THE BEGINNING OF THE END: THE POLITICAL THEORY OF THE GERMAN COMMUNIST PARTY TO THE THIRD PERIOD

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Abstract

In Marxist movements theory played a significant role. Even after the Stalinisation of the various Comintern parties, theory was propagated as crucial to their development. The KPD was born out of the rich theoretical traditions of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD). As disillusioned Lassalleans, Wilhelm Liebknecht and August Bebel chose Marxism as their theoretical guide to a Socialist outcome. As the political and economic climate in Germany changed the party grew and made parliamentary gains the nature of the SPD changed, much to the frustration of Rosa Luxemburg and the Left of the SPD. The final straw was, of course, the SPD's voting for war credits in 1914. In breaking away from the German Social Democratic Party Rosa Luxemburg had a clear idea of the type of party she hoped Spartakusbund would become. She sought a party that resembled the pre-1906 SPD – one that was democratic and non-bureaucratic. Therefore, one must ask – how was it possible that in the short life span of the Weimar Republic for Luxemburg's party to arrive at its Social Fascist end?

First, from its foundation in 1919 the fledgling German Communist Party (KPD) struggled to find its way. A few weeks after its founding congress, government forces murdered Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. In the months to follow, other key leaders and theoreticians also died – either by natural causes (in the case of Franz Mehring) or at the hands of government forces. Finding itself in a weakened position the fledgling party turned to the Bolsheviks for practical and theoretical guidance. However the Bolsheviks were desperate to spread the revolution to Europe, in particular to Germany, in

order to save their revolution. With this in mind Lenin and the Bolsheviks attempted to force Russian methods onto the German party with little or no regard as to whether those methods suited the German needs. Rather than force the revolution forward, Lenin's Policy of Uniformity merely served to further weaken the leadership's position within the party. The party leadership rather than maintain its independence from the Bolsheviks and fight matters, in which they fundamentally disagreed simply resigned, thereby allowing the party to become subordinate to the Russian party. While it was never Lenin's intention, his desire to force the revolution forward helped lay the foundations for the more repressive policy of Bolshevisation.

Second, Lenin's death and the failed German Revolution of 1923 marked a tremendous turning point. In the Soviet party the power struggle that ensued served to discredit the old Bolsheviks, especially Trotsky and any who posed a threat to Soviet hegemony. The Comintern's Policy of Bolshevisation was used to contain and control the revolutionary aspiration of its member parties. In Germany the failed revolution of 1923 and the "period of relative stabilisation" that followed paved the way for the Maslow-Fischer group to take control of the party. The Maslow-Fischer group officially adopted Bolshevisation and used it to purge the party of the Right and Centre wings. Armed with the Policy of Bolshevisation the Maslow-Fischer group launched attacks against Rosa Luxemburg, her supporters, and their Social Democratic past. The campaigns against Luxemburg were fairly successful. Although she remained an enduring symbol in the KPD, her memory as a revolutionary theoretician was successfully manipulated.

The Comintern's Policy of Bolshevisation not only served to purge the KPD of its Soviet opposition it also laid the foundations for the propagation of Social Fascism first as campaign against Social Democracy and then as a theory. In many ways Social Fascism was an exaggerated form of Bolshevisation. It began as a form of name calling – equating Social Democracy with Fascism. Later with the fall of Zinoviev and Bucharin Social Fascism was developed into a fully fledged theory.

The purpose of this thesis is to explore how and why the political theory of German Marxism changed as it passed through its various phases, essentially how it progressed from a theory of revolution to becoming synonymous with the dogma and repression of Social Fascism. This thesis will argue that the theoreticians and leaders of the German Communist movement were overwhelmed and unable to develop theory that reflected their unique circumstances. It was their own internal weakness and inability to lead that allowed the movement to be over taken by the Bolsheviks. Lenin's policy of Uniformity served to weaken the KPD leadership within the party. Each Comintern policy that followed left the party weaker and further subordinated to the Soviet party. While not a single Comintern policy can be blamed for the KPD's Social Fascist outcome, each played a role in weakening the German movement.

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Methodology

Without the combination of history and theory we are unlikely to understand either the past or the present.[1]

Why Bother with Marxist Theory in a Historical Context?

Marxist theory was intended to change and evolve as society, politics, and economics changed. Marx's method was derived from Hegel, in so far as Marx took Hegel's method and "turned Hegel on his head." Hegel's dialectics was intended to explain where change came from. Dialectics is the process in which two poles of contradiction interact. Eventually their interpenetration reaches a point where their negation of each other is negated, which results in the formation of a new entity. This process is known as "supersession." For Marx, the contradiction between labour and capital would ultimately lead to the supersession of both labour and capital resulting in the formation of a new social form – Socialism. For Marx the dialectical method was not merely intended to *describe* changes during historical periods, but rather it was a revolutionary dialectics intent on changing the world.[2] Therefore, "for the dialectical method itself the central problem is *to change reality*."[3] This question of how to change reality then became the central function of theory.[4]

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[1] Peter Burke, History and Social Theory, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005) 18.

[2] By revolutionary one refers to dramatic change in the political, economic and social process. In Marxism the revolutionary aspect of change is occurring and there is a force behind it.

[3] Georg Lukács, History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics, trans. Rodney Livingstone (London: Merlin Press, 1971) 3.

[4] Theory refers to an analysis of facts and how those facts related to one another. The term *facts* refers to those things we can tangibly identify and prove in the real world as opposed to abstractions – those things we can not see or prove. Lukács' description of Marxist theory is not a rigid explanation that merely creates categories. In defence of Rosa Luxemburg's theories Robert Looker accurately pointed out, if one is looking for "the enunciation of the universal laws of the historical process, marching and deploying vast and abstract categories – Proletariat, Capitalist, Revolutionary, etc. – across the world stage, then one will find precious little of this in Luxemburg's work – but then again Marx himself was hardly a 'theorist' in this sense either."

The purpose of theory in Marxism was to solidify the bond between the consciousness of the masses and their actions. For Marx the role of the proletariat was not just to lead change but it was to actually destroy the old existing order through the overthrow of the state.

> "[The] proletarians, if they are to assert themselves as individuals have to abolish the hitherto prevailing condition of their existence (which has, moreover, been that of all society up to then), namely, labour. Thus they find themselves directly opposed to the form in which, hitherto, the individuals, of which society consists, have given themselves collective expression, that is the state; in order, therefore, to assert themselves as individuals they must overthrow the state."[5]

Only in their unity as a "conscious" class would they be allowed to freely express themselves as individual human beings and only when the working class realised itself as an oppressed class could theory be converted into the vehicle of revolution. Once the "consciousness" of the working class began to reflect reality would it be possible for theory and practice to be united.[6]

Because of the importance of theory in acting as a vehicle in the revolutionary process, it is crucial to Marxism that the theorists possess the ability to reflect reality for the purpose of changing it. However, this was not the case in the so called Marxist parties of the Third International. Marxism

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Robert Looker, ed. Rosa Luxemburg: Selected Political Writings (London: Jonathan Cape, 1972) 13.

[5] Karl Marx, "The German Ideology," Collected Works, 49 vols. (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1975) 5: 80.

[6] It was at this point that theory became "the intellectual expression of the revolutionary process itself." Georg Lukács, History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics, trans. Rodney Livingstone (London: Merlin Press, 1971) 3.

experienced an incredible transition during the Weimar Republic. Theory became detached from the working class and ceased to reflect what was really going on in the world. It changed from a theory intent on changing the world through revolution, to a stagnated pseudo theory intent on suppressing and controlling its member parties. This process occurred slowly until it arrived at its final conclusion – the theory of Social Fascism. Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to examine "what happened to the theory?" How was it possible for a party (apparently) so committed to socialism and developing revolution to enable this process to develop overtly repressive propaganda that masqueraded as theory? I propose that within the historical context of the Weimar Republic that the German Communist Party (KPD) arrived at its natural conclusion. This is not to say that Social Fascism is the natural conclusion of Marxist theory, quite the contrary. The failure lies not with the theory but with the theoreticians. The theoreticians and the leaders of the KPD were overwhelmed by the events occurring around them that they were unable to develop theory that reflected the historical process. Thereby, leaving the door wide open for outside forces to influence and eventually dominate the internal dynamic of the German movement.

Georg Lukács viewed the revolutionary process occurring in steps.[7] Each step brought the masses closer to changing their reality. Analytical explanations (theories) assisted their awareness of not only each step as a step but also their understanding of their own historical purpose. This awareness of their historical

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[7] Georg Lukács (1885-1971) was a Hungarian Marxist philosopher and literary critic who played an influential role in the European Communist movement. Crucially Lukács pointed out "Orthodox Marxism...does not imply the uncritical acceptance of the results of Marx's investigations. It is not the 'belief' in this or that thesis, nor the exegesis of a 'sacred' book. On the contrary orthodoxy refers exclusively to *method*." Georg Lukács, History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics, trans. Rodney Livingstone (London: Merlin Press, 1971) 1.

process brought the proletariat closer to revolutionary consciousness. If we, like Lukács, look at the historical process as steps, each influencing the next, and the fluctuations in KPD theory as the conscious reflection of each step, then we can begin to understand the process of the Stalinisation of the KPD.

The purpose of this thesis is to understand how Marxist theory changed as it passed through its various phases. Often Marxist theoreticians or historians of Germany attempt to separate the two. This only makes sense, if anything for the purpose of simplicity. It is not the intention of this project to offer a thorough history of the KPD. Rather than utilise the existing political, historical, or sociology theory to explain the KPD during the Weimar Republic this thesis will analyse the KPD's political theory and how this theory related to its historical surroundings during this specific period. The theory that this thesis will be referring to is the Marxist theory of political organisation and education for the purposes of guiding the proletariat to the overthrow of Capitalism.[8]

The study of the KPD theory not only allows us to understand what motivated changes in the past, but also helps us to understand the state of Marxist theory today. Germany was the centre for Marxism from the birth of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) to the end of the Weimar Republic. From the beginning the SPD was influential in not only in the popularisation of Marxism, but also its interpretation. The parties of the Second International looked to the German party for theoretical and practical guidance. After the Russian Revolution this changed. The German party was superseded only by the Russian party, yet the party remained an extremely important party in the

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[8] Marx attached some importance to the training of the working class so that they did not fall prey to becoming a "plaything" in the hands of the ruling class. Marx's followers interpreted this as the necessity of a party to train and guide the working class in their revolutionary struggle. Karl Marx, "Marx to Freidrich Bolte 23 November 1871," Collected Works, 49 vols. (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1989) 44: 258-259.

Third International, albeit in second place. Essentially this meant that whatever happened in Germany would determine the fate of the revolutionary aspirations of the rest of the Third International. It was here, during this transitional period, that Marxist theory became Stalinised. That is to say that it was in Germany, during the Weimar Republic that Marxist theory became detached from reality and not only became dogmatic, but became a theory of repression. These stains still remain within the Left today.

Outline

In order to understand the past we must also understand the theories and ideas that motivated their actions. The German Communists based themselves on Marxist theory. Therefore, it seems extremely important to understand the theory that guided their movement. Their interpretation of the theory during each critical transitional period influenced how they reacted to the next phase of their existence. That is to say, how they interpreted (theorised about) past events determined how they would approach each consecutive step.

Stylistically the thesis is broken up into four chapters, each showing how disjointed the Marxism of the German movement actually was. Where possible, the body of the text consists of theoretical analysis and much of the historical narrative is in the footnotes. There are, of course, exceptions. In cases where the historical narrative was crucial to the change in theory a more detailed description of the events has been offered. Each chapter serves as a stepping stone to the next – beginning with a historical overview of German Social Democracy, then to Rosa Luxemburg's contribution to German Social Democracy, then proceeding on to the influence of Lenin and the Comintern,

and concluding with the theory of Social Fascism. The point is to show the historical progression in which the focus of German Communist Party theory transformed from seeking the emancipation of the working class to the divide and conquering of the working class.

The history of Marxist theory is inherently tied to the history of the German Social Democratic Party and its offspring German Communism. While the length limitation of the thesis does not allow room to offer an in depth analysis of German Socialism, the first chapter offers a historical narrative of the German Social Democratic Party during its Imperial Germany phase. The first chapter serves as an introduction to the thesis. The purpose of the chapter is merely to offer a historical overview of where the KPD came from – it is meant to paint a historical picture of the conditions in which the German Communist Party was trying to develop as a revolutionary party.

Following on from Social Democracy the second chapter – "Rosa Luxemburg's Contribution to German Socialism" – discusses the role that Luxemburg played in the development of the German Communist Party. Rosa Luxemburg was a journalist, an activist, and undoubtedly a Marxist theoretician. She played an integral role in the formation of the German Communist Party and attempted to build a mass party that was grounded in Marxist theory. Luxemburg attempted to build a party and theory that reflected the German situation. Unfortunately, she and Karl Liebknecht were arrested and murdered by government forces while the party was still in its infancy. Her influence as a symbol of Bolshevik opposition was enduring, particularly among the young. Therefore, when the world economic and political situation changed the Comintern attempted to destroy her theoretical influence and reinvented her as a

"mistaken" martyr. It is ironic that in their polemics Luxemburg and Lenin disagreed on many points, but they both agreed on the necessity of theory to guide the movement. So what happened to the theory?

Luxemburg's murder marked a significant turning point in the theoretical development of the German movement. The victory of the Russian Revolution meant that the leaderless movement looked toward the Bolsheviks for theoretical and practical guidance, while at the same time they attempted to remain true to their own traditions. Essentially this is the point of the third chapter – "Crisis of theory in the Comintern" – examines what happened to German Marxist theory after Luxemburg died. Chapter three begins with Lenin's attempts to create a uniform party structure and theoretical uniformity in the German party. Lenin and the Bolshevik were desperate to spread the revolution throughout Europe, in the hopes of saving their revolution. The German workers' movement had been the strongest in Europe – both theoretically and practically. If revolution were to spread the obvious country would be Germany. Lenin believed his party had demonstrated that they possessed the "correct" theory and that all the Comintern's parties should adopt their model. It is clear that Lenin sought a Socialist outcome, albeit by force. Lenin's attempts to replace the German party practice and theory with Russian party practice and theory were unsuccessful and hindered the fledgling party from developing. Rather than fight the Bolshevik's attempts to dominate the party, the KPD leaders resigned their positions.

The devastating defeat of the "German October" in 1923 marked the end of a revolutionary era. Up to this point it was believed that the world revolution was not only possible but imminent. However no successful socialist revolution

had occurred in any other country except Russia. All attempts had been systematically put down by counter-revolutionary forces and were followed by severe backlashes. By the end of the revolutionary period of 1919 – 1923 many Communist parties throughout Western and Eastern Europe operated on a semi-legal or illegal basis. Capitalism had firmly managed to re-establish itself. This period became known as the "period of relative stabilisation." The Soviet leaders were forced to refocus their attention on rebuilding the Soviet economy until the revolutionary tide turned. Lenin's death in 1924 changed everything. In the CPSU the power struggle that followed served to discredit the old Bolshevik's and paved the way for Stalin to emerge as the premier lone leader. In the Comintern, Lenin's death and the "period of relative stabilisation" had a detrimental effect on the development of revolutionary theory as well as the political practice of the KPD.

In an effort to contain and control its member parties the Comintern introduced the policy of "Bolshevisation." Bolshevisation attempted to pick up where Lenin's Policy of Uniformity left off. It was a more exaggerated form of the Policy of Uniformity. It insisted on loyalty, obedience, and sought theoretical cohesion. Unlike Lenin's Policy of Uniformity, Bolshevisation was not about the revolution. Bolshevisation took place in the midst of the power struggle in the Soviet Union and served to russify the Comintern's parties and stamp out all international opposition. It was also during this period that Socialism in One Country began to gain popularity in the Soviet Union, replacing the internationalism of Marxism with the nationalism of Stalinism.

It is under these turbulent conditions that the party become truly Stalinised and Marxist theory became completely cut off from reality. The fourth chapter

– the Third Period and Social Fascism – describes the origins of the concept of Social Fascism in Germany. The Maslow-Fischer reign and their pursuit of Bolshevisation created the appropriate environment for the concept of Social Fascism to flourish into a quasi-theory. Social Fascism as a theory and campaign picked up where Bolshevisation left off. It was an extreme form of Bolshevisation. Like Bolshevisation before it, Social Fascism served to divide the working class movement by creating a constant enemy from within the working class – the SPD leaders and later the SPD workers. But it was not until the declaration of the arrival of the Third Period that Social Fascism became truly destructive – where mere name calling was transformed into a fully fledged campaign. Masquerading as a theory, Social Fascism was justified and validated as an effective weapon, not against Social Democracy, but against the working class as a whole. Although the adoption of Social Fascism has been accused of being a dramatic shift, in reality KPD theory had merely followed the course laid down for it by the previous Comintern policies and arrived at its natural conclusion – the theory of Social Fascism.

Sources

As this thesis mainly deals with the theoretical aspects of the German Communist movement, a traditional literary review seems out of place, therefore, this section will discuss the type of sources used. If the historical debates were relevant to the overall argument, they have been listed in the footnotes in the main body of the thesis. The majority of the primary sources used in this thesis were gathered at Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv (SAMPO) in Berlin and the

Hoover Institute for War and Peace Library and Archives at Stanford University in California. It was unnecessary to travel to Russia to access Soviet archives as the required Comintern sources were published in periodicals or available at SAMPO or the Hoover Institute.

The sources used for this research were KPD and Comintern training material such as party school handbooks, KPD and Comintern periodicals, official reports such as Central Committee reports, protocol, theses and resolutions, statutes, speeches and programmes from the various Comintern conferences and Plenums. These sources were chosen because they provided the best insight as to how KPD theory changed in an official capacity, particularly during the "period of relative stabilisation" and the so called "Third Period." Primary sources, such as books or periodicals in general circulation, have been listed according to their publishers as they can still be found in more than one location and do not require special clearance to access them. In cases where sources are no longer in circulation the name of the holder (i.e. the library or archive) has been listed in the footnotes.

Many of the theoretical sources, such as the writings of Marx and Engels, Rosa Luxemburg, Lenin, and Trotsky have been published in English and where possible these sources were used. In the case of original German Communist propaganda and training material, found in archives or libraries, the translations are my own unless otherwise stated.

Many of the secondary sources were obtained at various libraries in the UK and from the UC Berkeley library. Certain secondary sources have been used as primary sources in this thesis, for example Victor Serge's Witness to the German Revolution, Ruth Fischer's Stalin and German Communism, Franz

Borkenau's The Communist International, and Paul Levi's Rosa Luxemburg: Her Life and Work. Although these works were interpretative and attempted to analyse the time period, they were also witnesses to the events that they were trying to examine. For example, Ruth Fischer's Stalin and German Communism is an attempt at examining the KPD history during the entire Weimar period from the Left perspective. Like Herman Weber after her and Trotsky before her, Fischer blames Soviet interference, but more specifically Stalin, for the failings of the German party. As a secondary source Fischer's account is rather problematic. Firstly, as a historical piece of work, Ruth Fischer's book is flawed. She did not provide a bibliography, her sources throughout the work are limited, and there are several inaccuracies with dates and events. Secondly, Fischer's tone is largely defensive. Mainly because of the dubious role she played in the German Communist Party as one of its leaders during an extremely transitional period.[9] Fischer, famously, launched the attacks against Rosa Luxemburg and her supporters in the mid-1920's. The purging of the Right wing of the KPD had dire consequences for the theoretical development of the party. However, as critical as one is about Fischer's work, treated as a primary source, it remains an important piece of work for a student of KPD history. Dates and details of events can be obtained from more reliable sources, but first hand accounts offer the reader invaluable to anyone attempting to gain any understanding of the German Party during this turbulent period.

The main secondary source I relied on for this project was Herman Weber's Die Waldung des deutschen Kommunismus: Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimar Republic. In 1970, in reference to the 1969 publication of

[9] This topic certainly requires more attention and could be a project in its own right. Unfortunately due to the time restraints and word limitations of this thesis, I have limited my examination of Ruth Fischer's role in so far as her policies affected the change in KPD theory.

Weber's Die Waldung Eric Hobsbawm asked if such a large piece of work was necessary. The answer was yes. Hobsbawm further queried the possibility of performing thorough research on the topic of German Communism as, at the time, many of the records were inaccessible in Moscow or East Berlin. "Let us be grateful for what we have until something better is possible."[10] Interestingly, the Berlin Wall came crashing down in 1989 and archival material is readily accessible and yet, Herman Weber's work is still most thorough piece of work on the German Communist Party (KPD) during the Weimar Republic. Weber's work has been criticised for focusing the blame of the KPD's political failure on the Soviet Union. This argument certainly has merit, however this is not the whole story. The KPD was internally weak. Although it claimed to uphold the traditions of Rosa Luxemburg and remained sceptical of Soviet interference, from the onset KPD leaders allowed the Bolsheviks to meddle in KPD affairs. Indeed it is true that Soviet interference irreversibly damaged the German movement but the German leaders, who allowed the Bolsheviks to dominate the German party in the first place, must take part of the responsibility. Even though I did not entirely agree with Weber's analysis, his work was extremely useful to my understanding of the German party.

The English literature examining the German Communist Party during the entire Weimar Republic is rather limited. Nothing in English resembles Weber's Die Waldung. The best English source I found was from the American historian Eric D. Weitz. Although I did not always agree with Weitz's analysis, his work offered useful and thought provoking insight into the Social and Political History of the KPD.

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[10] Eric Hobsbawm, "Confronting Defeat: The German Communist Party," Revolutionaries: Contemporary Essays (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973) 43.

In the case of the history of the Soviet Union, the opposite is true. There is almost an overabundance of sources available in English from both the Right and Left perspective. For a general overview of the Soviet Union I relied mainly on E.H. Carr, in part because Carr wrote a fair amount on the topic. Carr's approach was mainly narrative, which suited my purposes as the thesis is not attempting to re-examine the Soviet Union, but rather to examine the changes in Marxist theory.

Chapter One: Introduction – The Origins of German Communism: A Historical Narrative of the German Social Democratic Party

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the theoretical origins of the German Communist Party (KPD) by offering a historical narrative of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD). The history of German Marxism is inherently tied to the history of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD). Marx and Engels eventual blessing of the party helped it rise to become the most important Socialist party in Europe. Although the party considered itself a Marxist party, a dual reformist current plagued the party from the outset. The party's inability to develop a strong theoretical foundation erupted in potentially destructive debates until the party finally split into three.

This chapter has been split into three sections. The first section of this chapter – "The Gotha Unity" – will discuss the initial step towards uniting the two strands of the German workers' movement at a conference in Gotha. Marx and Engels initially opposed the *Gotha Programme* because they believed it conceded too much to the Lassalleans. But Marx and Engels' influence proved to be rather limited as the unity at Gotha was reached and the reformist tendencies of the Lassalleans flourished.

The second section – "From the *Erfurt Programme* to Bureaucracy" will discuss the consequences of the reform versus revolution dichotomy. The division in the party's theoretical foundations became overtly obvious during the Revisionist debates and the 1905/06 Revolution. This chapter will discuss the consequences of those debates.

The third section – "From War Credits to Republic" – will discuss the final years of the Social Democratic Party as a united party, the war years, and the party's declaration of the German Republic at the end in 1918.

This chapter is meant as a historical overview whose purpose is to describe the SPD's influence on the political theory of the KPD. It is not a thorough history of the SPD. For this reason the use of primary sources has been strictly limited. It is not the intention of this thesis to blame the SPD for the failings of German Communism, but merely to show the origins of some of the theoretical and practical problems innate in the German Communist movement.

The Gotha Unity

The birth of the German Social Democratic Party was just as precarious as its life. The SPD originated out of the unity between the two strands in the workers' movement – the *Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei Deutchlands* (SDAP – Social Democratic Workers' Party of Germany) – followers of Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels and the *Allgemeiner Deutsche Arbeiterverein* (ADAV – General German Worker's Association) - followers of Ferdinand Lassalle.[11] Wilhelm Liebknecht and August Bebel were early followers of Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels.[12] Their personal association with Marx and Engels inflated their credibility.

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[11] On February 14-15, 1875 a conference took place in Gotha to negotiate the unity between the two groups. It was at this conference that the *Gotha Programme* was officially signed and the two opposing parties joined to form the *Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei* (SAP – Socialist Workers' Party). The party adopted the name the Social Democratic Party of Germany in 1891 following the Erfurt Conference. Georg Eckert, "Die Konsolidierung der sozialdemokratischen Arbeiterbewegung zwischen Reichsgründung und Sozialistengesetz," Sozialdemokratie zwischen Klassenbewegung und Volkspartei, ed. Hans Mommsen (Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag GmbH & Co., 1974) 44-46.

[12] Wilhelm Liebknecht (1826 – 1900) participated in the revolution of 1848 and after its failure escaped to Switzerland and then to London. While in London he joined the Communist League where he came into association with Marx and Engels and eventually became a convert to their

Marx and Engels were very interested in the political development of the workers' movements in Germany and observed their development.[13] As is generally the case with compromising situations not everyone was pleased with the outcome. Marx and Engels observed the proceedings from England and kept in close correspondence with the Eisenach Group. Bebel had "deep misgivings" about the negotiations between the Eisenachers and the Lassalleans and expressed these to Engels. Engels, upon seeing the draft of the programme, wrote to Bebel a detailed letter and warned against any compromises that would endanger their Marxist principles. Bebel and the other Eisenachers ignored the warnings. Marx and Engels were infuriated at the programme adopted at Gotha and even threatened to "disassociate [themselves] from the programmes principles."[14] Marx wrote to Bracke a critical analysis of the draft programme, which he hoped would be circulated amongst the leaders. Marx took points of programme he disagreed with and commented on them. Marx warned that the Gotha Programme conceded too much to the Lassalleans and although the unity

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theories. He returned to Germany in 1862 where he met August Bebel (1840 – 1913) in Leipzig. Under the influence of Liebknecht, Bebel also converted to Marxism. In 1866 they formed the *Sächsische Volkspartei* (Saxon People's Party). Susanne Miller and Heinrich Potthoff, A History of German Social Democracy: From 1848 to the Present (1983; Leamington Spa, Hamburg, and New York: Berg Publishers, Ltd., 1986) 25.

[13] Paastela described role played by Marx and Engels during this period as that of "consultant" to the leaders of various workers' parties. They did not actually exercise any power over the leaders or the parties. The leaders of the various organisations took the advice given to them by Marx and Engels into consideration and then decided to do what was best for their organisation. For example, Marx sent his criticism of the Gotha Programme to Wilhelm Bracke and other leaders for circulation. Marx explicitly stated, "the programme's no good." Liebknecht, who felt the Gotha Congress was a victory, disagreed with Marx and did not even show the criticism to August Bebel. Jukka Paastela, Marx's and Engel's Concepts of the Parties and Political Organizations of the Working Class (Tampere: University of Tampere, 1985) 211, 219; Karl Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Programme," Collected Works, 49 vols. (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1975) 24: 78.

[14] Mehring claimed that Marx and Engels regarded the Lassalleans as a dying sect and eventually they would capitulate to a programme designed by the followers of Marx – the Eisenach group. They therefore, saw no reason to negotiate or compromise with them. The leaders of the Eisenach group, however, disagreed, and felt unity to be the only way to move forward. David McLellan, Karl Marx: His Life and Thought (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1973) 431; Franz Mehring, Karl Marx: The Story of His Life (London: Butler and Tanner, 1948) 508-509; Karl Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Programme," Collected Works, 49 vols. (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1975) 24: 77.

itself was a positive move, the programme underestimated the potential problems involved in the unity of two opposing socialist groups. The letter and the critique had no effect on the proceedings, in part because it was not circulated as Marx had hoped. It was shown to some leaders but not others, for example Bebel was not shown the *Critique*.[15]

Needless to say the warnings of both Marx and Engels were ignored and a compromise in Gotha was reached. Marx and Engels were not consulted on the final content of the programme and learned of the final programme from the newspaper. They observed the proceedings of the Gotha congress and their warnings were largely ignored. They were angry that their warning had gone unheeded. Although they were unhappy with the unity, they did not disassociate themselves from the new organisation that later became the German Social Democratic Party (SPD). A complete break with the movement would have meant cutting themselves off completely from the German workers' movement at a time when it appeared to be moving forward.

Marx's inability to wield influence over the Eisenachers occurred for three reasons. Firstly, part of the problem had to do with Marx and Engels' attitude toward political parties. They did not view political parties as *the* decisive stepping-stone in the revolutionary struggle.[16] But that is not to say that political parties should not play a role in the development of the workers' movement. Marx and Engels were not strangers to political participation, as was demonstrated by their involvement in the Communist League and the First

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[15] In fact Marx's Critique was not widely circulated until 1891 when Engels, with the help of Karl Kautsky, published the letter and Marx's criticism in *Neue Zeit*. GDH Cole, A History of Socialist Thought: The Second International 1889-1914, 7 vols. (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1956) 3: 255.

[16] One must note that the growth of local national political organisations did not occur until after the disintegration of the First International.

International. They clearly viewed political organisations as playing some role in the revolutionary struggle.[17] Yet Marx's writing on political parties remained scant with the exception of a few mentions scattered throughout his works. Marx never developed the role of political parties into a theory.[18] Marx's propaganda piece, *The Communist Manifesto*, mentioned the role of parties, but in a superficial capacity and only in relation to the role of Communists.

> "The communists do not form a separate party opposed to other working class parties…. The immediate aim of the communists is the same as that of all other proletarian parties: formation of the proletariat into a class, overthrow of the bourgeois supremacy, conquest of political power by the proletariat."[19]

The role of the party was not to work against the working class but with it. The writings of Marx are unclear about his position on the role of parties in the workers' movement and as a result his actual influence in the development of a Marxist party in Germany was limited.

Marx's writing on political parties may have been limited but his criticism of the Gotha programme offered some insight into his view of the role he believed parties should play in the revolutionary struggle.

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[17] In his letter to Bolte Marx implies the need for some type of organisation i.e. a party. Karl Marx, "Marx to Freidrich Bolte 23 November 1871," Collected Works, 49 vols. (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1989) 44: 258-259

[18] Marx and Engels did not establish a plan or a rigid structure for parties to follow. In fact if one is looking for a developed theory of political parties, one must look not to Marx but to the Marxist. Monty Johnstone accurately pointed out that there was nothing in the works of Marx and Engels "to justify Stalin's attempt to present as Marxist his theory that Socialism demands a one-party system." Monty Johnstone, "Marx and Engels and the Concept of the Party," Karl Marx's Social and Political Thought: Critical Assessments, ed. Bob Jessop, 4 vols. (London and New York: Routledge, 1990) 3: 183.

[19] Karl Marx, Communist Manifesto, 4th ed. (New York: Pathfinder, 1995) 27.

"It is altogether self-evident that, to be able to fight at all, the working class must organise itself at home *as a class* and that its own country is the immediate arena of its struggle.... The internal activity of the working classes does not in any way depend on the existence of the '*International Working Men's Association*'."[20]

Marx did not view the existence of First International or any other party as necessary in the revolutionary struggle. For Marx, the most important thing was for the working class to evolve into a *class*, aware and conscious of its historical role. Marx did see the need for parties but only as far as they might provide assistance to the working class in achieving their goal. He was quite vague how parties and their organisers might arise. One can only assume that during the evolutionary period the working class would form organisations to help educate other members of the working class and recruit members of other classes. The formation of parties would occur through the energy and movement from within the working class and not from an outside source. Marx did not view role of the party with as great importance as contemporary writers. He viewed political parties as loosely structured organisations. He believed organisations needed to be flexible so that the proletariat could develop and redevelop as history itself developed and changed. [21] Organisations, such as the Communist League, were the expression of the development of the proletariat, they were the place where theory and practice met, but a party was not the instrument by which practice became realised. The purpose of these organisations and their leadership was to

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[20] Karl Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Programme," Collected Works, 49 vols. (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1975) 24: 89-90.

[21] Rossanda pointed out that Marx was convinced "the proletariat does not require a specific and autonomous mode of organisation and expression, it creates and destroys as it goes along its political forms." Rossana Rossanda, "Class and Party," The Socialist Register, eds. Ralph Miliband and John Saville (London: Merlin Press, 1970) 218.

provide education and assistance in the proletariat's evolution. The proletariat needed to first develop their consciousness in order to give expression to their frustration. They would then organise parties and organisations and use them as *their* tools for change.[22] The parties and organisations would not come first and use the proletariat as their tools for change. In this sense Marx had no use for *vanguard parties*. However, Marx and Engels believed that parties could potentially play a useful role and remained interested in the developments of socialist parties throughout Europe.

Secondly, Marx and Engels were also limited by their geographical location. They were in England while Bebel and Liebknecht were in Germany. No one can deny that Marx and Engels made every attempt to remain informed with regard to the developments in the workers' movements but even with modern methods it is difficult to observe and critically assess what is going on abroad. Although Marx and Engels may have provided the theoretical foundation for the German Marxism, from their location in England they represented an outside force attempting to influence the internal dynamic of the workers' movement in Germany. To a certain extent their attempt to influence the German situation from the outside ran contradictory to Marx's own observations on the internal dynamic of the working class. While Bebel and Liebknecht valued the insight of Marx and Engels they ignored the criticisms of their mentors and did what they thought was best for the movement. Marx and Engels, perhaps aware of their limited influence, chose not to break with the newly formed party.

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[22] Ralph Miliband also stressed this point. "Whatever the form of the party, it is the working class, its developing consciousness and its struggle for self-emancipation which really matter to Marx: the party is only the political expression and the instrument of the class." Ralph Miliband, Marxism and Politics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977) 120.

Finally, Marx's lack of development of his concept of the party began with his observations. He could only analyse what he observed. He was limited by his own historical surroundings. Marx lived during a time when most European countries did not have universal suffrage, freedom of speech or press. Most countries were still under the authoritarian powers of monarchs. Marx, himself, was forced to flee his native Germany on account of his political writings. Therefore, if universal suffrage did not exist then neither did political parities in the modern sense.[23] Contemporary parties by their nature strive for political power. They campaign in various ways to convince others to join them. If the extreme possibility of political power did not exist then the party was superfluous. These were the extreme conditions of the 19th century Europe and this was what Marx observed. Even when universal suffrage was introduced in Wilhelmian Germany, the possibility for obtaining power did not exist.[24] Groups of people wishing to organise and discuss political issues, instigate change, or even promote education were forced to do so in secret for fear of arrest. They had no hope of election by legal means.[25] Therefore, the only

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[23] McLellan pointed out that mass political parties began to grow towards the end of Marx's life, and this was mainly due to the extension of suffrage in Western Europe. David McLellan, "Politics," Marx: The First Hundred Years, ed. David McLellan (London: Frances Pinter (publishers), 1983) 151.

[24] JP Nettl accurately pointed out that political parties during this period were extremely limited. They could, of course, play a limited negative role. Parties could obstruct legislation, but the possibility for obtaining or sharing power was never available to them. Ultimate power rested with the Kaiser. Peter Nettl, "The German Social Democratic Party 1890-1914 as a Political Model," Past and Present 30 (1965): 65.

[25] Robert Dahl asserted "the hypothesis that political parties are indispensable to democracy was not widely accepted during the lifetime of Marx and Engel even by those who set democracy, agrarian or capitalist, as their polity." Regardless of one's politics, during the 19th century, political parties were never regarded as a means to power. Dahl claimed that Marx was too set in his "dogma" and too preoccupied with finishing Capital that when dramatic political changes occurred (universal suffrage was introduced in Germany in 1866, the electoral reforms in England in 1867 and 1884, and the growth of socialist parties) Marx and Engels made no attempt to revise their ideas. Dahl then drew the conclusion that Marx did not develop adequate political theory. The point is senseless to argue, as it seems obvious that Marx never had any intention of developing political theory. Seeking political theory in Marx's writing implies that Marx accepted the State and hoped to change it from within. His intention was, however, not to change the system from within, but to completely destroy the system and create a new

possible method of changing the political situation was through the violent overthrow of the government – revolution. In Marx's view the only possibility of a successful revolution rested on the shoulders of a politically conscious working class.

Marx and Engels may have given the name to the Marxist movement but it was Bebel and Liebknecht who wielded the real influence inside the German workers' movement. Much to Marx and Engels' frustration, they attempted to utilise Marx and Engels theories to build a mass party in Germany. It is clear from Marx and Engels writing that they had a view on the type of party they hoped would develop in Germany, however they did not develop these views into a theory. Their notion of the party remained scattered throughout their writing and their followers were forced to create their own version of the Marxist party.

None the less, Marx's warnings were not without merit. In reality, the Eisenachers were frustrated Lassalleans and Marx provided a substantial alternative as well as a theoretical platform which explained their predicament. Wilhelm Liebknecht had a free hand in the design of the Programme and it was more Lassallean than Marxist. [26] Marx and Engels felt that the Gotha Programme conceded too much to the Lassalleans. Although Liebknecht was fully aware of Marx's hostility towards the programme, he believed that the

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egalitarian society. Robert Dahl, "Marxism and Free Parties," The Journal of Politics 10.4 (1948): 805, 809, 812.

[26] Although Lassalle's writings were sporadic, he had enduring appeal in the pre-SPD labour movement and his influence persisted long after the adoption of the Erfurt programme. Lassalle's version of Socialism did not require the overthrow of the state and could be realised within the confines of the state. Lassalle's ideas were passionate, however, much to Marx's frustration, they lacked substance and depth. Lassalle was a legend in the working class movement, more for his personality rather than his theories. It is, therefore, not surprising that Gotha Programme should have been so heavily influenced by Lassalle. For example the programme insisted on the "abolition of the iron law of wages." In reply to "Lassalle's dogmas" Marx insisted, "Lassalle *did not know* what wages were." Karl Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Programme," Collected Works, 49 vols. (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1989) 24: 92.

unity was more important. Liebknecht's determination to see the unity through came at a price. His refusal to demand that the Lassalleans adopt a non-reformist Marxist programme allowed a contradictory tendency to flourish within the movement. The existence of such a contradictory programme not only enabled the SPD to expand, but also had a detrimental effect on the Marxist movement as a whole. On the one hand the SPD was at the epicentre of Marxist revolutionary theory and officially promoted a Marxist programme, on the other it allowed an undercurrent of reform to flourish.

Marx and Engels' eventual blessing of the party allowed the SPD to dominate the Second International both practically and theoretically. As the chief interpreters of Marx's theories, the SPD played a remarkable role in the advancement of Marxism in the European Socialist movement. However, the situation was not as straight forward as it might seem. Although revolutionary Marxism was the official doctrine of the SPD, a reformist stream persisted as an undercurrent. This conflicting dichotomy existed since the compromise at the Gotha Conference in 1875 and continued to resurface until the party's voting for war credits in 1914 finely broke the SPD into three. From the onset Social Democracy was torn between its Marxist theory and reformism.

From the *Erfurt Programme* to Bureaucracy

Shortly after the unity at Gotha Bismarck unleashed the Anti-Socialist Laws (1878-1890). The differences between the Marxist and the Lassalleans became irrelevant as they were all under assault for being Socialists. The party provided a giant umbrella and drew its strength from its numbers. All those involved with socialist movements could have potentially been sent to prison.

Many SPD members and leaders were jailed for their Socialist affiliation, but not all. Those leaders who had suffered under Bismarck's repression, those whose professional lives suffered, etc tended towards a more revolutionary form of Marxism. Those who suffered less leaned more towards a reformist approach. While this divide may help explain the course that the party pursued in the run up to the voting for war credits, at the time this divide was not that significant. The loose structure of German Social Democracy allowed various currents to exist and they were openly debated. German Social Democracy emerged from Bismarck's Anti-Socialist Laws as the leading Marxist party in Europe.

The Anti-Socialist Laws were overturned in 1890 and by 1891 the Social Democratic Workers' Party of Germany had become known as the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD). Years of repression and underground organization helped drive out the utopianism of the Lassalleans, but not the reformism. In 1891 Ignaz Auer, August Bebel, and Wilhelm Liebknecht formed a committee to rewrite the Gotha Programme along more Marxist lines. The SPD adopted its official Marxist programme at the Erfurt conference in 1891. The draft was prepared by Karl Kautsky and Eduard Bernstein and became known as the *Erfurt Programme*.[27] The Programme was largely inspired by the *Communist Manifesto* and emphasized the class struggle through its clear demarcation between the aspirations of the working class and the

[27] *The Erfurt Programme*, largely written by Karl Kautsky, insured that the SPD was a Marxist party. However, there was not one overriding theory that governed the SPD. The SPD did not possess a theory of taking power or a theory of the role of the party. Such concepts were openly debated between the Right, Left and Centre, but there was not one single SPD theory that dominated the SPD. Yet, something held the three currents together. In the early years all three currents were Marxist and sought a socialist outcome. They merely could not agree on the details. As time went on this lack of theoretical cohesion became problematic and eventually the Right wing of SPD drifted away from Marxist theory altogether.

repressive role of the State. However, a problem existed that neither Marx nor Engels recognised. Even from the beginning the theoretical understanding of Marx's writing amongst the leadership in the Eisenacher group was in fact very poor. The leaders that joined the Eisenachers were disillusioned Lassalleans who had turned to Marxism as different path to revolution and perhaps this explains their reluctance to place strict demands on the Lassalleans, as the Marxist leaders themselves were significantly influenced by the ideas of Lassalle.[28]

As the chief interpreters of Marxism, the SPD played a key role in the advancement of Marxism in the European Socialist movement. While the early years of the SPD are generally regarded as the "golden years" for the development of Marxist theory, this period was plagued with a remarkable lack of theoretical cohesion. However, as the political and economic situation changed in Germany the dichotomy between its Marxist revolutionary theory and its behaviour as a mainstream party seeking reform within the parliamentary system grew. As the party made parliamentary gains the divisions within the party became increasingly polarised as the Executive's focus moved away from the revolutionary rhetoric of the *Erfurt Programme*, which had gained them support. The party's inability to develop a strong theoretical foundation meant that it was unable to develop the internal dynamic of the working class in the revolutionary struggle.

The consequences of this dichotomy between reform and revolution manifested itself in potentially destructive open debate. This division in the SPD's theoretical foundations became overtly obvious first during the

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[28] The interpretation of Marx's writing was taken up by younger Social Democrats, such as Kautsky and Rosa Luxemburg under the banner of Orthodoxy.

revisionist controversy and then during the 1905/06 uprisings. The *Erfurt Programme* demonstrated the official victory of the Marxist over the Lassalleans, but this is not to say that it represented the victory over reformism. The strained relationship between the revolutionary Marxists and the reform minded Lassalleans quickly became apparent. Within less than a decade of the Erfurt conference the revisionist debates led by one of the programme's architects, Eduard Bernstein, nearly destroyed the party. Eduard Bernstein published a series of articles in *Die Neue Zeit* on "The Problems of Socialism" from 1896-1898. Bernstein insisted that the nature of the party had changed. He claimed that the SPD was no longer a revolutionary party but a "democratic socialist" party of reform. While Bernstein had ruffled numerous feathers, for the most part the SPD executive were willing to allow the whole thing to blow over. However, Bernstein had taken things too far when he allegedly announced that "the final aim is nothing, the movement is everything." The SPD Executive was no longer able to ignore him. Karl Kautsky and the SPD's new arrival, Rosa Luxemburg, took up the task of dealing with Bernstein.[29] The SPD *officially* sided with Luxemburg and rejected Bernstein's concept of "evolutionary socialism" at the International Congress, which met in Amsterdam in August 1904. Bernstein certainly made some valid points, albeit his execution was flawed and Rosa Luxemburg had no problem in destroying his arguments. The German Social Democratic Party was changing and Bernstein certainly had support within the SPD Executive. However, the party was not in a position to *officially* make these changes as it owed much of its popularity to the *Erfurt Programme*. The official defeat of the Revisionists did

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[29] For a more detailed description of Luxemburg's role in the Revisionist Controversy see chapter 2.

not kill the reformism in the party, quite the contrary, it continued to flourish and once again resurfaced during the mass strikes debates, which followed the 1905 uprisings.

The Russian Revolution of 1905 sparked strikes and protests all over Central Europe. The situation was no different in Germany as strikes and protests spontaneously erupted. For Rosa Luxemburg the 1905/06 revolution signified the revolutionary potential of the German working class. Much to the frustration of Rosa Luxemburg, the Party Executive and the Trade Unions not only offered little support to the strikes, but they also actively tried to prevent them. Luxemburg was aware that the political and economic climate had changed, but she had not yet realised that by 1905 the Party's dynamic had also changed. The Social Democratic Party had begun to change and was shifting away from revolution toward a more reformist path. With their new found allies, the Trade Unions, the German Social Democratic Party had made significant parliamentary gains. The SPD Executive was antagonistic toward anyone or anything that might jeopardise their newly secured relationship with the Trade Unions. The Trade Unions were sceptical of revolutionary rhetoric that drew the rank and file away from the day to day struggle.

The 1905/06 Revolutions marked a tremendous watershed in the history of the German Socialist movement. At the Jena Congress held in September 1905 Bebel put forward the motion in support of the use of the general strike. The party passed the resolution with a large majority. In principle the SPD supported the use of the general strike as a political weapon under certain circumstances. However, this was not the reality of the situation. When unofficial strikes had broken out in 1905 the party and the Trade Unions

attempted to prevent them. In refusing to support the strikes the SPD Executive demonstrated that they were no longer restrained by the revolutionary rhetoric of the *Erfurt Programme*. The party and the Trade Unions not only refused to support the strikes, in 1906 when Luxemburg returned from Poland eager to theorise and utilise the lessons learned from the 1905/06 revolution, her efforts were met with intense opposition from both the SPD Executive and the Trade Unions.[30] They were hostile at Luxemburg's attempts to discuss the issue of general strikes as political weapons. The defeat of the Russian Revolution allotted the Trade Unions enough leverage to convince Bebel and the SPD Executive of the dangers of misusing the mass strike. By the Mannheim Congress, Bebel changed his position on the use of mass strike as a political weapon.

The Mannheim Congress marked a crucial turning point in the course that the SPD pursued after 1905. The issue was not merely the Trade Unions' attitude toward the use of mass strike for political purposes. The Trade Unions had demonstrated that they had also emerged from the Anti-Socialist Laws a powerful and influential force. While the Trade Unions and the party had always been separate entities, the Trade Unions had been in a subordinate position to the SPD Executive and tended to remain neutral in politics. Neutrality was necessary for recruitment purposes and cooperation with non-socialist unions. However the mass strike debates brought the Trade Unions out of their neutrality. The Mannheim Congress in 1906 not only placed the Trade Unions on equal footing with the SPD Executive, but also demonstrated the party's dependence on the Trade Unions. As a result of the Mannheim

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[30] For a more detailed discussion of Luxemburg's role in the Mass Strike debates see chapter 2.

Congress the Trade Unions won increasing influence over the SPD and its policies.[31] The Trade Unions clearly were not revolutionary nor did their interest in the day to day struggle require the destruction of capitalism. As a result of the Trade Unions suspicion of Marxist theory, their influence changed the theoretical and practical course of the party.

As a consequence of the SPD's dependence on the Trade Unions, a new type of revisionism became the official position of the party – one that was devoid of theory – and the divisions within the party grew.[32] The internal party dynamic began to change during this period. The debates that took place in the party's Congresses and in the various party journals no longer reflected the debates taking place in the inner circles of the party. The party shifted away from its revolutionary Marxism toward what Robert Michels termed as *oligarchy*.[33] The party expanded and increased its paid full time members of staff in order to deal with the increase in the number of members, the intake of dues, the party press, etc thus paving the way for the career SPD politician. The SPD Executive appointed local and regional secretaries, who were on the party payroll. The party became increasingly centralised and maintained tight control over elected members and representatives of mass organisations. Of course this increasing bureaucratisation had to do with more than the mere fact that the

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[31] In effect, the Mannheim Congress of 1906 negated the 1905 Jena Congress, while at the same time claiming to uphold it. Peter Gay, The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism: Eduard Bernstein's Challenge to Marx (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952) 238.

[32] Peter Gay made a very important point. He asserted that while the Trade Unions were the ally of Revisionism and gave the movement strength, they did not *create* the movement. The leading Revisionists were intellectuals not trade union leaders. "If there had been no Revisionist movement, trade unions would have celebrated their 1906 Mannheim triumph without it." Essentially the Trade Unions were intent on pursuing a specific path and it had nothing to do with theory. Peter Gay, The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism: Eduard Bernstein's Challenge to Marx (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952) 130.

[33] Michels claimed that part of the self-preservation mechanism of large organisations that democracy was impossible. "Democracy has an inherent preference for the authoritarian solution of important questions." Robert Michels, Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy, trans. Edan and Cedar Paul (New York: The Free Press, 1962) 342.

party had paid members of staff.[34] The political and economic conditions in Germany had changed in such a way that allowed these changes to take place within the party. Revolutionary rhetoric was no longer necessary to bind the party together.

From War Credits to a Republic

Having fallen out of favour with the SPD Executive as a result of the mass strike debates and frustrated by the course the party was taking Left and Centre became more and more marginalised until the party was divided into three mutually hostile camps.[35] The Right wing of the party found their champion in the form of Friedrich Ebert.[36] Ebert became General Secretary in 1906 and

[34] Essentially this hierarchically structured, highly disciplined, and centralised party became a model for Lenin and the other members the Second International. From 1904 – 1914 the central executive was enlarged, regional organisations strengthened, and new ones were created. The SPD created party schools in Berlin in 1907 and organised social and cultural events such as excursions and singing groups. These activities increased the party's reputation as a state within a state and made it the envy of the Second International. However unlike Lenin's conception of the "career" revolutionary, Friedrich Ebert's purpose was not revolution, but to build a party that could compete with other mainstream political parties. Pierre Broué, The German Revolution 1917 – 1923, trans. John Archer (Leiden: Brill, 2005) 21; JP Nettl, "The German Social Democratic Party 1890-1914 as a Political Model," Past and Present 30 (1965): 76-77; Carl E. Schorske, German Social Democracy 1905-1917: The Development of the Great Schism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955) 127.

[35] While the divisions within the adult movement increased in the period of 1904 – 1906 youth groups developed spontaneously. Unlike the Communist youth movements, the SPD's youth groups were not officially created by the party as the party executive saw no need to have a separate organisation for the young. Clara Zetkin was the first to recognise the potential of the youth movement. Zetkin developed a theory of youth training and believed that the youth organisations had something to add to German Social Democracy as a whole. Having been marginalised and pushed out of key party positions many on the Left focused their energies in the SPD's party school. Therefore, it is not surprising that the youth of the SPD became the leaders of the German Communist Party, for example Wilhelm Piek and Heinrich Brandler were former students of Rosa Luxemburg. Carl E. Schorske, German Social Democracy 1905-1917: The Development of the Great Schism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955) 97-108.

[36] Friedrich Ebert (1871-1925) was a saddler by trade. Ebert joined the party quite young and had made a name for himself as a talented organiser and administrator. In 1900 he became Bremen's first paid labour secretary. Schorske described Ebert as, "Colorless, cool, determined, industrious, and intensely practical, Ebert had all those characteristics which were to make him, *mutatis mutandis*, the Stalin of Social Democracy." That is to say, Stalin in bureaucratic form. Carl E. Schorske, German Social Democracy 1905-1917: The Development of the Great Schism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955) 124; also see H. Schurer, "The Russian Revolution of 1905 and the Origins of German Communism," Slavonic and East European Review 39 (1961): 469; Pierre Broué, The German Revolution 1917 – 1923, trans. John Archer

Chairman of the SPD in 1913 after Bebel died. It was under Ebert's leadership that the party became an efficient bureaucratic machine. The new party Executive was not theoretical and eventually the party bureaucracy became more interested in maintaining itself than it was in politics. [37] The main function of the party became to increase its electoral winnings and to avoid tactics that would alienate the non-socialist voter, rather than seeking revolution. Indeed in during the 1906-1914 period the SPD dramatically increased its voter capacity and became the largest single party in the Reichstag. The party bureaucracy would demonstrate how mainstream it had become when it backed the Kaiser's bid for war in 1914. Although not all the SPD representatives in the Reichstag agreed with the party's decision to vote in favour of war credits, those that were in opposition agreed not to break party discipline. On the 4th of August 1914 the SPD Reichstag delegation unanimously voted for war credits, including Karl Liebknecht.[38]

(Leiden: Brill, 2005) 24; David McLellan, Marxism After Marx: An Introduction (London: MacMillan Press, LTD, 1979) 53.

[37] The Marxism of the SPD was carried on by the marginalised Left and Centre. Although Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht were the most famous of the Left wing of the SPD, the Left was actually composed of a small group, which included Franz Mehring, Clara Zetkin, Julian Karski (Marchlewski), and Parvus (Helphand). Unlike the Right and the Left, the Centre had no political line of its own and often acted as a buffer between the Right and the Left. None the less, the Centre found its voice in the form of Karl Kautsky and Eduard Bernstein. Ironically Bernstein, who was nearly expelled from the party for his revisionism did not align himself with the revisionist on Right of the party. Unlike the Right, Bernstein defended his views as Marxist and his version of revisionism, flawed though it was, had a Socialist outcome. Evelyn Anderson, Hammer or Anvil: The Story of the German Working-Class Movement (1945; New York: Oriole Editions, 1973) 16.

[38] Although there were anti-war demonstrations (26-30 July 1914) through out Germany, Schorske explained that the primary motivation for the SPD's decision to support the war was fear. Social Democrats feared that if they were to oppose the war effort that the party could regress to the time of Bismarck's Anti-Socialist Laws. In Germany the law of siege insisted that during times of war commanders of military districts were granted unlimited power in dealing with any opposition to state. With this threat in mind, Friedrich Ebert and Otto Braun were sent to Zurich with the party's treasury so that if the party was dissolved and its leaders arrested there would be something left to continue the party. There was also the fear of opposing the war, losing to the Russians, and that such a defeat would lose the party the support of the working class who identified itself with the nation. Schorske pointed out that German patriotism is perhaps over emphasised as the key reason why the SPD voted for war credits. For example, Anderson claimed that the SPD was merely acting as the "faithful mouthpiece of the masses" as

However, this show of party unity was soon to be tested. By mid-September 1914 open opposition began to re-emerge in the party press, most notably in *Vorwärts*. By the end of 1914 the military censors had suspended the paper twice. Karl Liebknecht had resigned himself to vote alone against the second war credits bill on 3 December 1914. As opposition mounted on the 3rd of February 1915 the party changed its policy, which granted the Reichstag deputies "whose conviction would not permit him to participate in the unanimous vote of the deputation…the right to absent himself from the session in which the vote was taken; but this abstention might not have demonstrative character."[39] Effectively this new policy allowed oppositionist the opportunity to protest without breaking party unity. Too a certain extent it worked. On the next two votes (20 March and 20 August 1915) the Centrists abstained, with the exception of Otto Rühle who joined Liebknecht in voting against war credits in March but abstained in August. When the vote was taken again in December 1915, twenty Centrists voted against war credits.

Those who descended from the Executive's decision to support the war were openly condemned – as a warning to the moderate oppositionists – Liebknecht was formally expelled from the Reichstag in January 1916.[40] In

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the working class was nationalistic. While Schorske's "fear" argument can explain the SPD's initial support for the war, it does not explain the SPD's motivation for their continued support for the war and the State. Although the SPD's support of the war warrants further discussion, it remains outside of the scope of this thesis. Carl E. Schorske, German Social Democracy 1905-1917: The Development of the Great Schism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955) 283-291; Evelyn Anderson, Hammer or Anvil: The Story of the German Working-Class Movement (1945; New York: Oriole Editions, 1973) 19-20, 22-26; Helga Grebing, The History of the German Labour Movement: A Survey, trans. Edith Körner (Leamington Spa: Berg Publishers, Ltd., 1985) 92-93.

[39] As quoted from Prager in Carl E. Schorske, German Social Democracy 1905-1917: The Development of the Great Schism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955) 301.

[40] Karl Liebknecht was "called up" on 7 February 1915. In May 1915 he produced the leaflet which advanced the "enemy is at home." Liebknecht had not been taken seriously amongst his colleagues in the SPD Executive. He was regarded as a nuisance and not quite fit to fill his father's great shoes. However, his anti-war campaigning gained him support and notoriety within the working class.

March 1916 when the Left and the Centre delegates voted against war credits for the second time, the majority expelled them from the Reichstag delegation and purged the party press.[41] The group around Rosa Luxemburg attempted to gather oppositional support against the party's policies.[42] From its birth German Social Democracy housed many different currents. At times these currents were completely opposed to the decisions of the SPD Executive. Before the war, this type of opposition was merely seen as a nuisance. However, after the declaration of war, this type of opposition was seen as a clear threat.

By 1916 support for war had declined as the food situation became critical in what became known as the "turnip winter" of 1916 – 1917.[43] With the increase in opposition to the war the government tightened its repression. A pre-censorship of socialist press was introduced, at times closed membership SPD meetings were banned, and opposition leaders were arrested. Rosa Luxemburg, Franz Mehring (who was over seventy), Käthe Duncker, and many others were placed under "military protective custody." Essentially this meant that they were jailed without the hope of a trial. Karl Liebknecht was arrested and sentenced to two years in prison for "treasonable utterances on May Day" in June 1916. The government's clear violation of civil liberties only strengthened

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[41] Carl E. Schorske, German Social Democracy 1905-1917: The Development of the Great Schism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955) 308-311.

[42] By the beginning of 1916 the group around Rosa Luxemburg had become known as the "Spartacists." The official name of the group was *Spartakusbund* (Spartacus League) named after Spartacus, leader of the largest slave rebellion during the Roman Empire. Herman Weber, Die Waldung des deutschen Kommunismus: Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimarer Republik, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1969) 1: 24; Eric D. Weitz, Creating German Communism, 1890- 1990: From Popular Protests to Socialist State (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997) 79.

[43] Schorske placed the "turnip winter" during the winter of 1916-1917, while Broué placed it during the winter of 1915-1916. Carl E. Schorske, German Social Democracy 1905-1917: The Development of the Great Schism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955) 308; Pierre Broué, The German Revolution 1917 – 1923, trans. John Archer (Leiden: Brill, 2005) 59.

the oppositions resolve and gained them sympathy. Liebknecht's arrest aroused demonstrations and strikes all over Germany. In Berlin alone 55,000 workers from a munitions factory struck on June 28 – the day that Liebknecht appeared in court. The government attempted to increase its control over society by arresting the Left leaders – Karski was arrested on June 28 and Ernst Meyer was arrested on August 3. The SPD's continued support for the war and the state merely exposed the contradictions within the party.

As opposition within the party mounted, the Centrists called a conference in January 1917, which included the Spartacists and the Left Centrists. At this point neither the Spartacists nor the Left Centre were advocating a split with the party. The purpose of the conference was to discuss methods of protecting the oppositional minority against the repressive policies of the majority. However, they were unable to come to a consensus on what action to actually take. The Spartacists purposed the withholding of dues, which was rejected by the Left Centrists. Unable to control the opposition and impose party discipline, the majority Socialists seized the opportunity to rid itself of the opposition. On January 16, 1917 the party council declared that by holding a separate conference the opposition had separated itself from the party and SPD Executive expelled the opposition. As a result of the expulsion the oppositionists held a conference in Gotha and established the Independent Social Democratic Party (USPD) in April 1917.[44]

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[44] The new party included old rivals – Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht, Hugo Hasse, Georg Ledebour, Karl Kautsky, Rudolf Hilferding, and Eduard Bernstein. The negotiations between the pacifist Centre and the revolutionary Left resulted in the re-adoption of the Erfurt Programme. This left the Spartacists dissatisfied as they believed the *Erfurt Programme* to be outdated by the current events. While the new party emerged against the State and the war, the unity was fragmented from the start. There were many on the left (including the radical groups in Bremen, Hamburg, Hanover, and Rüstringen) who advocated a split with the Centre. In reality the Spartacists group was too small and many of its supporters were in jail. They reluctantly joined the USPD out of fear of degenerating into a sect. Carl E. Schorske, German

1917 marked an incredible turning point as support for the war waned. Revolution erupted in Russia in February 1917 and Lenin, with the support of the Germans, embarked on his journey back to Russia in April. In the months that followed the February Revolution strikes and demonstrations began to take place in Germany and once again like their Russian counterparts, the demonstrations were about food shortages. Revolutionary delegates decided to take advantage of the Russian events and planned to purpose a motion in favour of a strike for better food at the metal workers' union meeting in Berlin on April 15, 1917. However, the plot was discovered by union officials and Richard Müller – the secret organiser of the revolutionary metal workers – was secretly arrested on April 13, 1917. By April 12 strikes for better food had begun in Leipzig. On April 15, 1917 the government announced a reduction in bread rations from 1,350g to 450g and the delegates at the metal workers' union meeting decided to take action. Strikes took place in Berlin and Leipzig. By April 17, 1917 the strikes were called off and Müller's release had been negotiated. The reputation of the USPD had been inflated for the role they played during the strikes.

While the April demonstrations passed they were not the last. In January 1918 USPD deputies called for a three day strike. A strike Action Committee was elected and the Spartacists suggested extending an invitation to the SPD. On January 28, 1918 workers once again took to the streets, which resulted in clashes with police. By January 30 *Vorwärts* had been banned. By February 1 the military High Command threatened to impose martial law if strikers did not

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Social Democracy 1905-1917: The Development of the Great Schism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955) 312-313; Pierre Broué, The German Revolution 1917 – 1923, trans. John Archer (Leiden: Brill, 2005) 78-79; Julius Braunthal, History of the International: 1864 – 1914, 2 vols. (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons LTD, 1966) 2: 59-60.

return to work. The SPD insisted that workers comply. At this point the strikers remained isolated and there were no signs of the soldiers defecting to the side of the workers as they had done in Russia. The Action Committee called for an end to the strikes and by February 3, 1918 the workers resumed work. While the SPD took great pains to quell the hopes inspired by the Bolshevik victory, the workers paid no attention popularising the Russian slogan of "Workers' and Soldiers' Councils."[45]

By the August 1918 the German leaders' hope for victory began to fade and in mid-August the Kaiser decided to sue for peace. Defeats on both the Western and Eastern Fronts reawakened the possibility of revolution in Germany. By October 1918 sailors on the High Sea Fleet refused to sail against the British Fleet. They claimed the war was lost and they saw no point in dying for a lost cause. In an effort to quell the growth of radicalism the government freed hundreds of activists, including Karl Liebknecht whose imprisonment had granted him martyr status.[46] On October 26, 1918 demonstrations took place in Hamburg. While the USPD and Spartacists attempted to organise a date for the insurrection, rioting sailors captured Kiel and along with the dock workers formed Workers' and Soldiers' Councils on November 4, 1918. The Kiel mutiny set off a revolutionary wave all over Germany and Workers' and Soldiers' Councils were established. Since October 23, 1918 SPD ministers in

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[45] In retaliation for the strikes the government cancelled the "special exemptions" of many workers who had participated in the strikes. 50,000 Berlin workers – approximately 10 per cent of the strikers – were called up in the armed forces. Müller, who was regarded as one of the ring leaders, was one of the first to be sent. The police also set out to arrest revolutionaries such as Jogiches. As a result the government felt free to launch its assault on the Eastern Front. Pierre Broué, The German Revolution 1917 – 1923, trans. John Archer (Leiden: Brill, 2005) 110.

[46] According to Frölich the German government granted amnesty for political prisoners on October 20. This did not apply to Rosa Luxemburg because she was serving a prison sentence. Luxemburg was released from prison on November 9, 1918. Paul Frölich, Rosa Luxemburg: Her Life and Work, trans. Edward Fitzgerald (1940; New York: Howard Fertig, 1969) 286.

the government had called for the Kaiser to abdicate. However, this insistence on the Kaiser's abdication had nothing to do with their support for the revolution, but rather they hoped to circumvent the revolution. They sought to "sacrifice the Kaiser to save the country" from going down the same road as the Russians.[47] The Kaiser finally surrendered to the SPD leaders demands and abdicated on November 9, 1918. By then it was too late to stop the revolution, but not too late to change its course.

In the previous years the SPD leaders had done their utmost to prevent the revolution from developing. Once it became clear that they could not stop it they made sure that they did not appear to be standing in its way and even began signing their leaflets with the words "workers' councils," "soldiers' councils," and "people's committees." While Liebknecht, from the roof of a car at the Imperial Palace, declared a German Socialist Republic, Philip Scheidmann, from the balcony of the Reichstag, declared a German Republic, much to Ebert's resentment. Although the USPD leaders and the Spartacists had been the instrumental driving force in the revolution, they were disorganised and too fragmented to really control its direction. The SPD leaders were trained bureaucrats. They had little trouble in regaining their footing and coming out of the German Revolution – something which they had spent years trying to prevent – as its champion. In the end the USPD and the majority SPD formed a government and Ebert was declared Chancellor of the Reich. The Spartacists refused to take part in what they perceived to be a non-democratic government. In any event the dual government was short lived and by the end of December 1918 the USPD ministers resigned from the government. Essentially the end of

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[47] As quoted by Kolb in Pierre Broué, The German Revolution 1917 – 1923, trans. John Archer (Leiden: Brill, 2005) 144.

Imperial Germany and the beginning of the German Republic is where the story of the German Communist Party begins.

Chapter Two: The Theoretical Foundations of German Communism – The Theories of Rosa Luxemburg

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the theoretical contribution that Rosa Luxemburg made to the German Socialist movement. During her short life Luxemburg was a key figure in key theoretical debates in German Social Democracy. Rosa Luxemburg's political views were deeply entrenched in Marxist orthodoxy. After her death in 1919 her ideas lived on through her followers and she remained the most influential figure in the German Communist movement. As a result of her resilience in the Communist movement the Stalinised Comintern made many attempts to distort her theories.[48] This chapter will argue that Luxemburg was consistent in her political thought and it was her consistent devotion to the revolutionary movement that posed a threat to the changing SPD and later to the Comintern.

The first section of this chapter – Rosa Luxemburg as a Theorist – will discuss the academic debates surrounding Luxemburg as a theorist. Her writing

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[48] Herman Weber is probably still the foremost expert on German Communism. In his two volume book, Weber recounted Rosa Luxemburg's democratic nature. Weber was obviously sympathetic to Luxemburg and her constant desire to maintain democracy and a mass base party. Eric Weitz has written extensively (in English) on the German Communist Party. Although he correctly criticised others for their "uncritical [and] at times hagiographical" writing he spent little time actually delving deeply into her theories and even claimed that her writings were not theoretical. Weitz's post-structuralist argument is interesting – he attacked Luxemburg's language and essentially held her writings responsible for the post-war Stalinised Germany. He focused on her word usage and what he claimed to be inconsistencies in her writing rather than her theories. Weitz alleged that Luxemburg's powerful and passionate language paved the foundation for the repressive regimes of the GDR. JP Nettl and Paul Frölich's insightful biographies gave brilliant accounts of her life. Frölich's book still remains an important starting point for anyone interested in Rosa Luxemburg. However, it can be frustrating at times, as he did not always reference his quotes. Those that make references to her writing generally focus on "The Accumulation of Capital" or "Critique of the Russian Revolution." Herman Weber, Die Waldung des deutschen Kommunismus: Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimarer Republik, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1969); Eric D. Weitz, " 'Rosa Luxemburg Belongs to Us!' German Communism and the Luxemburg Legacy," Central European History 27.1 (1994): 30; JP Nettl, Rosa Luxemburg, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1966); Paul Frölich, Rosa Luxemburg: Her Life and Work, trans. Edward Fitzgerald (1940; New York: Howard Fertig, 1969); Georg Lukács, History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics (London: Merlin Press, 1971).

has been criticised for not being theoretical enough. Since Luxemburg's theories were extremely influential in the German Communist movement it seems important to include these discussions in this thesis.

The second section of this chapter – Rosa Luxemburg's Contribution to German Socialism – will discuss the role that Luxemburg played in the SPD. The Revisionist debates offered Luxemburg her first real chance to participate in a major debate in the SPD. The debate afforded Luxemburg the opportunity to make a name for herself and she was instrumental in the temporary defeat of the revisionists. Equally important was her role in the Mass Strike debate following the Russian Revolution of 1905. Luxemburg was adamant that the Russian Revolution of 1905 had lessons to teach the German movement. This was the first time that the world had witnessed a general strike used to bring a government to its knees and establish workers' councils in factories. Luxemburg believed this powerful weapon could be utilised in Germany, but the bureaucratised SPD leadership was no longer interested in revolutionary tactics. Although the mass strike debate was a sobering wake up call for Rosa Luxemburg, it is clear from her later writing that she remained devoted to the notion of mass action as the means to a successful revolution.

The third section – Polemics with Lenin – will discuss Luxemburg's role in international debates such as the National Question, Imperialism, and Political Organisation. Although, it was fashionable at the time for Social Democrats to be in favour of an independent Poland, Rosa Luxemburg sternly disagreed with this position. She believed that giving into nationalism would incur alliances with the bourgeois parties, who, once their desires for an independent Poland were fulfilled, would not only abandon the working class but also seek to

oppress them. Luxemburg firmly rejected national self-determination with the exception of cases where the oppressor country was keeping the locals backward as method of control. As the economic and political situation in Germany changed the debates over the National Question were quickly superseded by the discussion over Imperialism.

The end of the First World War and the Bolshevik victory in Russia changed the nature of the debates. Upon being released from prison Luxemburg set forth to create a revolutionary party in Germany. Although Luxemburg never articulated a clear blue print of party organisation, it is quite clear that she had an idea of what type a party she thought Spartakusbund should become. Luxemburg hoped to build a mass base party similar to the SPD but more democratic and less bureaucratic. Her untimely death at the hands of the *Freikorps* prevented this from becoming a reality.

I. Luxemburg as a Theorist

As an Orthodox Marxist Rosa Luxemburg adhered to Marx's materialist dialectical methods and like the Marxist of her time she did not blindly worship or hold his writings as sacred. She, as other Marxists such as Lenin, sought to unite theory and practice for the purpose of revolution. According to Robert Looker she exemplified the "unity of revolutionary theory and practice which lies at the heart of Marxist materialism."[49] But others were not so generous about her theoretical writing. JP Nettl, in his two volume biography of Rosa Luxemburg, accused her of being no more than a political critic. Whereas, Eric Weitz, saw her flaws entrenched in the "insufficiencies of Marxian socialist

[49] Rosa Luxemburg, Selected Political Writings, ed. Robert Looker (London: Jonathan Cape, 1972) 13.

tradition" and her devotion to mass activism. This, according to Weitz, resulted in her devoting little attention to "the institutional grounding of a democratic-socialist polity."[50] The flaw does not lie with these "insufficiencies of Marxism" that Weitz referred to, but rather with the reading of the subject. Weitz and Nettl both have read Luxemburg's writing with the eyes of a mid-20th century academics in a world where democratic institutions in the Western world are commonplace.[51] In doing so they failed to truly grasp the context of her works. As a consequence of their search for modern democratic institutions Weitz and Nettl have failed to understand the purpose of Marxist revolutionary theory. This is not an effort to absolve Luxemburg of any criticism, her writings do possess flaws and as Weitz accurately pointed out, many are reluctant to criticise her work, but rather this is an attempt to understand the source of the KPD's birth.

Nettl claimed that Rosa Luxemburg was "a critic, albeit profound and acute, rather than a political theorist.... Luxemburg was neither nor [did she] pretend to be a profound political thinker."[52] He also claimed that her writings were tactical rather than analytical. Nettl was correct in that Luxemburg had no time for intellectuals and she did not aspire to be categorised as one. But his

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[50] Eric D. Weitz, " 'Rosa Luxemburg Belongs to Us!' German Communism and the Luxemburg Legacy," Central European History 27.1 (1994): 29.

[51] Interestingly, Geoff Eley, in his book review of Norman Geras' The Legacy of Rosa Luxemburg, pointed out that one of Geras' main flaws in his appraisal of Luxemburg's works was that "he fails to consider the material setting – the dynamics of Wilhelmine capitalism, the developing structure of the German working class, the larger field of class relations, the character of the Imperial state, the political formation of the SPD – in which Luxemburg's ideas were formed, and which helps explain both the strengths and weaknesses of her thought." This appears to be a common trait in the case of criticism of Luxemburg's works. The historical setting can not be detached from any analysis of her writing. Groups or individuals may attempt to adapt her writing for modern for modern political purposes, as in the case of the use of Luxemburg as a symbol in East Germany, but such use leans more towards propaganda rather than theoretical analysis, in which case the context of the analysis is different. Geoff Eley, "The Legacy of Rosa Luxemburg," Critique 12 (1979-1980): 148; Norman Geras, The Legacy of Rosa Luxemburg, (London: NLB, 1976).

[52] JP Nettl, Rosa Luxemburg, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1966) 2: 493, 546.

criticism of Luxemburg's writing revolved mainly around the lack of "systems" in Luxemburg's writings. As a journalist she commented on the political questions of the day rather than systematically examining the various aspects of politics that she found interesting.[53] Much of Luxemburg's work was commissioned, therefore, some lacked the impassioned ferocity that others possessed. This also serves to explain why some were more analytical than others.

As a Marxist Luxemburg did not see her role in the party as someone who built a framework for others to try to fit into. The party needed to be flexible enough to deal with a change in the revolutionary tide. There is no evidence to suggest that she had any desire to develop systems or methods outside of those that already existed within Marxism. She analysed the societal setting of the world around her and used Marx's methods to try inspire change in the world. She criticised others who became too comfortable in their environment and no longer fought for change. But this did not make her any less theoretical. Central to Luxemburg's writing was a desire to fuse analysis with revolutionary commitment.[54] Nettl's claim that Luxemburg's works were more tactical than analytical demonstrated his desires for "systems." His search for "systems" prevented him from seeing that the opposite was actually true. One of Luxemburg's greatest flaws was her lack of revolutionary tactics. Her writing analysed and criticised the heated political questions of the day but offered no

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[53] Looker's response to this lack of systemisation was contextual. "Like all genuine Marxists, Luxemburg's work is rooted in the determinate conditions of her arena of struggle, and unlike many of them, her responses to that struggle possess a sense of immediacy and grasp of detail which place very considerable demands on the historical knowledge of the reader. Indeed the unwary reader might be excused for assuming that this very detail must limit their relevance to their specific subject matter, and for seeing them as examples of the art of journalism...rather than contributions to Marxist theory." Rosa Luxemburg, Selected Political Writings, ed. Robert Looker (London: Jonathan Cape, 1972) 12-13.

[54] Rosa Luxemburg, Selected Political Writings, ed. Robert Looker (London: Jonathan Cape, 1972) 13.

systematic method of change. But this problem was not limited to the writings of Rosa Luxemburg. This problem has plagued the Left since the time of Marx.

Let us examine Weitz's argument further. His argument followed two basic points of attack – her language and her lack of political theory, which he refered to as "the politics of everyday life."[55] He accused her of failing to describe what kind of relationship would exist between Civil Society and the State once the Socialist revolution took place. He claimed her democratic ideals were undermined by her blind faith in Socialism. I would like to argue that Weitz failed to understand Luxemburg as a Marxist.

Firstly, Weitz was correct to point out that Rosa Luxemburg's writings lacked any discussion or even any acknowledgement of the relationship between Civil Society and the State before or after the revolution.[56] She never used the term Civil Society to discuss the repressive nature of the State. She inevitably used Marxist terms such as proletariat, workers, working class, bourgeoisie, etc to describe the participants in society. Although she had a clear understanding of Social Science categorisations (she possessed a Doctorate in

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[55] Eric D. Weitz, " 'Rosa Luxemburg Belongs to Us!' German Communism and the Luxemburg Legacy," Central European History 27.1 (1994): 44.

[56] One must point out that Weitz's desire for a discussion of Civil Society is historically out of context in Wilhelmine Germany. Aristotle originally developed Civil Society as a democratic concept. It was later taken up by Rousseau but later fell out of use. Hegel and Marx did use the term, but they used it interchangeably with "bourgeois society." It meant something entirely different than it does today. We must remember that dialogue between public and private was obsolete. European Empires were ruled by sovereigns, who believed they were chosen by God, and had no desire or intention of sharing power. Julius Braunthal produced a fantastic quote by Wilhelm II at Könisberg in August 1910 where he referred to his Grandfather's coronation, "my grandfather placed the crown of Prussia on his head by his own right...it had been given [to] him solely by the grace of God, and not by parliaments, popular assemblies or decrees of the people...he considered himself to be the chosen instrument of heaven.... Considering myself to be the instrument of Him, without regard to any opinions or ideas, I proceed on my way...." Therefore the relationship between Civil Society and the state was not a topic of discussion particularly amongst socialists. Oppositionalists generally favoured the overthrow of the monarchy and the formation of liberal democracies. Discussions of Civil Society did not re-emerge until the 1970s and 1980s as anti-State politics in Eastern Europe. Julius Braunthal, History of the International: 1864 – 1914, 2 vols. (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons LTD, 1966) 1: 267.

Political Science from the University of Zurich), she made no reference to such terminology in her writing. The use of the term C*ivil Society* inherently implies that one acknowledges a relationship between the participants in society (the public sphere) and the State (the private sphere).[57] This acknowledgement also implies that cooperation is possible. Such an assumption is contrary to the writings of Marx and the Marxist of this period. It is here that Weitz failed in his understanding of Luxemburg's writing as a Marxist. Marx and the Marxist did not divide social and political relationships into the categories of society and the state but rather the social division was derived from the productive system (which inevitably affected social relationships). Marx divided society into the owners of the means of production (bourgeoisie) - those who influenced and ruled the State and workers (proletariat) - those who were subject and repressed by those who ruled. This relationship was contradictory and hostile henceforth, any relationship was impossible. Attempts at cooperation would inevitably end in greater repression of the proletariat. Therefore, it would be contradictory for Luxemburg as a Marxist to "anchor [herself] in democratic institutions," as Weitz suggested, as well as impossible.[58] Yet, Luxemburg, indeed, anchored herself in democracy. But her democracy had nothing to do with "institutions." She was not fighting for the establishment of a modern liberal democracy, but rather she fought for the overthrow of the State in its entirety. For Luxemburg, a democratic society was one in which all members of society participate in the

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[57] Most writers of Civil Society accept the role of the State as a legitimate part democratic society. Even the radicals such as Havel, who believe that State power is inherently corrupt, have reluctantly conceded to its role. The Sociological view is probably most widely accepted. It is very clearly defined by Frentel-Zagorska as "a structure of self-organisation of society, located outside, though not disconnected from, the institutional framework of the state." Jania Frentzel-Zagorska, "Civil Society in Poland and Hungary," Soviet Studies 42.1 (1990): 759.

[58] Eric D. Weitz, " 'Rosa Luxemburg Belongs to Us!' German Communism and the Luxemburg Legacy," Central European History 27.1 (1994): 44.

decision making process. The desire for the establishment of "democratic institutions" automatically contradicted Luxemburg's views.

Secondly, Weitz attacked Luxemburg's language. Weitz's argument stemmed from a post-structuralist point of view. He claimed that the "very complexity and instability of her ideas and language made their meanings extremely mobile and open to a wide range of interpretations."[59] Weitz's argument did not leave any room for misreading and misinterpretation on the readers' part. In the case of Rosa Luxemburg, her word usage was overpoweringly strong. Her speeches and articles generally took the form of debates. Taken out of this context and carefully manipulated, her position may have appeared polarised and exclusive. But Rosa Luxemburg was not against open debate or opposing voices. Most of her political career had been spent as an oppositional voice from her time in the revolutionary socialist party "Proletariat" in Poland, to her formation of the Social Democratic Party of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania (SDKPiL) in opposition to the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) in Zurich, to her organisation of Spartacus in opposition of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) in Germany. The nature of debates is the development of a concrete argument. Essentially the strongest argument wins. Taken out of context Rosa Luxemburg's, or anyone's writing, can be manipulated and used for purposes contrary to the desires of the author. Weitz's post-structuralist argument was a moral time bomb. We can not hold Luxemburg responsible for the Stalinist's distortion of her writing no more than we can hold Nietzsche responsible for the crimes of Hitler.

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[59] Eric D. Weitz, " 'Rosa Luxemburg Belongs to Us!' German Communism and the Luxemburg Legacy," Central European History 27.1 (1994): 31, 35.

II. Rosa Luxemburg's Contribution to the Debates within the SPD

Rosa Luxemburg arrived in Germany in 1898 in order to actively participate in the German Social Democratic Party.[60] She very quickly became a leading figure inside the party and the Second International. Throughout her life she remained dedicated to the revolutionary role that Marxist theory played in the overthrow of the capitalist system. Rosa Luxemburg was committed to Marxism as a tool in the revolutionary struggle. Paul Frölich described Luxemburg's theoretical and political method as non-dogmatic and used empirical evidence to support her arguments.

> "Like Marx, she regarded history as a process in which class-forces struggled with each other for their interests as they developed out of objectively given economic conditions. For her Marxism was not a theoretical system solving all questions once and for all, but a method of examining the process of economic change at each new stage of its development, with all its effects on the interests, ideas, aims, and political activities of each group in society."[61]

This was clearly demonstrated throughout her writings. Luxemburg's role in the Revisionist and Mass Strike debates demonstrated, more than in her other writings, the importance of the function of theory and practice within the party.

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[60] Rosa Luxemburg was smuggled out of Poland and joined the Polish émigré group in Switzerland. Upon completion of her university studies in Zurich in the spring of 1897, Rosa Luxemburg decided to move to Germany to work with the SPD. In order to solve her citizenship problem she married a family friend, Gustav Lubeck, which granted her German citizenship for life, and thereby saving her from deportation. (The two separated outside the registry office.) She arrived in Berlin in the spring of 1898, in time to join the Revisionist debate. Incidentally, this period was the only time that Rosa Luxemburg was in good graces of August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht.

[61] Paul Frölich, Rosa Luxemburg: Her Life and Work, trans. Edward Fitzgerald (1940; New York: Howard Fertig, Inc., 1969) 64-65.

This section will discuss Rosa Luxemburg's role in defending Marxism against the Revisionist and how she believed revolution could be spread through the use of the Mass Strike.

Revisionism

"*The further development and elaboration of Marxist doctrine must begin with criticism of it.*"[62]

The non-revolutionary character of German Social Democracy had always been a feature in the party in one form or another. Initially these tendencies within the party did not appear threatening. It was not until Eduard Bernstein, albeit not his intention, offered a theory for the changes that were occurring in the party. Eduard Bernstein had written a series of articles from 1896 – 1898[63] in *Neue Zeit* on the "Problems of Socialism."[64] Eduard Bernstein had been close to Engels until his death in 1895 and became one of the literary executors of Engels' estate. In reality Bernstein was surprised that that his writing erupted into controversy. Until his death Bernstein defended himself against

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[62] Eduard Bernstein, Preconditions of Socialism, ed. Henry Tudor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 28.

[63] Colletti and Tudor place the first date of publication as 1896 (a year after Engels' death). Braunthal and Oelßner placed the first year of publication as 1897. Lucio Colletti, From Rousseau to Lenin: Studies in Ideology and Society (London: NLB, 1972) 48; Eduard Bernstein, Preconditions of Socialism, ed. Henry Tudor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) xxi; Julius Braunthal, History of the International: 1864 – 1914, 2 vols. (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons LTD, 1966) 1: 264; Fred Oelßner, Rosa Luxemburg: Eine Kritische Biographische Skizze (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1952) 24.

[64] The series of articles originally appeared as "Probleme des Sozialismus" which were reprinted almost in full as "Zur Geschichte und Theorie des Sozialismus." The first edition of the book appeared in March 1899, as Die Voraussetzungen des Sozialismus und die Aufgaben der Sozialdemokratie - The Presuppositions of Socialism and the Tasks of Social Democracy. (Depending on the translator *Voraussetzung* may appear as *precondition*, *premise*, or *presupposition*.) According to Tudor the English translation was published in 1909 under the title Evolutionary Socialism. Peter Gay, The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism: Eduard Bernstein's Challenge to Marx (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952) 61, 65; Eduard Bernstein, Preconditions of Socialism, ed. Henry Tudor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) xi.

accusations that he ceased to be a Marxist.[65] Bernstein believed that he was adding to the Marxist debates within the party and that what he was writing merely reflected the reality of the party. [66] The task of defending the party's position fell on the SPD's new arrival – Rosa Luxemburg. Although her name was all ready known in the SPD for her publications in Western Europe on the Polish situation, it was the Revisionist controversy that made her famous as a Marxist theoretician. It was the springboard that launched Rosa Luxemburg's career within the SPD. This in itself gives us insight to how she viewed and developed her Marxist theory. We can see the consistency in her thought.

First, Bernstein's theory of Evolutionary Socialism, albeit poorly executed, brought into the open a growing current within German Social Democracy.[67] Bernstein was correct to point out that certain trends had developed within German Social Democracy, which did not reflect its rhetoric. Bernstein claimed,

> "The position nowadays is that one can probe *everything* out of Marx and Engels.... The duty of their disciples consists in

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[65] According to Gay the transition to Revisionism was a difficult one for Bernstein and perhaps this was the reason why he clung to the unrealistic insistence that Revisionism was still Marxism. The struggle affected him deeply. In 1898 Eleanor Marx wrote to Kautsky complaining that Bernstein had become irritable. She expressed concern that he was allowing himself to be used by the Fabians as a tool in their anti-Marxist campaign. Peter Gay, The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism: Eduard Bernstein's Challenge to Marx (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952) 60.

[66] According to Nettl, Bernstein's articles were "good natured construction" that used the tools, materials, and acknowledged skills of Marx. Nettl suggested that Bernstein's intentions were not to abandon Marx but to adapt Marx's writings to suite what he perceived as changes in modern society. JP Nettl, Rosa Luxemburg 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1966) 1: 204, 205.

[67] According to Mary Alice Waters Karl Kautsky – who was the editor of *Neue Zeit* – thought highly of the articles and accepted them for publication. Mary Alice Waters, ed. Rosa Luxemburg Speaks (New York: Pathfinder Press, Inc. 1970) 33.

> this [the removal of contradictions from their works], and not in the perpetually repeating the words of the masters."[68]

Indeed dogmatic elements had begun to appear in the Marxist movement and that it was the duty of Marx and Engels' followers to develop and pursue debates within the movement.

Second, Bernstein directed his criticism at Marx and German Social Democracy, in particular, the Erfurt Programme in which he ironically helped to write. Bernstein argued that capitalism was more enduring than Marx had expected and he denied the notion that the collapse of the bourgeois economy was expected shortly. In fact the capitalist class had increased and did not appear in decline as Marx had predicted in the Communist Manifesto. The working class were better off than they had ever been and were increasing in strength.

> "The intensification of social relations has not in fact occurred as the *Manifesto* depicts it. It is not only useless but extremely foolish to conceal this fact from ourselves. The number of property owners has grown, not diminished. The enormous increase in social wealth has been accompanied not by a fall in the number of capitalist magnates but by an increase in the number of capitalists of all grades. The middle classes are changing in character, but they are not disappearing from the social spectrum."[69]

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[68] Eduard Bernstein, Preconditions of Socialism, ed. Henry Tudor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 28.

[69] Eduard Bernstein, Preconditions of Socialism, ed. Henry Tudor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 2, 77.

Bernstein's basis for this attack was the Marxist "materialist conception of history." He accused the materialists of being "Calvinists without God" for their belief in a predestined collapse of the capitalist system.[70] Bernstein rejected Marx's notion of the crisis in the capitalist system as an abstraction reminiscent of Hegelian philosophy. [71] The revolution, whose rhetoric was abundant in SPD propaganda, was not only unnecessary but impossible.

Third, Bernstein concluded that tactics must be adapted to suite this new assumption. He accused the Social Democratic Party of no longer being a revolutionary party but rather a "democratic socialist party of reform."[72] He insisted that rhetoric of the German Social Democratic party was outdated.

> "Is there any sense…in maintaining the phrase 'dictatorship of the proletariat' at a time when representatives of Social Democracy have in practice placed themselves…in the arena of parliamentary work…which [is] inconsistent with dictatorship. The phrase is nowadays out of date…. All the practical activity of Social Democracy is aimed at creating the circumstances and conditions which will enable and ensure the transition of the modern social order to a higher one – without convulsive upheavals. [D]ictatorship belongs to a

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[70] Eduard Bernstein, Preconditions of Socialism, ed. Henry Tudor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 13.

[71] Bernstein denied actually coming up with the catchphrase - "The final goal of socialism is nothing to me, the movement is everything." He later insisted that his point about the final goal was, "[P]reconceived theories about the outcome of the movement which go beyond a generally conceived goal, and which determine the fundamental direction and character of the movement, will always be forced into utopianism and will…stand in the way of the real theoretical and practical progress of the movement, obstructing and constricting it." Bernstein was convinced that reformism would rescue the party from plunging into utopianism. Something that Marx himself was adamantly against. Eduard Bernstein, Preconditions of Socialism, ed. Henry Tudor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 190, 192; JP Nettl, Rosa Luxemburg, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1966) 1: 152.

[72] Eduard Bernstein, Preconditions of Socialism, ed. Henry Tudor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 186.

> lower civilisation…it can only be regarded as a retrograde step, as political atavism…."[73]

The SPD's parliamentary success terminated their commitment as solely participating in the government for the purposes of agitation.[74] Bernstein insisted that the party should admit this and focus on gaining power through parliamentary means as the time for armed insurrection had passed, the party should concentrate on the development of Trade Unions and cooperatives.

Bernstein drew on Engels as proof and based this presumption on Marx's The Class Struggle in France for which Engels wrote the introduction for the reprint in March 1895. Engels reflected on the revolutions of 1848 in which both Engels and Marx (as well as other socialist) believed would erupt into a Socialist Revolution. He admitted that they had miscalculated the economic development of the continent and its ripeness to overthrow capitalism. Hindsight had shown them that the " 'social' revolution of 1848 had concentrated the real power in the hands of the big bourgeoisie." Engels also pointed out that the nature of the standing army had changed. The methods used in 1848 to bring the continents monarchies to their knees were no longer viable as demonstrated by the bloodbath of 1871 in Paris. Engels mentioned the

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[73] Eduard Bernstein, Preconditions of Socialism, ed. Henry Tudor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 145-146.

[74] To a certain extent Gay was correct to point out that Bernstein "merely told an obvious truth." However, Bernstein's argument was grossly incorrect. It is ironic that the SPD voted overwhelmingly against Bernstein at the 1904 Amsterdam Conference. By 1903 the SPD had won eighty-one seats in the Reichstag. By 1914 the Revisionist controversy ceased to have any importance as Marxist orthodoxy seemed to vanish overnight when the SPD voted for war credits at the onset of WWI. But even prior to the 1914 Luxemburg had become frustrated with the SPD's lack of action during the 1905 uprisings. The leadership's revolutionary incapacity was further exasperated during the Revolution of 1918 and Friedrich Ebert's reluctance to not only to establish a "bourgeois" republic but to take the revolution further – to socialism. Peter Gay, The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism: Eduard Bernstein's Challenge to Marx (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952) 228-230; Carl Schorske, German Social Democracy 1905 – 1917: The Development of the Great Schism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955) 23.

irony that success was being won by legal means – through parliamentary participation, which he appeared to encourage. But nowhere did Engels state that parliamentary means should be the sole means of revolutionary conduct. Engels was fully aware that universal suffrage did not exist and that the monarchical governments of the continent would never surrender power threw legal methods.[75]

August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht, the "Fathers of Social Democracy" vehemently disagreed with Bernstein and strongly insisted that the role of the SPD within the parliament was limited to agitation.[76] But when the articles first began appearing the party leadership did not take the controversy seriously. Eduard Bernstein, after all, was a friend of the entire SPD leadership – August Bebel, Wilhelm Liebknecht, and Ignaz Auer, to name but a few.[77] He had been persecuted under Bismarck's anti-socialist laws and was forced to live in

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[75] Frölich suggested that there was something wrong with the introduction. He mentioned Engels' protests and submission. He alluded to the notion that the SPD executive tampered with original manuscript. Schurer suggested that the SPD Executive "bowdlerised" Engels' text and made him appear an advocate of peaceful progress by parliamentary means alone. This "bowdlerised text" became the "political testament" of Engels and remained unchallenged for many years at least until the Russian Revolution of 1905. Schurer also insisted that in 1909 Karl Kautsky published documents in *Neue Zeit* which proved that Engels' 1895 preface had been tampered with and that a few months before his death Engels had protested against this. David McLellan, ed. Marxism: Essential Writings (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) 72-73; Paul Frölich, Rosa Luxemburg: Her Life and Work, trans. Edward Fitzgerald (1940; New York: Howard Fertig, 1969) 61-62; Helga Grebing The History of the German Labour Movement: A Survey, trans. Edith Körner (Leamington Spa: Berg Publishers, 1985) 76; H. Schurer, "The Russian Revolution of 1905 and the Origins of German Communism," Slavonic and East European Review, 39 (1961): 460, 467.

[76] Peter Gay, The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism: Eduard Bernstein's Challenge to Marx (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952) 101.

[77] One must bear in mind that the Anti-Socialist Laws (1878 – 1890) remained fresh in the memories of many SPD leaders. The lifting of the law did not guarantee democratic freedom and the government quite often interfered with the SPD's meetings. The law had been lifted for five years but this did not prevent Wilhelm Liebknecht from being imprisoned after a speech following a party congress in 1895. In 1900 the International Socialist Congress was not held in Germany due to the lack of freedom of speech. Although the SPD was the largest party in the Second International, the German party was still very weak and could not afford to expel or allow rival dissenting groups to form. At most the SPD could make party life difficult for dissenters i.e. make it difficult for them to hold key positions of influence party organisation. James Joll, The Second International 1889 – 1914 (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968) 90-91; also see GDH Cole, Socialist Thought, 4 vols. (London: Macmillan & Co LTD, 1958).

England, as an exile as there was an outstanding warrant for his arrest.[78] In fact, the SPD leadership, although most disagreed with Bernstein, were hopeful that the whole controversy would disappear.

However the German Social Democratic Party, as the leading party in the Second International, was forced to react to Bernstein. While the SPD leadership had chosen to deal with Bernstein's articles in a quiet manner, foreign Socialists such as Plekhanov were not prepared to ignore them.[79] For the non-German Socialists Bernstein's attempts to "update" Marxism attacked the fundamental basis of the theory and practice of the Marxist movement. To insist that cooperation with the State was the only way forward in countries where basic suffrage rights did not exist was ludicrous. Plekhanov wrote to Kautsky, "You say your readers have no interest in philosophy…then you must force them to take an interest…. If you want me to write against Bernstein you must give me full freedom of speech. Bernstein must be destroyed…and I will

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[78] Bernstein was allowed to return to Germany in January 1901 after his friends in Germany managed to convince Chancellor Bülow to not renew the warrant. Gay pointed out that the Chancellor's motives were unclear, but that it is quite plausible that he believed that Bernstein's presence would split the SPD. Peter Gay, The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism: Eduard Bernstein's Challenge to Marx (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952) 66.

[79] Let us not forget that Bernstein did have support within the party leadership, even though August Bebel, Wilhelm Liebknecht, Franz Mehring, and Karl Kautsky were adamantly against him. Gay pointed out that Viktor Adler, while he disagreed with Bernstein, he applauded him for bringing "socialist doubts" out into the open. On March 17, 1898 Alder wrote to Bernstein, "I will tell you and everybody else frankly: in my opinion you have *not* put yourself *anywhere* outside Social Democracy, no matter how much I may dissent in some things. You represent, in brilliant fashion, a direction *within* the party." At first Bebel was determined to have Bernstein expelled, but changed his mind because of the "grave disturbance" he thought it would cause the party. Bebel wrote to Adler on April 8, 1899, "The whole matter would be of little significance if there were only one Bernstein…but we have a whole lot of them, and most in distinguished positions within the party." Following the Dresden Congress in 1903 Ignaz Auer wrote to Bernstein, "My dear Ede, you *don't* pass such resolutions. You don't *talk* about it, you just *do* it." Essentially this is what the SPD eventually did. Nettl made the interesting point that the supporters of revisionism tended to be people who had managed to remain "socially acceptable socialists" – Trade Union leaders and others who had not suffered for their open dedication to the SPD. Members against revisionism tended to be those who had suffered i.e. lawyers who had been disbarred or had become isolated because they were socialists. Peter Gay, The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism: Eduard Bernstein's Challenge to Marx (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952) 66-69, 267; James Joll, The Second International 1889 – 1914 (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968) 94; JP Nettl, "The German Social Democratic Party 1890 – 1914 as a Political Model," Past and Present 30 (1965): 68-69.

gladly undertake this task if you let me."[80] Bernstein's Revisionism became a source of embarrassment for them and the SPD leaders were forced to openly act.

Parvus, editor of the *Sächsiche Arbeiterzeitung*, had been running criticism of Bernstein from January to March 1898.[81] It was during this period that Luxemburg arrived in Berlin in 1898 and joined forces with Parvus against revisionism. The main assault against revisionism was led by Parvus, Mehring, and Luxemburg and eventually others joined. Luxemburg and Parvus' criticisms forced the SPD leadership to take a stand on the issue. Bebel and Kautsky openly denounced Bernstein at the Stuttgart Conference in October 1898.

By far Bernstein's intellectual superior Rosa Luxemburg launched a serious of attacks in the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* in September 1898 in which she focused on reformist tactics and the party's revolutionary goal. The articles were reissued as a book in 1899 under the title *Social Reform or Revolution.*[82] Luxemburg pointed out that the potential shift toward reformism threatened the very essence of the Social Democratic movement.

> "[Bernstein's] theory tends to counsel us to renounce the social transformation, the final goal of the social democracy and inversely, to make social reforms the means of the class struggle, its aim. [T]he final goal of socialism constitutes the

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[80] Plekhanov's to Kautsky dated 16 September 1898 as quoted in J.P. Nettl, Rosa Luxemburg, abridged edition, (New York: Schocken Books, Inc., 1969) 130.

[81] According to Schurer, Parvus was extremely influencial in the thought of Luxemuburg, Kautsky, and Trotsky. It was Parvus, after all, who gave Luxemburg her first chance to prove herself as a writer in the German Social Democratic movement. H. Schurer, "The Russian Revolution of 1905 and the Origins of German Communism," Slavonic and East European Review 39 (1961): 460-461.

[82] David McLellan, Marxism After Marx: An Introduction (London: MacMillan Press, LTD, 1979) 43.

only decisive factor distinguishing the social democratic movement from bourgeois democracy and bourgeois radicalism.... The question of reform or revolution, of the final goal and the movement, is basically...the question of the petty bourgeois or proletarian character of the labour movement."[83]

Bernstein's abandonment of the final goal also brought into question the nature of the class struggle of the movement. In placing greater emphasis on the movement rather than the goal Bernstein shifted the focus of socialist activity away from revolutionary change. This in turn removed the proletarian consciousness as a class as the centre of revolutionary activity and replaced it with institutions. Institutions have the capacity and indeed the tendency, become bureaucratised.[84]

In abandoning the revolutionary goal Bernstein placed great importance on the role of Trade Unions in transforming the political system from within. Luxemburg conceded that the Trade Union struggle and parliamentary participation were a means to an end – that of guiding, educating, and preparing the proletariat for their revolutionary task of taking power. Trade Unions helped assist in developing the consciousness of the proletarian and organising them as a class. But Luxemburg disagreed that the Trade Unions and

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[83] Rosa Luxemburg, "Social Reform or Revolution," Rosa Luxemburg Speaks, ed. Mary Alice Waters (New York: Pathfinder Press, Inc. 1970) 36, 37.

[84] Robert Michels was a disillusioned member of the SPD. His book described the evolution of the SPD from a political underground movement to bureaucracy to oligarchy. For Michels this was the nature of political participation – that is of modern democracy and the institutions that function within it. Highly organised political parties seeking power are not democratic within their own internal structure; therefore, they were incapable of fighting for a democratic society. They would not suddenly become more democratic but rather become more controlling as they gained more power. Once they had gained "collective power" it was probable that they would do all that was possible to maintain control. They would eventual evolve into oligarchy. Robert Michels, Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy, trans. Eden and Cedar Paul (New York: The Free Press, 1962) 188-202, 349.

parliamentary participation could produce a "socialising influence" on political economy.

> "[Once trade unions] are considered as instruments of direct socialisation of capitalist economy, they lose not only their usual effectiveness but cease being means of preparing the working class for the conquest of power."[85]

Luxemburg insisted that although Trade Unions may at times support Social Democracy in their revolutionary struggle, they were reformist rather than revolutionary. Trade Unions fought to alleviate the symptoms of capitalism. They struggled for shorter working hours, unemployment insurance, job security, etc. According to Luxemburg the dual function of Trade Unions, that of influencing the situation in the labour market and improving the conditions of the workers, resembled a sort of "labour of Sisyphus."[86] Luxemburg had not meant to offend the Trade Unions with this comment. She believed their work to be "indispensable" but like Sisyphus never ending. In their tireless struggle to increase wages the aims of Trade Unions would always stop short of revolution.

The short term impact of Eduard Bernstein's Evolutionary Socialism was limited. The debates over Reform or Revolution involving Bernstein, Luxemburg, Kautsky, Merhring, and Parvus were mostly played out at the intellectual level of the party. By the time the SPD voted against revisionism in

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[85] Rosa Luxemburg, "Social Reform or Revolution," Rosa Luxemburg Speaks, ed. Mary Alice Waters (New York: Pathfinder Press, Inc. 1970) 58.

[86] According to Greek mythology, Sisyphus was the King of Corinth who, as a punishment for disrespecting Zeus, was condemned to eternally roll a heavy rock up a steep hill. Once he neared the top of the hill the rock would always escape him and roll back down again. Although this comment was not intended maliciously, it deeply antagonised the Trade Unions. Rosa Luxemburg, "Social Reform or Revolution," Rosa Luxemburg Speaks, ed. Mary Alice Waters (New York: Pathfinder Press, Inc. 1970) 71.

favour of a revolutionary programme at the Amsterdam Congress in August 1904, the debate in this specific form had faded into insignificance. But this is not to say that the drive toward reformism faded. The rejection of Bernstein's theory did not destroy the reformism within the party, nor did it lead to the expulsion of the revisionists.[87] The SPD had quietly begun to transform (evolve as Bernstein put it) as Bernstein pointed out in 1896. As time moved on and old SPD leaders died this shift became more and more openly apparent. For Luxemburg this shift away from revolutionary methods became all too clear after the Russian Revolution of 1905.

Mass Strike and the Russian Revolution of 1905[88]

The defeat of the Russian army at Port Arthur during the Russo – Japanese War demonstrated the initial signs of weakness of the Russian autocracy. On the 9th of January 1905 the Tsar Nicholas II's soldiers opened fire on peaceful demonstrators outside the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg. The reaction to this dreadfully violent act (which became known as Bloody Sunday) was outrage in the already discontented Russian society. By the 22nd of January, fury had manifested itself into the "dramatic eruption" into revolution with mutinies occurring in the army and navy and the establishment of Soviets.[89] This wave

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[87] Gay insisted that if there had been no Bernstein it would have been necessary to invent him. For Gay Revisionism represented "the rational recognition of an already existing state of affairs." Peter Gay, The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism: Eduard Bernstein's Challenge to Marx (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952) 99; also see Carl Schorske, German Social Democracy 1905 – 1917: The Development of the Great Schism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955) 16-24.

[88] Parts of this section have been published in an article. For further details see Lea Haro, "Luxemburg, the Mass Strike, and the 1905/06 Revolution," Against the Current 118 (2005) 23-25.

[89] JP Nettl described the outbreak of the 1905 Russian Revolution as a complete surprise. It was only later, in the "search for perspective," that the warning signs were pieced together. The revolution was a surprise not only to the Tsar but also to professional revolutionaries such as Lenin, Martov, and Luxemburg. JP Nettl, Rosa Luxemburg, abridged edition, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969) 202.

of revolutionary fervour spread throughout the Tsarist Empire into Poland and even spilled into Germany.

As news of the Russian Revolution reached Germany the Ruhr basin was already embroiled in its greatest labour struggle. Workers all over Germany had taken an active interest in Russian affairs and demanded the presence of the SPD's inspiring speaker – Rosa Luxemburg. Leaders of the four mine workers' unions attempted to prevent the spread of strikes but failed. By February the strikes had been called off. May Day was normally a day for protest in Russia and Poland, but in 1905 Germany also experienced outbreaks of strikes and protest. Trade Unions renounced the revolutionary spirit in Germany and refused to take part. Luxemburg became increasingly frustrated and disillusioned with the inaction of the SPD and the growing power of the Trade Unions. The Unions blamed Luxemburg for the "strike fever."[90]

Poland responded to the revolution in Russia by declaring a state of emergency. By the 27th of January connections between Russian and Polish workers had been established and according to JP Nettl, they behaved as Marx predicted, without borders.[91] A state of emergency was declared in Poland. Mass strikes and opposition from most sections of Russian society forced the Tsarist government to agree to convene an elected but purely consultative National Assembly known as the *Duma*. By October the government was near collapse. But this victory was short lived. On the 3rd of December 1905, the

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[90] Carl Schorske, German Social Democracy 1905 – 1917: The Development of the Great Schism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955) 37; JP Nettl, Rosa Luxemburg, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1966) 1: 300-304; Paul Frölich, Rosa Luxemburg: Her Life and Work, trans. Edward Fitzgerald (1940; New York: Howard Fertig, 1969) 117.

[91] In The Communist Manifesto Marx insisted that the "The working men have no country." Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, The Communist Manifesto, intro. Leon Trotsky, 4th ed. (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1995) 32; JP Nettl, Rosa Luxemburg, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1966) 1: 319.

government arrested 260 members of the St. Petersburg Soviet including Leon Trotsky.

By 1906 the Tsarist government had regained complete control of Russia and began trying and executing members of the opposition. The events in Poland continued until 1906. Ignoring the persuasive efforts of August Bebel, Franz Mehring, Karl and Louis Kautsky, and Leo Jogiches, Luxemburg began preparations to travel to Poland in mid-December 1905. By the time she arrived the revolutionary struggle was dying. By March Polish authorities had arrested her; a German conservative newspaper had exposed her presence in Warsaw. She was allowed to leave Poland through Finland where she spent time with Lenin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, and other exiles of the 1905 Russian Revolution who had managed to escape.[92] When Luxemburg returned to Germany, she arrived refreshed and ready to analyse the 1905 – 1906 events and apply them to the German situation. For Luxemburg, the upsurge in strikes symbolised the revolutionary spirit of the working class.

The Revolution of 1905 – 1906 symbolised a turning point in Rosa Luxemburg's practical and theoretical thought for two reasons. First, Luxemburg's return from Poland provided her with the opportunity to blatantly see the changing nature of the SPD Executive. By the time Luxemburg returned

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[92] Luxemburg wrote the pamphlet "Mass Strike, the Party, and Trade Unions," while in Kuokkala, Finland during the second half of 1906. Schurer argued that from 1905-1914 German Social Democracy never stopped discussing whether the Russian Revolution of 1905 had anything to teach German Socialism. For Schurer a deep polarisation developed that foreshadowed the divide between the Social Democratic and Communist movements. Schurer, quoting from Radek, claimed that Luxemburg's pamphlet sparked the beginning of a new trend in Social Democracy. It "[began] the separation of the communist movement from social democracy." This view is also held by JP Nettl and Pierre Broué. H. Schurer, "The Russian Revolution of 1905 and the Origins of German Communism," Slavonic and East European Review 39 (1961): 459, 463; JP Nettl, Rosa Luxemburg, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1966) 1: 298; Pierre Broué, The German Revolution 1917 – 1923, trans. John Archer (Leiden: Brill, 2005) 18-19; Eric D. Weitz, " 'Rosa Luxemburg Belongs to Us!' German Communism and the Luxemburg Legacy," Central European History 27.1 (1994): 34.

to Germany, the revolutionary situation had returned to "normal." She was shocked to find that the nature of the party had changed in her absence. The party had become "official" and tame in its opposition. It behaved diplomatically and behind the scenes. Indeed, it behaved like a political party whose goal is power within a parliamentary system while at the same time still paying lip service to its Marxist revolutionary rhetoric.

Luxemburg was further shocked to discover the increasing influence of the Trade Unions in party matters. While she was in Warsaw the Trade Unions had regained their autonomy under a secret agreement.[93] The SPD Executive's increasing reliance on Trade Union support made them reluctant of anything that might cause confrontation with them and Rosa Luxemburg's newfound revolutionary enthusiasm certainly appeared dangerous to their relationship with the Trade Unions. The party's capitulation to the Unions was so complete that in her attempt to have the pamphlet, "Mass Strike, Party, and Trade Unions" printed, the party executive put a last minute stop on the printing. The Executive had the original printing blocs destroyed and printed a mildly altered

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[93] The secret agreement took place on February 16, 1906 and was an incredible victory for the Trade Unions. The Executive renounced any intentions of propagating the mass strike and pledged to take preventative measures. If a mass strike were to break out the party would bear sole responsibility for leadership and costs of the strike. Although Trade Unions would not participate, they would not betray the strike either. Should lockouts and strikes occur after the mass strike was called off, then the Unions would step in and offer support. The content of the secret agreement eventually leaked out. It betrayed the Jena Congress resolution (held in September 1905) in which the party supported and indeed advocated mass strike under certain conditions. In fact Bebel put forward the motion to support the political general strike. Essentially the SPD Executive granted the Unions autonomy in all Trade Union questions and the party (unofficially but in practice) gave up its right to enforce party policy on the Unions without their full consent. Broué insisted that it was at this point – the signing of the secret agreement – that German Social Democracy "categorically turned its back on the Party's identification with revolution." The secret agreement became the official party policy at the Mannheim Congress held on September 23, 1906. Carl Schorske, German Social Democracy 1905 – 1917: The Development of the Great Schism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955) 48-49; Pierre Broué, The German Revolution 1917 – 1923, trans. John Archer (Leiden: Brill, 2005) 18-19.

version of the pamphlet, having first removed any phrases that might antagonise the Unions. [94]

Trade Unions, on the other hand, were mostly concerned with the practical consequences of using mass strikes for political purposes. Aside from the potential financial devastation that mass strikes posed, refocusing the workers' attention on the revolutionary struggle, as opposed to the day to day struggle, threatened the Unions authoritative position. They feared political discussions and hope for political change would lure the rank and file away from the practical work of the Trade Union struggle.[95] Therefore, in an effort to draw the rank and file back to the Trade Union struggle and away from the "abstractness" of the revolution the SPD Executive and the Trade Unions distorted the meaning of Rosa Luxemburg's pamphlet.

Second, the revolutions of 1905/06 provided Rosa Luxemburg with the basis for her future thought on political organisation. From 1906 onwards the role of mass action in the revolutionary struggle remained dominant in her writing. For Luxemburg it formed the link between theory and practice that is more crucially, the link between the party and the masses. The notion of the mass strike or general strike was quite old but the Russian Revolution of 1905

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[94] The Hamburg provincial organisation was furious at the interference by the SPD Executive. Not only had the most forceful strikes in 1905 taken place in Hamburg but the Hamburg organisation had also commissioned Luxemburg's stay in Finland for the purpose of writing on the Russian Revolution and its use of the mass strike. They had hoped that the pamphlet would influence the delegates at the Mannheim congress. Unfortunately they had not realised that the SPD Executive had changed in such a way that the propagation of the revolution was no longer necessary to gain popular support. JP Nettl, Rosa Luxemburg, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1966) 357, 365; Carl Schorske, German Social Democracy 1905 – 1917: The Development of the Great Schism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955) 54-55.

[95] The SPD did not possess the financial resources to keep striking workers from going hungry. Hostile employers could potentially retaliate with lockouts. Carl Schorske, German Social Democracy 1905 – 1917: The Development of the Great Schism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955) 39-40; JP Nettl, Rosa Luxemburg, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1966) 1: 299-300.

was the first time that mass strikes were used to bring an empire to its knees.[96] Luxemburg believed that the 1905 Russian Revolution demonstrated the debilitating potential of spontaneous mass action and she believed that it could be utilised as a special weapon in times of revolutionary upheaval. Although Luxemburg intended mass strike to be a tool used by the SPD in the overthrow of Capitalism, her theory posed a great danger to the new bureaucracy developing within the SPD.

Luxemburg's critics attacked "Mass Strike, the Party, and Trade Unions," for creating a link between mass strike and revolution. They felt she confused two separate issues – the economic and the political strike. They accused her of advocating a "theory of spontaneity," which: diminished the role of the party as the leader of the class struggle; over-estimated the role of the masses; denied the importance of conscious and organised action; and the "complete abandonment to the mechanical fatalism of the historical process."[97] Indeed, if the workers were to play the leading role in their own struggle then the role of the Party and the Trade Unions would be superfluous.

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[96] Julius Braunthal asserted that it was always discussed as a last resort and had been discussed as early as 1839 at the Chartist Convention. Paul Frölich pointed out that it was mainly discussed as a weapon against the bourgeois for political purposes. It was a means of exerting pressure on capitalism to force the system into reforms and a means by which the workers could fight for political rights. However in capitalist countries the idea of general strike as a weapon of the working class movement seemed to have gone out of fashion, particularly in Germany and Great Britain. It remained firmly placed on the shelf of academic discussion and strictly for defensive purposes, although Parvus advocated that it could lead the masses from the defensive to the offensive struggle. Most SPD leaders were of the opinion that "General strike is general nonsense." Julius Braunthal, History of the International, trans. Henry Collins and Kenneth Mitchell, 2 vols. (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1966) 1: 285,295; Paul Frölich, Rosa Luxemburg: Her Life and Work, trans. Edward Fitzgerald (1940; New York: Howard Fertig, 1969) 150-151; H. Schurer, "The Russian Revolution of 1905 and the Origins of German Communism," Slavonic and East European Review 39 (1961): 462; Peter Gay, The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism: Eduard Bernstein's Challenge to Marx (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952) 232, 237.

[97] Paul Frölich, Rosa Luxemburg: Her Life and Work, trans. Edward Fitzgerald (1940; New York: Howard Fertig, 1969) 168.

Not surprisingly her critics' accounts of Luxemburg's use of mass strike were exaggerated and inaccurate.[98] Rosa Luxemburg did not advocate chaotic, leaderless, undisciplined, and unconscious uprisings, although fear inspired her enemies to argue that these were indeed her intentions. Luxemburg did not believe that the mass strike should be limited to a purely defensive measure, nor was it an isolated incident. In fact, the mass strike was "the sign" of the class struggle, which had developed over years.[99] For Luxemburg, the mass strike did not lead to revolution but rather the revolutionary period created the economic and political conditions for mass strikes to occur. This *spontaneous* action by the party could not be contained by discipline, planned, or tampered with by the party. [100]

Luxemburg fully intended the party leadership to play an active role at the head of strikes. She did not believe that the leadership could plan the hour of the mass strike; the masses would have to decide for themselves the critical moment of the mass strike. She did, however, believe that the trend and character of the party would play a crucial role in determining the nature and the course the strikes took during the revolutionary period.

> "To fix beforehand the cause and the moment from and in which the mass strikes in Germany will break out is not in the power of social democracy, because it is not in its power to

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[98] With the discussion over the mass strike debates once again placed on the party's agenda, the party leadership once again drew on Engels' introduction to the Class War in France and continued to claim that he warned against confrontations with the military. Julius Braunthal, History of the International, trans. Henry Collins and Kenneth Mitchell, 2 vols. (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1966) 1: 302

[99] Rosa Luxemburg, "Mass Strike, Party, and Trade Unions," Rosa Luxemburg Speaks, ed. Mary Alice Waters (New York: Pathfinder Press, Inc. 1970) 182.

[100] Geras suggested that Luxemburg' repeated emphasis that the mass strike was not something that could be conjured up by the leadership was the reason why she was accused of being a "spontaneist." Norman Geras, "Mass Strike," The Legacy of Rosa Luxemburg (London: NLB, 1976) 118.

bring about historical situations by resolutions at party congresses. But what it can and must do is to make clear the political tendencies, when they once appear, and to formulate as resolute and consistent tactics. Man cannot keep historical events in check while making recipes for them, but he can see in advance their apparent calculable consequences and arrange his mode of action appropriately."[101]

The conditions for *spontaneous* action did not fall from the sky, nor did workers arbitrarily decide to "have" a mass strike.[102] The economic and political conditions would need to already exist. It was not only necessary for the party to play an active role in educating and preparing the proletariat for their historical role of the overthrow of capitalism, but the party was in fact a pre-condition of a successful revolution. Luxemburg believed that this type of *spontaneous* mass action would play a vital role during the revolutionary period. However she maintained that without the necessary preparation and fulfilment of the necessary pre-conditions the most carefully planned and disciplined general strike would be no different than an ordinary struggle for wages and it could, potentially, end in disaster. In order for a mass strike to be an effective revolutionary weapon against Capitalism it was imperative that the desire and drive for mass action came from the masses – who had been guided and influenced by the party.

Essentially Rosa Luxemburg's theory of mass action – placed the workers at the centre of the revolutionary struggle. In empowering the workers Luxemburg posed a threat to the Trade Unions and the SPD Executive. Indeed

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[101] Rosa Luxemburg, "Mass Strike, Party, and Trade Unions," Rosa Luxemburg Speaks, ed. Mary Alice Waters (New York: Pathfinder Press, Inc. 1970) 205.
[102] Rosa Luxemburg, "Mass Strike, Party, and Trade Unions," Rosa Luxemburg Speaks, ed. Mary Alice Waters (New York: Pathfinder Press, Inc. 1970) 187-188, 198.

German Social Democracy had changed. Social conditions in Germany meant that it was no longer tied to the revolutionary rhetoric of the *Erfurt Programme*. From 1906 onward Rosa Luxemburg and her supporters became increasingly marginalised. Many focused their attention on the party school.

III. Polemics with Lenin

Although the Left wing of the party played a dominant role during the Revisionist controversy by 1906 their influence had diminished. By 1906 bureaucrats enjoyed the majority in the SPD Executive and Trade Unions had become increasingly influential force within the SPD. The party had become more involved in parliamentary politics and as a result dependant on Trade Unionists votes, who tended to be anti-revolutionary. The Trade Unions' alliance allowed the SPD Executive to become the parliamentary representative of the workers through their alliance. In exchange the SPD Executive hung the Left out to dry.[103] Schorske pointed out that this alliance would prove fatal for a revolutionary party such as the SPD. For although, the Executive were swinging Right and attempting to reinvent themselves as a legitimate legal political party, it still paid lip service to its Marxist origins. The move towards parliamentary participation proved a practical victory for the Revisionists who maintained their belief that the road to Socialism lies in parliamentary participation. But the Trade Unions were anti-revolutionary and had no interest in the Marxist rhetoric of overthrowing Capitalism and the Socialist revolution.

[103] Despite the Left's diminishing influence, they remained in control of the women's organisation, the youth organisation, and the party school. (The SPD Executive founded the party school in Berlin in 1905 to train party and Trade Union functionaries.) The Unions did not openly object, they merely demonstrated their distaste by not sending students. Carl Schorske, German Social Democracy 1905 – 1917: The Development of the Great Schism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955) 111.

Their social interests were firmly grounded in practical everyday struggles and their material interests in retaining the existing system. Schorske concluded that the SPD's alliance with the Trade Unions helped sow the seeds for its own destruction. "By capitulating before the trade unions…the party surrendered its political flexibility, and thus prepared the ground for its subsequent dissolution."[104]

During the period 1905 – 1909 the party restructured itself, creating a rigid hierarchy. The party's inflexibility and orientation towards parliamentary participation demonstrated its tendency towards bureaucracy.[105] By 1911 Friedrich Ebert had become the most influential man in the SPD and became a symbol of the party's new bureaucracy.[106] The Left radicals became increasingly marginalized. Luxemburg found it more and more difficult to get her articles published particularly any articles that promoted the use of mass strike and the reorientation of the party's influence back into the hands of the masses.[107] The SPD had existed on the fringe of German politics – as agitators of the parliamentary system. But by the 1912 election campaign the SPD had

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[104] Carl Schorske, German Social Democracy 1905 – 1917: The Development of the Great Schism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955) 110.

[105] Schorske claimed that the SPD were the first to devise bureaucratic institutions as a means of control and these were adapted by Communists, Fascists, and Nazis to suite their own purposes. The statement is interesting because it is adapted directly from Michels. Carl Schorske, German Social Democracy 1905 – 1917: The Development of the Great Schism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955) 116; Robert Michels, Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy, trans. Eden and Cedar Paul (New York: The Free Press, 1962).

[106] David McLellan, Marxism After Marx (London: MacMillan Press, Ltd., 1979) 53; Carl Schorske, German Social Democracy 1905 – 1917: The Development of the Great Schism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955) 124; Pierre Broué, The German Revolution 1917 – 1923, trans. John Archer (Leiden: Brill, 2005) 24.

[107] Kautsky refused to publish Luxemburg's article "What Further?" in Die Neue Zeit. The article had been previously rejected by Vorwärts. McLellan claimed the article's title was "What Now?" while Schorske claimed the article title was "What further?" however, Kautsky wrote a series of articles entitled "What Now?" David McLellan, Marxism After Marx (London: MacMillan Press, Ltd., 1979) 53; Carl Schorske, German Social Democracy 1905 – 1917: The Development of the Great Schism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955) 182-183.

thrown itself into the arena of power hungry politics and begun cooperation with bourgeois parties into order to maximise votes and thereby further marginalizing the Left and Centre wings within the SPD. By early 1917 both the Left and the Centre had been expelled from the party.[108] The SPD had shown its support for the State through its support for the war and consolidated its power by expelling its opposition.

Despite being marginalised and expelled from the SPD Luxemburg remained committed to the active role of the masses until the end of her life. It is clear through her writing and her activity in the SDKPiL and Spartakusbund that Luxemburg viewed the SPD as a model by which to build a movement on. The Social Democratic Party of Germany was famous, intellectually and organisationally. During the period of the Second International it was the strongest socialist movement in Europe and was the party in which others based themselves on. But as the SPD moved out of the shackles of illegality under the Anti-Socialist Laws and into the realm of a socially acceptable political party, it became considerably less democratic and increasingly bureaucratic. Luxemburg's articles called for more democracy within the party, the use of mass action as a weapon, and the education of the masses so that they could become conscious and would be able to transform themselves from a "class in itself" to a "class for itself."

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[108] The Left wing of the party (the group around Rosa Luxemburg which became known as the Spartacists) and the Centrists formed the *Unabhängige Sozialistische Partei Deutschlands* (USPD – Independent German Socialist Party.) The USPD included Spartacists, Kautsky, and even Bernstein. At the time Luxemburg was keen to cooperate with the Centrists in an effort to "steal" away its members. Pierre Broué, The German Revolution 1917 – 1923, trans. John Archer (Leiden: Brill, 2005) 79-85; Carl Schorske, German Social Democracy 1905 – 1917: The Development of the Great Schism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955) 312-321; JP Nettl, Rosa Luxemburg, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1966) 2: 655-659; Julius Braunthal, History of the International: 1914 – 1943, 2 vols. (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons LTD, 1967) 59-60; Herman Weber, Die Waldung des deutschen Kommunismus: Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimarer Republik, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1969) 1: 36-37.

Rosa Luxemburg remained consistent and dedicated to her opposition of centralism and bureaucracy and this was certainly highlighted by her debates with Lenin. Therefore, this section will discuss Rosa Luxemburg's polemics with Lenin. Although Lenin and Luxemburg debated on most topics this section will highlight their debates surrounding the national question, Imperialism, and political organisation.

The National Question

The "national question" was and still remains a great point of division in the Socialist movement. This question has never been successfully resolved and still remains a point of contention amongst some groups.[109] Rosa Luxemburg's experience in German Social Democracy was no exception. Luxemburg first became involved in the debate over the national question in Switzerland during her time with the PPS.[110] During this period it was fashionable for Western European Social Democrats to dogmatically support Polish independence. They claimed that Marx and Engels had supported this position. Paul Frölich pointed out that Marx and Engels had pursued a policy of independence for Poland since

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[109] For Schorske the most significant event in the fluctuation of the SPD's attitude toward the national question was the Mannheim Congress in 1906. The congress not only brought about a reversal of the party's position toward the use of mass strike, but it also showed the first signs of the acute division developing between the Left and the party leadership. Carl Schorske, German Social Democracy 1905 – 1917: The Development of the Great Schism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955) 75.

[110] The Polish Socialist Party (PPS) was formed in 1892 as an attempt to unite the underground Polish Socialist movement. The unity was extremely short lived. The nationalists could not agree amongst themselves. Some advocated the use of the slogan of Polish independence as a means of realising a Socialist revolution. Many bore hostility toward Russians and the other oppressed nationalities within the Tsarist Empire and refused to entertain the notion of an alliance with Russian Social Democracy. The divisions over the national question became one of the central issues for the PPS split. The issue of national self-determination of nations also contributed to the split in the Russian Social Democratic Party. Paul Frölich, Rosa Luxemburg: Her Life and Work, trans. Edward Fitzgerald (1940; New York: Howard Fertig, 1969) 50; Leonard Sharpiro, The Communist Party of the Soviet Union (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1960) 148; JP Nettl, Rosa Luxemburg, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1966) 2: 845.

the 1840's but their policy did not have nationalist undertones.[111] They viewed Tsarist Russia as a powerful threat that intervened in Western European affairs and actively hindered progress. Their attitude toward Polish independence was largely governed by their aim of defeating Russia. The idea was that an independent Poland would sufficiently weaken Russia's grasp and potentially allow the wheels of progress to move forward. Indeed the creation of a democratic Poland was a pre-condition to the creation of a democratic Germany. [112] While Marx and Engel supported the notion of an independent Poland, they were extremely sceptical about the right of self-determination of nations. They firmly believed that it was not possible for a nation to be truly free as long as the Capitalist system remained in place. [113]

Luxemburg maintained that the means by which Marx had hoped to gain independence for Poland no longer existed. The Tsar's Empire had begun to show signs of weakness. The introduction of Capitalism had begun to disintegrate Russian society. As a result the Tsar was forced to emancipate the serfs in 1861. The Tsar received a further blow when Russia was hit with a series of famines in 1891 – 1893. Capitalism and famine forced peasants to leave their villages in search of work in the towns, thus, creating a new class - the proletariat. The development of the working class in Russia would be the means by which the Tsar's empire would come to an end. Luxemburg believed that even in the unlikely event that the Polish proletariat were to successfully break away from the three strongest empires in Europe (the Russian, the Austro-

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[111] Paul Frölich, Rosa Luxemburg: Her Life and Work, trans. Edward Fitzgerald (1940; New York: Howard Fertig, 1969) 37-39.
[112] JP Nettl, Rosa Luxemburg, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1966) 2: 842.
[113] Paul Frölich, Rosa Luxemburg: Her Life and Work, trans. Edward Fitzgerald (1940; New York: Howard Fertig, 1969) 37-39; JP Nettl, Rosa Luxemburg, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1966) 2: 842-844.

Hungarian, and the Prussian) it would then be forced to take the position of the ruling class, resulting in the creation of a new class within the State. It would then be forced to propagate further oppression in order to maintain its power. Luxemburg insisted that "National States and Nationalism are empty vessels into which each epoch and the class relations in each particular country pour their particular material content."[114] Although she realised that there was no set formula for each country, Luxemburg concluded that an independent Poland should not be followed as an immediate aim of the Polish proletariat.

Rosa Luxemburg agreed that the aim of Socialism was indeed, the destruction of all forms of oppression including Imperialism – the oppression of one nation over another.[115] Luxemburg's acknowledgement that each national case was different was not a contradiction in her position. In some cases Imperialist nations kept oppressed countries backward as a means of maintaining control.[116] Luxemburg cited the example of Turkey, in which Turkish domination in Southern Europe retarded cultural and economic development. Independence for the Balkan countries would allow the development of bourgeois democracies and potentially create a united force against Russia.[117] But marrying Socialist aims to nationalist aims by

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[114] As quoted from Frölich. Paul Frölich, Rosa Luxemburg: Her Life and Work, trans. Edward Fitzgerald (1940; New York: Howard Fertig, 1969) 45.

[115] For Luxemburg the "concern about guaranteeing an internal market for the industrialists of the 'fatherland', and of acquiring new markets by means of *conquest*" were the concerns of the bourgeoisie and their purpose of creating a Nation-State. According to Luxemburg these aims were the opposite of the aims of a "conscious proletariat." Rosa Luxemburg, "The National Question and Autonomy," The National Question: Selected Writings by Rosa Luxemburg, ed. Horace B. Davis (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976) 167.

[116] Luxemburg was adamant that the " 'nation' –*state* as an apparatus of the domination and conquest of foreign nationalities...has no meaning for the proletariat." Rosa Luxemburg, "The National Question and Autonomy," The National Question: Selected Writings by Rosa Luxemburg, ed. Horace B. Davis (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976) 168-169.

[117] Rosa Luxemburg, "The National Question and Autonomy," The National Question: Selected Writings by Rosa Luxemburg, ed. Horace B. Davis (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976) 113-114; JP Nettl, Rosa Luxemburg, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1966) 2: 846-

unconditionally advocating the right to self-determination was dangerous to the final aim of Socialism. Self-determination required an alliance based on national boundaries, i.e. the unity of the Polish proletariat with the Polish bourgeoisie rather than alliances based on class. Promoting the right of self-determination of nations threatened the international working class struggle.

In her article, "Der Sozialpatriotismus in Polen," Luxemburg argued that the Polish bourgeoisie had proven that their true alliance lay with the Russian bourgeoisie and not with their countrymen – the Polish proletariat.[118] Not only did big business rely on the Russian market but petty bourgeoisie and hand working businesses attempted to follow the lead of big business and gain access to the Russian market. In reality the entire Polish economy was heavily dependent on Russia as it main market. Luxemburg concluded that as no class had an economic interest in Polish independence, the Polish proletariat must openly build alliances with the Russian proletariat.[119] When Luxemburg introduced these ideas to the Polish Socialist movement she met with resistance and hostility from both nationalist and those who had dogmatically followed the Social Democratic line of Polish independence.

Despite severe opposition Rosa Luxemburg maintained her anti-nationalist stance until her death in 1919. She readdressed the issue of Polish

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847; Paul Frölich, Rosa Luxemburg: Her Life and Work, trans. Edward Fitzgerald (1940; New York: Howard Fertig, 1969) 44-46.

[118] The article was originally published in Neue Zeit in 1895/96. Rosa Luxemburg, "Der Sozialpatriotismus in Polen," Gesammelte Werke: 1893 – 1905, 5 vols. (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1972).

[119] Luxemburg pointed out that this was not only an issue of economic interests. Some Poles enjoyed more "freedom" than others. Poles in the Austrian sphere of influence enjoyed relative autonomy. They did not have much to gain but rather they potentially had much to lose in a unified Poland. Rosa Luxemburg, "Der Sozialpatriotismus in Polen," Gesammelte Werke: 1893 – 1905, 5 vols. (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1972) 1/1: 43-51; Horace B. Davis, Toward a Marxist Theory of Nationalism (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1978) 61.

independence in a series of articles "The National Question and Autonomy."[120] Although several Marxist attempted to contribute to the "National Question" including Kautsky, the most notable, in the eyes of contemporary scholars, came from Lenin.[121] Lenin answered Luxemburg with his article "The Revolutionary Proletariat and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination," published in 1914. Lenin firmly held that Marx shared the concept of the right of self-determination of nations to the point of separation.

> "Never in favour of petty states, or the splitting of states in general, or the principle of federation, Marx considered the separation of an oppressed nation to be a step towards federation, and consequently, not towards a split, but towards concentration, both political and economic, but concentration on the basis of democracy."[122]

Lenin claimed that such a programme was an internationalist programme. He argued that an oppressed nation was not able to flourish democratically while its oppressor was stifling its "freedom." Therefore, it would be hypocritical for the proletariat of the oppressor nation to not demand separation. Separation did not close the door to a potential federation, which might come later. Lenin advocated that this was consistent with a revolutionary programme and in

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[120] The articles were originally published in 1908-1909 in the Polish journal Przeglad Sozialdemokratyczny. Rosa Luxemburg, "The National Question and Autonomy," The National Question: Selected Writings by Rosa Luxemburg, ed. Horace B. Davis (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976).

[121] Kautsky disagreed with Luxemburg on the issue of Polish independence. Kautsky claimed that Polish dependence on Russian markets was a "passing phase." He put forth the old Social Democratic notion that an independent Poland would weaken Russia and hence increase the possibility for revolution. However, he did not advocate the *unconditional* right to self-determination of nations. Horace B. Davis, Nationalism & Socialism: Marxist and Labor Theories of Nationalism to 1917 (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1967) 138-139.

[122] V.I. Lenin, "The Revolutionary Proletariat and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination," Collected Works, 45 vols. (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964) 21: 410.

keeping with internationalism. In fact, it was imperative to "*link* the revolutionary struggle for Socialism with a revolutionary programme on the national question."[123] Lenin insisted that demands for self-determination and the right to succession could not be separated from democracy or the international Socialist struggle.

Luxemburg, however, continued to disagree. While writing from her prison cell during the war she remained sceptical about linking the revolutionary struggle to nationalism.[124] In her critique of the Russian Revolution, Luxemburg warned of the potential disaster awaiting the Bolsheviks. She warned that the working class alliance with the bourgeoisie for the struggle of self-determination could potentially become a tool of the counter-revolution and this would potentially ruin the revolutionary struggle.

> "[I]t was really not the 'people' who engaged in these reactionary policies, but only the bourgeois and petty bourgeois classes, who – in sharpest opposition to their own proletarian masses – perverted the 'national right of self-determination' into an instrument of their counter revolutionary policies."[125]

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[123] V.I. Lenin, "The Revolutionary Proletariat and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination," Collected Works, 45 vols. (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964) 21: 408.

[124] Waters criticised Luxemburg's position on the national question. She claimed that Luxemburg's refusal to accept the self-determination as a strategy was a "major error." Waters was correct to assume that Luxemburg under-estimated the full potential of the nationalism. History has proven time and time again that nationalism is a powerfully destructive force that Socialist movements have been unable to control. Nonetheless Luxemburg's argument remained sound. Socialist support for national self-determination subordinated the working class struggle to that of a national struggle. Mary Alice Waters, ed. Rosa Luxemburg Speaks (New York: Pathfinder Press, Inc. 1970) 12-15.

[125] Rosa Luxemburg, "The Russian Revolution," Rosa Luxemburg Speaks, ed. Mary Alice Waters (New York: Pathfinder Press, Inc. 1970) 380.

She further argued that under Capitalism self-determination was not possible because each class would end up working to enhance their own situations rather than striving for the overthrow of Capitalism. Eventually the bourgeoisie would subordinate the drive for national freedom in favour of the maintenance of class rule. This is essentially what happened in Russia. But the Bolsheviks' slogan of national self-determination during the Russian Revolution must not judged too harshly. Luxemburg was in prison and her access to information was limited. Her argument was not based on information but rather she merely presented the same argument she had been advocating since 1895. She remained fully unaware that the Bolsheviks, whether they were for or against national self-determination, were forced to promote the slogan. They had no other choice as Republics had begun to break away and they did not have the means to stop them. The success of the Russian Revolution forced the Bolsheviks to rethink their position on the national question.

Imperialism

The SPD's position on the national question fluctuated. Before 1907 many chose to ignore the issue as irrelevant and, as stated above, they merely followed the dogmatic line of the First International. As the social and political situation changed in Germany the national question became inherently tied to the development of Imperialism and militarism in Germany.[126] At the beginning of the 20th century the party abandoned its position on the abolition of standing armies and the creation of militias in favour of advocating support for

[126] Schorske pointed out that after the 1905 Russian Revolution "world politics" or Imperialism began to occupy centre stage. It was not until after 1907 that Marxists began serious attempts at analysing the problems of Imperialism. Carl Schorske, German Social Democracy 1905 – 1917: The Development of the Great Schism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955) 67-68.

national defence. The concept of national defence helped pave the way for the SPD's support of the State in the event of war. At the Bremen congress in 1904 Karl Liebknecht proposed the development of anti-militarist propaganda amongst potential recruits. The proposal was rejected with a certain amount of laughter. When Liebknecht tried again at the Mannheim congress in 1906 this time the reaction was not laughter, but fury from August Bebel.[127] It appeared that Bebel had resigned himself to the might of the German military. If war were to break out the military would assume control in order to maintain law and order and resistance would be foolish.[128] Acknowledging the strength of the German military machine and support for national defence slowly shifted the SPD leaders' position away from a Marxist anti-State position and toward a nationalist position.[129]

For Luxemburg this shift toward militarism and its international counterpart – Imperialism – played a very specific role in the history of Capitalist development. "Imperialism is the political expression of the accumulation of capital in its competitive struggle for what remains still open of the non-Capitalist environment."[130] Luxemburg's attempt to explain why

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[127] Schorske asserted that Bebel's annoyance with Liebknecht was partially motivated by his own "innate nationalism." Carl Schorske, German Social Democracy 1905 – 1917: The Development of the Great Schism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955) 69-70, 72.

[128] Joll asserted that the SPD leaders were fully aware of the strength of the Prussian army and as a result they were much less revolutionary than they claimed. Even before they gave up on their anti-military propaganda they had resigned themselves to their subordinate position. For Schorske, it was this fear of the German military machine that drove the SPD to support the State's war agenda. James Joll, The Second International 1889 – 1914 (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968) 110; Carl Schorske, German Social Democracy 1905 – 1917: The Development of the Great Schism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955) 71-73, 283-291.

[129] For Anderson and Grebing it was the SPD's growing nationalism that dictated their decision to vote for war credits. Evelyn Anderson, Hammer or Anvil: The Story of the German Working-Class Movement (1945; New York: Oriole Editions, 1973) 19-20, 22-26; Helga Grebing The History of the German Labour Movement: A Survey, trans. Edith Körner (Leamington Spa: Berg Publishers, 1985) 92-93.

[130] Rosa Luxemburg, The Accumulation of Capital, trans. Agnes Schwarzschild (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1951) 446.

capital had expanded beyond itself began from an underconsumption point of view.[131] First, Luxemburg argued that Imperialism began with onset of Capitalism. During the period of "primitive accumulation" militarism played a role in conquering the New World and other countries such as India. It was later used as a means of proletarianisation of the local population and also as a means of control.

Second, she pointed out that in order to perpetuate its own existence it needed to find new markets to exploit.

> "From the very beginning, the forms and laws of capitalist production aim to comprise the entire globe as a store of productive forces. Capital, impelled to appropriate productive forces for purposes of exploitation, ransacks the whole world, it procures its means of production from all corners of civilisation and from all forms of society. It becomes necessary for capital progressively to dispose ever more fully of the whole globe…."[132]

Militarism was used to create new markets for European countries for the purpose of Capitalist expansion in non-European regions.[133] Indeed the concept of Capitalist expansion was not new. However Luxemburg's point was that capitalism *needed* to expand in order to exist.[134] If it did not expand or if it ran

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[131] The most convincing underconsumption argument probably came from J.A. Hobson. Hobson was a liberal economist whose book was critical of Imperialism and overseas expansion. For more details see J.A. Hobson, Imperialism: A Study, 3rd ed. (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1938).

[132] Rosa Luxemburg, The Accumulation of Capital, trans. Agnes Schwarzschild (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1951) 357-358.

[133] Rosa Luxemburg, The Accumulation of Capital, trans. Agnes Schwarzschild (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1951) 454.

[134] Brewer stressed that although Luxemburg was wrong to claim that Capitalism *needed* a non-Capitalist environment to exist, she was certainly correct to point out that it did appear to grow in these environments. Sweezy on the other hand was entirely dismissive of Luxemburg's

out possibilities for expansion then the system would fall into a crisis. Luxemburg concluded that Capitalism would be overthrown before it exhausted its markets.[135] Essentially history has proven her wrong on this point as Capitalism has not fallen into an irrevocable crisis.

While Luxemburg's theory of Capitalist accumulation has been systematically disregarded as being wrong, she did make some very valid points.[136] Luxemburg was incorrect to suggest an inevitable mechanical breakdown of the Capitalist system. However she was correct to point out that economic polarisation was occurring on a world wide scale that is, the rich nations were getting richer and the poor nations were getting poorer.[137] Luxemburg was the first to highlight that the arms race provided Capitalism with a special, artificial market.[138] Luxemburg insisted that the increase in competition for new markets would eventually become lawless and violent and would eventually lead to war.

Rosa Luxemburg wrote The Accumulation of Capital prior to the outbreak of the war. Her purpose was an attempt to fill in the gaps left by Marx – gaps

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argument. He attributed her mistakes to her "logical inflexibility." Anthony Brewer, Marxist Theories of Imperialism: A Critical Survey, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 1989) 66; Paul Sweezy, The Theory of Capitalist Development: Principles of Marxian Political Economy (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1968) 202-207.

[135] Luxemburg concluded that "Though Imperialism is the historical method for prolonging the career of capitalism, it is also a sure *means* of bringing it to a swift conclusion." Rosa Luxemburg, The Accumulation of Capital, trans. Agnes Schwarzschild (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1951) 446.

[136] Frölich insisted that only Franz Mehring and Julian Marchlevski were the only prominent Marxist that saw the value of her work. He claimed that there were hordes of criticisms from competent and incompetent critics, which degenerated into mere abuse. Essentially they refused to recognize that there was a problem with Marx's formula most probably because they did not understand his economics. Paul Frölich, Rosa Luxemburg: Her Life and Work, trans. Edward Fitzgerald (1940; New York: Howard Fertig, Inc., 1969) 186-187.

[137] Michael Barratt Brown, "A Critique of Marxist Theories of Imperialism," Studies in the Theory of Imperialism, eds. Roger Owen and Bob Sutcliffe (London: Longman Group Limited, 1972) 50.

[138] V.G. Kieran, Marxism and Imperialism (London: Edward Arnold (publishers), 1974) 21; Michael Barratt Brown, "A Critique of Marxist Theories of Imperialism," Studies in the Theory of Imperialism, eds. Roger Owen and Bob Sutcliffe (London: Longman Group Limited, 1972) 51.

that others refused to recognise their existence in the first place. Luxemburg was heavily criticised for the flaws in her work particularly by Lenin, who had a political score to settle. Lenin began from a disproportionality position. Unlike Luxemburg, Lenin's pamphlet was written in Zurich in 1916 in the middle of the First World War. He made no attempt to offer anything new to the already existing theories of Imperialism. Lenin's main purpose for writing his work on Imperialism seemed to be to criticise other Marxist such as Kautsky and Hilferding, whom he viewed as taking the Second International in the wrong direction.

Lenin's theory of Imperialism was derived from Hilferding, Bucharin, and Hobson.[139] Unlike Hilferding who argued that Capitalism could organise itself out of a crisis and Luxemburg who argued that Imperialism had always been a part of Capitalism, Lenin not only argued that Imperialism was a stage of Capitalist development but that it was the final stage.

> "Imperialism emerged as the development and direct continuation of the fundamental attributes of capitalism.... But capitalism only became capitalist imperialism at a definite and high stage of its development.... Monopoly is the transition from capitalism to a higher system. Imperialism is the monopoly stage of capitalism."[140]

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[139] Rudolf Hilferding's book Finance Capital attempted to explain the growth of Monopoly and Finance Capital. Brewer pointed out that Hilferding's work contained almost all the major points made by Bucharin and Lenin and in some ways he deserves the real credit for developing the Marxist theory of Imperialism. Brewer insisted that Bucharin's originality was not that he developed new ideas, but that he put together the existing ideas into a coherent and novel whole. Anthony Brewer, Marxist Theories of Imperialism: A Critical Survey, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 1989) 88-116.

[140] V.I. Lenin, Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism – A Popular Outline, revised trans. (London: Lawrence and Wishart, Ltd., 1948) 107-108.

Lenin argued that Capitalism was in decline and this explained why it turned to Imperialism. Underdeveloped countries served as a place where the Capitalist could get the most return for their investment. The monopolisation of important sources of raw materials increased the power of the Capitalist and increased antagonism between industries.[141] From these monopolies banks were formed, which Lenin referred to as a "financial oligarchy." As the colonial world quickly became usurped a period of intense struggle for the division and re-division of the world followed.[142]

What becomes rather interesting is that in the Stalinised Comintern Rosa Luxemburg's contribution to the debates on Imperialism and Marxist Political Economy were entirely disregarded. Lenin's analysis became the reigning theory of the Third International. In 1928 Bucharin insisted, "Imperialism is…moribund and decaying capitalism. It is the final stage of development of the capitalist system."[143]

Political Organisation

On November 9, 1918 Rosa Luxemburg was freed from her prison in Brelau. She arrived in Berlin on November 10, 1918 eager to become involved in the revolutionary movement growing around her. Luxemburg had a clear idea of the type of political party she hoped Spartakusbund (Spartacus League) would become. Luxemburg outlined Spartacus' position in the pamphlet, Was

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[141] V.I. Lenin, Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism – A Popular Outline, revised trans. (London: Lawrence and Wishart, Ltd., 1948) 148-149.
[142] V.I. Lenin, Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism – A Popular Outline, revised trans. (London: Lawrence and Wishart, Ltd., 1948) 149.
[143] Bucharin, "The Programme of the Communist International (Adopted by the VI World Congress on 1st September 1928, Moscow," International Press Correspondence 8.92 (1928): 1753.

will der Spartakusbund?[144] The pamphlet was consistent with Luxemburg's democratic position on the central role of the working class in carrying out the revolution. In the spirit of Marx's Communist Manifesto the eight paged pamphlet took the form of a propaganda piece making its demands clear but with no set programme as to how to accomplish them. She insisted, "The liberation of the working class must be the work of the working class itself."[145] In order for a proletarian revolution to be successful the work and the desire for revolution must come from the masses themselves and not from a minority who manipulated the masses' desires for change to suite their own needs as bourgeois revolutions had done in the past. She also insisted that unity amongst all strata of the proletariat was imperative for building the basis of a future socialist society.

> "Only a solid front of the entire German proletariat: the south Germans with the north Germans, the city dwellers with the country dwellers, the workers with the soldiers…can create the granite foundations on which the edifice of the future can be constructed."[146]

The pamphlet discussed Spartacus' refusal to share power with bourgeois parties or even to take power without the direct participation and consent of the majority of the proletariat. Luxemburg also outlined Spartacus' demands to secure revolution, which were incredibly similar to the SPD's pre-1906 position, particularly with its advocacy of a voluntary workers' militia and the

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[144] The pamphlet is not dated but one must assume that it was written in late 1918 as they changed their name to *Die Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands* (KPD) in 1919.
[145] Rosa Luxemburg, Was will der Spartacusbund? (Berlin: Spartacusbund, n.d.) 4. Hoover Library: S.P. Germany – Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands [Spartacus].
[146] Rosa Luxemburg, Was will der Spartacusbund? (Berlin: Spartacusbund, n.d.) 5. Hoover Library: S.P. Germany – Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands [Spartacus].

abolition of military hierarchy in favour of soldiers' councils. Economically and politically Luxemburg's demands coincided with her position on mass action. She advocated the abolition of the State and parliament replacing them with a German Socialist republic run by workers' and soldiers' councils. The pamphlet's economic demands were similar to the demands cited in Marx's Communist Manifesto – the abolition of private property, repossession factories, and other large-scale trade organisations. As a piece of propaganda the pamphlet idealistically laid out the demands of the Spartacus League.

It is clear that Luxemburg hoped to build a party similar to the SPD, but one that was committed to the revolutionary struggle and one without the SPD's bureaucracy. As early as 1904 she expressed her concerns over centralism and bureaucracy. Luxemburg's article "Organisational Questions of Russian Social Democracy" was originally published in 1904 in Neue Zeit. The German version appeared in the SPD party press before it appeared in Iskra. Although the article was presented as a reply to Lenin's "One Step Forward, Two Steps Back," it was in fact written with a German audience in mind.[147] She addressed the political organisational problems of Russian Social Democracy but the same problems existed within German Social Democracy. Her warnings were addressed to the Russian Social Democratic party but they were intended for German ears. Luxemburg was concerned with the use of centralism as a means of organising the movement. At first she was sympathetic to the organisational difficulties that Russian party has experienced, particularly with its lack of bourgeois democracy. However, she warned that centralising party organisation

[147]Although Lenin was in fact impressed that the German Social Democrats had bothered to "acquaint" themselves with the literature of the Russian party, he did point out that Luxemburg's criticism was addressing something other than his book. V.I. Lenin, "One Step Forward, Two Steps Back: Reply by N. Lenin to Rosa Luxemburg," Collected Works, 45 vols. (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964) 7: 474.

– creating a hierarchical centre that dictates to its lower branches and functionaries – was not the answer.

To Luxemburg, the installation of a Central Committee would give the impression that the Committee is the only active section of the party and the other sections merely behaved as its minions carrying out the Committee's orders. She was concerned that strict organisation was not what Marx had in mind. Luxemburg asserted, "it becomes clear that the Marxist conception of socialism cannot be fixed in rigid formulas in any area, including that of the question of organization."[148]

It is interesting that Luxemburg had concerned herself with rigid party structures as early as 1904. Perhaps she had begun to see the subtle changes taking place in the SPD structure, its leanings toward bureaucracy. She warned Russian Social Democracy, "nothing will deliver a still young labor movement to the intellectual's thirst for power more easily than confining it in the straitjacket of a bureaucratic centralism which degrades the worker to a pliant tool of a 'committee'."[149] Again, this warning could very easily have been transferred to the SPD Executive who did, in fact, become a bureaucratic machine concerned with maintaining power.

While maintaining a commitment to mass action and a democratic structure in political parties, Luxemburg's articles never addressed how a party was supposed become a decentralised non-bureaucratic party. She viewed rigid organisations as means to subordinate the movement. But Socialist

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[148] Rosa Luxemburg, "Organizational Questions of Russian Social Democracy," Selected Political Writings, ed. Dick Howard (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1971) 286 - 287.

[149] Rosa Luxemburg, "Organizational Questions of Russian Social Democracy," Selected Political Writings, ed. Dick Howard (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1971) 302.

organisations have been grappling with the issue of how to effectively organise a movement and none have managed to come up with a solution. Those that are loosely organised generally fall apart because no one can agree on anything, while those that are strictly organised fail because their dictatorial methods scare off members. Luxemburg's writings on political organisation are profoundly democratic but, like Marx, they did not provide the formula as to how to build a political mass movement.

Summary

Rosa Luxemburg was a political commentator, a critic, and a theorist. She criticised others' writings and commented on the world around her. As a theorist she attempted to interpret the nature of the world around using Marxist methods. As the leader of Spartakusbund she did her utmost to push the movement forward. She has been criticised for remaining in the USPD too long. But Luxemburg, who was reckless when it came to her own safety, was not willing to prematurely break with the UPSD. She feared a premature break would cause Spartakusbund to disintegrate. She has also been criticised for the lack of systems in her writings. But this comment is unfair. Luxemburg was against rigid organisation because she worried that a strictly disciplined party would lose its democratic character. As an orthodox Marxist this was something she was not willing to risk.

Luxemburg's contribution to German Socialism was enormous. She relentlessly battled against Revisionism because it strayed from Marxism. She argued against national self-determination because she was fully aware of the

devastating strength of nationalism and its potential to destroy the working class. When the Russian Revolution of 1905 broke out she advocated the mass strike as a weapon hoping that it would be utilised in the revolutionary struggle. But the nature of the SPD had changed and they were no longer interested in revolution. Rather, the new leadership's interests were in maintaining their positions in the Reich parliament and promoting their careers. It is true that Luxemburg never developed a "plan" for a Marxist party, but such a thing ran counter to her beliefs. She felt that a party should be run by the masses and flexible enough to change during a revolutionary period.

In January 1919 Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht were murdered by *Freikorps* during the so called "Spartacus uprisings."[150] The untimely deaths of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht led to a crisis of leadership in the newly formed KPD. Following the subsequent murder of Leo Jogiches, Paul Levi - who did not have majority support within the party - succeeded them. It was during this period that the fledgling KPD began to look toward the Bolshevik party for guidance, something that Rosa Luxemburg was extremely cautious of.[151] She feared Russian dominance of the Communist International and even instructed the German representative, Hugo Eberlein, to vote against joining in

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[150] On January 6, 1919 strikes took place all over Berlin in support of Emil Eichorn – Berlin's radical Police President. Eichorn had been charged with appropriating public money and preparing to launch a civil war. The USPD, the Shop Stewards Committee, and the Communists decided to support Eichorn. On January 11, 1919 Noske led 3,000 troops through Berlin. By January 13 the fighting was over and the General Strike was called off. Luxemburg and Liebknecht refused to leave Berlin and hid in Neukölln. On the evening of January 15, 1919 they were arrested and brutally murdered during the night. Pierre Broué, The German Revolution 1917 – 1923, trans. John Archer (Leiden: Brill, 2005) 239-258.

[151] The founding congress of the German Communist Party took place on December 30, 1918-January 1, 1919. Rosa Luxemburg was reluctant of the party being called the German Communist Party. She preferred the name *Sozialistische Partei* (Socialist Party) but she and the Zentrale were outvoted 62 to 23 votes. Herman Weber, Die Waldung des deutschen Kommunismus: Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimarer Republik, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1969) 1: 37-38.

1919.[152] Her worst fears quickly came to surface as the German Communist Party did not merely look toward the Soviet Union for guidance but became completely subordinated to its will. The party no longer functioned as a revolutionary struggle directly linked to Marxist theory and eventually became a party devoted to the Soviet Union. Unfortunately, the link between Marxist theory and the party was severed as soon as the party became focused on the needs of the Soviet State rather than the needs of the German Socialist movement. Efforts to develop workers' consciousness were quickly replaced by training material filled with dogmatic slogans.

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[152] The First Congress of the Communist International was held on the 2nd of March 1919. Invitations were sent to 39 Communist Parties and revolutionary groups who had broken with the Second International thus qualifying them for membership to the Third International. In the end only 9 out of the 51 delegates managed to pass though the boarders, the rest were Soviet based. Hugo Eberlein was the only German representative to arrive in Moscow. (Leviné was also chosen to attend but he never made it out of Germany.) Both were given strict instructions by Luxemburg to oppose the formation of a new International as premature. Eberlein, after private persuasion by the Bolsheviks, defied Luxemburg's instructions and abstained rather than vote against the International. On the 4th of March 1919 the Third Communist International was born. Eberlein's refutation of the Third International can be found (under the pseudonym *Max Albert*) in John Riddell, ed. Founding the Communist International: Proceedings and Documents of the First Congress, March 1919 (New York: Anchor Foundation, 1987) 113-120, 169-170; also see Hugo Eberlein, "The Foundation of the Comintern and the Spartakusbund," The Communist International 6.9-10 (1929): 436-442; Kevin McDermott and Jeremy Agnew, The Comintern: A History of International Communism from Lenin to Stalin (London: MacMillan Press Ltd., 1996) 12-13; Isaac Deutscher, "Record of a Discussion with Heinrich Brandler," New Left Review 105 (1977): 49.

Chapter Three: Crisis of Theory in the Comintern

But there exists yet another danger. The leadership of the Socialist Party may fall into the hands of persons whose practical tendencies are in opposition with the programme of the working class, so that the labor movement will be utilized for the service of interests diametrically opposed to those of the proletariat.[153]

The death of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht not only marked the end of an old tradition in German Marxism – the development of Marxist theory – it also signified an end to the pioneering role played by the Germans in leading the European socialist movement both practically and theoretically. The successful revolution in Russia knocked the Germans into second position as the most important Marxist revolutionary party. Lacking strong leadership from within the German Communist Party the rank and file looked toward the Soviet Union for theoretical and practical guidance. However, the Soviet Union's theoretical development had also suffered a severe blow. Lenin's death resulted in a power struggle, which consumed the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and changed the Marxist revolutionary movement all over Europe, most notably in Germany. The Soviet Union's desire to maintain itself as a nation-state meant that, although, the Soviet State and its revolutionary organ – the Comintern – paid lip service and spread revolutionary propaganda neither were interested in promoting or developing theory that might displace the Soviet Union's hegemony over other parties or threaten its nation-state status.

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the role of revolutionary theory in the Comintern, how it changed, and the way in which those changes affected the

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[153] Robert Michels, Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy, trans. Edan and Cedar Paul (New York: The Free Press, 1962) 352.

German Communist Party. This chapter will argue that although not a single Comintern policy can be held fully responsible for destruction of the KPD's theoretical and practical development, each played a role in the KPD's subordination to the Soviet Union – each policy was a stepping stone to the KPD's adoption of Social Fascism, which will be discussed in chapter four. I have broken this chapter into three sections.

The first section, Creating Uniformity in the Comintern, describes Lenin's desire to utilise his version of *correct theory* and centralism and strict discipline to drive the revolutionary movement forward. Prior to his death Lenin implemented a Policy of Uniformity in the Comintern's parties, including the KPD. Its purpose was to reorganise member States' parties and turn them into vanguard parties based on the Bolshevik model.[154] Lenin clearly viewed this

[154] The process of creating uniform parties in 1919 – 1923 was a long complex process and did have the support of the rank and file within the national parties. We must recall the historical events during this period. The First World War had just come to an end and many believed that a proletarian revolution was imminent. Members of the Spartacus League were young and there was a strong sense of radicalism. In 1918 the rank and file had voted against parliamentary participation against the position of their leaders – Luxemburg, Levi, and Jogiches. Participation in the parliamentary elections was something the Rosa Luxemburg actually supported. The newly formed Communist Party did not participate in the elections because their leaders were outvoted (62 to 23 votes) which Luxemburg and the others accepted as the wishes of the majority. This was also something that Lenin mentioned in his pamphlet, 'Left – Wing' Communism – An Infantile Disorder. However, he mistakenly included Liebknecht amongst those who supported participation in the parliament. According to Frölich, Liebknecht on principle was against parliamentary participation but his position often fluctuated. Drachkovitch and Latich pointed out that Liebknecht, in particular, struggled to make up his mind on the issue of parliamentary participation in 1918. Drachkovitch and Latich identified the rejection of parliamentary participation as "an unmistakable symptom of the 'leftist disorder'." Following the murders of Luxemburg, Liebknecht, and Jogiches the party never really recovered nor did it manage to find strong replacements. According to Radek, whilst in prison he became concerned regarding the fate of the revolutionary struggle in Germany. "From my correspondence with them I saw that the Party had no leadership; on the basic question of relations with trade unions, there was complete chaos." According to Carr, Radek developed his cynical pessimism during this period and it "coloured all his later thought and action." Milorad M. Drachkovitch and Branko Lazitch, Lenin and the Comintern (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1972) 242; Paul Frölich, Rosa Luxemburg: Her Life and Work, trans. Edward Fitzgerald (1940; New York: Howard Fertig, 1969) 313; V.I. Lenin, " 'Left – Wing' Communism – An Infantile Disorder," Selected Works, 3 vols. (1964; Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975) 3: 321; E.H. Carr, Karl Radek, and M. Philips Price, "From Soviet Publications – Radek's 'Political Salon' in Berlin 1919," Soviet Studies 3.4 (1952) 422; E.H. Carr, A History of Soviet Russia: The Bolshevik Revolution, 3 vols. (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1953) 3: 134; Eric D. Weitz, " 'Rosa Luxemburg Belongs to Us!' German Communism and the Luxemburg Legacy,"

policy of creating uniformity in the Comintern's individual national parties as a step forward. Lenin's version of the vanguard party required obedience and loyalty, which suited the conditions of Tsarist and wartime Russia. Although Lenin's Policy of Uniformity attempted to force the revolution forward, in Germany it served to hinder the practical and theoretical development of the German movement. Rather than assist in the recovery of the German movement, Lenin's Policy of Uniformity attempted to replace German theoretical traditions with Russian traditions. Russian interference served to undermine the German leaders' attempts to rebuild their party and in the end left the newly formed German Communist Party subordinated to the Soviet Union.

The second section, Comintern's Policy of Bolshevisation, describes the impact that the power struggle in the Soviet Union had both inside the Soviet Union and the Comintern.[155] Inside the Soviet Union the power struggle severely damaged the reputations of the mostly likely candidates to succeed Lenin, allowing Stalin and Bucharin to take the reigns. The Bolshevisation of the Comintern was the means of purging the opposition. The Fifth Plenum in 1925 (in Lenin's name) began to undo what Lenin spent his life attempting to achieve. It changed the role of the party and Lenin's desire for strict discipline within the party. Lenin had always intended strict discipline as a means of pushing the revolution forward. Bolshevisation changed this. Strict discipline became a method in which to control the Comintern's parties. The Stalinists launched attacks against all theoretical opposition. Lenin's dedication to the

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Central European History 27.1 (1994): 36; Herman Weber, Die Wandung Des Deutschen Kommunismus: Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimarer Republic, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1969) 1: 38.

[155] Agnew and McDermott accurately pointed out that the term "Bolshevisation" was not used as a slogan until after 1924. Kevin McDermott and Jeremy Agnew, The Comintern: A History of Communism From Lenin to Stalin (London: Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1996) 26-27.

role of theory and political practice as his theories were replaced by the dogma of *Leninism.*

In Germany, Bolshevisation was used to divide and rule the movement. The power struggle and economic stabilisation created the perfect environment for the rise of the Left, led by Ruth Fischer and Arkadij Maslow. The Left possessed no theoretical training and were extremely hostile to the old theoretical traditions of the KPD, which they considered "remnants of Social Democracy." Bolshevisation was used to defeat the old Spartacists who remained loyal to the theories of Rosa Luxemburg. The Stalinised Comintern pitted the Left and Right against one another and purged the party of all dissent. The party no longer resembled the mass base party that Luxemburg had attempted to build. Luxemburgism was invented as a means of ridding the party of the memory of Rosa Luxemburg. The attacks were partially successful. Luxemburg, the woman and martyr of the Spartakusbund, was rehabilitated. Her theories, however, were not. Crimes and errors were invented in an effort to destroy and possibility of dissent in the various Communist Parties. The Fifth Plenum and Bolshevisation were the first signs of the dramatic and repressive changes occurring in the Comintern. Once the Left had defeated opposition and its theoretical remnants within the KPD, the Comintern turned against Maslow and Fischer.

The third section, the Consequences of a New Doctrine, discusses the role that Socialism in One Country played in reshaping the world's Communist movement from a theory based revolutionary movement to an instrument of the Soviet Union. Socialism in Once Country had a tremendous impact on the Comintern transforming it from a revolutionary organisation to an instrument of

propaganda. Socialism in One Country was designed to counteract Trotsky's Theory of Permanent Revolution by claiming that Socialism did not require a world revolution to survive. The result of Socialism in One Country was the Comintern Programme of 1928 and announcement of the emergence of the Third Period. The Statutes of the Sixth Congress placed further repressive restrictions on the Comintern's member parties and insisted on blind obedience. Although the Third Period was supposed to herald the beginning of a new revolutionary era, it in fact served to destroy the revolutionary movement. Each policy imposed on the Comintern by the Soviet Union – Lenin's Policy of Uniformity, Stalin's policy of Bolshevisation, and the Programme of Sixth Congress, regardless of their original intent, reshaped the Comintern by placing restriction on open debates and criticism of Soviet policy. This in turn had an effect on the Comintern's parties, such as the KPD. In the end theory was no longer being developed and the Comintern's member parties bent to the will of the Soviet State.

I. Creating Uniformity in the Comintern

In Rosa Luxemburg's analysis of the Russian revolution she praised the Bolsheviks for doing what European socialist organisations had failed to do – conduct a victorious revolution. However, her praise was followed by severe criticism and words of caution. She warned against the subordination of theory in favour of duplicity and tactics that would ensure victory at whatever costs. Luxemburg feared that such a policy would only provide short-term gains and

corrupt the ultimate goal of socialism.[156] Indeed the Bolsheviks had substituted theory for tactics in an effort to remain flexible during the revolutionary upheaval. Unlike the German or other European socialist uprisings post-WWI, the Bolshevik revolution survived both revolution and civil war. However, by 1920 the masses were exhausted from war and the revolutionary tide seemed to have turned. Communist parties began the laborious process of rebuilding their mass base.

The Bolsheviks were desperate for a European revolution that would save their Russian Revolution. Lenin believed that the success of the Bolshevik party was attributed to their possession of the *correct* revolutionary theory and through their development of a centralised and strictly disciplined party. Lenin was deeply committed to building Communist parties that would produce

[156] Luxemburg chastised the Bolshevik policies on land, the national question, suffrage, the Constituent Assembly, and democracy and dictatorship. From these criticisms arose Luxemburg's most famous quote and weapon against Soviet hegemony, "Freedom only for the supporters of the government, only for the members of one party – however numerous they may be – is no freedom at all. Freedom is always and exclusively freedom for the one who thinks differently." According to Herman Weber, from this work Luxemburg arose as a symbol of Soviet opposition, although, her intention was never to undermine the Russian Revolution. Luxemburg remained consistent in her argument and presented the same case that she had on these topics, against Lenin, since the early 1900's. Luxemburg had always been critical of Lenin's concept of a vanguard party. It seems fair to assume that whilst in prison Luxemburg was not able to keep up to date with occurrences in Russia. She remained unaware that the Bolshevik slogan of "go and take the land for yourselves" occurred after the peasants had begun confiscating land. To go against the peasants' actions during the revolutionary upheaval would have been political suicide for the Bolsheviks. Georg Lukács made the very important point that Rosa Luxemburg's article on the Russian Revolution had been used for propaganda against the Soviet State since it was published in 1922. Levi's publication of the pamphlet took place during a struggle between the KPD and the Comintern. Worshippers and opponents of Luxemburg have manipulated this work, in particular, to suite their own propaganda needs. Lukács surmised that the aim of its publications was not to "undermine the standing of the German C.P. or to weaken confidence in the policy of the Third International; it [was] to strike a blow at the theoretical basis of Bolshevik organisation and tactics." Rosa Luxemburg, "The Russian Revolution," Rosa Luxemburg Speaks, ed. Mary Alice Waters (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970) 389; Herman Weber, Die Wandung Des Deutschen Kommunismus: Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimarer Republic, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1969) 1: 13-14; Georg Lukács, "Critical Observations on Rosa Luxemburg's 'Critique of the Russian Revolution'," History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics (London: Merlin Press, 1968) 272; Eric D. Weitz, " 'Rosa Luxemburg Belongs to Us!' German Communism and the Luxemburg Legacy," Central European History 27.1 (1994): 27-31; Werner T. Angress, Stillborn Revolution: The Communist Bid For Power in Germany, 1921 – 1923 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963) 42; JP Nettl, Rosa Luxemburg, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1966) 2: 794-796.

successful revolutions. He, therefore, attempted to force the Bolshevik model on the Comintern parties through the implementation of his Policy of Uniformity in the early 1920's. Uniformity was endorsed through his pamphlet "Left-Wing" Communism – An Infantile Disorder and the resolutions ratified at the Second Congress of the Communist International. Although Lenin's Policy of Uniformity in the Comintern was meant as a means to promote world revolution, it helped to lay the foundations for Stalin's retardation of the revolutionary movement.

This section will examine Lenin's Policy of Uniformity by exploring his propagation of the "correct theory" as well as centralism and strict discipline and the consequences that these policies had on the fledgling German Communist Party.

The Role of *Correct Theory*

Lenin, like Luxemburg, was interested in the role that theory played in the revolutionary movement. In 1902, in his article What is to be Done? Lenin declared, "without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement."[157] For Lenin the party played an important role in the revolutionary struggle and theory played a central role in guiding the revolutionary party to victory. Workers might show their dissatisfaction through the *spontaneous* destruction of machinery and these actions were

[157] Lenin remained committed to this notion until his death. Interestingly, this quote was used by the Comintern in its propagation of false theories. In the late 1920's and early 1930's what Lenin meant by theory ceased to have any meaning in the Comintern. In 1902 Lenin strove for a theory that defined and guided the movement. By the late 1920's the term theory ceased to represent anything with depth or meaning. It became euphemism for propaganda. For example see "Reorganisation unseres Literaturvertriebes," Rundschreiben 1930 SAMPO RY 1/I2/707/146 FBS 248/11612 40-48; V.I. Lenin, "What is to be Done?" Collected Works, 48 vols. (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1961) 5: 369.

consciousness in *embryonic form.*[158] Such destructive action demonstrated the awaking of consciousness, and herein rested the role of the party. Lenin viewed the party as a highly centralised and disciplined organisation, led by a small group of committed revolutionaries – career revolutionaries who acted as a *vanguard* and who were willing to commit their lives to working under the extremely dangerous and illegal conditions of Tsarist Russia. Their role was to develop theory in order to lead the revolutionary struggle and to educate the working class in the *correct theory.* Armed with the *correct theory* the working class would become conscious of their place within the confines of the economic system. Rather than fight for higher wages or civil rights, they would realise themselves as a united class and realise that their enemy was not their employer or even the State but the entire capitalist system. Only with their victorious destruction of the system could they become free and able to change their situations. Although Lenin's intentions were later manipulated by Stalin and his cohorts to suite their own political purposes, during his lifetime Lenin remained committed to the important role that the *correct theory* played in the revolutionary movement.

First, Lenin believed that the Bolsheviks' victory proved they possessed the *correct theory.* His pamphlet, "Left Wing" Communism – An Infantile Disorder demonstrated his earnest dedication to the propagation the Bolshevik version of the *correct theory.*[159] Lenin believed that even under favourable

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[158] Lenin pointed out "there is spontaneity and spontaneity," meaning that there were different forms of *spontaneous* action. Lenin was against *spontaneous* action, in the random sense, because it inevitably led to a backlash. However, Lenin agreed that spontaneity played a role in the revolutionary movement. V.I. Lenin, "What is to be Done?" Collected Works, 48 vols. (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1961) 5: 374.

[159] The pamphlet was written in April 1920 and was distributed prior to the Second Congress, which took place during the summer of 1920, for the purpose of discussion. According to Carr, this article was the last of his major writings and one of the most influential. It was written shortly after the civil war and in the spirit of "legitimate self-congratulations." Borkenau

revolutionary conditions, all their efforts would have failed without the correct "political strategy and tactics." The creation of the correct conditions for victory could only occur under the guidance of the *vanguard party* who possessed the *correct theory*. For Lenin, the issue of *correct theory* was crucial in building a revolutionary movement and this *correct theory* guided the Bolsheviks to success.

> "[F]acilitated by a correct revolutionary theory, which, in its turn, is not dogma, but assumes final shape only in close connection with the practical activity of a truly mass and truly revolutionary movement. [...] Bolshevism arose in 1903 on a very firm foundation of Marxist theory. The correctness of this revolutionary theory...has been proved, not only by the world experience throughout the nineteenth century but especially by the experience of the seekings and vacillations, the errors and disappointments of revolutionary thought in Russia."[160]

Lenin rationalised the victory of his party, not as luck, but as fate. If the Bolsheviks had not possessed the *correct theory* then victory would not have been possible, therefore the Bolsheviks must be in possession of the *correct theory*.

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insisted that the pamphlet was the Comintern's first attempt to interfere with Communist parties abroad. Angress asserted that the pamphlet was written with a dual purpose – to criticise Left wing elements within Communist parties and to win new supporters to Communism. E.H. Carr, A History of Soviet Russia: The Bolshevik Revolution, 3 vols. (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1953) 3: 177; Franz Borkenau, The Communist International (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1938)190-191; Pierre Broué, The German Revolution 1917 – 1923, trans. John Archer (Leiden: Brill, 2005) 402; Werner T. Angress, Stillborn Revolution: The Communist Bid For Power in Germany, 1921 – 1923 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963) 63.

[160] V.I. Lenin, " 'Left – Wing' Communism – An Infantile Disorder," Selected Works, 3 vols. (1964; Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975) 3: 294.

Lenin's desire to create uniformity amongst the Comintern's parties in no way meant the divorce of political practice from theory. Indeed, Lenin believed that the Bolsheviks had formulated the "correct" theory that could be applied all over Europe.[161] "We now possess quite considerable international experience, which shows very definitely that certain fundamental features of our revolution have a significance that is not local, or a peculiarly national, or Russian alone, but international."[162] This attitude of "correctness" resonated in the Comintern and their insistence that the other parties follow their model and, for the most part, the rank and file of the Comintern's national parties agreed. Their proof was the fact that the Russian party was the only party to base themselves on Marxist theory who had completed a successful revolution.[163] The idea was that the Bolsheviks had armed themselves with the *correct theory*, the *correct* revolutionary practice followed, and their reward was victory.[164]

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[161] Carr made the point that "the arguments and recommendations of the pamphlet were designed for the brief interval necessary to bring about this consummation [revolution in Western Europe]." That is to say Lenin intended the instructions in the pamphlet to be temporary measures. It was clear, based on the pamphlet itself, Lenin believed that West European parties, particularly the German Communist Party would shortly conduct their own revolutions. E.H. Carr, A History of Soviet Russia: The Bolshevik Revolution, 3 vols. (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1953) 3: 177.

[162] V.I. Lenin, " 'Left – Wing' Communism – An Infantile Disorder," Selected Works, 3 vols. (1964; Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975) 3: 291.

[163] Fernando Claudin made the interesting point that other parties were inclined to agree with Lenin. "On a more general theoretical plane, the October victory was seen as irrefutable proof of the absolutely scientific character of Marxism." Incidentally this was part of Luxemburg's point. Victory did not mean that the road to Socialism was sustainable. Socialism built on strong foundations with faulty materials would crumble i.e. the steps in between were just as important as the outcome. Although the October victory proved to many that Marxism was correct, the steps taken to gain that victory would be the true test. However, the rank and file of individual parties were not inclined to take into account theoretical or practical foundations and did not look beyond the victory. As a result they sided with Lenin whom they believed could show them the path to socialism. They demonstrated their confidence in the Bolsheviks through their ratification of Statutes and Conditions of Admission at the Second Congress, which consolidated Soviet control. Fernando Claudin, The Communist Movement: From Comintern to Cominform (1970; Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1975) 94; Rosa Luxemburg, "The Russian Revolution," Rosa Luxemburg Speaks, ed. Mary Alice Waters (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970).

[164] This may seem an overly simplistic attitude, but one must bear in mind that then as now, there would have been a percentage of party members who were interested in neither revolutionary theory nor Marx's dialectical methods. Some may have joined Marxist

Second, Lenin remained firmly committed to his version of *correct theory*, but he needed to convince the Comintern parties to adopt the Bolshevik model. Lenin emphasised the role that history played in their attainment of the *correct theory*. His pamphlet attempted to demonstrate the applicability of the Russian model to other countries through a discussion of the history of Bolshevism. Lenin described Russia's political struggle amongst the three main classes – the "liberal bourgeoisie," the "petty-bourgeois-democratic" (this included the social democrats as well as other revolutionary groups) and the revolutionary proletariat. These trends were able to mature and develop into revolutionary organisations and parties. All three groups sought change through revolution, however they differed on their methods and practical outcomes. The time to test these organisations quickly came in the 1905 – 1907 uprisings, which Lenin referred to as the "1905 dress rehearsal." The formation of Soviets demonstrated the powerful weapon of spontaneous mass action. Although the Tsar was victorious and a backlash followed, Lenin claimed that if it had not been for the lessons learned during the 1905 revolution then victory in 1917 would not have been possible. The spontaneous formation of Soviets was similar to the spontaneous destruction of machinery. It demonstrated working class' desire for change and the possibility for working class consciousness, however, as an unguided force their actions were followed by a backlash. Utilising the lessons learned in Russia in 1905 and 1917 Lenin hoped to transplant Russian style revolutions all over Europe.

Unfortunately, Lenin's historical assessment was flawed. Firstly, his argument neglected the simple fact that the historical conditions existing in

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revolutionary parties, not because they agreed with Marx but because Communist parties appeared radical and seemed to give a voice to their misery with promises of a better world.

Western Europe were different than those existing in Russia. Unlike Russia, political parties and Trade Unions were allowed to exist and had limited rights within the parliamentary system. The uprisings that took place in 1905/06 in Central Europe were not of the same magnitude as those that took place in Russia in 1905. It is true that mass strikes occurred but not on the same revolutionary scale as in Russia. In Germany, for example, the strikes were quickly subdued. Although the workers, particularly in the Ruhr Basin, were eager for the strikes to develop into a revolution, they did not have the support of the Trade Unions and as a result the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) was reluctant to encourage the strikers.[165] Unlike the Tsar, who was forced to make concessions, the Kaiser in Germany remained firmly in control and the situation returned to normal fairly quickly. Lenin's Russo-centric analysis did not highlight important lessons learned from other countries and the role played by others in the historical development of the Russian movement.

Secondly, Lenin's desire to transplant the Bolshevik's version of the "correct theory" to other countries neglected the unique theoretical traditions of each country. For example, the German party possessed a rich theoretical tradition whose origins traced back to Marx and Engels. It had developed under conditions that were different to those that existed in Russia. The SPD had emerged as an underground movement during Bismarck's Anti-Socialist laws to become a fully legal parliamentary party, from which the KPD split in 1914 after the majority voted for war credits in 1914. This contrasted to the Bolsheviks who had never experienced legality. Therefore, the assumption that

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[165] Carl Schorske, German Social Democracy 1905 – 1917: The Development of the Great Schism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955) 37; JP Nettl, Rosa Luxemburg, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1966) 1: 300-304; Paul Frölich, Rosa Luxemburg: Her Life and Work, trans. Edward Fitzgerald (1940; New York: Howard Fertig, 1969) 117.

only the Bolshevik experience allowed them to possess the *correct theory* invalidated the theoretical development of other countries such as Germany, who in the realm of theory had always been superior to Russians. Naturally the inability of the Germans to produce a successful revolution and the murder of its leaders Luxemburg and Liebknecht won the Bolsheviks support for their belief in their own theoretical superiority.

Lenin, in his propagation of the Bolshevik's version of *correct theory,* truly believed that he was doing what was best to push the revolution forward. However, in using force to drive the revolution the Comintern's parties were no longer in a position to develop on their own. Although Bolshevik propaganda was aware that revolutionary movements needed to develop, Lenin's Policy of Uniformity attempted to speed up the process. The assumption that the Bolsheviks were the only ones to possess the "correct theory" opened the door for Stalin's exploitation. In his drive to push the revolution forward Lenin was unable to see the devastation instilled in the Policy of Uniformity.

Centralism and Strict Discipline

In addition to *correct theory* Lenin believed centralism and strict party discipline were crucial to the procurement of a successful revolution. Lenin believed that the Bolsheviks would have been unable to obtain power if "iron discipline" and "strict discipline" did not reign within the party. However, Lenin continued to neglect the unique circumstances existing in each country. Lenin's insistence on "centralism" and "strict discipline" may have suited the conditions of Tsarist Russia but such a dramatic change in party practice was met with resistance in some of the Comintern's parties. Although Lenin's

discussions of a strict and disciplined party were consistent with the views that he had held since the early 1900's, the rigidity of his policies opened the door for Stalinist exploitation.

First, Lenin believed that a highly disciplined and centralised organisation were absolutely essential qualities of a revolutionary party. Lenin reiterated this notion throughout his pamphlet, 'Left-Wing' Communism – An Infantile Disorder and the Theses and Resolutions adopted at the Second Congress.

> "The strictest centralisation and discipline are required within the political party of the proletariat in order to counteract [petty-bourgeois atmosphere] (and that is its *principal* role) may be exercised correctly, successfully and victoriously. [...] Whoever brings about even the slightest weakening of the iron discipline of the party of the proletariat (especially during its dictatorship), is actually aiding the bourgeoisie against the proletariat."[166]

Lenin made it abundantly clear that anyone who disagreed with his notion of the party was, in fact, assisting the bourgeoisie. However, the German Left disagreed and they expressed their views in an oppositional pamphlet.[167] They

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[166] V.I. Lenin, " 'Left – Wing' Communism – An Infantile Disorder," Selected Works, 3 vols. (1964; Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975) 3: 310-311.

[167] Broué insisted that the ultra-left current had erupted throughout Europe. It revealed itself "vigorously" in Germany and resulted in the founding of the German Communist Workers' Party – *Kommunistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands* (KAPD) in April 1920. The principle theoreticians for the current were found in the Dutch Communist Party – Henriette Rolland-Holst, Hermann Gorter, and Anton Pannekoek. Lenin addressed the local German group in Frankfurt am Main who had published a pamphlet expressing the ideas of the opposition entitled, "The Split in the Communist Party of Germany (The Spartacus League)." The Left, in adopting the name the "Spartacus League," attempted to align themselves with Rosa Luxemburg and the tradition of "opposition" she was perceived to have established. The Left were opposed to the Bolshevik's method of organisation. They also expressed opposition to participation in the parliamentary elections and trade unions. In 1919 the issue of parliamentary participation and trade unions took second tier in the Comintern next to more pressing issues, but by 1920 these topics re-emerged as central issues. V.I. Lenin, " 'Left – Wing' Communism – An Infantile Disorder," Collected Works, 48 vols. (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1966) 31: 39;

argued that Bolsheviks drive for top down discipline appeared more important than the needs of the local party, thereby, alienating the leadership from the masses. The German Left were also hostile towards the Bolshevik's form of organisation. Under Luxemburg, the majority ruled the party. The Left criticised the Bolshevik's version of the party for creating a division between the party leadership and the masses. The Left claimed that they fought for the "dictatorship of the masses" while the Party Executive represented the "dictatorship of the leadership." This view was held, particularly amongst the young radical elements in the party. For Lenin their antagonism toward the Bolsheviks was a lack of situational understanding and a matter of principle versus compromise. Lenin pursued his attack on the Left but particularly the "Left-Wing" of the German Communist Party who he accused of possessing the "infantile disease of Leftism." Lenin dismissed these accusations as "Left-Wing childishness" but he could not deny that at times the Left were more popular than the sections that complied with the Bolsheviks.[168] In viewing the Left as disruptive children and not as outright enemies Lenin allowed room for the possibility of change. The discrepancy was a matter of tactics not a matter of politics. Both Lenin and the Left desired the same goal, they did not agree on how to make that goal a reality. Lenin hoped that in time he could convince the Left to join the side of the Bolsheviks.

Pierre Broué, The German Revolution 1917 – 1923, trans. John Archer (Leiden: Brill, 2005) 398; Herman Weber, Die Wandung Des Deutschen Kommunismus: Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimarer Republic, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1969) 1: 39.

[168] For this very reason Lenin believed that the Left posed a greater danger to the revolutionary struggle than the Right because the Left divided the revolutionary movement through their attacks on the Bolsheviks. Lenin was severe and uncompromising with the Right – the enemy of the proletariat. Although he saw the dangers posed by the Left to Bolshevism as more harmful, he viewed their actions as childish and did not instigate a complete break with them. V.I. Lenin, " 'Left – Wing' Communism – An Infantile Disorder," Collected Works, 48 vols. (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1966)

Second, Lenin and the Bolshevik's refusal to acknowledge the possibility of other revolutionary methods was demonstrated by the authoritarian terminology used in polices adopted at the Second Congress.[169] Lenin continued to propagate his notions of *centralism and strict discipline* as the only means by which to secure a successful revolution. The Second Congress provided a platform to create structural changes in the Comintern and where the true shift towards uniformity began.[170] The Comintern believed that it carried forth the tradition of the First International and their ultimate goal was the overthrow of the international bourgeoisie, the creation of international soviets, and the destruction of the State. The only possible means by which to accomplish these goals was through a strictly centralised organisation. However, the Statutes appeared repressive and removed any autonomy from the individual parties and placed the Comintern in control of the revolutionary movements. Although Lenin hoped to utilise the Statutes adopted at the Second Congress as a means

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[169] The Second World Congress of the Communist International took place in Leningrad and Moscow between July 19 and August 7, 1920 against the backdrop of the Polish-Soviet War, which appeared to be going well. The First Congress merely served as the founding Congress and no major decisions were made other than the founding of the Congress itself. Indeed any such decisions may have been subject to the claim of ill representation as many delegates had difficulty travelling to Russia because of the civil war. In 1919 of the 51 delegates only 9 had travelled from abroad. Unlike the First Congress, many of the delegates of the Second Congress represented parties from outside the Soviet Union – 37 countries were represented (Angress claimed that 41 countries were represented, while Agnew and McDermott and Weber placed the number at 37.) Germany was represented by three different parties – the KPD, KAPD, and the USPD, although the KAPD and the USPD were only guests they had consultative power but no voting rights. John Riddell, ed., The Communist International in Lenin's Time – Workers of the World and Oppressed Peoples, Unite! Proceedings and Documents of the Second Congress, 1920, 2 vols. (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1991) 1: 1-5; Werner T. Angress, Stillborn Revolution: The Communist Bid For Power in Germany, 1921 – 1923 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963) 64-66; Kevin McDermott and Jeremy Agnew, The Comintern: A History of Communism From Lenin to Stalin (London: Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1996) 17; Herman Weber, Die Wandung Des Deutschen Kommunismus: Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimarer Republic, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1969) 1: 31.

[170] The Statutes, in the spirit of Lenin's pamphlet "Left-Wing" Communism – An Infantile Disorder demanded uniformity and centralisation. The move toward uniformity was explicitly demonstrated in the Statutes and the Twenty-one Conditions of membership. The Statues of the Second Congress were adopted unanimously at Session 14 on August 4, 1920 with a vote of 237 to 156 delegates. Eric D. Weitz, Creating German Communism, 1890- 1990: From Popular Protests to Socialist State (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997) 98.

by which to push the revolution forward, it in fact, created an oppressive environment and opened the door for Stalinist exploitation. The Communist International elevated itself and the CPSU over and above all parties. Any parties who did not agree with the Comintern would be expelled. For example,

> "Point 4. The highest authority of the Communist International is the world congress of all parties and organizations belonging to it. [...] Only the world congress is empowered to change the program of the Communist International. The number of decisive votes allotted to each party or organization is determined by a special congress decision.
>
> Point 5. The world congress elects the Executive Committee of the Communist International.... The Executive Committee is responsible only to the world congress.
>
> Point 8. The party of the country where, by decision of the world congress, the Executive Committee is located bears the main burden of the Executive Committee's work [the Soviet Union].
>
> Point 9. [...] The Executive Committee of the Communist International has the authority to demand of its member parties the expulsion of groups or individuals that breach international discipline, as well as the authority to expel from the Communist International any party that contravenes the resolutions of the world congress."[171]

The theme of expulsion carried over to the "Theses on the Conditions for Admission" also known as the 21 Points or the 21 Conditions of

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[171] John Riddell, ed., The Communist International in Lenin's Time – Workers of the World and Oppressed Peoples, Unite! Proceedings and Documents of the Second Congress, 1920, 2 vols. (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1991) 2: 697-698.

Membership.[172] The "Theses on the Conditions of Admission" elaborated on the role of the individual member parties.

> "Point 2. Every organization wishing to join the Communist International must consistently and systematically remove reformists and centrists from all positions of any responsibility in the workers' movement…and replace them with reliable Communists….
>
> Point 6. Every party that wishes to belong to the Communist International is duty-bound to expose not only overt social patriotism but also the duplicity and hypocrisy of social pacifism [i.e. social democracy]….
>
> Point 7. Parties wishing to belong to the Communist International are duty-bound to recognize the need for a complete break with reformism and the policies of the Center…. The Communist International demands unconditionally and as an ultimatum that this break be carried out at the earliest possible date.
>
> Point 12. Parties belonging to the Communist International must be organised on the basis of the principle of democratic *centralism*. In the present epoch of intensified civil war, the Communist Party will be able to fulfil its duty only if it is organized in the most centralized way possible and governed by iron discipline, and if its central leadership, sustained by the confidence of the party membership, is strong, authoritative, and endowed with the fullest powers.

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[172] According to Deutscher the purpose for the 21 Conditions was to create a constitution that would bring unity through "a centralised and strong leadership in the Executive." For Weber the 21 Conditions were a precondition of establishing centralism in the Comintern. Isaac Deutscher, The Prophet Unarmed – Trotsky: 1921 – 1929, 3 vols. (New York: Vintage Books, 1965) 2: 148; Kevin McDermott and Jeremy Agnew, The Comintern: A History of Communism From Lenin to Stalin (London: Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1996) 23; Herman Weber, Die Wandung Des Deutschen Kommunismus: Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimarer Republic, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1969) 1: 31.

Point 14. Every party that wishes to belong to the Communist International is obligated to render unconditional assistance to every soviet republic struggling against the forces of the counterrevolution.

Point 21. Party members who reject on the principle the conditions and theses laid down by the Communist International must be expelled from the party. This applies in particular to delegates to the special congress."[173]

It is clear that Lenin viewed his authoritarian attitude as necessary during the revolutionary period. A centralised party structure and strict discipline were what enabled the Bolshevik party to survive revolution and civil war. The advancement of revolution in Europe was no different.

Third, Lenin's desperation to spread the revolution prevented him from taking into consideration some very important features of the Comintern's parties, primarily the issue of legality versus illegality. The Statutes and the "21 Conditions" demonstrated the rigid attitude of operating during wartime conditions. The revolution was coming and, therefore, strictness could be tolerated for a short period. The adoption of measures passed during the Second Congress reflected the hopeful mood in the Communist movement during the early 1920's. One could fully understand the necessity of discipline when an organisation was attempting to survive under the conditions of illegality in Tsarist Russia. But was this discipline necessary under peaceful conditions, during times of legality or semi-legality? For Lenin the answer was yes – discipline was necessary until a world wide Socialist outcome had been achieved. By 1920 the KPD operated as a semi-legal party and Lenin

[173] John Riddell, ed., The Communist International in Lenin's Time – Workers of the World and Oppressed Peoples, Unite! Proceedings and Documents of the Second Congress, 1920, 2 vols. (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1991) 2: 767, 769, 771.

emphasised that during times of illegality Party discipline was crucial. He attempted to explain the basis for leadership and the difference between operating during legality and illegality. For Lenin the Leftist (comprising of mostly young radicals) did not comprehend the nature of an illegal organisation, having been accustomed to working solely under legal conditions as part of the SPD. However, Lenin had never experienced a party that operated under legal conditions and did not understand that the conditions in Western Europe were fundamentally different than those of Tsarist Russia.[174] Lenin wanted to force the German party to adopt party practice that went against their traditions.

Lenin may not have understood the difference between working under legal and illegal conditions but he was fully aware of the importance of a European victory. The oppressiveness of "21 Conditions" appeared as a means to an end. The rank and file of many of the Comintern's parties were willing to adhere to Bolshevik's demands of discipline because they believed that the Bolsheviks held the key to victory. Lenin's Policy of Uniformity and the "21 Conditions" were intended as means of pushing the revolution forward. In order to do so sympathy for the Second International had to be destroyed. The Comintern had hoped to split the parties of the Left-Centre most notably the USPD, the Italian Socialist Party and the British ILP by discrediting their leaders and by luring their rank and file to the side of the Comintern but at the same time the "21

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[174] The conditions that existed in Western Europe were different from those in Tsarist Russia. For example, "reformism" was a rival to the revolutionary movement in Western Europe, whereas in Russia it did not really mean anything since parliamentarianism did not really hold much meaning. There was also the question of legal versus illegal actions. Lenin had difficulty understanding why workers in the West were reluctant to engage in illegal activity whereas in Russia it was the natural order of things inside the revolutionary movement. E.H. Carr, A History of Soviet Russia: The Bolshevik Revolution 3 vols. (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1953) 3: 180; Pierre Broué, The German Revolution 1917 – 1923, trans. John Archer (Leiden: Brill, 2005) 405; Franz Borkenau, The Communist International (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1938)191-192; Milorad M. Drachkovitch and Branko Lazitch, Lenin and the Comintern (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1972) 265.

Conditions" were not designed to exclude the dissidents of the Left. As demonstrated with Lenin's "Left-Wing" Communism – An Infantile Disorder the Comintern viewed the dissent of the Left as childish rhetoric – misguided children who could potentially be shown the correct path and brought back into the fold. This sympathetic attitude was not extended to the Centrists such as Kautsky and Hilferding whom Lenin and the Comintern regarded with hostility. It is clear from Lenin's writing that he hoped that the Policy of Uniformity – through its promotion of strict discipline – would lead to a world revolution.

While Lenin's Policy of Uniformity appeared repressive, in reality Lenin did not possess enough power to enforce the "21 Conditions" or the Statutes adopted at the Second Congress. Unfortunately in less than a decade following Lenin's death all of that would change. By the Sixth Congress the Comintern dominated the world's Communist parties. Stalin had consolidated his power and dissent was no longer treated as "childish rhetoric" but rather it was severely punished. Stalin's speech at the Presidum meeting in 1928 made it quite clear that the time for tolerance and open debate had come to an end. Stalin used the "21 Conditions" and Lenin's drive toward centralism and discipline to rationalise his own position and to prove that the Comintern's parties were subordinate not equal to the Central Committee. "Point 12 of the 21 conditions stipulates that the Party must 'be organised in the most centralised fashion', that 'iron discipline bordering on military discipline must prevail'."[175]

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[175] Interestingly point 12 of the "21 Conditions" (quoted in full above) did not mention "strict discipline bordering on military discipline." Point 12 insisted that it was the condition of civil war that necessitated the need for "iron discipline" and stipulated that the party required the confidence of the party members. In his speech, Stalin did not mention any of these conditions to Point 12. Instead he pilfered the sections that would suite his needs and discarded the rest. John Riddell, ed., The Communist International in Lenin's Time – Workers of the World and Oppressed Peoples, Unite! Proceedings and Documents of the Second Congress, 1920, 2 vols. (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1991) 2: 769; Joseph Stalin, "Stalin's Speech at the Presidium Meeting of the ECCI held on December 19, 1928," Communist International 6.4 (1929) 146.

Lenin had hoped to utilise the *centralism* and *strict discipline* to destroy the capitalist system and to liberate the world's proletariat. Stalin, over a short period of time, manipulated Lenin's words and in the name of Lenin destroyed the world's revolutionary movement.

Consequences of the Lenin's Policy of Uniformity for the KPD

Lenin's Policy of Uniformity reflected the Bolshevik's desperation to spread the revolution. Believing that a German revolution was imperative to their own survival they attempted to force their party model onto the KPD without taking into consideration the circumstances surrounding the German party.[176] The murder of Luxemburg and Liebknecht placed the KPD at a crucial

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[176] The Kapp-Lüttwitz Putsch signified the unsettled state of the Weimar Republic. On March 13, 1920 General von Lüttwitz, leading a Right wing military band known as the *Freikorps*, marched into Berlin and established a right wing dictatorship under Dr. Wolfgang Kapp. The Ebert government fled to Stuttgart and then to Dresden. The General Federation of Labour under the leadership of Karl Legien called a general strike in support of the SPD government. SPD members followed suite and the mass movement brought the country to a stand still. In the Ruhr strikes were called in defence of the government and quickly manifested themselves into an offensive action. Workers began arming themselves, workers' councils were established, and a Red Army was established, which managed to successfully defeat the Reichswehr and the Freikorps in armed clashes. By March 17 Kapp fled Germany to Hungary. Although the Kapp-Lüttwitz Putsch had been defeated the workers councils remained firmly in place with a list of demands for the SPD government. By April 1920 the Reichswehr had regained control of the Ruhr and had set up military courts to punish militant strikers. The KPD's response to the Putsch was confused. The KPD Zentrale initially did not support the strikes and called for passivity. Many of the local organisations ignored the Zentrale and called for a general strike. Levi, who was in jail at the time sent a scathing letter to the Zentrale insisting that it take advantage of the revolutionary situation. The KPD's confused reaction to the Kapp-Lüttwitz Putsch cost it dearly.

Broué insisted that that Kapp-Lüttwitz Putsch revealed the most serious weakness of the party and it in effect instigated the split with the KAPD in April 1920. Angess insisted that it was actually the issue of National Bolshevism that instigated the split. Ever since the party's founding in 1919 a section of the KPD favoured cooperation with the Right wing Nationalists. Levi's failure to purge them allowed an opposition to develop. Initially Radek condemned the idea National Bolshevism, but in 1923 he promoted it through the "Schlageter Campaign." While the KPD's flirtation with National Bolshevism fluctuated during the Weimar Period, the KPD's relationship with Right Wing Nationalists falls outside the scope of this thesis. For Zetkin's account of the Putsch see Clara Zetkin, "The Situation in Germany," The Communist International 2.13 (1920): 2496-2500; G. Zinoviev, "When and Under what Conditions Soviets of Workers' Deputies Should be Formed," Communist International 2.11-12 (1920):2162-2163; Pierre Broué, The German Revolution 1917 – 1923, trans. John Archer (Leiden: Brill, 2005) 325-326, 351-380, 393; Eric D. Weitz, Creating German Communism, 1890- 1990: From Popular Protests to Socialist State (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997) 96-97; Julius Braunthal, History of the International: 1864 – 1914, 2 vols. (London: Thomas Nelson and

turning point. Without a strong internal leadership to guide and protect it from the medalling of the Bolsheviks, the KPD was left particularly vulnerable. Bolshevik interference had tremendous impact on the theoretical and practical development of the KPD. The Bolshevik's arrogance in their own theoretical superiority prevented them from taking into consideration the needs and historical experiences of the German party.

This section will demonstrate that although it was not Lenin's intention, his drive for uniformity in the Comintern served to cripple the Communist movement in Germany by preventing it from naturally developing a strong leadership from within the movement. Discipline and loyalty to the Comintern overrode the German Communist Party's need for strong leadership. The Comintern's interference in the KPD and the party's inability to create leaders pushed it into the shadow of the CPSU and the Comintern, eventually weakening the movement leaving the party as a subordinate of the Soviet Union.

Firstly, Lenin's Uniformity Policy thwarted the efforts of the newly formed KPD leadership to advance the theoretical traditions of the KPD by forcing policies onto it that, based on their history and traditions, the leadership could not tolerate. Shortly after the murder of their friend and leader, the old Spartacist found themselves increasingly isolated and marginalized as the party fell under the influence of Karl Radek and the Comintern. The old Left of the

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Sons LTD, 1966) 2: 218-219; Werner T. Angress, Stillborn Revolution: The Communist Bid For Power in Germany, 1921 – 1923 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963) 41-42; Warren Lerner, Karl Radek: The Last Internationalist (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1970) 89-90, 119-123; Ruth Fischer, Stalin and German Communism: A Study of the Origins of the State Party (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1948) 92-96, 267-273; Siegfried Bahne, " 'Sozialfaschismus' Deutschland zur Geschichte eines Politischen Begriffs," International Review of Social History 10.2 (1965): 212; Evelyn Anderson, Hammer or Anvil: The Story of the German Working-Class Movement (1945; New York: Oriole Editions, 1973) 71-76; Helga Grebing, The History of the German Labour Movement: A Survey, trans. Edith Körner (Leamington Spa: Berg Publishers, Ltd., 1985) 126-128.

SPD were suddenly labelled the Right wing of the KPD. In February 1921 those on the Right – Paul Levi, Clara Zetkin, Ernst Däumig, Adolf Hoffman and Otto Braß[177] – resigned from the party leadership over differences with the Comintern.[178]

As they departed the party leadership they took with them the history and SPD traditions that Rosa Luxemburg had hoped to utilise to build a mass based party – a decentralised party structure, a democratic party similar to the SPD but without the bureaucracy, and ultimately the old SPD's dedication to Marxism. Levi and his colleagues on the Right not only played a key role in keeping the old traditions alive but on a practical level the Right wing of the party determined the party's policy and set its course. They highlighted the importance of maintaining the relationship between Marxist theory and

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[177] Clara Zetkin had been involved in the labour movement since the days of the anti-Socialist laws and she had also been a close friend of Rosa Luxemburg. At this point, in 1921, she was still critical of the Bolshevik involvement in the KPD, but her views began to change after the Third Congress of the Comintern in the summer of 1921. By October 1921 she had begun advocating the need for unity. Ernst Däumig was a former leader of the Revolutionary Shop Stewards and was rather displeased with the notion of taking orders from Zinoviev with regard to party matters. Adolf Hoffman and Otto Braß had joined the KPD from the USPD. For further details on Zetkin's position on party unity see Clara Zetkin, "On the Situation in the German Party," International Press Correspondence 1.2 (1921); Werner T. Angress, Stillborn Revolution: The Communist Bid For Power in Germany, 1921 – 1923 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963) 100-101.

[178] A disagreement took place over the recent split in the Italian Socialist Party. Levi rejected the Comintern's schism policy and he warned that repeated splits in the movement would be detrimental to the Communist movement as a whole. When a vote was taken to decide whether Levi's position was right or wrong he resigned as chairman along with his four colleagues. They produced a joint statement in *Die Rote Fahne* claiming that they could not carry out party policy that they fundamentally disagreed with. The Comintern Executive Committee condemned their resignation. "In a Communist party the leaders nominated by workers have as little right to leave their posts without permission, as a red army man has to leave his sentry post." Heinrich Brandler and Walter Stoecker shared the chairmanship, replaced Levi and his colleagues. Paul Frölich, Ernest Meyer, Paul Böttcher, and Max Sievers became secretaries, and Paul Wegmann replaced Hoffmann as alternate. "Withdrawal of Five Members of the Central Committee of the United Communist Party of Germany," Communist International 3.16-17 (1921): 30; Werner T. Angress, Stillborn Revolution: The Communist Bid For Power in Germany, 1921 – 1923 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963) 99-101; Herman Weber, Die Wandlung des deutschen Komminismus: Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimarer Republik, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1969) 1: 40-41; Pierre Broué, The German Revolution 1917 – 1923, trans. John Archer (Leiden: Brill, 2005) 475-489; Franz Borkenau, The Communist International (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1938) 208-213; Julius Braunthal, History of the International: 1864 – 1914, 2 vols. (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons LTD, 1966) 2: 225-228.

revolutionary practice. They utilised Marxist methods to determine the ripeness of the movement for revolution. They debated issues in terms of "objective" versus "subjective" factors i.e. the relative strength of the State in relation to the German labour movement. [179] The Right maintained that the only way to achieve their ultimate goal of Socialism was to build a mass party, educated in Marxism.

Essentially the Right wing's reluctance to become involved in premature uprisings centred around their past experiences under the repressive Anti-Socialist Laws and the backlash that occurred in 1919. Once Levi and his colleagues resigned these theoretical relations lost importance. The new members of the KPD had not lived through the repression of the Anti-Socialist laws nor were they grounded in the tradition of Marxist theory. They were younger, more radical, and impatient. They did not understand the Right wing's tendency towards caution. The Right wing counter balanced the young radicals and attempted to keep the traditions and the legacy left behind by Rosa Luxemburg alive. The resignation of the *Zentrale* from the Comintern marked the beginning of a dramatic theoretical shift in the KPD. Rather than strike a blow in the face of the Bolsheviks, their resignations merely left theoretical a void, which Lenin and the Comintern were all too eager to fill with Russian traditions and Russian methods.

Secondly, Lenin's Uniformity Policy undermined the creation of leadership from within the German movement.[180] Certainly one can acknowledge that the

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[179] Werner T. Angress, Stillborn Revolution: The Communist Bid For Power in Germany, 1921 – 1923 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963) 112.

[180] Levi was annoyed that the KAPD and the USPD had been invited to the Second World Congress and had been granted consultative powers. He felt his position undermined when he found out that the Bolsheviks had been secretly negotiating with the KAPD and the USPD. Werner T. Angress, Stillborn Revolution: The Communist Bid For Power in Germany, 1921 –

resignation of Levi and his four colleagues was a political statement and one cannot blame them for the consequences that followed.[181] In reality their resignations demonstrated the actual weakness of the leadership itself. A strong leadership does not need to resign in order to demonstrate its opposition even in the face of the majority. Once the opposition resigns it loses its influence in shaping any further legislation and a leadership that cannot comprehend this does not have a grasp of the wider picture.

Traditionally, the KPD leadership had always been weak and unable to control the chaos that existed throughout the German labour movement in the early 1920's. This issue of weak leadership was not limited to the KPD in the 1920's. In reality the problem goes back to the decentralised tradition of the SPD which heavily influenced Rosa Luxemburg's notion of a mass party. It is clear from her decision to take part in the January uprisings in 1919 that Rosa Luxemburg was prepared to capitulate to the will of the majority regardless of whether she viewed the action as a complete mistake. One can argue that this was because she held a highly democratic horizontal structure above all other things.[182] However, movements with horizontal structures can only function if they posses a strong base. In 1919 the revolutionary labour movement in

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1923 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963) 64-67; Warren Lerner, Karl Radek: The Last Internationalist (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1970) 106-107; Milorad M. Drachkovitch and Branko Lazitch, Lenin and the Comintern (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1972) 309-311.

[181] Rosa Leviné-Meyer, wife of Ernest Meyer, was quite keen to blame many of the KPD's problems on Paul Levi. She claimed that Levi was impatient and dismissive of intellectual inferiors and that he frightened away a large number of people who could have been relied on to be the backbone of the movement. She insisted that this was the root cause that led to the disintegration of the Communist movement in Germany. However, it also appears that she was writing in defence of her husband's chairmanship, who was heavily criticised, particularly by the Comintern. Rosa Leviné-Meyer, Inside German Communism: Memoirs of Party Life in the Weimar Republic (London: Pluto Press Ltd., 1977) 15-19, 43.

[182] See Herman Weber, Die Waldung des deutschen Kommunismus: Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimarer Republik, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1969); JP Nettl, Rosa Luxemburg, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1966).

Germany was strong but that is not to say that the KPD possessed a strong power base. It was a new party caught up in the revolutionary tide of the time.

Unlike the Bolshevik party, the KPD never possessed a strong leadership that was capable of guiding those that were sympathetic to the revolutionary cause. Luxemburg was not willing to dictate party procedure to the masses nor was she willing to desert the masses and go into hiding – this mistake cost her her life. Luxemburg failed to realise that once she became the leader of a movement her life was no longer her own to gamble with. She did not see the bigger picture, her survival meant the life or death of the movement. This problem of weak leadership plagued the KPD from the onset and was further exasperated by the dominating role played by the Comintern. The drive for revolution existed in the KPD, but it lacked strong leadership to guide it. The resignation of the Right, merely proved their willingness to yield to the Comintern rather than fight for their position.

Finally, Lenin's Policy of Uniformity demonstrated that internal party matters were secondary to discipline, obedience, and loyalty to the Comintern, thus leaving the KPD a subordinate of the Soviet Union. Paul Levi was expelled from the Communist Party for his open criticism of the Mansfeld uprising in March 1921. [183] He insisted that if the KPD were to take the offensive position that it would result in bloodbath and he refused to take part. The uprising, led by Béla Kun, took place regardless of Levi's warnings and

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[183] Conan Fischer claimed that Levi resignation actually had to do with the National Question and his attempts to recruit right wing extremists in Munich. Under scrutiny by his Berlin colleagues he resigned. Unfortunately Fischer did not offer a primary source for this fresh allegation and he failed to mention Levi's conflict with the Bolshevik party over the Bolsheviks schism policy in Italy and the Mannsfeld uprising. Fischer's allegation of Levi's nationalism seemed to play into his Cold War premise that Communism and Fascism were no different. Conan Fischer, German Communism and the Rise of Nazism (London: MacMillan Press, 1991) 32-33.

true to Levi's predictions the Mansfeld uprising was a massacre.[184] Yet no one in the Comintern took responsibility for the actions.[185] Levi, who refused to participate in the action was essentially, hung with his own rope. The Comintern insisted that regardless of Levi's position it was the KPD's duty to place itself at the front a workers' uprising. Levi was expelled for his failure to comply with Comintern policy. In reality Levi was not only expelled for braking ranks but, more precisely, he was expelled for his post-uprising criticism, in which he criticised the Comintern and the Soviet leaders.[186]

Lenin, in a letter to Zinoviev, stated, "The crux of the matter is that Levi in very many respects is *right politically*. Unfortunately, he is guilty of a number of breaches of discipline for which the Party has expelled him."[187] The Bolshevik leaders held Levi's open criticism of the Mansfeld massacre as more devastating to the revolutionary cause than Béla Kun, who actually led the uprising. Levi's "braking in the ranks" was highlighted while Kun's

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[184] Béla Kun is most well known for his role in the failed Hungarian revolution in 1919, in which his disastrous attempt to establish a Hungarian Soviet fell under the assault of counter-revolutionary forces. Following the Mansfeld uprising Kun was recalled to Moscow.

[185] It remains unclear who actually sent Béla Kun to Germany, whether he arrived on his own volition or if he was commissioned to incite revolution by one of the Bolshevik leaders. Levi insisted that the "action" originated from the head of one man – Béla Kun. The "Rightist," certainly, had not requested his presence and neither Radek nor the Bolsheviks claimed responsibility for his destructive actions. Paul Levi, Unser Weg Wider den Putschismus (Berlin: A. Seehof & Co., 1921) 36.

[186] While Levi claimed that he did not blame the Executive Committee of the Comintern, he insisted that there was a lot of pressure on the Zentrale to make up for its "inactivity" during the Kapp Putsch. Levi insisted that the Communists became victims of their own slogans. The members were not savvy enough to know when a revolutionary situation did not exist and the Zentrale failed in its task to guide the party in the right direction. The Zentrale itself appeared to be unaware of its relationship to the proletariat during an action. Levi concluded that the leadership of the ECCI was inadequate. The reason for this inadequacy had to do with technical difficulties and poor postal communications leaving Western Europe isolated. Paul Levi, Unser Weg Wider den Putschismus (Berlin: A. Seehof & Co., 1921) 29-30, 33-37, 53-55; Karl Radek, "The Downfall of Levi," Communist International 3.16-17 (1921): 20-29; Paul Frölich, "Der Fall Levi," Die Internationale 3.4 (1921): 115-22; Karl Radek, "Lehren der Märzkämpfe," Die Internationale 3.8 (1921): 277-280.

[187] Lenin had not intended the expulsion of Levi to be permanent. In the same letter Lenin stated that Levi's expulsion should be a *fixed term* "say at sixth months." After the six months he would be permitted to seek readmission. This is a striking contrast to expulsion under Stalin where expulsion was a form of political death. V.I. Lenin, "Remarks on the Draft Theses on Tactics for the Third Congress of the Communist International – Letter to G.Y. Zinoviev," Selected Works, 3 vols. (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1971) 3: 566, 569.

misjudgement of the revolutionary situation was relatively ignored. In fact, in Trotsky's personal notes he dismissed Levi's criticism as a distortion of the "political perspective" and asserted that such action threatened to introduce "demoralisation" into the ranks of the KPD during a time when unity was required.[188] Responsibility for the massacre was of secondary importance to discipline and obedience. This sent a very strong message to other Comintern parties – right or wrong party discipline overrode the needs of individual parties. The accuracy of Levi's evaluation was of little importance to the Comintern. It did not matter if the masses were headed for a massacre, if the Comintern ordered the party's participation then the party's leaders must obey. [189]

During a time when the fledgling KPD needed to nurture and develop the working class movement in Germany, rather than offer guidance, Lenin and the Comintern attempted to impose their model on the KPD in order to force the revolutionary struggle in Germany forward. Desperation and arrogance prevented the Bolsheviks from acknowledging the internal needs of the Germany party. The drive for revolution existed in Germany, however, as Lenin put it in *What is to be Done*, in *embryonic* form. Lenin could not see that

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[188] Trotsky's personal notes actually blame the "blatant treachery of the social-democrats and Independents" as being the responsible parties in the massacre. Levi, in turn, was merely repeating their arguments. Leon Trotsky, "The March Revolutionary Movement in Germany (personal notes)," The First Five Years of the Communist International, 2 vols. (London: New Park Publications, 1973) 1: 197.

[189] The clamp down on open opposition did not end with Levi's expulsion. By the fall of 1921 Lenin had begun advocating the need for a purge of the Russian party. "The purification of the Communist Party is apparently developing into a most serious and enormously important task. [...] We must cleanse the party of the swindlers, of the bureaucrats, of the insincere and unsteadfast communists and the Mensheviks, who, have changed their color but who at heart still remain Mensheviks." It certainly must have caused enough of a stir in the German Party for Wilhelm Pieck, a former student of Rosa Luxemburg at the SPD Marxist school, to come to the defence of the Lenin's policy. Pieck insisted that Levi's accusation, that Lenin was more interested in building a small, unblemished party rather than building a mass party, might appear true. However, it was important for the Russian party to keep clear of "hostile forces." Pieck insisted that "cleansing" actually strengthened the workers' government rather than weakened it. V.I. Lenin, "On Cleansing the Party," International Press Correspondence 1.2 (1921): 18-19; Wilhelm Pieck, "Enter the Communist Party!" International Press Correspondence 1.4 (1921): 34.

his insistence on developing a conscious working class also pertained to the situation in Germany. Revolutions, just as working class movements, can not be created by force. The development toward a conscious working class struggle must come from within the movement. The movement itself must develop its own leadership who will guide the revolutionary struggle. A leadership that is imposed from the outside – one that does not take into consideration the history and the traditions of the movement – will find itself unable to guide the struggle. The fledgling KPD was absent of strong leadership, however, given time it may have developed leaders from within to guide the struggle. The Bolsheviks did not have time to wait – their survival depended on the revolution spreading. Their impatience prevented the KPD from developing into a mass based party envisioned by Rosa Luxemburg. Once discipline and loyalty overrode the need of the movement the revolutionary struggle in Germany became handicapped. The KPD ceased to be in a position where it could develop leaders and the movement from within.

II. The Comintern's Policy of "Bolshevisation"

The Ruhr crisis of 1923 and rising inflation marked a period of political and economic instability in Germany. French and Belgium forces invaded the Ruhr in January because the Germans had fallen behind on their reparation payments as stipulated in the Treaty of Versailles. The German government advocated a policy of "passive resistance" whereby a united front of workers, employers, and officials was formed against the French. This form of resistance lasted a few months until the German government lost control of inflation. By April 1923 the economic situation had deteriorated and the Cuno government was

forced to resign in August. The KPD had hoped to transform the economic and political instability into a revolutionary situation and the KPD awaited instructions from Moscow. Brandler was summoned to Moscow where he asked the Comintern to send Trotsky to assist in organising the German revolution. The CPSU and the Comintern leaders were too embroiled in the power struggle inside the CPSU to allow Trotsky out of their sight. Radek was sent instead. The KPD's attempts to rally the masses was disjointed and disorganised. The result was a brutal defeat and followed by severe repression.[190] Although Brandler had asked the Comintern and the CPSU for guidance, neither the Comintern nor the CPSU shared in the responsibility for the 1923 failure. Brandler, Thalheimer, and Radek were used as scapegoats and held responsible for the defeat. Zinoviev's article clearly blamed the German party and its leaders for the defeat.

> "The political situation in Germany before and during the October events was objectively revolutionary.... The retreat of the party in the October struggles is to be explained not only by organisatory, military or technical defects, nor by the unfavourable general proportion of forces, which was far more unfavourable when the party adopted its measures for the struggle than in the decisive month, but before all by the mistakes in regard to the tactical and strategical attitude of the

[190] For our purposes a detailed description of the events that transpired during 1923 is not essentially as this thesis is concerned with the aftermath of 1923 and its consequences for the KPD. For a more detailed description see Victor Serge, Witness to the German Revolution: Writings from Germany 1923, trans. Ian Birchall (London: Redwords, 2000); Pierre Broué, The German Revolution 1917 – 1923, trans. John Archer (Leiden: Brill, 2005); Ruth Fischer, Stalin and German Communism: A Study of the Origins of the State Party (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1948); Werner T. Angress, Stillborn Revolution: The Communist Bid For Power in Germany, 1921 – 1923 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963); Herman Weber, Die Wandung Des Deutschen Kommunismus: Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimarer Republic, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1969); Julius Braunthal, History of the International: 1864 – 1914, 2 vols. (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons LTD, 1966).

> party in the struggle for winning over the majority of the party which was the first premise for success. These mistakes were the result of a false valuation of the Party's role in these struggles."[191]

Brandler and Thalheimer were removed from their leadership positions and Radek was recalled to Moscow. Trotsky, who had very little to do with the planning of the German revolution was also implicated in its failure. As Agnew and McDermott put it, Trotsky "was guilty by association." The Comintern and the CPSU never reflected on their own role in the German defeat. [192]

The devastating defeat of the "German October" in 1923 marked the end of a revolutionary era. Up to this point the German party believed that the world revolution was imminent. However, no successful socialist revolution had occurred in any other country except Russia. All attempts had been systematically put down by counter-revolutionary forces and were followed by severe backlashes. By the end of the revolutionary period of 1919 – 1923 many Communist parties throughout Western and Eastern Europe operated on a semi-legal or illegal basis. Capitalism had firmly managed to re-establish itself. This period became known as the "period of relative stabilisation."

Lenin's death in 1924 and the failed revolution of 1923 changed everything. The Soviet leaders were forced to refocus their attention on rebuilding the Soviet economy until the revolutionary tide turned. In the CPSU the power

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[191] G. Zinoviev, "Theses on the Tactics of the October Retreat and on the next Tasks of the C.P. of Germany," International Press Correspondence, 4.1 (1924): 1.

[192] Kevin McDermott and Jeremy Agnew, The Comintern: A History of Communism From Lenin to Stalin (London: Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1996) 45; Pierre Broué, The German Revolution 1917 – 1923, trans. John Archer (Leiden: Brill, 2005) 817-818; Ruth Fischer, Stalin and German Communism: A Study of the Origins of the State Party (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1948) 311-317; Herman Weber, Die Wandung Des Deutschen Kommunismus: Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimarer Republic, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1969) 1: 43-52.

struggle that followed Lenin's death served to discredit the old Bolshevik's and paved the way for Stalin to emerge as the premier lone leader. In the Comintern, Lenin's death and the "period of relative stabilisation" had a detrimental effect on the development of revolutionary theory as well as the political practice of the Comintern's parties, in particular the German party. In an effort to contain and control its member parties the Comintern introduced the policy of "Bolshevisation." "Bolshevisation," in reality, was a form of Russification. Loyalty and obedience became important features of the Comintern even when its course was marked by contradictory zigzag shifts between the Right and Left. This policy of "zigzags" had a profound effect on the CPSU and the Comintern. Prior to the battle between the "Right" against the "Left Opposition" all Marxist parties believed that the Soviet Union must bide its time and wait until revolution broke out in other countries. The policy of Bolshevisation was developed by Zinoviev in the battle against Trotsky and began the destruction of old Marxist theory.[193] Internationally Bolshevisation targeted Trotsky, in Germany Bolshevisation attacked Luxemburg and her supporters.

This section will discuss the power struggle inside the CPSU, the Comintern's policy of Bolshevisation, and the detrimental effect that it had on the theoretical and practical development of the German movement. The "period of relative stabilisation" and the Comintern's policy of Bolshevisation marked a tremendous watershed in the course that KPD pursued. Essentially it

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[193] According to Deutscher "Bolshevisation" was not only Zinoviev and Stalin's method of refashioning the European Communist movement into the Russian image but also it was a way to stamp out International opposition i.e. it was a way of ridding the Comintern of any individual members who supported Trotsky. Isaac Deutscher, The Prophet Unarmed – Trotsky: 1921 – 1929, 3 vols. (New York: Vintage Books, 1965) 2: 150.

was during this period that the foundations were laid for the development of Social Fascism in Germany.

Power Struggle in the CPSU

Lenin's third stroke, 10 months before his death, left him unable to speak let alone work. In effect his role as leader had been terminated. Lenin's ill health threw the Bolshevik party into a frenzy over who would succeed him. A power struggle ensued that forever changed the political practice of Communist parties around the world. Inside the Soviet Union the struggle for power was plagued with fluctuations in alliances, which led to dramatic changes in tactics and policies. Originally the alliances were forged with the specific purpose of defeating Trotsky.[194] By the time Lenin had died in 1924 Trotsky had been stripped of any real influence in the party.[195] Those that supported Trotsky were systematically purged.[196] The power struggle left the entire CPSU tarnished. The brutal nature of the power struggle discredited the reputation of the old Bolshevik leaders, with the exception of Stalin. Although the power struggle in the CPSU was marked by fluctuations in alliances and zigzagging polices, it had

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[194] Subtle assaults were launched against Trotsky. Although Zinoviev's article did not name Trotsky it subtly attacked the value of Trotsky's *theory of permanent revolution.* The article played up the role of the peasantry and claimed that without the peasantry as an ally the victory of the proletariat would not have been possible. Trotsky's *theory of permanent revolution* was inadequate because it "ignored" the peasantry. G. Zinoviev, "What is Bolshevism?" International Press Correspondence 4.3 (1924): 18; also see Leon Trotsky, My Life: An Attempt at an Autobiography (1971; Middlesex: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1975) 535.

[195] According to Trotsky, he was officially relived of his duties as the People's Commissary of War in January 1925. By his own admission he yielded his military post without a fight, "thereby wresting from [his] opponents' hands their weapon of insinuation concerning [his] military intentions." Leon Trotsky, My Life: An Attempt at an Autobiography (1971; Middlesex: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1975) 540.

[196] Carr sited the example of student demonstrations. In December several articles were published in Pravda launching the Stalinists full-scale attack on Trotsky. The paper refused to print any articles favouring Trotsky and the opposition. Students held demonstrations in favour of the opposition. The result was a purge of the Central Committee of the Komsomol. E.H. Carr, The Russian Revolution: From Lenin to Stalin (1917 – 1929) (Basingstokes: Palgrave, 1979) 67.

a tremendous impact inside and outside the Soviet Union. The battles scarred the reputations of the most likely candidates for leadership, Trotsky, Kamenev, and Zinoviev and paved the way for Stalin to emerge as the premier lone leader.

First, Trotsky was targeted because he appeared to be the best suited candidate to succeed Lenin.[197] He had worked alongside Lenin during the Bolshevik revolution and during the Civil War he had been the Commissar of the Red Army. After the Civil War he maintained ties with the military and some of his greatest support came from the military, as well as from the youth movement. His close ties to the military certainly made him appear threatening to his opponents. However, there was a lot of animosity towards him and his sudden closeness to Lenin. Trotsky had joined the Bolsheviks much later than the others and, in fact, had spent many years in disagreement with Lenin. It seemed unacceptable that someone who had not struggled alongside the Bolsheviks should be allowed to lead their party. However, not a single candidate was strong enough to challenge Trotsky on his own. Therefore, an alliance (known as the Triumvirate) was formed between Zinoviev, Kamenev, and Stalin.[198]

Second, the power struggle changed the way in which internal disputes were handled. Rather than conduct open debates based on theoretical and practical differences the participants lost sight of what was important – pushing the revolution forward. The battles were forged on a personal basis with the

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[197] The Twelfth Congress of the CPSU assembled in April. Its opening paid a spontaneous homage to Trotsky and Lenin. The chairman read tributes that had poured in from all over the country – from party cells, trade unions, and groups of workers and students – paying homage to Lenin and Trotsky. The Triumvirs were surprised and annoyed. Isaac Deutscher, The Prophet Unarmed – Trotsky: 1921 – 1929, 3 vols. (New York: Vintage Books, 1965) 2: 94.

[198] According to Carr, Zinoviev openly believed that he was the best suited to be Lenin's successor and, at the time, Trotsky appeared to be his greatest obstacle. During this period Stalin remained rather silent about his ambitions toward the position. E.H. Carr, The Russian Revolution: From Lenin to Stalin (1917 – 1929) (Basingstokes: Palgrave, 1979) 68.

purpose of discrediting one another's reputations. At first, the battles were mostly forged between Zinoviev and Kamenev against Trotsky. Accusations against Trotskyism began appearing in the press.[199] During this time Stalin, who was not seen as a threat, remained in the background with clean hands, and almost appeared as the moderate in the battles.

By 1925 the Triumvirate had managed to isolate Trotsky and stripped him of any real influence in the party but this was done at a great cost.[200] Rather than a clear victor in the battles, the power struggle damaged the reputations of both sides, with the exception of Stalin, who walked away stronger. In their battle against Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev were unable to see the forces working against them. When Zinoviev and Kamenev realised the vulnerability of their positions and danger that Stalin really posed, they joined forces with Trotsky, however, by this time it was too late.[201] Trotsky was reluctant to join

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[199] According to Trotsky, during the autumn of 1924 the "press and orators did nothing but expose Trotskyism, although no one knew exactly what it meant." Day after day Trotsky's polemics with Lenin were drawn up from the past and "falsified" and "mutilated." At the time he was ill and did nothing. Leon Trotsky, My Life: An Attempt at an Autobiography (1971; Middlesex: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1975) 535-536.

[200] According to Deutscher Trotsky missed the opportunity to discredit Stalin. He failed to "act as Lenin's mouth piece" and present Lenin's final testament against Stalin. "He kept silent when the cry for inner-party democracy rose from the floor." He presented his economic ideas in such a manner that his audience was unable to understand, thus leaving the door open for his opponents to twist his words. Deutscher also pointed out that Trotsky shared the Triumvirate's anxiety over what the shock of Lenin's death would do to the party. For Deutscher, Trotsky's eagerness to strengthen the party actually weakened his own position. Isaac Deutscher, The Prophet Unarmed – Trotsky: 1921 – 1929, 3 vols. (New York: Vintage Books, 1965) 2: 103-104.

[201] Carr insisted that the rift in the Triumvirate, in the beginning, took the form of a geographical rivalry between Leningrad and Moscow. Furthermore, it was this geographical rivalry that determined the ideological mould and led to the reversal of attitudes. The Opposition and the Triumvirate disagreed over role of the peasantry, methods of industrialisation, NEP, etc. On April 20, 1923 Trotsky presented his speech on the "Scissor Crisis." He surveyed Russia's industrial development in the two years of NEP. The rise in industrial productions was still slow and trailed behind agricultural development. As farmers increasingly sold their products this led to the fall in the price. The industrial sector was the opposite. Farmers could not afford to buy industrial products. The discrepancy between agriculture and industrial sectors resembled scissors opening high industrial and low agricultural prices. Therefore there was no incentive for the farmers to sell their products to the towns. The "scissors" threatened to cut the economic ties between town and country. Trotsky concluded that the "scissor crisis could be averted by lowering the price of industrial goods rather than raising the price of agricultural goods. The debates between the Right and the Left, at the time were over how to industrialise and

forces with Zinoviev and Kamenev, especially after their recent battles but in 1926 he agreed to ally with them and they formed the "United Opposition" against the "Right" – Bucharin and Stalin. However, this alliance came too late and by November 1927 Zinoviev, Kamenev, and Trotsky had been expelled from the Communist Party.[202] Stalin then embarked on his "Left-Turn" and used Trotsky's arguments on agrarian policies to defeat his former allies Bucharin, Rykov, and Tomsky. By 1929 the old Bolsheviks had been defeated. Stalin had emerged as the undisputed leader and was firmly in control.

Lenin was ambiguous over whom he thought should succeed him.[203] The power struggle that ensued was brutally fought in the open for the sole purpose of isolating and destroying the reputation of Trotsky. Unbeknownst to Trotsky, Kamenev, and Zinoviev their battle to take over the party leadership inadvertently led to dramatic changes in the Comintern and the CPSU. In their efforts to gain the party leadership for themselves, Kamenev and Zinoviev discredited themselves and left the door open for Stalin to take over the party leadership.

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collectivise not whether or not to industrialise and collectivise. Although Stalin made the divisions appear enormous, in reality they were not. One must also recall that open disagreements were acceptable prior to this period. E.H. Carr, A History of Soviet Russia: Socialism in One Country 1924 – 1926, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1959) 2: 57-58; also see Leon Trotsky, My Life: An Attempt at an Autobiography (1971; Middlesex: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1975) 542-543; Isaac Deutscher, The Prophet Unarmed – Trotsky: 1921 – 1929, 3 vols. (New York: Vintage Books, 1965) 2: 99-103.

[202] According to Yaroslavsky, the expulsion of the opposition demonstrated maximum strengthening of Bolshevik unity ie unity behind Stalin. Yaroslavsky, "For Bolshevik Unity, for Bolshevik Discipline," International Press Correspondence 8.1 (1928): 5.

[203] According to Trotsky, from his death bed Lenin had been preparing to strike a blow at Stalin and his allies. Deutscher insisted that Lenin had intended to demote Stalin. Leon Trotsky, My Life: An Attempt at an Autobiography (1971; Middlesex: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1975) 527; Isaac Deutscher, The Prophet Unarmed – Trotsky: 1921 – 1929, 3 vols. (New York: Vintage Books, 1965) 2: 88, 91.

Comintern After Lenin

Lenin's death and the power struggle in the CPSU had an incredible impact on the policies pursued by Comintern. The Fifth Congress of the Communist International met in 17 June – 8 July 1924 and officially announced the slogan of "Bolshevisation."[204] Officially the policy of "Bolshevisation" was supposed to apply the principles of "Leninism" to the Comintern's member countries. The Comintern's drive toward Bolshevisation reflected the power struggle inside the Soviet Union. According to the Theses adopted at the Fifth Plenum, "The slogan bolshevization arose in the struggle against the right danger…. Bolshevization of the Comintern sections means studying and applying in practice the experience of the RCP in the three Russian revolutions…."[205] In reality it set the precedent for relations between Communist parties, the Comintern central bodies and the Russian party. The "Theses and Tactics on the Bolshevisation of Communist Parties Adopted at the Fifth ECCI Plenum," elaborated on Lenin's "21 Conditions." The principles adopted at the Second Congress were used to further marginalize the Trotsky and his supporters.

This section will demonstrate the way in which the Triumvirate used the policy of Bolshevisation, while hiding behind Lenin's rhetoric of uniformity and discipline to permanently change the revolutionary movement. The Comintern after Lenin's death changed the role of the party as well as the role that theory played in the revolutionary movement.

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[204] The resolutions were further modified at the Fifth ECCI Plenum that took place on 26 March – 6 April 1925. Kevin McDermott and Jeremy Agnew, The Comintern: A History of Communism From Lenin to Stalin (London: Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1996) 45; Isaac Deutscher, The Prophet Unarmed – Trotsky: 1921 – 1929, 3 vols. (New York: Vintage Books, 1965) 2: 146; Julius Braunthal, History of the International: 1864 – 1914, 2 vols. (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons LTD, 1966) 2: 295.

[205] "The Theses on the Bolshevization of Communist Parties Adopted at the Fifth ECCI Plenum," The Communist International 1919-1943 – Documents, ed. Jane Degras, 3 vols. (London: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1971) 2: 189,190.

First, the Fifth Plenum of the Comintern in 1925 changed the role of the party in the revolutionary movement. Lenin was a great advocate of strict discipline inside the revolutionary movement. As mentioned previously, this was seen throughout his writing until the end of his life. However, the new policies dictated by the Fifth plenum went farther than Lenin intended. With Lenin dead and out of the way there was no one around to stop the Comintern from developing obscure policies based on personal vendettas. The Fifth Plenum claimed to carry on Lenin's revolutionary desires, hence the need for Bolshevisation, but in reality it manipulated Lenin's words to suite their own purposes. For example, the document exaggerated Lenin's insistence for strict discipline.

> "Iron proletarian discipline is one of the most important pre-conditions of bolshevization. Parties which carry on their banner 'Dictatorship of the Proletariat' must realize that there can be no talk of a victorious proletarian dictatorship without iron party discipline, acquired in the course of years and decades. Bolsheviks…must realize that the civil war cannot be fought, political power conquered, or the proletarian dictatorship maintained and strengthened, without the strictest internal discipline founded on ideological unanimity; without this the civil war is doomed in advance to failure."[206]

Essentially the Fifth Plenum doomed the revolutionary movement to failure if parties did not impose strict discipline within their rank and file. Lenin also called for strict discipline, but unlike the Comintern of 1925 Lenin was unable

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[206] "The Theses on the Bolshevization of Communist Parties Adopted at the Fifth ECCI Plenum," The Communist International 1919-1943 – Documents, ed. Jane Degras, 3 vols. (London: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1971) 2: 198.

to strictly enforce his desire for discipline in the Comintern. In Lenin's time the Comintern's parties retained autonomy. He treated the "Ultra-Left" as unruly children rather than enemies. The Theses of the Fifth Plenum changed this – the Statutes were developed as a means in which to defeat the Left Opposition rather than as a method in which to lure them back to the "correct path." Lenin's usage of the concept of "strict discipline" was a form of self-discipline and commitment to the struggle, whereas, the Comintern's new usage of the term demanded blind obedience.

Second, the Fifth Plenum changed the role of revolutionary theory and replaced it with "Marxism and Leninism," as it became known. In Stalin's quest for power he deified Lenin by projecting himself as nothing more than Lenin's humble student whose desire was to continue the legacy left behind by Lenin. The Comintern did not claim to change theoretical tactics after Lenin's death, rather the opposite, it went to great pains to show that it was following methods laid out by Lenin. The document discussed the way in which Leninism (not Lenin the man who rejected the term Leninism) had enriched Marxism. There was a constant attempt to link Leninism to Marxism.

> "The idea that Marxism is only theory, and Leninism only practice, is false. Leninism is the theory and practice of Marxism in the period of imperialism, of imperialist wars and proletarian revolutions ushered in by the proletarian dictatorship in Russia…."[207]

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[207] "The Theses on the Bolshevization of Communist Parties Adopted at the Fifth ECCI Plenum," The Communist International 1919-1943 – Documents, ed. Jane Degras, 3 vols. (London: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1971) 2: 191.

This convoluted quote does not actually mean anything. It does, on the other hand, imply that Marxist theory was not enough to carry a revolution. It required Leninism to come along and develop the correct applications to the imperialist world and Stalin, the pupil of Lenin, was the only person who could continue this legacy.

The Stalinist use of *Leninism* clearly contradicted Lenin's actions and theories. Lenin was deeply committed to the relationship between theory and political practice. In What is to Done? written in 1902 he wrote, "Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement."[208] Lenin further insisted on the necessity of a *conscious* working class and a vanguard party that would help guide them in their revolutionary struggle. As previously discussed, the role of the party was to guide and assist the working class in developing *consciousness*. Lenin remained committed to the crucial link between revolutionary theory and political practice throughout his life even when the prospect of world revolution had faded. Following Lenin's death there is no evidence to suggest that this commitment to theory continued, in fact the opposite is true. The Comintern and Stalin's entourage appeared to do everything in their power to rewrite or destroy the remnants of theory within the Comintern. Rather than encourage the development of revolutionary theory slogans were used instead.

Third, Bolshevisation was used to destroy any theoretical opposition. In order to maintain their power base and ensure that the "theory" of Marxist-Leninism went unquestioned the Comintern embarked on the task of destroying the remainder of Marxist theory within the Comintern. The Theses of the Fifth

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[208] V.I. Lenin, "What is to be Done?" Collected Works, 48 vols. (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1961) 5: 369.

Plenum attacked what it referred to as "theoretical mistakes," particularly those of Luxemburg, Trotsky, and the Dutch Marxists – Gorter and Pannekoek.[209] Unlike Luxemburg and Trotsky, Gorter and Pannekoek ceased to be perceived as great threats and, therefore, were named but not systematically attacked in the same way. They were charged with their attempts to apply Marxism to the "new epoch" but it claimed, unsuccessfully.

In the Soviet Union, Trotsky was the greatest victim of the Fifth Plenum. Unlike Luxemburg, Trotsky had not yet died a martyr's death and was openly and viciously attacked. Many viewed him as the most natural to succeed Lenin, therefore, the Triumvirate perceived him as their main threat. Hence, a campaign was developed to rid the Comintern of his supporters.[210] The term "Trotskyism," was coined by Zinoviev and served a dual purpose – it destroyed support for Trotsky and disassociated him from Lenin. The creation of "Trotskyism" served a similar purpose as that of "Leninism" it helped remove the man from the *ism*. Trotsky was the Commissar of the Red Army during the

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[209] During the spring and summer of 1925 a group of young communists, led by Ruth Fischer and Arkadi Maslow, led an offensive against the remnants of Social Democracy and Luxemburgism in the Communist Party under the banner of Bolshevisation. The main victim of this offensive was Rosa Luxemburg and her theories. The main targets were the old Spartacists, who still remained loyal to Luxemburg's ideas, and were considered the right wing of the party. The attacks were strategically played out. The Spartacists, who were former members of the SPD prior to the Bolshevik revolution of 1917, could not claim loyalty to Bolshevism during this period. In fact, no one in Germany really could, as the Bolshevik party was a relatively unimportant party in Europe. It only placed itself on the revolutionary map with its seizure of power in 1917. Luxemburgism not only became a political weapon against the opponents of Soviet hegemony but also irrevocably changed the nature of the German Communist Party politics. Any opposition had to be stamped out. Therefore, Luxemburg, as a critic of Lenin, had to be purged into insignificance. JP Nettl, Rosa Luxemburg, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1966) 2: 797-805.

[210] Throughout 1925 Trotsky was viciously attacked in the Comintern press. The Comintern went to great pains to demonstrate Trotsky's deviations away from Lenin as well as his isolation. He was accused of trying to replace the ideology of Russia with "Trotskyism" and then proceeded to attack this so called ideology. Trotsky's supporters were not allowed to come to his defence, thus giving the impression that he was indeed completely isolated. "Decision of the Central Committee of the C.P. of Russia Regarding the Attitude of Comrade Trotsky," International Press Correspondence 5.7 (1925): 65; "Trotsky Completely Isolated in the C.P. of Russia and the Communist International," International Press Correspondence 5.7 (1925): 74-75; also see Leon Trotsky, My Life: An Attempt at an Autobiography (1971; Middlesex: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1975) 535-536.

Civil War and had developed a reputation inside the Soviet Union as well as abroad. Somehow this image of the war hero had to be destroyed. Trotsky was no longer associated with revolutionary theory and collaboration with Lenin but rather he was associated with "Trotskyism," which the Fifth Plenum deemed as an especially dangerous deviation from Leninism. The Statues insisted that if the legacy of Lenin were to live on then Trotsky and any influence he wielded had to be destroyed.

> "Trotskyism is not an isolated deviation towards menshevism, but a yearlong system of struggle against Leninism. Nor is Trotskyism a purely Russian phenomenon; it is international in character. To achieve Leninism in the Comintern means to expose Trotskyism in all parties and to liquidate it as a tendency."[211]

In reality the attacks on "Trotskyism" had nothing to do with protecting the legacy of Lenin. Fuelled by an extremely destructive battle for power, "Trotskyism" served one purpose – to isolate and destroy any influence held by Trotsky inside the Soviet Union and in the Comintern's parties. The Statutes of the Fifth Plenum not only served to isolate those who might favour Trotsky over the Triumvirate but also acted as an excuse for purging. Any opposition to the Triumvirate could be perceived as a Trotskyism, the worst form was deviation from Leninism.

The campaign against Trotsky was successful. He was expelled from the Russian Communist Party in 1927 and sent into exile. In effect, the

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[211] "The Theses on the Bolshevization of Communist Parties Adopted at the Fifth ECCI Plenum," The Communist International 1919-1943 – Documents, ed. Jane Degras, 3 vols. (London: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1971) 2: 192.

consequences of the Bolshevisation were devastating to the Russian revolutionary movement, as well as the European revolutionary movement. Shortly after his death, the theoretical model that Lenin had dedicated his life to create was manipulated into a weapon used to build the foundations of a dictatorship that was completely alienated from Lenin's "dictatorship of the proletariat." The open forum for debate, which the Marxist revolutionary parties had always enjoyed, slowly withered away. Theory ceased to be the driving force of the revolutionary movement. Rather than being developed from within the Comintern's parties, theory was dictated from the Comintern down to the national parties. The party was no longer a group of professional revolutionaries who had armed themselves with theory and hoped to guide the masses. It became a bureaucratic machine that received orders from Moscow and passed down them down to the rank and file.

Consequences of Bolshevisation on the KPD

The catastrophic outcome of the failed German uprising in 1923 and Lenin's death marked a dramatic change in tactics for the Soviet Union and the Comintern. The failed revolution of 1923 was a disappointing reality check for the Soviets. It became clear that a German revolution was not forthcoming. The failed revolution and Lenin's death forced the Soviets to become inward looking and they began the arduous task of the rebuilding the Soviet Union. By 1924 the world economic situation had stabilised and revolutionary prospects were morose.

In Germany the acceptance of the Dawes Plan led to an influx of foreign capital resulted in an economic upturn. It was during this period of "relative

stabilisation" that the course and theories adopted by the movement no longer came from within movement but were dictated from the top down by the Comintern. Although Lenin's Policy of Uniformity was misguided, it strove to drive the revolution forward. Bolshevisation on the other hand was not intended to push the revolution forward but rather it served to contain and control the Comintern's parties. In Germany, Bolshevisation was used to divide and rule the movement, however the true death blow was wielded from within the KPD leadership and when their deeds were done the Comintern turned against them.

This section will discuss the way in which the Comintern and the German Left destroyed the KPD's theoretical traditions through their assaults against "Luxemburgism" and the Right. During an extremely transitional period the German Left not only laid the foundations for the Stalinisation of the German Party, but also inadvertently created the environment for Social Fascism to develop.

First, Rosa Luxemburg remained an important feature of German Communist politics. In 1921 Lenin introduced his Policy of Uniformity in an attempt to forcibly change the course that the KPD and push the revolution forward. Lenin's policy may not have taken into consideration the KPD's theoretical traditions but it did not attempt to destroy them. To the old Spartacists, who were critical of outside interference, the Bolshevik's meddling came as shock. However, the damage to the German movement caused by Lenin's Policy of Uniformity was superficial compared to the destruction caused by Bolshevisation. During Lenin's lifetime, the Bolsheviks were never in a position to truly control the theory or political practice of the KPD without support and assistance from the rank and file. But this is not to say that

opponents to Bolshevik domination did not exist. Indeed, old Spartacists members remained within the movement, albeit, increasingly marginalized. For the old Spartacists the choice was clear – they chose Luxemburg over Lenin.[212] For them, her theories represented the German situation while her polemics with Lenin highlighted their unique importance and were indicative of a time when open debates were encouraged in the Socialist movement.[213]

After her death, Luxemburg, as a figure, remained popular, particularly amongst the youth movement. For the youth, Luxemburg represented a hero that died for their cause.[214] Lenin was aware of the importance, as well as the fragile nature, of his relationship with the German Communists. He was sensible enough to realise that regardless of his differences with Luxemburg,

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[212] Herman Weber, Die Wandung Des Deutschen Kommunismus: Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimarer Republic, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1969) 1: 89.

[213] Although Lenin disagreed with Luxemburg on many points, he had great respect for her and remained friendly with her until the end of her life. Lenin did not suffer fools, therefore, it is clear from his behaviour before and after her death that he viewed her as his intellectual equal rather than as his subordinate. Lenin was deeply saddened by the news of Luxemburg's death and rose to her defence when he felt her name had been misused. In response to Levi's publication of *Russian Revolution* Lenin insisted, "in spite of her mistakes she was – and remains for us – an eagle. And not only will Communists all over the world cherish her memory, but her biography and her *complete* works...will serve as useful manuals for training many generations of Communists all over the world." Based on Lenin's *Notes*, it is abundantly clear that he would not have approved of the assault on Luxemburgism. V.I. Lenin, "Notes from a Publicist," Rosa Luxemburg Speaks, ed. Mary Alice Waters (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970) 440; JP Nettl, Rosa Luxemburg, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1966) 2: 794-796.

[214] This idolisation of Luxemburg and Liebknecht was particularly strong in the Communist Youth League, which was instrumental in developing the LLL (Lenin-Liebknecht-Luxemburg). Annual rallies were held in January to honour the murder of Luxemburg and Liebknecht in 1919. Lenin was included after his death in 1924. The festivals continued throughout the Weimar period and were endorsed by the KPD Central Committee. Weitz pointed out that the listing of the names was not only alphabetical but also signified each leader's importance in the movement. "Prepare for the Commemoration Day of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg," International Press Correspondence 4.1 (1924); Eric D. Weitz, Creating German Communism 1890-1990: From Popular Protests to Socialist State (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997) 180-185; Eric D. Weitz, " 'Rosa Luxemburg Belongs to Us!' German Communism and the Luxemburg Legacy," Central European History 27.1 (1994): 47-48; "Anweisung des Zentralkomitees zur Durchführung der LLL-Kampagne," SAMPO RY 1/I2/5/21 FBS 241/11373; also see Victor Serge, "The Anniversary of 15 January: Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg," Witness to the German Revolution: Writings from Germany 1923, trans. Ian Birchall (London: Redwords, 2000) 19-24.

once she became a martyr, any posthumous attack on her theories could potentially backfire.

Second, the KPD was the most important (and strongest) party in the Comintern outside of the Soviet Union. Unlike other smaller and weaker parties, the Comintern could not send its agents to take over the party. Therefore any successful assault against the Right wing, Luxemburg, and her theories could only come from inside the German movement. [215] Brandler's failure to carry out a successful revolution in 1923 not only led to his demise, but coupled with political and economic stabilisation in Germany, inadvertently created the right conditions for the rise of the Left, led by Ruth Fischer and Arkadij Maslow.[216] The rise of the Left and the introduction of Bolshevisation marked a watershed in the relationship between revolutionary theory and political practice in the German Communist Party.[217] Neither Maslow nor

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[215] Ruth Fischer's book blamed the Soviet Union and in particular Stalin. She insisted that Manuilsky was sent to Germany to manipulate and prevent the party from forming a united opposition to Moscow. He supported the Left bid for power against the Right and then the Right against the Left. Fischer claimed he manipulated KPD politics with promises of Soviet support pitting the Right and Left against one another in an effort to gain supremacy over the KPD. Fischer asserted, "If the party could no longer be manipulated, then its integration into a stronger form could only be opposed by the manipulator. His job was clear: by some means to prevent the integration of the three principal factions of the German party into one working unit." However, it is clear from the vicious method in which the attacks against the Right were carried out that the Left were not eager to unite the various factions in Germany. Ruth Fischer, Stalin and German Communism: A Study of the Origins of the State Party (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1948) 441-443.

[216] In fact, Rosa Leviné-Meyer asserted that it was the Left leadership that had devised the term "bolshevisation" and had begun using the term in their propaganda prior to the Fifth Plenum. She claimed that they were years ahead of the Russians in ruling by fear and intimidation. According to Weber the Left took over Bolshevisation as their main slogan from the Comintern. Rosa Leviné-Meyer, Inside German Communism: Memoirs of Party Life in the Weimar Republic (London: Pluto Press Ltd., 1977) 68; Herman Weber, Die Wandung Des Deutschen Kommunismus: Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimarer Republic, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1969) 1: 85.

[217] It is interesting that Ruth Fischer's book did not mention her role in the Bolshevisation process. She discussed the Fifth Congress and its fight against Trotskyism, but did not discuss the Bolshevisation of the German party. Weber was very critical of Fischer's account because of her failure to discuss her role as leader during Bolshevisation. See Ruth Fischer, Stalin and German Communism: A Study of the Origins of the State Party (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1948) 401-405; Herman Weber, Die Wandung Des Deutschen Kommunismus: Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimarer Republic, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1969) 1: 85; see Siegfried Bahne, " 'Sozialfaschismus' Deutschland

Fischer had any theoretical training and did not comprehend the vital relationship between revolutionary theory and political practice. While Maslow and Fischer were not Stalinists, they happily employed Bolshevisation as a means to rid the KPD of the Right and Centre wings. They were not concerned with the theoretical ramifications of Bolshevisation. Where previous leaderships had been cautious regarding Russian interference, the Left leadership welcomed Bolshevisation.[218] They were hostile to what they perceived as the theoretical "remnants" of Social Democracy. Rather than celebrate the party's theoretical past the Left blamed the past for the party's failings:

> "Our progress towards Bolshevisation is difficult not only because of the objective situation in Germany, but also because of our party's past makes it particularly difficult to deal with the Party questions now before us. I am convinced that with the help of the decisions of the Executive and with the help of our comrades...in the struggle against the right elements we will yet come to truly Bolshevik tactics in Germany."[219]

The attacks launched by Maslow and Fischer struck at the very heart of the KPD's theory and attempted to destroy it. No elements of the KPD's past were sacred.

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zur Geschichte eines Politischen Begriffs," International Review of Social History 10.2 (1965): 225-228.

[218] In her speech to Fischer stated, "we welcome the chapter of the Bolshevisation theses on Luxemburgism as peculiarly applicable to the CPG." Ruth Fischer, "Meeting of the Enlarged Executive, Third Session," International Press Correspondence 5.31 (1925): 407.

[219] Ruth Fischer, "Meeting of the Enlarged Executive, Twelfth Session," International Press Correspondence 5.37 (1925): 495.

> "We must take the good points of the Social Democrats into consideration, and the revolutionary tradition of the Spartacus League trebly so. But that must not prevent us from destroying certain holy legends [ie Rosa Luxemburg]."[220]

They were willing to destroy the KPD's past with their assaults against Luxemburg's theories to consolidate their own power. Maslow and Fischer did not comprehend that it was the KPD's rich historical past and its long tradition of opposition, which revolved around Rosa Luxemburg that allowed the KPD not only to flourish but to exist in the first place. Having no theoretical traditions of their own Maslow and Fischer created no concrete alternatives to replace the SPD's "remnants" or Luxemburg's theories.

The relationship between theory and political practice, one that Lenin and Luxemburg worked hard to build, ceased to command great importance in the party. The attacks against oppositional theory in the KPD were acceptable to the Comintern who had begun their own assaults against the Trotskyist opposition. At first, the Comintern treaded carefully in their attacks against Rosa Luxemburg and allowed the brunt of the assaults to come from the KPD leadership. In early 1925 Luxemburg was still valued as a theoretician and even appeared on the "syllabus for elementary party courses" under the section "theory of revolution."[221] In fact, Zinoviev wrote an article in January 1925 regarding the Bolshevisation of the Comintern's parties and did not even mention Luxemburg. The only past errors that Zinoviev cited, were in reference

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[220] Ruth Fischer, "Meeting of the Enlarged Executive, Third Session," International Press Correspondence 5.31 (1925): 407.

[221] Ironically the piece that appeared on the party reading list was her pamphlet on mass strikes. Bela Kun, "Explanatory Remarks Re Syllabus of Elementary Party Courses," International Press Correspondence 5.5 (1925): 50.

to Brandler.[222] The Comintern observed the proceedings in Germany before they added fuel to the fire. The Comintern used subtle tactics to undermine the Right's support for Luxemburg's theories. The Left believed that the Comintern favoured their leadership over the Right.[223] The Comintern demonstrated their support for the Left's assaults by including specific sections targeted against Luxemburg in the Theses and Resolutions adopted at the Fifth Plenum of the Comintern. Unlike Trotsky, the Comintern did not attack Luxemburg as a traitor or deviator but rather as "mistaken" and "erroneous."

> "Among the most important Luxemburgist errors of real importance at this present time, are:
> (a) The unbolshevik treatment of the question of 'spontaneity' and 'consciousness', of 'organization' and 'the masses'. Their false ideas on this question…prevented them from appraising correctly the role of the party in the revolution….
> (b) The underestimation of the technical factor in preparing insurrections was, and is in part today, an obstacle to the correct treatment of the question of 'organizing' the revolution
> (c) The error in the question of attitude towards the peasantry."[224]

The Comintern and the German Left used Bolshevisation as a weapon to marginalize the theoretical opposition and secure their own positions. The Comintern claimed that the German party's tendency to hold on to its

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[222] G. Zinoviev, "The Bolshevising of the Parties of the Communist International," International Press Correspondence 5.7 (1925): 63-65.
[223] At the Plenary Session of the Central Committee of the Russian Party held on October 10, 1925 Zinoviev insisted that the Comintern had its reservations about the Maslow-Fischer group but supported them because they "had no choice." G. Zinoviev, "The Situation in the German Communist Party," International Press Correspondence 5.79 (11925): 1203-1205.
[224] "The Theses on the Bolshevization of Communist Parties Adopted at the Fifth ECCI Plenum," The Communist International 1919-1943 – Documents, ed. Jane Degras, 3 vols. (London: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1971) 2: 191.

"Luxmeburgist" past hindered the process of Bolshevisation. The Comintern regarded Lenin as an infallible god and claimed that only his path was the true path to a glorious Communist future. The Comintern attempted to devalue Luxemburg's contribution to German Marxism and only revered "Leninism." In reality, Bolshevisation and the attacks on the KPD's hero, Rosa Luxemburg, were only possible with the approval of the KPD Left leadership. Maslow and Fischer's arrogance and ignorance of theory prevented them from seeing the damage they were causing to the movement.

Third, Bolshevisation was not only used to destroy the KPD's theoretical traditions but also it targeted Luxemburg's supporters – the Right and Centre wings of the KPD. [225] Both Right and Centre claimed to carry forward the legacy of Rosa Luxemburg and were cautious over Soviet dominance.[226] The Left utilised their support from the Comintern and used the KPD's Social Democratic past to destroy their opposition. Prior to 1923 the Right wing of the party played an influential role determining party practice and, in the spirit of Rosa Luxemburg, they were apprehensive of role played by the Soviet Union in KPD affairs. The Comintern clearly found their resistance threatening. In an effort to consolidate their control over the KPD the Right needed to be marginalized. After 1923 the Right were blamed for Brandler's failure as neither the Left nor the Comintern made a distinction between Right and

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[225] Aside from the theoretical differences, the main difference between the Right and Left was their attitude toward the treatment of SPD workers. The Right wanted to lure the SPD workers toward the cause of Communism, while the Left treated them as enemies. From 1924 onward, KPD policy toward SPD workers fluctuated between these two attitudes.

[226] Clara Zetkin attempted to protest over the tendency in the KPD to refer to all the old Spartakus as "Right" and accused the Central Committee of not having fought enough against this tendency. Clearly, Zetkin did not see how the creation of factions benefited the Comintern. It was not in their interests to have a strong unified party in Germany who possessed their own theoretical traditions. For the Comintern, a divided party was much easier to control. Clara Zetkin, "Meeting of the Enlarged Executive, Sixth Session," International Press Correspondence 5.32 (1925): 423.

Centre.[227] Brandler was, in fact, a Centrist, however, Luxemburg was blamed for his leadership and his failed revolutionary efforts in 1923. Fischer claimed, "The Brandlerist deviations are the legitimate offspring of Luxemburgism."[228] These attacks against the Right and "Luxemburgism" were not merely an attempt to rid the party of opposition but they were aimed at the historical traditions of the movement. Thus, the destruction of the KPD's theoretical traditions, and the bearers of those traditions, made the movement easier to control and manipulate.

Bolshevisation had a tremendous impact on the German Communist movement. It represented forcible change in the political practice of the parties conduct. It began a new trend in Communist movements all over the world, one in which "divide and conquer" were used to maintain control. Zinoviev claimed,

> "bolshevising of the Parties of the Comintern is the making use of the experiences of the Bolshevik Party in the three Russian Revolutions (as well as the experiences of the best sections of the Comintern), and in applying them to the concrete situation of each particular country." [229]

This clearly was not the case. The actual practice of the process of Bolshevisation made it quite clear that the unique situation of each country was of no importance. When a party strayed from the course set by the Comintern, they were viciously attacked. Although the Comintern appeared to support the

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[227] In their expulsion proceedings, Brandler and Thalheimer were referred to as "the leaders of the German Right." "Resolution passed by the Tenth Party Congress of the C.P. of Germany on the Work of the Communist International," International Press Correspondence 5.62 (1925): 862.

[228] Ruth Fischer, "Meeting of the Enlarged Executive, Third Session," International Press Correspondence 5.31 (1925): 407.

[229] G. Zinoviev, "The Bolshevising of the Parties of the Communist International," International Press Correspondence 5.7 (1925): 64.

Left bid for power, the Comintern Executive wasted no time in launching attacks against Fischer and Maslow.

The Fischer – Maslow victory was short-lived. By September 1925 the Left's dominance of the KPD had come to an end. The Comintern Executive accused Fischer and Maslow of "sabotage" and "social democratic deviations" when they failed to carry out Comintern policy.[230] The attacks that the Fischer-Maslow group used to topple the Right and Centre were turned against their creators to destroy them. The Left used the KPD's Social Democratic past to destroy those that stood in its path to power and the Comintern used these very same arguments to rid itself of the Left leadership.[231] By adopting the policy of Bolshevisation the KPD Left leadership under Fischer and Maslow unknowingly assisted the Comintern in removing the opposition and weakened the party so that it became much easier to control from the outside. Maslow and Fischer's acceptance of Bolshevisation and their attacks on the Right wing made the Stalinisation of the KPD possible.

By December 1925, Zinoviev had been defeated at the 14th Congress of the CPSU, which led to a change in policy in the Comintern. Fischer's opponents, encouraged by the Comintern, launched a bitter assault. Maslow was eventually arrested and imprisoned by the German State, as a dangerous Communist and Fischer was recalled to Moscow where she remained under house arrest until

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[230] "Letter from the E.C.C.I. to all Organisations and Members of the Communist Party of Germany," International Press Correspondence 5.69 (1925): 1016-1018; "E.C.C.I. Letter to all Organisations and Members of the C.P.G.," The Communist International 14 (1925): 66-74.

[231] In the party press Maslow and Fischer and their supporters were accused of being "erroneous," "Right Deviators," "Trotskyists," "renegades," and "Social Democratic Deviators." For example see "Zu dem Protest vom Ruth Fischer, Maslow, Urbahns, Scholem und Schwan gegen ihren Ausschluß an die Erweiterte Executive," Die Internationale 9.24 (1926): 761-762; Ernst Schneller, "The End of the Maslow-Fischer Opposition," International Press Correspondence 8.29 (1928): 529-530; Ernst Schneller, "The Ultra-Left Party as Aiders and Abettors of the Reformists in the German Elections," International Press Correspondence 8.29 (1928): 546-547.

her expulsion. By 1926 Stalin had consolidated his power in the Soviet Union and Maslow and Fischer had been ousted from their positions in the KPD. They were replaced with someone loyal and obedient to the Stalin, Ernest Thälmann.

The Legacy of Luxemburgism

By 1926 Rosa Luxemburg had been rehabilitated. But by then the damage had been done and she no longer appeared threatening. A division had been set up to create a distinction between Rosa Luxemburg the person – Spartacist martyr and misguided thinker and Luxemburgism – the false "system" which was against "Leninism." Rosa Luxemburg the martyr was good while her ideas and Luxemburgism were bad. Her alleged crimes, particularly her disagreements with Lenin, were considered "mistakes [which] towards the end of her life [she] began to understand and correct."[232] The official Communist line claimed that if she had lived she would have seen the error of her ways and gone over to the side of the Bolsheviks. Martinov's articles brilliantly manage to separate the woman from the system. The Comintern found Luxemburg as a symbol difficult to defeat.[233] As result they paid homage to her contributions while at the same time they emphasised her "mistakes."

> "If Rosa Luxemburg and the 'left radicals' had completely assimilated the lessons of Leninism at that time, the birth pangs of the German Communist Party would undoubtedly have been greatly alleviated.... None the less, at that time the positive services of Luxemburgism in the German situation

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[232] A. Martinov, "Lenin, Luxemburg, Liebknecht" The Communist International 10.3-4 (1933): 141.

[233] Eric D. Weitz, " 'Rosa Luxemburg Belongs to Us!' German Communism and the Luxemburg Legacy," Central European History 27.1 (1994): 56; Fred Oelßner, Rosa Luxemburg: Eine Kritische Biographische Skizze (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1952) 211-217.

> outweighed its negative aspects, its errors, to an enormous degree. Consequently Rosa Luxemburg's historical service is enormous, and she, perishing heroically after the Spartacus rising, has passed into history with an extraordinarily large active balance to her credit."[234]

Rosa Luxemburg was no longer a great enemy of "Leninism." She was, however, a poor leader because she had not utilised the lessons placed in front of her by Lenin and indeed had the audacity to disagree with him.

The vacillation between Rosa Luxemburg the hero and the misguided leader who was erroneous is quite interesting.[235] Unable to directly destroy Luxemburg as a symbol in German Communism, the Comintern had to manipulate the KPD's members' image of her. Rosa Luxemburg had not committed any great crimes, with the exception of disagreeing with Lenin on nearly every topic, so in the Stalinist tradition, crimes had to be invented. Despite her great service to Communism, according to Martinov, she was a semi-Menshevik who did not understand Marxism.[236]

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[234] A. Martinov, "Luxemburg to Lenin or Luxemburg to Kautsky?" The Communist International 6.7 (1929): 214.

[235] KPD training material described Luxemburg's "erroneous" view on party organisation. The pamphlet's section "Rosa Luxemburg's view on the Organisation question," uses a quote to describe her position. The section claimed to be from "an article in Der Neuen Zeit, but does not give the title. Although Luxemburg was rehabilitated in 1926, her position on party organization was continually attacked in Comintern literature. For example, KPD training material described Luxemburg's "erroneous" view on party organisation. It described her sharp opposition to Lenin and described her "mistaken" attitude to the role of party leaders and her analysis of opportunism. Kursusmaterial über Organisationsfragen der KPD – Mai 1929 3-4. SAMPO FBS 248/11598, RY 1/I2 /707/99; also see D. Manuilsky, "Bolsheviation of the Parties," The Communist International 10 (1925): 59.

[236] Despite her apparently great contribution to German Communism she was reinvented as a semi-Menshevik. Stalin claimed that she and Parvus developed the theory of permanent revolution, not Trotsky. "They [Parvus and Luxemburg] invented a Utopian and semi-Menshvist scheme of the permanent revolution (a monstrous distortion of the Marxian scheme of revolution." Joseph, Stalin, "Some Questions Regarding the History of Bolshevism," The Communist International 8.20 (1931): 666; also see Schneller, "Vom Trotzismus in der deutschen kommunistischen Bewegung," Die Internationale 8.3 (1925): 128; Herman Weber, Die Wandung Des Deutschen Kommunismus: Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimarer

> "All the semi-Menshevik mistakes of Rosa Luxemburg arose methodologically out of her one *main mistake – out of her mechanical understanding of Marxism, and submission to the spontaneity of the historical process*.... Not having understood Marx, Rosa Luxemburg raked among the historic archive and found the "third persons" theory of the Populists long since rejected by Russian Marxists.... Lenin...criticised her in a friendly way, trying to give her support with his criticism; to try to assist her to rectify her line and take the genuine Marxist road."[237]

Martinov's infantilisation of Luxemburg's capacity as a thinker no doubt served to undermine her followers. If she did not understand Marxism, how could she be taken seriously as an opponent of Lenin? She could not. Luxemburg had been reduced. No longer was she Lenin's intellectual equal, but merely a pet project – someone he seemed to have taken pity on and hoped to lead to the "correct path." The efforts of the Comintern were partially successful. Although her memory as a martyred leader lived on, her memory as a theorist was buried. The Stalinist never attacked her theories head on. For this might open the door to formal discussions regarding her criticisms, particularly her warnings about Bolshevik methods potentially leading to suppression. She was attacked, for something she had never done nor intended to do, follow Lenin. In this way her distorted memory lived on and she once again re-emerged as a symbol of opposition to the GDR. And this is the legacy of Luxemburgism. The distortion of one's work until it is utterly unrecognisable.

Republic, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1969) 1: 96-97; Pierre Broué, The German Revolution 1917 – 1923, trans. John Archer (Leiden: Brill, 2005) 842-843.

[237] A. Martinov, "Lenin, Luxemburg, Liebknecht" The Communist International 10.3-4 (1933): 140, 141-142.

III. The Consequences of a New Doctrine

"Everything has changed.

The aims: from international social revolution to socialism in one country.

The political system: from the workers' democracy of the soviets, the goal of the revolution, to the dictatorship of the general secretariat, the functionaries and the GPU.

The party: from the organizations, free in its life and thought and freely submitting to discipline, of revolutionary Marxists to hierarchy of bureaus, to passive obedience of careerists.

The Third International: from a mighty organization of propaganda and struggle to the opportunist servility of Central Committees for the purpose of approving everything, without shame or nausea.

(...) The Stalinist bureaucracy no longer pursues the policies of the working class but its own policies. This is the inner significance of its acts."[238]

In the few years following the death of Lenin the power struggle inside the CPSU changed the face of the international revolutionary movement as the conflict spilled over into the Comintern. The campaigns against Luxemburgism and Trotskyism provided effective weapons for ridding the Comintern's parties of members who might question Soviet authority, while Socialism in One Country provided the theoretical rationale for the witch-hunts. The alliances in the CPSU were riddled with shifts and turns that affected the policies of the CPSU and the Comintern; however, Socialism in One Country remained a fixture throughout.[239] Socialism in One Country, although not immediately

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[238] Victor Serge, From Lenin to Stalin (1937; New York: Monad Press, 1973) 57, 61.

[239] This is not to say that Socialism in One Country did not have its opponents. It certainly did. Trotsky was, obviously, opposed to Socialism in One Country as it was developed in direct opposition to his theory of Permanent Revolution. Trotsky openly attacked it as impossible. He argued that it was utopian and that the Marxist position held that economic systems (i.e. capitalism) were not limited by national boundaries; therefore, any system replacing it could not be limited by national boundaries. "The theory of Socialism in One Country [is] a reactionary theory because it is irreconcilably opposed not only to the fundamental *tendency* of development of the productive forces but also to the *material results* which have already been attained by this development. The productive forces are incompatible with national boundaries." Deutscher

apparent, marked a tremendous shift in the world's revolutionary movements. It declared that Socialism was possible without world revolution. This ran counter to everything Lenin and the old Bolsheviks had claimed prior to this stage. If world revolution was no longer absolutely necessary for the survival of the Soviet Union, then what was the purpose of the Comintern? The Comintern – an organ committed to encouraging and propagating world revolution – had to be changed as well. The new mission of the Comintern was to enforce the subservient and subordinate role of its member parties. The new purpose of the member parties was no longer to rise up in revolution but to protect the Soviet Union. Although Socialism in One Country was used to rationalise the rebuilding of Russia, it ran counter to the international nature of Marxist revolutionary movements. The theory of Socialism in One Country opened the door to the proclamation of the "Third Period" and the repressive statutes adopted at the Sixth Congress in 1928.

This section will discuss Socialism in One Country and how this new theory paved the way for the emergence of the "Third Period" of the Comintern, which eventually led to the adoption of the theory of Social Fascism.

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claimed that the first signs of the break up of the Triumvirate, which began to appear in April 1925, were due to Socialism in One Country. Stalin wished to include the theory of Socialism in One Country in the resolutions to the upcoming party conference. Kamenev and Zinoviev objected on the grounds that Socialism in One Country was anti-Marxist and anti-Lenin. However, they did not wish to scandalise the party by showing their disunity in public and did not voice their opinions publicly. Carr, on the other hand, asserted that Deutscher's claim is false. According to Carr, Zinoviev and Kamenev raised no strong objections and were, in fact, indifferent to the whole matter. Leon Trotsky, "The Draft Programme of the Communist International," The Third International After Lenin (London: New Park Publications, Ltd., 1974) 40; Isaac Deutscher, The Prophet Unarmed – Trotsky: 1921 – 1929, 3 vols. (New York: Vintage Books, 1965) 2: 241 – 242, 245-246; E.H. Carr, The Russian Revolution: From Lenin to Stalin (1917 – 1929) (Basingstokes: Palgrave, 1979) 75.

Socialism in One Country

Up to 1923 all Marxist believed that a world revolution was the *only* road to Socialism. However, the period of "relative stabilisation" and Lenin's death altered the CPSU and the Comintern's commitment to world revolution. As the CPSU became embroiled in a struggle for power, it became inward looking. Revolutionary theory was replaced by the doctrine of Socialism in One Country. Socialism in One Country marked a crucial turning point in the Comintern. Although Socialism in One Country claimed to carry on the revolutionary legacy of Lenin, it in fact removed the international character of the revolutionary struggle, and thereby, ceased to be Marxist.

First, Socialism in One Country allowed the Soviet Union to become inward looking. It was originally developed in relation to Bucharin's New Economic Policy (NEP).[240] The Soviets were forced into a contradictory position whereby they needed to refocus their attention internally – on rebuilding the Soviet economy. NEP was developed in 1921 to stimulate economic growth and emphasis was placed on the Soviet Union in a transitory period as it "grew into Socialism." The prospects of world revolution became ambiguous as Europe moved into its period of "relative stabilisation." The Soviet Union, therefore, needed to justify its cooperation with capitalist countries and its shift towards

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[240] The theory behind Socialism in One Country was actually developed by Bucharin, not Stalin, although Socialism in One Country is most notably associated with Stalin and Stalinism. Day insisted that it was Bucharin's elimination of dialectics from the theory of NEP as a means of securing internal change during the period of stabilisation that precipitated Stalin's formulation of Socialism in One Country. Stephen Cohen, Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography 1888 – 1938 (London: Wildwood House, 1974) 187-188; Stephen Cohen, "Bolshevism and Stalinism," Stalinism: Essays in Historical Interpretation, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: Norton, 1977) 22; Richard B. Day, "The New Leviathan: Bukharin's Contribution to the Theory of the State and the Transition to Socialism," N.I. Bukharin: Selected Writings on the State and the Transition to Socialism, ed. Richard B. Day (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1982) xlviii, l; also see Leon Trotsky, The Revolution Betrayed: What is the Soviet Union and Where is it Going?, trans. Max Eastman (London: Faber and Faber, Limited, 1937) 277.

the market. It was not only the Right that accepted Socialism in One Country but also CPSU party members.[241] Socialism in One Country took on a nationalist context. It reawakened national pride, which had been buried under the burden of awaiting an international revolution. It appeared positive and removed the Soviet Union's dependence on other countries for its own survival. It offered a sense of hopefulness during the "period of stabilisation" – even though international revolutionary situation had stagnated the Soviet Union could still be successful.

Second, Socialism in One Country based itself on the "law of uneven development." The idea was that as capitalism developed unevenly, revolution would also take place unevenly. Once revolution took place in one country, it would exploit the contradictions within the capitalist system to maintain itself and build socialism.

> "Uneven economic and political development is an absolute law of capitalism. This unevenness is still more pronounced and acute in the epoch of imperialism. Hence it follows that a single event occurring simultaneously all over the world; at first Socialism may be victorious in a few, or even one single capitalist country."[242]

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[241] It also can not be neglected that Socialism in One Country did have some support from within the Soviet Union and the doctrine began to have an impact during the summer of 1925. At first Socialism in One Country had the same appeal as NEP and Carr described it as the "legitimate successor of NEP. However, after 1925 it came to mean the opposite of NEP. E.H. Carr, A History of Soviet Russia: Socialism in One Country 1924 – 1926, 3 vols. (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1964) 2: 47-49; also see Leon Trotsky, The Challenge of the Left Opposition (1928-1929), eds. Naomi Allen and George Saunders (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1981) 32.

[242] Following the defeat of the "Trotskyist" Socialism in One Country became the official doctrine of the Comintern. Hence, its appearance in the 1928 Comintern programme written by Bucharin. Bucharin, "The Programme of the Communist International (Adopted by the VI World Congress on 1st September 1928, Moscow," International Press Correspondence 8.92 (1928): 1756.

However, Bucharin's use of "uneven development" was flawed. It was meant to solve all theoretical difficulties. If capitalism developed unevenly then Socialism could also develop unevenly. However, Bucharin simply omitted the fact that "uneven development" was one of the causes of the general crisis of capitalism. It led to instability and wars. Trotsky attacked the "law of uneven development" that appeared in the "Draft Programme of the Comintern" in 1928. Trotsky described the impossibility and the contradictions of the doctrine:

> "From the uneven sporadic development of capitalism flows the non-simultaneous, uneven and sporadic character of the socialist revolution; from the extreme tensity of the interdependence of the various countries upon each other flows not only the political but also the economic impossibility of building socialism in one country. [...] It is precisely this proposition which excludes, rejects, and sweeps away *a priori* the theory of socialism in one country as a reactionary theory because it is irreconcilably opposed not only to the fundamental *tendency* of the development of the productive forces but also to the *material results* which have already been attained by this development."[243]

The use of "uneven development" placed Socialism in One Country in a neutral position. It did not invalidate Marx's thesis about the *worldwide* character of

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[243] Leon Trotsky, "The Draft Programme of the Communist International – A Criticism of Fundamentals," The Third International After Lenin (1928; London: New Park Publications, Ltd., 1974) 40.

the revolution and nor did it validate the possibility of Socialism in One Country.[244]

Third, Socialism in One Country attacked the international character of a Marxist revolution. In fact, it was developed as the antithesis to Trotsky's theory of Permanent Revolution.[245] Marxist tended to agree that in order for a Socialist Revolution to be successful it would have to be an international occurrence.[246] Socialism in One Country claimed it was unnecessary for revolutions to occur in other countries, and in fact, Russia could build Socialism surrounded by capitalist countries. Armed with the newly created doctrine of Marxist-Leninism, Stalin portrayed Socialism in One Country as a continuation of Leninism. Once the Soviet Union had abandoned its dependence on other countries to rise in revolution it was free to develop itself as a nation-state. As a nation-state it bore the wants and needs similar those of capitalist nation-states that surrounded it – to maintain its power base, to maintain its borders, to

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[244] Claudin pointed out, "Stalin's methodological error is that he uses this 'law' in a metaphysical way, isolating it from the other tendencies in world economy and world politics.... In the metaphysical way in which Stalin employs it, this 'law' is good for everything and for nothing." Fernando Claudin, The Communist Movement: From Comintern to Cominform (1970; Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1975) 73-75.

[245] Lenin believed that due to Russia's backwardness a socialist revolution would have to take place in two phases. The first phase would be a bourgeois revolution. This would establish the preconditions for a Socialist revolution. Trotsky developed his theory of Permanent Revolution during his imprisonment for his participation in the 1905 Russian Revolution in St. Petersburg. For the most part it agreed with the premise of two phases, however, Trotsky took it one step further. Trotsky argued that the alliance forged between the peasants and workers created the momentum to bring about bourgeois revolution and that this would render it incapable of stopping at a bourgeois revolution, it would have to continue to the next step – to Socialism. Initially Lenin disagreed with this theory, however, by the time he arrived in Russia in 1917 to deliver his April Thesis he seemed to have adopted it completely, with the exception of minor modifications, to which Trotsky did not object. E.H. Carr, The Russian Revolution From Lenin to Stalin – 1917 – 1929 (Basingstokes: Palgrave, 1979) 74-75.

[246] Trotsky insisted that this was something that all the Marxist agreed to up to 1925 – Marx, Engles, Lenin, all the Bolsheviks, including Stalin and Bucharin. At first Stalin rejected the notion of Socialism in One Country. In early 1924 in his *Foundations of Leninism* Stalin clearly advocated world revolution as the only means by which to accomplish Socialism, however, by December 1924 Stalin changed his view. Leon Trotsky, "The Draft Programme of the Communist International – A Criticism of Fundamentals," The Third International After Lenin (1929; London: New Park Publications, Ltd., 1974) 40; Isaac Deutscher, Stalin a Political Biography, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1967) 281-282.

sustain its economy through growth and trade, etc. If the Soviet Union were to survive as a nation-state it must look inward rather than constantly looking outward. As Socialism in One Country took on nationalist characteristics it ran counter to the revolutionary goals of both Lenin and Trotsky.[247] Once the unity between national desires and socialism took place, Marxism no longer existed.

The defeat of the German October in 1923 and the onset of period of "relative stabilisation" left the Soviet Union in a very vulnerable and awkward position. The Bolsheviks had believed in order for a socialist revolution to survive it needed to be an international occurrence. Socialism in One Country began the Soviet Union's rationalisation for refocusing its attention on its internal needs. Bucharin utilised the concept of "uneven development" to demonstrate that the existence of Socialism solely in the Soviet Union was possible. However, Socialism in One Country in his attempt to unite socialism and nationalism, Bucharin created an anti-Marxist and anti-revolutionary doctrine. After Bucharin's defeat Stalin used Socialism in One Country to smother the revolutionary movements in Europe. The acceptance of Socialism in One Country changed the face the communist revolutionary movement as it paved the way for the emergence of the Third Period of the Comintern.

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[247] Carr presented an interesting point. "The appeal [of Socialism in One Country], though national (and potentially anti-Marxist) in one respect, was Marxist in another. Socialism in One Country might look like the nationalization of the revolution; but it was also its continuation. Through the process of industrialization the Soviet Union was to bring to fruition the socialist revolution, and to make itself a great and independent Power. Socialism in One Country was the synthesis between socialist and national loyalties." Carr's conclusion is interesting, albeit, utterly incorrect. Socialism in One Country was developed to defeat Trotsky and to destroy the opposition. Carr neglected the fact that Socialism just as capitalism is an international system. Once it becomes limited by national boundaries, it is no longer socialism, and therefore, Socialism in One Country *is* anti-Marxist. E.H. Carr, A History of Soviet Russia: Socialism in One Country 1924 – 1926, 3 vols. (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1964) 50.

The Sixth Congress of the Comintern and the Emergence of the Third Period

The Sixth Congress of the ECCI took place on July 17 – September 1, 1928 and marked a turning point in Comintern history. Each new policy in the Comintern – the drive towards uniformity in Lenin's time, Bolshevisation, Socialism in One Country – placed greater restrictions on the Comintern's member parties and built the foundations for a bureaucratic organisation. Stalin and his cohorts utilised the restrictions implemented in previous policies in order to firmly control the Comintern's parties.[248] In the end the only way to protect an illegitimate power base was through increasingly oppressive measures and thus, the only possible outcome for the policies introduced in the 1920's was the Programme adopted at the Sixth Congress in 1928. The Sixth Congress not only holds significant importance because of the Programme and the repressive statutes it adopted, but also because the Sixth Congress declared the end of the "Period of Stabilisation" and the emergence of a new revolutionary period – the "Third Period."[249] Although the rhetoric of the

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[248] However, Koslov and Weitz disagree with this point. They claimed that it was the Fifth Congress that paved the way for the more radical line of the Sixth Congress particularly the emphasis on the sharpening contradictions within the capitalist system, which would lead to a new revolutionary situation. The Fifth Congress certainly played a significant role but one must also bear in mind the situations that allowed the stricter line of the Fifth Congress to take place. As Draper pointed out the power struggle in the CPSU certainly played its part, however, it was not solely responsible either. Both Lenin's death and the power struggle in the CPSU played an enormous role in the outcome of the Fifth Congress. Indeed it was all of these situations playing on one another that created the appropriate environment for the Sixth Congress and the emergence of the "Third Period." However, the role played by the "period of relative stabilisation" can not be neglected. Stabilisation had a detrimental effect on the revolutionary movents and the Communist Parties and the Comintern were eager for it to be declared over. Nicholas N. Kozlov and Eric D. Weitz, "Reflections on the Origins of the 'Third Period': Bukharin, the Comintern, and the Political Economy of Weimar Germany," Journal of Contemporary History 3.24 (1989): 391; Theodore Draper, "The Strange Case of the Comintern," Survey 18.3 (1972): 101.

[249] The "period of relative stabilisation" was devastating to the Communist movements. Membership declined during this period and the Comintern was eager to declare it over. In 1923 the KPD had 294,230 members. In 1924 this figure plummeted to 121,394. As early as January 1925 Zinoviev had claimed that 1921 – 1924 marked the Second Period and Fifth Congress marked the beginning of the Third Period. However, it was not until the Sixth

Programme and the "Third Period" claimed to push the revolution forward, its true intentions were to repress the European revolutionary movement.

This section will discuss the Programme and the Statutes adopted at the Sixth Congress, as well as the role played by the propagation of the "Third Period" in the subordination of the revolutionary movement.

First, the rhetoric of the Programme claimed to strive for advancement of the revolutionary struggle. Prior to his demise in 1929 Bucharin was the chief architect of the Programme of the Sixth Congress. The draft of the Programme was published in June 1928 in Comintern periodicals and was discussed within Communist circles.[250] It claimed it was the first attempt, since the Communist Manifesto, to create a uniform programme for the Communist International. However, unlike the Communist Manifesto, which was written as a propaganda piece the Programme expected to be followed. Bucharin claimed that the Programme satisfied some *need* for a uniform programme and even implied that

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Congress that the Comintern officially declared the stabilisation as over. G. Zinoviev, "Bolshevising the Parties of the Communist International," International Press Correspondence 5.7 (1925): 63; for KPD membership statistics see Herman Weber, Die Wandung Des Deutschen Kommunismus: Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimarer Republic, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1969) 1: 362-363.

[250] A lot of press was devoted to inflating the importance of the Sixth Congress and drumming up support for the Programme. The programme was painted as "the programme of struggle of the world proletarian dictatorship...." The propaganda also cited the urgent *need* for the Programme. "The need for formulating the basic views of Communism in regard to principles and tactics has become still greater, still more necessary." Even Yablonski's article at first seemed critical bearing some disagreements with Bucharin's analysis on the crisis of Capitalism and the phases of socialism. However, it appears that he merely wanted to raise the issues and not engage in open debate. At the end of his article he reassured his reader of the importance of the Programme. "These few remarks on the Draft Programme may possess a certain significance, but they should on no account be regarded as derogatory to its real value, its historical importance as the programme of the principles of Communism." Trotsky's critique is probably the most famous critique of the Draft Programme, which was first published outside the Soviet Union in 1929. It was not made available to the delegates as a whole, though some managed to acquire an abridged version. Trotsky claimed the draft "bears obvious traces of hasty, even slipshod work, without any preliminary serious and scientific criticism in the press or an extensive discussion in all parties of the Comintern." Editorial, "The Sixth Congress of the Comintern," The Communist International 5.15 (1928): 347; Yablonski, "Some Remarks on the Draft Programme of the C.I.," The Communist International 5.14 (1928): 343; Leon Trotsky, The Third International After Lenin (1929; London: New Park Publications, Ltd., 1974) 1.

the proletarian dictatorship would be impossible without it.[251] The "Programme of the Sixth Congress" remained relatively unchanged until the Comintern's dissolution after World War II and was adopted as the new format by which Communist parties modelled themselves.[252] The Programme of the Sixth Congress stated its purpose clearly:

> "The Sixth World Congress of the Communist International adopted an international programme which is binding equally for all sections. For the first time since the existence of the revolutionary working class movement, the working class will have a document in its hand whose passage are law for the millions of organised workers in all countries and amongst all races and nations of the globe. [...] This document is the guiding star of millions of exploited and oppressed toilers in the struggle against the oppressors, in the struggle of the proletarian masses...everywhere the class-struggle is being

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[251] Bucharin attributed historical significance to the Programme and claimed that all the Comintern's historical struggles created "the need for a uniform programme of the Communist International.... This programme of the Communist International, being the supreme critical generalisation of the whole body of historical experience of the international revolutionary proletarian movement, becomes the programme of struggle for the World Proletarian Dictatorship, the programme of struggle for World Communism." It appears that anytime the Comintern wanted to convince its member parties of anything they linked their argument to history. Bucharin, "The Programme of the Communist International (Adopted by the VI World Congress on 1st September 1928, Moscow," International Press Correspondence 8.92 (1928): 1750.

[252] According to McKenzie, "the Program was never at any time criticized or rejected by the leadership of the Comintern. ...[The] Program of 1928 became a *universal* guide for correct Communist thinking on many problems of the revolutionary movement, for the programs of the Communist parties were modelled after the Comintern Program." McKenzie did not address the reasons for this, however, it should be noted that no internal opposition to the programme arose because internal opposition had been destroyed. Criticism did appear from outside the Comintern, particularly from Trotsky, however, as previously mentioned these criticisms had little effect on the proceedings. For McDermott and Agnew the *real* significance of the Sixth Congress was that the meeting took place "in an atmosphere of intolerance and name-calling, the congress represented a crucial stage in the undermining of Bucharin's authority." Kermit McKenzie, Comintern and World Revolution 1928 – 1943: The Shaping of a Doctrine (London and New York: Columbia University Press, 1964) 43; Kevin McDermott and Jeremy Agnew, The Comintern: A History of International Communism From Lenin to Stalin (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1996) 78.

> carried on. It is the programme of the unity of the working class…."[253]

The Sixth Congress and its Statutes attempted to use Marx and Lenin as a means of rationalising their oppressive measures. Marx had attempted to write a programme for the revolutionary struggle. Lenin attempted to create uniformity in the Comintern and insisted that the Comintern's parties follow the Bolshevik model. However, unlike Stalin in 1928 neither Marx nor Lenin were in a position to dictate party policy. Compared to the Programme of 1928, Lenin's Policy of Uniformity appeared utopian. Lenin's drive towards the creation of theoretical uniformity inside the Comintern was met with resistance, much of which he could do nothing about. Lenin's Policy of Uniformity was his method to try to push the revolution forward. It was not developed for the purpose of destroying the opposition within the revolutionary movement. The Programme, on the other hand, attempted to create a uniform structure with the sole intention of maintaining control of the Comintern's parties.

Second, the Programme stifled the revolutionary movement by removing all remaining autonomy from the Comintern's member parties and eliminating the open debates. The Statutes adopted in 1928 left Comintern member parties completely subordinated to the will of the Soviet Union. For example, Statute 5 insisted that,

> "The Communist International and its sections are built up on the basis of democratic centralism, the fundamental principles of which are: […] (c) decisions of superior party committees

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[253] Bucharin, "The Programme of the Communist International (Adopted by the VI World Congress on 1st September 1928, Moscow," International Press Correspondence 8.92 (1928): 1770.

> [are] to be binding on subordinate committees, strict party discipline and prompt and precise execution of the decisions of the Communist International, of its agencies, and of the leading party committees. [...] Once decisions have been taken by the congress of the Communist International, by the congress of the respective section, or by the leading committees of the Comintern of the section, these decisions must be unconditionally carried out even if part of the party membership or of the local party organizations is in disagreement with it."[254]

Individual parties were subordinated to the desires of their higher bodies. In effect if a member party disagreed with a Comintern decision they could be expelled. Statute 15 made it quite clear that the policy of expulsion was not limited to the rank and file; even whole parties could be expelled.

> "The ECCI has the right to expel from the Communist International entire sections, groups, or individual members who violate the programme and rules of the Communist International or the decisions of the world congress and of the ECCI."[255]

The Statues of the Sixth Congress sent out a very important message: The time for open debate had come to an end. Neither dissention nor open criticism would be tolerated in any Communist Party. This was further emphasised in Stalin's speech to the Presidium meeting held on December 19, 1928 in which

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[254] "Statutes of the Communist International Adopted at its Sixth Congress – 29 August 1928," The Communist International 1919 – 1943 *Documents*, ed. Jane Degras, 3 vols. (London: Frank Cass and Company, Ltd., 1971) 2: 464.

[255] "Statutes of the Communist International Adopted at its Sixth Congress – 29 August 1928," The Communist International 1919 – 1943 *Documents*, ed. Jane Degras, 3 vols. (London: Frank Cass and Company, Ltd., 1971) 2: 468.

he offered his support to the Programme and condemned those who criticised it, particularly Humbert-Droz and Serra. For their criticism of capitalist stabilisation, Stalin accused them of "pusillanimous opportunism," even though his article did not offer an adequate defence of the concept, presumably because he had little to due with its theoretical development. But even more striking was the question of open debate. Humbert-Droz and Serra appeared to be against the expulsion of Rightist factions that had developed in the KPD. They suggested combating them with ideological methods rather than expulsion. Stalin, on the other hand, defended the decisions taken at the Sixth Congress and condemned Humbert-Droz and Serra suggestions and accused them of supporting the Rightist themselves. Stalin claimed that the tightening of grips over parties,

> "does not imply flat discipline is to be relaxed; on the contrary, it implies the general tightening up of iron internal discipline, the absolute subordination of the minority to the majority, the absolute subordination of the minor organisations, as well as the other Party organisations…to the leading party centres." [256]

The Sixth Congress called forth a new era. One that would not tolerate deviation and that was utterly devoid of its original theoretical foundations.

Third, the Sixth Congress used old Bolshevik rhetoric to stifle the European revolutionary movement. The Sixth Congress heralded the beginning of a new revolutionary era – the "Third Period." The concept of the "Third

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[256] Joseph Stalin, "Stalin's Speech at the Presidium Meeting of the ECCI held on December 19, 1928." The Communist International 6.4 (1929): 146.

Period" was not new. It had been introduced at the Third Congress in 1921. The First Period was marked by revolutionary upsurge all over Europe. It was during this period that the Russian Revolution was fought and the Soviet Union was born. The Second Period was the period of "relative stabilisation." Just as the economic system was characterised by peaks and troughs so too was the revolutionary tide. During the period of "relative stabilisation" capitalism had managed to build itself up again and the tide was no longer favourable to revolution. The idea was that after a time the period of "relative stabilisation" would give way to the "Third Period," meaning a new wave of revolutions.

Different *periods* (phases) of the revolutionary movement as well as the nature of capitalist development (i.e. the nature of capitalist stabilisation) had been debated since the Third Congress in 1921. Trotsky's famous speech announced that capitalism had stabilised itself and the revolutionary period was at its end.[257] In the "Theses on the International Situation and the Tasks of the Comintern" Trotsky proclaimed,

> "The first period of the revolutionary movement after the war is characterized by the elemental nature of the onslaught, by the considerable formlessness of its methods and aims and by the extreme panic of the ruling classes; and it may be regarded by and large as terminated. The class self-confidence of the bourgeoisie and the outward stability of its state organs have

[257] Although Trotsky's speech took place in 1921 and the Comintern agreed, the Comintern's parties were reluctant to accept the notion of "relative stabilisation." It was not until the devastating defeat of the German movement at the end of 1923 that the Germans, in particular, accepted that the time for revolution had come to an end. For further discussion on "relative Stabilisation" see G. Zinoviev, "Tactics of the Communist International," International Press Correspondence 1.4 (1921): 29-30.

> undoubtedly become strengthened. The dread of Communism has abated, if not completely disappeared."[258]

Trotsky ended the Theses with the point that regardless of whether the period of capitalist stabilisation ended quickly or slowly the Communist movement must remain poised for action. Shifts in the revolutionary tide were normal, and at times they favoured the bourgeoisie at others, as in the case of the Russian Revolution, it favoured the proletariat. The working class must remain patient and it must continue to rebuild. Naturally this proclamation was rather unpopular, particularly with the German delegation. Many had joined the Communist movement because it promised immediate gains – the misery of the workers would be eliminated once the successful revolution had been achieved. Pressure for the period of "relative stabilisation" to come to an end certainly existed.[259]

> "The entire scope and truly world wide scale of the contradictions of capitalism become most glaringly revealed

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[258] Leon Trotsky, "Theses on the International Situation and the Tasks of the Comintern: Adopted unanimously at the Sixth Session, July 4, 1921," The First Five Years of the Communist International, 2 vols. (London: New Park Publications, Ltd., 1973) 1: 291.

[259] There are several different arguments as to why stabilisation was declared over. McKenzie claimed that the concept of the "Third Period" was linked to Stalin's struggle for mastery of the Comintern and the CPSU. McKenzie further argued that Bucharin's demotion from the head of the Comintern and member of the Politburo and the purging of all Bucharin's followers from the Comintern's parties were the consequence of this struggle. Draper, however, disagreed with McKenzie's argument because he limited the origins of the "Third Period" only to what was going on inside the CPSU and furthermore, McKenzie attributed the origins of the Third Period to Stalin. Draper claimed that at the end of August 1927 it was Stalin following Bucharin's lead and not vice versa. Kozlov and Weitz, on the other hand, agreed that the "Third Period" originated with Bucharin but claimed that Draper's argument reduced the "Third Period" to a power struggle and ignored the theoretical context of his argument. They concluded that Draper's argument presented a "cloud" over the "Third Period" and distorted Bucharin's views. Kermit E. McKenzie, Comintern and World Revolution 1928 – 1924: The Shaping of a Doctrine (London and New York: Columbia University Press, 1964) 122-123; Theodore Draper, "The Strange Case of the Comintern," Survey: A Journal of East and West Studies 3.18 (1972): 98; Nicholas N. Kozlov and Eric D. Weitz, "Reflections on the Origins of the 'Third Period': Bukharin, the Comintern, and the Political Economy of Weimar Germany," Journal of Contemporary History 3.24 (1989): 388 –389.

in the epoch of imperialism (finance capitalism)…. This new historical period set in as a result of the operation of the principal dynamic laws of capitalist society. It grew out of the development of industrial capitalism, and is the historical continuation of the latter. […] The law of uneven development of capitalism, which becomes intensified in the epoch of imperialism, renders firm and durable international combination of imperialist powers impossible. [Imperialism is] the highest phase of capitalist development refashioning the whole world after its own image…. All at the same time, however, the monopolistic form of capital increasingly develops the elements of parasitical degeneration, decay, and decline of capitalism. […] Imperialism is…moribund and decaying capitalism. It is the final stage of the development of the capitalist system. It is the threshold of the world social revolution."[260]

Although it might have seemed that the Comintern's proclamation of the "Third Period" encouraged revolutions, it in fact did not. The "Third Period" merely created a false sense of incumbent war. Stalin and Bucharin had learned from their revolutionary past. If the Comintern's parties believed that revolution was imminent, then they would accept the Comintern's repressive measures.

The long awaited new era had been declared. Although the economic analysis that appeared in the Programme of 1928 was not new and had been heavily debated, the major difference was that in 1928 not many were left to disagree with Bucharin's analysis. There was nothing new about the "age of Imperialism." Lenin and Luxemburg had devoted many discussions to the role of imperialist development and the part it played in the revolutionary

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[260] Bucharin, "The Programme of the Communist International (Adopted by the VI World Congress on 1st September 1928, Moscow," International Press Correspondence 8.92 (1928): 1751, 1752, 1753.

movement. However, unlike Lenin or Luxemburg's discussion of Imperialism, the Programme of 1928 depicted Imperialism as the "*final* phase of capitalist development." Not long after Bucharin's proclamation the New York Stock exchange crashed in October 1929. This certainly worked in favour of the propaganda devoted to the promotion of the "Third Period." As the Comintern entered a new revolutionary period strict disciple was required of the rank and file of the Comintern's parties. Unbeknownst to the rank and file of the Comintern's parties the CPSU was no longer interested in world revolution but rather it was only interested in maintaining its own power base. The propagation of world revolution was merely a tool to maintain discipline within the Comintern's member parties. The "Third Period" also allowed the CPSU to use foreign Communist Parties buffers between them and their respective states.

Summary

The Comintern played an extremely influential role in the practice and theoretical changes that took place in the German Communist movement. While not a single Comintern policy can be held completely responsible for the KPD's subordination, each policy played a distinctive role in hindering the KPD's practical and theoretical development. The Bolshevik's desperation to spread the revolution across Europe in order to save the Russian revolution influenced Lenin's Policy of Uniformity. As a Marxist, Lenin was profoundly committed to pushing the revolution forward and he needed to convince other parties to join his cause. He firmly believed that the Bolsheviks possessed the *correct* revolutionary model that could be transplanted all over Europe. However, the rigidity and the forceful methods inherent in Lenin's Policy of

Uniformity laid the foundations for the repressive measures implemented by Bolshevisation.

Bolshevisation took Lenin's Policy of Uniformity to its extreme and attempted to "russify" the Comintern's parties. Changes and fluctuations in the Comintern reflected the upheaval and the power struggle in the Soviet Union. In their attempts to gain power the Triumvirate manipulated the strictness of Lenin's words to rid the CPSU and the Comintern of its opponents and, thereby, removed the Comintern's focus away from Lenin's goal of spreading world revolution. In Germany, the policies of the Comintern had a tremendous impact on the theoretical development of the German Party. Bolshevisation, in its attempts to rid the KPD of the remnants of Social Democracy targeted the old Spartacists, who were influential in perpetuating the KPD's theoretical traditions. Bolshevisation successfully divided the moment and removed all the influence of the old Spartacists leaving behind a severely weakened, albeit, more controllable party. Bolshevisation attempted to destroy the old theoretical traditions of the KPD and replaced it with propaganda.

Bolshevisation paved the way for the Statutes of the Sixth Congress and the emergence of the "Third Period." The Statutes of the Sixth Congress took Lenin's Policy of Uniformity and Bolshevisation to their utmost extremes. The Russians no longer tried to convince the Comintern's parties to follow their path. After 1928 they were in a position to dictate individual party policy. The Comintern had completely ceased to be an organ of revolution. It became a bureaucratic machine intent on securing its own survival. The Comintern utilised the emergence of a new revolutionary period as a means of oppression. The Comintern had learned from its past. During Lenin's time the Comintern's

parties were willing to accept restrictive measures during the revolutionary period. They believed the revolution was around the corner. The Comintern resuscitated the revolutionary period in order to rationalise their authoritarian measures. However, unlike the previous revolutionary period, revolutions in Europe posed a threat to the hegemony of the Comintern and the CPSU.

Chapter Four: The Third Period and the Development of the Theory of Social Fascism in Germany

Social Fascism is Socialism in word, Fascism in deed.[261]

The link between Social Democracy and Fascism was a relatively new concept conceived out of the Communist's antagonism toward the SPD. The SPD were the creators of the Weimar Republic and consequently the Republic's chief defenders. In an effort to protect their creation, the SPD brutally suppressed numerous uprisings. As a result, the KPD held the SPD responsible for the death of several of its leaders as well as countless members of the rank and file. The hostility that the KPD exercised toward the Social Democrats was born out the perceived betrayal of the revolutionary movement and the murders of the KPD leaders. [262] While there was no love lost between the Communists and the SPD leaders, prior to 1924 the KPD cooperated with the SPD rank and file under the various United Front campaigns.[263] The United Front campaigns

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[261] "Was ist Sozialfaschismus?" 1930 SAMPO RY 1/I2/707/127 FBS 248/11605; Kursmaterial Nr. 2: Grundizüge der leninistischen Stragegie und Taktik in der gegenwärtige Periode (Zentral Kommittee der Kommunistschen Partei Deutschlands, 1930) 22: SAMPO RY 1/I2/707/99 FBS 248/11598; Earl Browder, The Meaning of Social-Fascism: Its Historical and Theoretical Background (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1933) 14-15.

[262] Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht were murdered in January 1919 during the so called "Spartakus uprising." The old and frail Franz Mehring died shortly after hearing the news of the brutal murders of Luxemburg and Liebknecht – it is said of a broken heart. Leo Jogiches was arrested and shot in March 1919. Brandler claimed that Jogiches' death was in fact a suicide and not an assassination. Eugen Leviné was condemned to death and shot for his role in the second Soviet Republic in Munich in 1919. During the Munich Soviet in April and May 1919 700 people died. In Berlin, 1919 a general strike resulted in repression – 1200 people died in what become known as "bloody week." In January 1920 a demonstration outside of the Reichstag left 42 dead. In 1921 the March action also resulted in a bloodbath. Isaac Deutscher, "Record of a Discussion with Heinrich Brandler," New Left Review 105 (1977): 48-49; A. Joseph Berlau, The German Social Democratic Party 1914 – 1921 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949) 252-253.

[263] While the United Front campaigns were an important feature of the KPD's propaganda throughout the Weimar period, this thesis has limited itself to addressing the fluctuations in KPD theory. Therefore the United front campaigns fall outside of the scope of this thesis. For more on the KPD's United Front campaigns see Siegfried Bahne, " 'Sozialfaschismus' Deutschland zur Geschichte eines Politischen Begriffs," International Review of Social History 10.2 (1965): 214-215.

were utilised in an attempt to lure the SPD rank and file over to the KPD. Hence SPD rank and file were considered something separate from the SPD leaders i.e. they were not held responsible for the crimes of their leaders. However, this attitude changed during the post-1923 KPD and particularly during the Maslow-Fischer years when the policy of Bolshevisation intensified the KPD's opposition of the SPD. During Bolshevisation everything associated with the SPD fell deeper under scrutiny – including the SPD rank and file. The Maslow-Fischer reign and their pursuit of Bolshevisation created the appropriate environment for the term Social Fascism to flourish into a quasi-theory.

Social Fascism as a theory and campaign picked up where Bolshevisation left off. It was an extreme form of Bolshevisation. Like Bolshevisation before it, Social Fascism served to divide the working class movement by creating a constant enemy from within the working class – the SPD leaders and later the SPD workers. However, it was not until the declaration of the arrival of the Third Period that Social Fascism became truly destructive – where mere name calling was transformed into a fully fledged campaign. Masquerading as a theory, Social Fascism was justified and validated as an effective weapon, not against Social Democracy, but against the working class as a whole. The May Day events in 1929 provided the appropriate catalysts for the hardliners to launch Social Fascism into a theory.

This chapter will discuss the KPD's development of the theory of Social Fascism. Although the theory of Social Fascism has been accused of being a dramatic shift, in reality KPD theory merely followed the course laid down for it by the previous Comintern policies and arrived at its natural conclusion – the

theory of Social Fascism. The evolution of Social Fascism took place in two phases. At first glance the first phase seemed to be a relatively harmless form of name calling during the early years of the Weimar Republic. The second phase took place toward the end of the Weimar Republic. It not only reflected the overt hostility toward all aspects of Social Democracy, but it also became a destructive weapon in the German working class movement and ensured the impossibility of any working class unity. The proclamation of the Third Period had an incredible impact on the practical and theoretical course that the German Communist Party pursued after the Sixth Congress of the Comintern in 1928. While not a single Comintern policy could be held responsible for the destruction the KPD's theoretical and practical development, each policy changed the internal dynamic of the German movement and in the Comintern's attempts to create uniformity, they merely subordinated the movement. In the end it was inevitable for the KPD to create the theory of Social Fascism.

The first section of this chapter – "Benign" Use of Social Fascism – will discuss Social Fascism in its name calling form. Zinoviev's use of the term in 1924 was no accident. Zinoviev appeared to first use the term within the German context as a means of diverting attention away from his involvement in the defeat of the failed German revolution in 1923. While Zinoviev can not be blamed for what Social Fascism developed into, he did possess ulterior motives in perpetuating the term in Germany and was instrumental in developing the Comintern's policy of Bolshevisation.

In many ways the theory of Social Fascism was a more extreme version of Bolshevisation. While the use of the term Social Fascism seemed to have taken a hiatus under Bucharin, his role in developing Social Fascism into a

theory was dubious. Bucharin was under tremendous pressure, particularly from the German hardliners, to intensify the campaign against Social Democracy. He appeared reluctant to do so. Bucharin never directly equated Social Democracy with Fascism, but he did compare the two in the programme of the Sixth Congress and thereby helped lay the foundations for Social Fascism as a theory. The theory of Social Fascism drew on the programme of the Sixth Congress to prove the more extreme measures that were pursued.

The second section – The Practical Foundations of a Pseudo Theory – will discuss the KPD's transition into the acceptance of Social Fascism as a theory. Essentially two key events took place in Germany that helped launch Social Fascism into a theory – the Wittorf Affair and the Bloody May Day 1929. What is significant about these two events is how the Comintern and the German party responded to them. First, when oppositional leaders took advantage of Thälmann's involvement in a financial scandal to oust him, Stalin and Molotov intervened in favour of Thälmann. A special Plenum was held which demanded the "liquidation" of all opposition. The Wittorf Affair signified a change in the Comintern's relationship with the KPD. Previously, the KPD possessed a certain degree of autonomy. The Wittorf Affair demonstrated that the Soviet leaders had clearly decided who the KPD leader should be and opposition within the KPD was in such a weakened state that it was not able to challenge this.

Second, the role of May Day 1929 in the perpetuation of the theory of Social Fascism is highly debated. This chapter wishes to argue that May Day was an important tool in the rationalisation of Social Fascism in Germany. The May Day events were used to demonstrate the "correctness" of the Sixth

Congress and the awakening of a new revolutionary tide. While neither event can be credited with creating the conditions for the development and perpetuation of Social Fascism as a theory, both played a role in the rationalisation of the party's harsher line against Social Democracy.

The third section of this chapter – Pseudo Theory Takes Hold – will discuss the second phase of Social Fascism – the more belligerent use of the term. The Tenth Plenum of the Comintern held in 1929 not only used the events of Bloody May Day as unadulterated proof that Social Democracy had declined into Social Fascism, but attempted to provide theoretical foundations for Social Fascism. The key features of the theory of Social Fascism were its increased attacks on the Left wing of the SPD, its claim that a new revolutionary upsurge was occurring and that it coincided with the Third Period, and attempts to theorise the reasons behind Social Democracy's "corruptness." However, the theory of Social Fascism was extremely problematic. In utilising the working class' association of the SPD with the Weimar State and feeding off this hostility the KPD theoreticians failed to comprehend the nature of Fascism. Fascism was developing before their eyes and the KPD leaders and the KPD spin doctors refused to acknowledge it.

I. "Benign" Use of Social Fascism

The use of the term Social Fascism has often been associated with Stalin and Stalinism. The origins of the theory that wrecked havoc on the socialist movement appeared humble and seemed to have sprung to life almost by

accident.[264] Although the use of the term Social Fascism appeared benign in its name calling form, it was anything but harmless. In the same way that a limp or a cough may appear harmless, but in fact hidden beneath the surface lurks a cancerous tumour. From the onset the use of the term Social Fascism in Germany was contrived and hid the Comintern's ulterior motives. Underneath the intense loathing of Social Democracy and the Social Fascist rhetoric lurked Comintern's desire to redirect the working class' focus away from revolution. The perpetuation of Social Fascism in its name calling form allowed it to flourish into a dangerous theory. As a result the concept enabled Social Fascism to endure and evolve into its second phase – that of a weapon against, not only Social Democracy, but all opposition in the KPD.

This section will discuss the first phase of Social Fascism from its coinage in the German context by Zinoviev, to its association with the policy of Bolshevisation, and its supposed abandonment by Bucharin in the Programme of the Sixth Congress of the Comintern.

Zinoviev and Social Fascism

The first phase of Social Fascism began in the early 1920's. When Social Fascism was first introduced in Germany it did not appear to mean any more than Lenin's use of "social-chauvinist" or "social-patriot" during the First World War. Yet, it still reflected the Comintern's belligerence and extreme

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[264] Draper traced the first use of the term to an Italian report printed in the Russian periodical *Izvestia* on November 12, 1922. In fact, he alleged that the term may have been the invention of a headline writer and there was nothing too significant about the term at the time. Draper attributed the invention of the term to the Bolsheviks habit of amalgamating negative phrases such as "social-chauvinist" and "social-patriot" to describe Social Democracy. Carr offered the slightly earlier date of November 10, 1922. Theodore Draper, "The Strange Case of the Comintern," Survey – A Journal of East and West Studies 3.84 (1972) 119-120; E.H. Carr, A History of Soviet Russia: Foundations of a Planned Economy 1926-1929, 3 vols. (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1979) 3: 638.

distrust of the SPD. The use of the term Social Fascism seemed to continue in this capacity until Bucharin's defeat following the Sixth Congress of the Comintern in 1928. In Germany the first official use of the term "Social Fascism" can be traced back to Zinoviev (not Stalin) following the disastrous defeat of the German October in 1923.[265] Zinoviev claimed,

> "The leading strata of the German Social Democrats are at the present moment nothing else than a fraction of German Fascists under a socialist mask. [...] It is not just now that the German social democrats have passed over to the side of capitalism. At the bottom, they have always been the class enemies of the proletariat."[266]

Stalin, following Zinoviev's lead, further asserted,

> "Fascism is a fighting organisation of the bourgeoisie dependent upon the active support of Social Democracy. Objectively, Social Democracy is a moderate wing of

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[265] In his unpublished memoirs housed at the University of Glasgow, Rudolf Schlessinger claimed that he "had been one of the first who had coined the term." It is clear, under the pseudonym R. Gerber, that Schlessinger was responsible for the development of Social Fascism into a theory. In his German memoirs Schlessinger explained that the term had taken on a life of its own and had begun to mean something different than its origination. However, there is no physical evidence to suggest that Schlessinger coined the term Social Fascism to suit the German situation, although it is difficult to ascertain what his involvement was in an unwritten capacity. It is also difficult to understand why he would claim responsibility for such a diabolical phrase. Rudolf Schlessinger, Memoirs: In a Time of Struggle, 2 vols. (Unpublished memoirs, 1957) 1: 363; Erinnergun, 2 vols. (Unpublished memoirs, n.d.) 1: 271.

[266] While Zinoviev can be credited for bringing the term to Germany, it is doubtful that he can be credited with developing the theory of Social Fascism. Zinoviev's use of the term, in the early 1920's, remained in the form of name calling. G. Zinoviev, "Lessons of the German Event," International Press Correspondence 4.14 (1924): 110; Theodore Draper, "The Ghost of Social-Fascism," Commentary 47.2 (1969): 30; also see Siegfried Bahne, " 'Sozialfaschismus' Deutschland zur Geschichte eines Politischen Begriffs," International Review of Social History 10.2 (1965): 224-225; Herman Weber, Die Wandung Des Deutschen Kommunismus: Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimarer Republic, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1969) 1: 101-102; Kevin McDermott and Jeremy Agnew, The Comintern: A History of Communism From Lenin to Stalin (London: Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1996) 50.

> Fascism. They are not poles apart, but immediate neighbours."[267]

Initially, Stalin's analysis attributed the rise of Fascism to a by-product of imperialism – a power block that formed and developed in retaliation to the threat of the proletarian revolution. Clearly, Stalin's use of the term merely imitated Zinoviev's observation. The correlation between Fascism and Imperialism reflected the time period and the dominating theories of this specific period. Zinoviev and Stalin tossed the term "Imperialism" around much in the same way that the term "globalisation" is used to describe everything today. Clearly neither Zinoviev nor Stalin possessed the knowledge or depth on the topic of Imperialism to discuss it in anything other than a superficial manner. The statements made by both Zinoviev and Stalin demonstrated this fact. Although Zinoviev's declaration accurately depicted his

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[267] It is rather remarkable that even party members and witnesses to the failed German Revolution of 1923 blamed Stalin for developing the concept and theory of Social Fascism. These supposed eye witnesses also placed the birth of Social Fascism in the late 1920's. For example, Ruth Fischer insisted that "the new theorem of 'social fascism', which Stalin enunciated in person," took place in the years of the Nazi ascendancy, 1929-1933. Borkenau correctly asserted that the intensification of hostility toward Social Democratic workers occurred after May Day 1929. He was incorrect to place the origins of Social Fascism in 1929. "As a result of [of May Day] a new theory was proclaimed, to the effect that every single member of the socialist parties and every single active member of the trade unions was...an active enemy of the proletariat. All through the years 1929 and 1930 the war-cry of 'social-fascism' was raised...." Therefore, it is not surprising that later historians and commentators also blamed Stalin for Social Fascism. While Mandel correctly provided the original date for the Stalin's first utterance of Social Fascism, citing the above mentioned quote, he nonetheless made the same mistake as his predecessors and claimed that the whole notion and theory was developed by Stalin. For example in a footnote Ernest Mandel insisted, "Social Democracy was labelled social fascist in accord with Stalin's theory." While Trotsky was correct to assert, "It is absolute balderdash to identify Social Democracy with fascism." He mistakenly associated it with Stalin – "Stalin himself was enmeshed with social fascism." However, Trotsky also pointed out that German Communists were responsible for the perpetuation of the Stalin myth. He insisted that the *Rote Fahne* traced the origins of Social Fascism to Stalin's first use of the term in 1924 and completely ignored Zinoviev's use of the term shortly before. J. Stalin, "On the International Situation," International Press Correspondence 4.72 (1924) 792; Ruth Fischer, Stalin and German Communism: A Study in the Origins of the State Party (1948; New Brunswick and London: Transaction, Inc., 1982) 655; Franz Borkenau, The Communist International (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1938) 341-342; Leon Trotsky, The Struggle Against Fascism, intro Ernest Mandel (New York: Pathfinder Press, Inc., 1971) 454; Leon Trotsky, "What Next? Vital Questions for the German Proletariat," The Struggle Against Fascism, intro Ernest Mandel (New York: Pathfinder Press, Inc., 1971) 145, 157.

complete and utter ignorance surrounding the topics of both Fascism and Imperialism, his use of the term Social Fascism was an artificial diversion. It was used to redirect blame away from his responsibility for the failed German revolution of 1923 and focus the blame onto the Social Democrats. This intensification in hostility towards Social Democracy gave rise to the policy of Bolshevisation

First, Zinoviev used the term Social Fascism to refocus blame for the failed German revolution of 1923 onto the Social Democrats. Given that the theory of Imperialism was used to explain the war and as a result the forthcoming collapse of the Capitalist system, one can see why Zinoviev, and at his heels Stalin, used the term Imperialism to discuss Social Democracy's decline. However, one must wonder why Zinoviev chose to associate Social Democracy with Fascism? If one performs acrobats and applies fools logic then he can almost see the round about crooked connection between Socialism and Fascism. The historical characters (in the pre-1924 world) who had called themselves Fascist had started off as Socialists. [268] In the face of the First World War both Mussolini and Piłsudski had chosen to support the State and side with the war effort.[269] Zinoviev drew the parallel that this mimicked the behaviour of the German Social Democratic Party. The SPD had begun as Socialists and in the

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[268] The term *fascio* had existed in Italian politics since 1890. Originally it merely referred to radical revolutionary politics. It later evolved into the more common term *fascism*. Fascism became an organised political movement in Italy following a meeting in Milan on March 23, 1919. The Fascists formed armed squads to terrorise Anarchists, Socialists, and Communists.

[269] Józef Piłsudski in Poland had joined the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) in 1892. The PPS formed in an attempt to unite the underground Polish Socialist movement. However the party split over the national question. Rosa Luxemburg was a member of the PPS, but broke away to form the Social Democratic Party of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania (SDKiL). Piłsudski's desire for an independent Poland precipitated his decision to join the army during the First World War. Benito Mussolini followed a similar progression. Mussolini, following in his father's footsteps also joined the Socialist party as a youth. A group of syndicalists broke with the Socialists over Italy's entry into the First World War. In 1914 he joined the pro-war group *Fasci d'Azione Rivoluzionaria*.

face of the war were overcome with nationalism and turned their back on their Marxist rhetoric, and thereby betrayed the workers movement. The conclusion to this logic was as follows: if Piłsudski and Mussolini started off as Socialists, supported and joined the war effort, and became Fascists, then the SPD must also be Fascists because they started off as Socialists and supported the war effort. Unfortunately, this conclusion was utterly illogical and dismissive of the whole concept of Fascism. It implied that Fascism was nothing more than a pro-State form of Socialism and ignored the possibility that Fascism might be an entity unto itself with motivations unto itself. In hindsight this pattern of thinking turned out to be extremely dangerous.[270] By superficially aligning Social Democracy with Fascism and refusing to acknowledge Fascism as new political movement in the wake of Hitler's rise to power in 1933, the Communists found themselves completely unprepared.

It is obvious that Zinoviev had a propensity for throwing around fashionable terminology. The concept of Fascism was new to the world stage – Mussolini's "march" on Rome took place at the end of October 1922 – and generally, any analysis of Fascism was associated with Italy not Germany.[271] Zinoviev's use of the term appeared in a fashionable and superficial sense as he did not overtly attach any real depth or meaning to it. The newness of Fascism may also explain why the term had such an enduring shelf life and managed to evolve, as opposed to "social-chauvinist" or "social-traitor." However, in practice Fascism had been around for two years before Zinoviev appropriated the concept to suit his own purposes. It, therefore, becomes clear that

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[270] It is true that there were some who opposed this pattern of thinking and believed that the Fascists were indeed dangerous, more dangerous than the Social Democrats. However, in true Stalinist style, they were purged for their opposition.

[271] Siegfried Bahne, " 'Sozialfaschismus' Deutschland zur Geschichte eines Politischen Begriffs," International Review of Social History 10.2 (1965): 241.

Zinoviev's choice to unearth the term "Social Fascism" in 1924 was no accident.

The failed German Revolution of 1923 signified an incredible turning point in the history of the KPD. Although both the CPSU and the Comintern played a leading role in dictating to the party leaders their prescribed course of action, no one in Russia took responsibility for their role in the defeat.[272] Blame was very strategically scattered throughout Germany. Brandler and Thalheimer (the Centre leaders of the KPD) and Radek (the Comintern representative in Germany) were used as scapegoats.[273] With the leaders in Germany attempting to blame the Executive Committee of the Communist International ie Zinoviev – the head of the Comintern – for mistakes made in Germany, Zinoviev needed

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[272] Broué quite accurately pointed out that the October defeat of the German revolution was never discussed. In October 1923 Zinoviev wrote a series of articles entitled, "Problems of the German Revolution." But these articles were written during the events. The articles were translated and circulated by the KPD, but were quickly withdrawn. The October defeat became a weapon in the power struggle inside the CPSU and the Comintern. Pierre Broué, The German Revolution 1917 – 1923, trans. John Archer (Leiden and London: Brill, 2005) 817-818. Also see G. Zinoviev, "Problems of the German Revolution," The Communist International (1923): 3-57.

[273] Brandler and Thalheimer produced an unsuccessful joint article explaining the reasons for the German defeat in an attempt to return some of the blame back to the Comintern. In their explanation they claimed that the main reason for the defeat in 1923 was "objective" and not due to practical mistakes made by the KPD. They also blamed the Executive Committee of the Communist International and Central Committee of the KPD. Although the KPD was critical of the ECCI's assessment of the German situation they did not protest loudly enough against it. The consequence of the ECCI's false estimations was that they fixed the date for the revolution too early.

Interestingly Ruth Fischer's account of the German events is inconsistent. At times her account of Brandler's attitude was for revolutionary action but then she contradicted herself and insisted that he was against it. She insisted that Brandler's leadership position in Germany was in a delicate state. He maintained his leadership position because his party colleagues believed he was backed by the Comintern. If he lost their backing his party would desert him if he opposed the Russians proposals regarding entering into an alliance in Saxony and Thuringia. He therefore, accepted the Russians' line "in general" and did not object to referring to the German situation as "revolutionary." But when the Russians attempted to set a date for action he was reluctant. It was Zinoviev that led the compromise – Brandler agreed that he was for a revolution "in principle." A. Thalheimer and H. Brandler, "The Situation in the Communist Party of Germany. Theses on the October Defeat and on the Present Situation," International Press Correspondence 3.4 (1924): 20; Pierre Broué, The German Revolution 1917 – 1923, trans. John Archer (Leiden and London: Brill, 2005) 823-832; Werner T. Angress, Stillborn Revolution: The Communist Bid For Power in Germany, 1921 – 1923 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963) 462-470; Ruth Fischer, Stalin and German Communism: A Study in the Origins of the State Party (1948; New Brunswick and London: Transaction, Inc., 1982) 313, 317.

to deflect the responsibility for disastrous defeat of the 1923 German Revolution away from himself. The introduction of Social Fascism was a way to redirect the blame to the Social Democrats.[274] Thereby, allowing Zinoviev to walk away from the disastrous mess he helped to create – the German revolution of 1923. Zinoviev's superficial use of the term Fascism in 1924 may have appeared harmless, but it was in fact a precursor for things to come.

Second, in maintaining his innocence over 1923 and blaming the Social Democrats, Zinoviev continued to describe the alliance between Social Democracy and the bourgeoisie as Fascist without offering any significant depth for his assessment. In July 1925 Zinoviev pointed out eight reasons why Social Democracy was so tenacious. Amongst those reasons included:

1. Social Democracy was an ally of the bourgeoisie and drew its strength from the strength of the bourgeoisie,
2. The fatigue of the working class after the war,
3. The change in the social composition of Social Democratic Parties and the aristocracy of labour,
4. The bureaucracy of the German Social Democratic machine,
5. The role of the reformist trade unions and their counter revolutionary influence in the SPD,
6. The Dawes Plan and the role errors of the Ultra-Left,

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[274] As the tides turned in the CPSU Trotsky was blamed. But it is clear he was used as a scapegoat as well. His role in planning the German Revolution was limited. According to Angress, Zinoviev was eager to condemn Brandler, Thalheimer, and Radek because he believed it would weaken Trotsky's position in the CPSU. Kevin McDermott and Jeremy Agnew, The Comintern: A History of Communism From Lenin to Stalin (London: Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1996) 45; Pierre Broué, The German Revolution 1917 – 1923, trans. John Archer (Leiden: Brill, 2005) 817-818; Ruth Fischer, Stalin and German Communism: A Study of the Origins of the State Party (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1948) 311-317; Herman Weber, Die Wandung Des Deutschen Kommunismus: Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimarer Republic, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1969) 1: 43-52; Werner T. Angress, Stillborn Revolution: The Communist Bid For Power in Germany, 1921 – 1923 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963) 462-470.

7. German Social Democracy's exploitation of the difficult times in Russia following the revolution, especially the period 1921-1923,
8. The 1923 defeat of the German revolution and the errors committed by the "opportunist right" leaders of the KPD.

From these eight points Zinoviev concluded that the Comintern was correct to describe German Social Democracy as the "third party of the bourgeoisie" and a "modern wing of Fascism."[275]

Zinoviev's use of the term Social Fascism set a dangerous precedent during a transitional period and laid the foundations for something more sinister – the Comintern's policy of Bolshevisation. Bolshevisation was instrumental in the development of Social Fascism into a theory as it intensified hostility toward the Social Democrats. While the term Social Fascism was not used as part of the policy of Bolshevisation, Zinoviev continued to perpetuate the notion of the SPD as a "wing of Fascism." Bolshevisation itself played a dual role in the KPD. It eliminated all theoretical and practical opposition from the KPD by demonising anything to do with Social Democracy. As old Spartacists the Right wing of the KPD were the direct decedents of the German Social Democratic Party. Therefore, the SPD could be blamed for the failings of the KPD.[276] Everything that was wrong with the Socialist movement was blamed on Social Democracy. Under the guise of the purging the "remnants" of Social

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[275] G. Zinoviev, "Letter from the Executive Committee of the Comintern to the Tenth Congress of the Communist Party of Germany," International Press Correspondence 5.55 (1925): 757.

[276] It appears that the only redeemable period that the SPD experienced was during the Anti-Socialist Laws. According the Theses and Resolutions, "German Communists must not forget the experience of the struggle conducted by the better sections of Social Democracy in the period of the anti-socialist laws. The better works of Wilhelm Liebknecht and August Bebel must be used by the German Communists against the Social Democrats." It also appears that Zinoviev failed to realise that the SPD did not take form until after the Anti-Socialist Laws. "Theses and Resolutions Adopted at the Session of the Enlarged ECCI Plenum – Theses on the Bolshevisation of the Parties of the Comintern," International Press Correspondence 5.47 (1925): 616.

Democracy, the Comintern rid itself of any opposition by lumping the Centre and Right wings together as Luxemburgist and Right wing.

Zinoviev's estimation of the role of Social Democracy, the bourgeoisie, and Fascism was, if anything consistently flawed. Unlike Bucharin, Zinoviev was unable to see beyond the surface of the alliance between Social Democracy and the bourgeoisie. Zinoviev claimed that his desire for understanding the enduring qualities of Social Democracy was motivated by his aspiration of destroying them. Rather than weaken the stronghold of Social Democracy in the German labour movement, his role in increasing the hostility against Social Democracy merely exacerbated the divide within the working class. Zinoviev insisted that workers who followed the "counter revolutionary" Social Democratic leaders were still considered the class brothers of the Communist. However, the recognition of class similarities between SPD and KPD workers at an official level and the actual practice of this were two entirely different matters. The animosity of the Comintern toward SPD leaders naturally trickled down to the rank and file.[277] Very often the rank and file of the SPD were targeted as enemies of the KPD. It is clear that rather than take responsibility for 1923 Zinoviev escalated tensions between Social Democracy and the KPD. This was a significant step in the theory and practice of the Comintern. Zinoviev may have lacked enough theoretical understanding to substantiate his Social Fascist accusations and develop Social Fascism into a theory, but his influence was enduring in Communist parties. Zinoviev's true legacy was that

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[277] For Zinoviev's description see G. Zinoviev, "Letter from the Executive Committee of the Comintern to the Tenth Congress of the Communist Party of Germany," International Press Correspondence 5.55 (1925): 758; for a further discussion of the violent relationship between KPD, SPD, and NSDAP at the rank and file level see Eve Rosenhahaft, Beating the Fascists? The Communists and Political Violence 1929-1933 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

of creating campaigns and enemies in an effort to remove attention from what was really going on in the Comintern.

Bucharin and Social Fascism

Bucharin's role in the development of Social Fascism into a theory is rather ambiguous. Bucharin, unlike Zinoviev, did possess the theoretical basis to turn Social Fascism into a theory. He was, after all, the Bolshevik's chief theoretician and possessed some understanding regarding the decline of capitalism and political trends. Yet, Bucharin did not employ the term Social Fascism. However, this does not exonerate Bucharin from any responsibility in the development of Social Fascism as a theory. Bucharin, as chief architect of the Programme of the Sixth Congress, played a key role in the theory of Social Fascism. Bucharin provided the political, economic, and social rationale for the development of Social Fascism into a theory in the *Programme of the Communist International* adopted by the Sixth Congress in 1928.

First, Bucharin attempted to explain Social Democracy's role as a part of the State. He regarded Social Democracy as having betrayed Marxism and crossed over from revisionism to complete liberal bourgeois reformism and avowed "social-imperialism."[278] Although Bucharin clearly differentiated between Fascism and Social Democracy, he maintained that Social Democracy demonstrated Social Fascist tendencies. Bucharin insisted

> "The bourgeoisie resorts either to the method of Fascism or to the method of coalition with Social Democracy according to

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[278] N. Bucharin, "The Programme of the Communist International. Adopted by the VI World Congress on the 1st September 1928, in Moscow," International Press Correspondence 8.92 (1928): 1764.

the changes in the political situation; while Social Democracy itself, often plays a Fascist role in periods when the situation is critical for capitalism. In the process of development Social Democracy reveals Fascist tendencies which, however, does not prevent it, in other political situations, from acting…against the bourgeois government in the capacity of an opposition party. The Fascist method and the method of coalition usually employed in 'normal' capitalist conditions; they are symptoms of the general crisis of capitalism, and are employed by the bourgeoisie in order to stem the advance of revolution."[279]

Bucharin recognised that the alliance between Social Democracy and the bourgeoisie was unnatural. Social Democracy and Fascism may have stood side by side in aiding the bourgeoisie in suppressing the workers, but they were not the same thing. He further warned that it was a mistake to lump Social Democracy with Fascism and that these tendencies did not complete the Fascist process.[280]

Yet the admission that Social Democracy possessed Fascist tendencies offered some validity to the notion that "Social Democracy is Social Fascism." If Social Democracy possessed Fascist tendencies, could it not then become a Fascist party? After Bucharin's demise – in Comintern logic – this certainly was the case. It is clear that Bucharin's was attempting to approach the concept of Social Fascism with some delicacy. However, admitting any link between Social Democracy and Fascism left it open to future exploitation.

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[279] N. Bucharin, "The Programme of the Communist International. Adopted by the VI World Congress on the 1st September 1928, in Moscow," International Press Correspondence 8.92 (1928): 1754.
[280] N. Bucharin, see International Press Correspondence (1928): 1039.

Second, Bucharin provided the economic rationale for Social Democracy's decline into Social Fascism. Bucharin used the relationship between Social Democracy and the bourgeoisie to demonstrate his own theories regarding the general crisis of Capitalism. Yet Social Democratic rhetoric still placed the party in opposition to the bourgeoisie. According to Bucharin, Social Democracy was not the natural ally of the bourgeoisie and during other periods they would have stood opposed to one another. However, as Capitalism had reached a critical point the bourgeoisie were using Social Democracy to suppress the working class. While Social Democracy might behave in a Fascist manner, it was the actual Fascist who would take advantage of Social Democracy's inaction and work to destroy the "revolutionary labour vanguard." Bucharin used the behaviour of Social Democracy to substantiate his own theory of Imperialism and Capitalist decline and perpetuate the notion of the emergence of the Third Period.[281] He explained that the alliance of the SPD and the bourgeoisie as demonstrative of the weakness of the period of relative stabilisation i.e. if the bourgeoisie felt secure there would be no need for them to make alliances with their natural enemies the Social Democrats. It is clear that Bucharin saw the relationship between Social Democracy, Fascism, and the bourgeoisie as signs of the impending collapse of the Capitalist system.

Third, Bucharin attacked the social make up of Social Democracy. In the Programme of the Sixth Congress Bucharin cited the Right wing of Social Democracy as avowedly counter revolutionary while the "Left wing Social Democracy, in practice acts against the workers, particularly in acute and

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[281] Kozlov and Weitz pointed out that following Bucharin's defeat in the Comintern, his disproportionality economics were replaced with Varga's underconsumptionist views. Nicholas N. Kozlov and Eric D. Weitz, "Reflections on the Origins of the 'Third Period': Bukharin, the Comintern, and the Political Economy of Weimar Germany," Journal of Contemporary History 3.24 (1989): 402-403.

critical situations… and is therefore, the most dangerous faction in the Social Democratic parties."[282] While Bucharin declared both Right and Left wings of Social Democracy as dangerous his approach toward Social Democracy was met with opposition. Antagonism against Social Democracy was mounting and Bucharin's approach was considered too moderate for some of the German hardliners who had hoped that the Sixth Congress would provide an all out assault against Social Democracy. Yet even Bucharin's "moderate" attitude toward Social Democracy played a role in the escalation of hostility toward Social Democracy. This was a distinct shift away from the United Front tactics in which the KPD attempted to ally with the Left wing of Social Democracy in an effort to lure away its members. By the time the Sixth Congress actually met, Bucharin had fallen out of favour and the hardliners were able to get what they wanted – anti-Social Democratic hostility was developed into the theory of Social Fascism.

Bucharin's role in the development of Social Fascism into a theory is rather ambiguous. His economic policies did not survive his demise nor did his distinction between Social Democracy and Fascism. However, as demonstrated above, Bucharin clearly played a role in the perpetuation of hostilities against Social Democracy. Bucharin insisted that Social Democracy at times "behaved in a fascist manner," the alliance between the SPD and the bourgeoisie demonstrated the weakness of the Capitalist system, and the Left wing of Social Democracy was the most dangerous section of Social Democracy. These things were picked up by the so-called theorist of Social Fascism, albeit they were exaggerated and distorted.

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[282] N. Bucharin, "The Programme of the Communist International. Adopted by the VI World Congress on the 1st September 1928, in Moscow," International Press Correspondence 8.92 (1928): 1754.

II. The Practical Foundations of a Pseudo Theory

At the end of 1928 and at the beginning of 1929 a general political shift in the KPD occurred. As previously discussed by the time of the Sixth Congress in September 1928, Bucharin had already lost influence and was officially ousted at the Tenth Plenum in 1929. In Germany a significant shift, both politically and socially, was also taking place. As the Comintern and the KPD changed, the meaning of Social Fascism also evolved. The notion that "Social Democracy is Social Fascism" experienced a revival after the Sixth Congress and the proclamation of the Third Period. The second wave of Social Fascism occurred in 1929 and lasted until the end of the Weimar Republic. In its second wave Social Fascism was marked with the exaggerated characteristics of Stalinism. In 1929 two key events took place that helped rationalise the use of Social Fascism as a theory – the Wittorf Affair and the May Day demonstrations or what became known as *Blutmai* (Bloody May). Although neither event can be credited for creating the conditions for the development of Social Fascism into a theory both occurred at the appropriate time to add fuel to the propaganda fires. The Wittorf Affair was used to rid the party of any remaining opposition while May Day 1929 was used as a springboard for the hardliners to transform anti-Social Democratic propaganda.[283]

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[283] Draper disputed the cause and effect scenario described by the official East German Communist history of the Weimar Republic. He claimed that they insisted that the May Day street battles were the reason for the Communist's accusation that the SPD had "developed into Social Fascism." Draper claimed that the revival of the "theory" of Social Fascism had taken place before May Day 1929 and the application of the theory in Britain did not require a catalyst. It is clear that the accusation that "Social Democracy is Social Fascist" was used as a slogan well before 1929. I am not disputing Draper's cause and effect argument, but rather I am disputing his use of the term "theory." I am arguing that Social Fascism did not become a "theory" until after the May Day events and therefore, the "theory" of Social Fascism was not the cause of the May Day demonstrations in 1929. Theodore Draper, "The Ghost of Social Fascism," Commentary 47.2 (1969): 33; see Siegfried Bahne, " 'Sozialfaschismus' Deutschland

This section will discuss the historical reasons during the latter part of the Weimar Republic for this theoretical shift in the KPD. The Wittorf Affair and May Day were used to prove the "correctness" of the KPD's shift toward a more extreme party line against Social Democracy in the form of the theory of Social Fascism.

Wittorf Affair

In March 1928 Thälmann appointed his friend John Wittorf as the political secretary of the Hamburg district party organisation. [284] It was soon discovered that Wittorf had misappropriated a large amount of his district's party funds. The scandal became known as the Wittorf Affair. [285] In May 1928 Thälmann and his Hamburg colleagues, fearing what the scandal would do to the party decided to conceal the scandal. The financial discrepancies were eventually discovered and his opponents, who were referred to as the "conciliators," seized the opportunity to oust Thälmann. His expulsion was ratified at a meeting of the Central Committee of the KPD and the KPD Politburo. Ernst Thälmann's involvement in the Wittorf Affair actually

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zur Geschichte eines Politischen Begriffs," International Review of Social History 10.2 (1965): 243.

[284] There appears to be a discrepancy about what Thälmann's relationship was to Wittorf. Many have alleged that he was Thälmann's brother-in-law. According to Weber and Carr he was not, but rather one of his friends. Herman Weber, Die Wandlung des deutschen Kommunismus: Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimarer Republic, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Europaische Verlagsantalt, 1969) 1: 199; E.H. Carr, A History of Soviet Russia: Foundations of a Planned Economy 1926-1929, 3 vols. (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1979) 3: 443.

[285] Also see Herman Weber, Die Wandlung des deutschen Kommunismus: Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimarer Republic, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Europaische Verlagsantalt, 1969) 1: 199-210; Herman Weber, Der Thälmann-Skandal: Geheime Korrespondenzen mit Stalin (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag GmbH, 2003); Kevin McDermott, "Stalin and the Comintern During the 'Third Period', 1928-33," European History Quarterly 25 (1995): 412-413; Norman LaPorte, "Presenting a Crisis as an Opportunity: The KPD and the Third Period, 1929-1933," In Search of Revolution: International Communist Parties in the Third Period, ed. Mathew Worley (London and New York: I.B. Tauris & Co., Ltd., 2004) 40; E.H. Carr, A History of Soviet Russia: Foundations of a Planned Economy 1926-1929, 3 vols. (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1979) 3: 442-448.

accelerated the shift in the Germany party's line i.e. it accelerated the acceptance of Social Fascism.

At Thälmann's request the matter was referred to the Executive Committee of the Communist International. The Comintern's intervention on Thälmann's behalf signified that a new type of party was about to emerge. Moscow responded rather quickly and defensively as he was considered the party favourite. At a special presidium of the ECCI held in October 1928 Thälmann was not only cleared of any wrong doing, but accusations of misconduct were turned onto his opponents. The Presidium claimed, that although Thälmann had made a "serious mistake" in not alerting the Central Committee of Wittorf's monetary indiscretions, he did so *only* because he was trying to protect the party from a scandal. It was as though the SPD and the bourgeoisie were waiting in the lurch for such a scandal so that they could exploit the opportunity to discredit the KPD and prevent it from carrying out its work. The ECCI also insisted that the Central Committee of the KPD was not only wrong to publish the resolution to condemn Thälmann, but more importantly the ECCI declared that the KPD Central Committee was "mistaken" to condemn Thälmann in the first place. However, this mistake was only possible because the majority of the members were ill informed and "allowed themselves to be misled by political opponents within the CC.... These comrades proceeded to exploit the Wittorf Affair in their fractional group interests against comrade Thälmann."[286] The Presidium accused Thälmann's opponents, the so called "conciliators" of attempting to change the party

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[286] "Extracts from a Decision of the ECCI Presidium on the Circumstances Connected with the Embezzlement of Party Funds in Hamburg," eds. Jane Degras, The Communist International 1919-1943 – Documents, 3 vols. (London: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1960) 2: 550-551.

leadership and further insisted that the Central Committee of the KPD should take steps "to liquidate all fractional groups in the party."[287] Stalin and Molotov also became involved in the matter and openly supported Thälmann.[288] Stalin's support made it abundantly clear that Thälmann was untouchable. The consequences of the Wittorf Affair were extremely significant.

The Comintern's veto of the Central Committee's decision to remove Thälmann overtly removed any remaining autonomy the KPD possessed. Comintern's declaration of Thälmann's innocence and his backing by Stalin and Molotov created a situation, similar to that of the Soviet Union, where the decisive majority supported the KPD's subordination to the Soviet Union.[289] The Presidium's insistence that fractional groups be liquidated was used as the green light for Thälmann to rid the party of his opposition. Massive purges of local and district branches ensued and party leaderships were uprooted.[290] Even respected members of the KPD such as Ernest Meyer and Arthur Ewert were demoted or forced to capitulate. With the full backing of Moscow Thälmann

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[287] "Extracts from a Decision of the ECCI Presidium on the Circumstances Connected with the Embezzlement of Party Funds in Hamburg," eds. Jane Degras, The Communist International 1919-1943 – Documents, 3 vols. (London: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1960) 2: 550-551.

[288] Humbert-Droz was critical of the way in which the Wittorf Affair was handled as the Right Wing had been excluded from the discussion. Stalin responded by accusing Humbert-Droz of opportunism. Stalin further insisted on "a general tightening up of iron discipline" and called upon the 21 conditions of membership to rationalise his claim. In reality this meant the purging of any – real or perceived – opposition. J. Stalin, "Stalin's Speech at the Presidium Meeting of the ECCI held Dec. 19, 1928," The Communist International 6.4 (1929): 143-149.

[289] For McDermott this was "the deciding moment in the 'Stalinization' of the Comintern." However, LaPorte insisted that it was *Blutmai* that marked the completion of "party's political and organisational Stalinisation." Kevin McDermott, "Stalin and the Comintern During the 'Third Period', 1928-33," European History Quarterly 25 (1995): 413; Norman LaPorte, " 'Social Fascism', 'Stalinisation' and the Case of the Saxon Communist Party, 1928-9," Labour History Review 67.1 (2002): 74.

[290] The Wittorf Affair kicked off a series of purges in the Comintern's parties. By 1930 the seven members who had been elected at the Sixth Congress had been expelled. According to McDermott, between September 1929 and January 1930 a Purge Commission screened 239 Communist officials, 201 were verified as loyal members, 31 were given penalties, and 7 were expelled from the Russian Party. McDermott insisted that the process unleashed a wave of fear amongst Comintern employees. Kevin McDermott, "Stalin and the Comintern During the 'Third Period', 1928-33," European History Quarterly 25 (1995): 413-415.

was able to consolidate his leadership position. As a consequence a new type of party emerged – one that was staunchly loyal to the Comintern, the Soviet Union, and to Stalin.

While the Wittorf Affair did not create the conditions for the advancement of Social Fascism into a theory it certainly created a new environment in the KPD. The Wittorf Affair demonstrated the overt weakness of the KPD Central Committee and the KPD Politburo in the face of Soviet intervention. It rid the party of what little opposition existed so that the leadership could change its course without any resistance and sent a very clear message. The KPD was subordinated to the will of the Soviet leaders.

Blutmai **– May Day 1929**

The acute divisions in the working class and the looming Great Depression were exasperated by the events that took place on May Day 1929.[291] May Day 1929 marked the first time that Communists and Socialists held separate celebrations. Traditionally May Day in Berlin had always been a single united event sponsored by the Trade Unions, which were generally dominated by the SPD. In 1929 Communists refused to march in the same demonstrations as Social Democrats. On December 13, 1928 Karl Zörgiebel,

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[291] Also see Evelyn Anderson, Hammer or Anvil: The Story of the German Working-Class Movement (1945; New York: Oriole Editions, 1973) 130-135; Kevin McDermott and Jeremy Agnew, The Comintern: A History of Communism From Lenin to Stalin (London: Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1996) 101-102; Hsi-Huey Liang, The Berlin Police Force in the Weimar Republic (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1970) 106-108; Herman Weber, Die Wandlung des deutschen Kommunismus: Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimarer Republic, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Europaische Verlagsantalt, 1969) 1: 224-225; Stefan Berger, Social Democracy and the Working Class in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Germany (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2000) 105-106; Chris Bowlby, "Blutmai 1929: Police, Parties and Proletarians in Berlin Confrontation," The Historical Journal 29.1 (1986): 137-158; Siegfried Bahne, " 'Sozialfaschismus' Deutschland zur Geschichte eines Politischen Begriffs," International Review of Social History 10.2 (1965): 233-234; E.H. Carr, A History of Soviet Russia: Foundations of a Planned Economy 1926-1929, 3 vols. (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1979) 3: 457-463.

the Social Democratic Police President of Berlin, announced a *Demonstrationsverbot* in Berlin. The measure proclaimed all open air meetings and marches illegal on the grounds that such activities posed a danger to public safety.[292] Communist hostility exercised against the Social Democrats was intensified in March 1929 when the Social Democratic Prussian Minister of the Interior, Albert Grzesinski issued a "final warning" against radical violence and threatened to intervene ruthlessly. [293]

At this point it is important to point out the dramatic chasm between the SPD rank and file and the bureaucratised SPD leaders. The issue of *Demonstrationsverbot* merely highlighted this divide. Many of the old pre-war SPD members were horrified at the notion that a SPD dominated government should ban a traditional SPD event. The SPD were, after all, responsible for its institution in Germany forty years prior. The KPD press was keen to publish the outrage of the SPD rank and file, while the National Socialists emphasised the dramatic irony that SPD members should put the police on alert on a day of proletarian celebration. The National Socialists interpreted this action as the tides turning in their favour.

Regardless of their outrage Social Democrats organised their celebrations behind closed doors, while the KPD insisted that its members take to the streets. The Central Committee called for peaceful demonstrations but

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[292] Bowlby insisted that the *Demonstrationsverbot* was a result of the Sixth Congress at the end of 1928 and its pronouncement of the arrival of the "Third Period." Communist press propagated an improvement in revolutionary prospects. The KPD press also expressed extreme indignation at Zörgiebel and Grzesinski. Bowlby claimed that in psychological terms that the tone of the press may have provided the preconditions for the clashes that occurred on May Day 1929. Chris Bowlby, "Blutmai 1929: Police, Parties and Proletarians in Berlin Confrontation," The Historical Journal 29.1 (1986): 138.

[293] For a more detailed description on the political career of Grzesinski see Anthony Glees' article. While Glees celebrated the political life of Grzesinski, he rather surprisingly passed over the significance of the *Demonstrationsverbot* in 1929. Anthony Glees, "Albert Grzesinski and the Politics of Weimar Prussia, 1926-1930," The English Historical Review 89.353 (1974): 814-834.

told workers to be prepared to strike on May the 2nd if the police spilled workers' blood. [294] Certain working class areas were deemed "problem areas" and tactical forces *Bereitschaftspolizei* had been on alert for several weeks.[295] On the morning of May the 1st demonstrators began to gather in working class areas. The police had little problem breaking up these small groups. In most cases the police resorted to the use of their rubber truncheons. However, by mid-afternoon the problem ceased to be that of crowd control and "warning" shots were fired in Bülow-Platz, Mitte, Neukölln, and Prenzlauer Berg, and the situation very quickly became a running street battle. During the afternoon and evening indoor meetings held by the SPD, KPD, and Trade Unions ended and thousands of people poured into the streets – some joined the demonstrators others were merely on their way home while others were simply lost in the confusion. As the crowds grew the police became more aggressive. The police acted indiscriminately and attacked civilians, which merely served to outrage onlookers. Parks and open spaces were cleared with the use of truncheons, pistols, and water canons. In Schöneberg police were attacked and beaten after they had been seen to strike girls and women. In other areas the police were hit with rocks, bottles, rubbish, and even excrement to which the police responded with shots. Everywhere in the city the police performed house raids and mass arrests. By late afternoon the police had sealed off certain sections of the city

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[294] Bowlby also pointed out that there seemed to be an expectation among KPD leaders that despite government warnings that in the face of popular support the ban would be lifted. Rosenhaft, on the other hand, claimed that the expectation of violence was strong on both sides. The police were just better prepared. Regardless of whether the KPD leaders thought that May Day would pass without violence or whether they expected the violence the fact remains that the rank and file were obviously unprepared for an armed clash with the police. Chris Bowlby, "Blutmai 1929: Police, Parties and Proletarians in Berlin Confrontation," The Historical Journal 29.1 (1986): 141; Eve Rosenhaft, "Working-Class Life and Working-Class Politics: Communists, Nazis and the State in the Battle for the Streets, Berlin 1928 – 1932," eds. Richard J. Besel and Edgar J. Feuchtwanger Social Change and Political Development in Weimar Germany (London: Croom Helm, Ltd., 1981) 224.

[295] The *Bereitschaftspolizei* were special squads used for riot control.

and over the next few days whole working-class districts were placed under Martial Law.

In Wedding and Neukölln the demonstrations were quickly transformed from running street battles into street combat. Wedding was notoriously considered a bastion of Communism. The area around Kösliner Strasse, in particular, was regarded as the most "solidly revolutionary community."[296] Demonstrators had gathered in the early morning behind Communist banners. By mid-morning they attempted to make their way into the city centre and the police moved in. Police efforts to disperse crowds were frustrated by the demonstrators' familiarity with their own neighbourhoods, which allowed them the advantage of ducking into side streets and alleyways. The police were showered with hard objects from the houses. Thinking that they had been fired upon from one of the houses, the police opened fire. By evening demonstrators had erected a barricade. The police responded by sending in two tactical teams in armoured cars. Within a few hours three city blocks had been sealed off by the police and by midnight the police were firmly in control. The area remained sealed for the next two days and residents' homes were searched for weapons. In Neukölln the situation was similar. Demonstrators erected barricades in the area around Hermanstrasse. The police responded by sending in armoured cars to assault the barriers. In Neukölln, just as in Wedding, police believing that they had been fired upon fired shots into the surrounding houses. By the 6th of May most of the Martial Law regulations that governed Wedding and Neukölln had been lifted. The police had officially registered 1,228 arrests, 194 wounded

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[296] Chris Bowlby, "Blutmai 1929: Police, Parties and Proletarians in Berlin Confrontation," The Historical Journal 29.1 (1986): 144.

and 25 deaths. None of the dead were police officers and at least six of the dead were shot in their own homes.[297]

KPD's Reaction to the May Day Demonstrations

The impact of *Blutmai* was extremely significant in the formulation of Social Fascism into a theory. May Day served as a demoralising blow to entire working class communities all over Berlin. Victimisation by the police was not limited to individuals or members of certain parties. Even people who were innocently on their way home from indoor activities were apprehended and beaten by the police.[298] As a result the police actions on May Day 1929 served to widen the gap between the working class and the SPD supported State. While the May Day events were not significantly different than what the KPD had experienced in its "revolutionary" days – leaders were not rounded up and tried and hundreds of civilians were not dead – May Day 1929, nonetheless, had a considerable impact on the course that the KPD pursued after the events.

First, May Day was used to rationalise the party's new course and party officials wasted no time in generating propaganda. In fact, the Twelfth Party Congress of the KPD was scheduled to be held in Dresden, but was transferred

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[297] Eve Rosenhaft, "Working-Class Life and Working-Class Politics: Communists, Nazis and the State in the Battle for the Streets, Berlin 1928 – 1932," Social Change and Political Development in Weimar Germany, eds. Richard J. Besel and Edgar J. Feuchtwanger (London: Croom Helm, Ltd., 1981) 227; Hsi-Huey Liang, The Berlin Police Force in the Weimar Republic (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1970) 107; Kevin McDermott and Jeremy Agnew, The Comintern: A History of Communism From Lenin to Stalin (London: Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1996) 101; Herman Weber, Die Wandlung des deutschen Kommunismus: Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimarer Republic, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Europaische Verlagsantalt, 1969) 1: 224.

[298] Rosenhaft pointed out, "The peculiar horror of the reports of what happened in every working-class neighbourhood of Berlin on that first day lies in the impression they convey of the powerlessness of the individual civilian.... Nobody was safe from the police." Eve Rosenhaft, "Working-Class Life and Working-Class Politics: Communists, Nazis and the state in the Battle for the Streets, Berlin 1928 – 1932," Social Change and Political Development in Weimar Germany, eds. Richard J. Besel and Edgar J. Feuchtwanger (London: Croom Helm, Ltd., 1981) 225.

to Wedding to be closer to the Berlin "street battles."[299] The Congress did not hesitate in interpreting the significance of the May Day events. The Twelfth Congress declared,

> "The Berlin May struggle represented a turning point in the political developments in Germany. The preconditions emerged for the approach of an immediate revolutionary situation with whose development the question of armed insurrection inevitably gets placed the agenda. The May struggle was the first test for the KPD."[300]

The Tenth Plenum of the ECCI held in Moscow in July 1929 reinforced the prognosis established by the Twelfth KPD Congress:

> "On the background of the unfolding strike battles and the new revolutionary upsurge, the action of the Berlin proletariat on May Day acquires the very greatest significance. This struggle not only revealed the fighting initiative of the German proletariat, but also the strength of the influence of the Communist Party of Germany which, notwithstanding the prohibition of the demonstration by Zoergiebel and the reformist trade unions, succeeded in leading nearly 20,000 workers into the street. The party has not retreated one step under the onslaught of the reaction, nor did it allow itself to be provoked by the bourgeoisie to an armed insurrection which in

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[299] The Twelfth Party Congress was originally scheduled for May 5-10, 1929, but was postponed and moved to Wedding at the last minute. The Congress took place on June 9-15, 1929 and met a few blocks from where the fighting took place. Herman Weber, Die Wandlung des deutschen Kommunismus: Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimarer Republic, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Europaische Verlagsantalt, 1969) 1: 225.

[300] Waffen Für den Klassenkampf: Beschlüsse des XII. Parteitages der K.P.D. (Berlin: Internationaler Arbeiterverlag, G.m.b.H., 1929) 25.

the then existing situation would have led to the isolation of the revolutionary vanguard and the loss of its position.

The Berlin May Days constitute a turning point in the class struggle in Germany and accelerate the tempo of the revolutionary upward trend of the German working class movement."[301]

The KPD leadership insisted that the events in Berlin demonstrated that the predictions of the Sixth Congress were correct – the working class had become more revolutionary and that the tide was turning in their favour. Clearly this rise in the revolutionary tide was a figment of the Comintern's imagination.

Second, the KPD leadership was eager to present the May Day events as revolutionary and link them to the upturn predicted at the Sixth Congress in 1928. The Communist press interpreted the Berlin barricades as a sign that the working class had become increasingly revolutionary. The barricades themselves were the "reflection of the growth of the revolutionary perquisites."[302] But as the KPD leadership was applauding its predictions, it failed to examine its own failure to anticipate the unrest of both the KPD and SPD workers and their mutual hostility toward the State for the banning of the May Day processions. By their own admission the Berlin workers were unprepared for the conflict with the police.[303] Rather than take any responsibility for calling on the workers to take up arms against the police with little or no preparation, the KPD blamed the police for "strategically" planning

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[301] The World Situation & Economic Struggle: Theses of the Tenth Plenum of the E.C.C.I (London: Dorrit Press, Limited, n.d.) 14-15.
[302] "May Day in Berlin," The Communist International 4.16 (1929): 618.
[303] "May Day in Berlin," The Communist International 4.16 (1929): 618.

the Berlin blood bath by provoking the working class into a confrontation.[304] This is not intended to remove any responsibility from the police. The police acted in an extremely aggressive fashion. The details of the police's behaviour during the May Day events have already been well documented by historians such as Rosenhaft, Bowlby, LaPorte, and Liang. The point here is to demonstrate the KPD's manipulation of the May Day events to not only rationalise the Comintern's proclamations of the Sixth Congress, but also to relinquish responsibility for their own lack of preparation.

The Berlin demonstrations were not highly organised attempts at insurrection. Although the police had issued warnings and insisted that they would be upholding the *Demonstrationsverbot*, the KPD leadership seemed to have not taken the warnings seriously.[305] It is clear that the KPD had no other alternative but to challenge the *Demonstrationsverbot*, nevertheless, they seemed to have been caught entirely unprepared by the spontaneous actions of not only their own members, but the working class in general. Locales were increasingly frustrated that their requests for guns were denied. May Day 1929 highlighted the KPD propaganda for what it was – a lot of talk with no intention of following through.

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[304] Interestingly Remmele insisted that the systematic cruelty exercised by the police, the dissolution of Communist press, and the banning of Communist literature signalled the beginning of deeper repression. Liang insisted that the police could have avoided the violence had it allowed open air demonstrations, which had taken place in previous years. Herman Remmele, "Die Lehren des Berliner Blutmai und dass drohende Verbot der Kommunistischen Partei Deutschlands," Die Internationale 12.12 (1929): 387-388; Hsi -Huey Liang, The Berlin Police Force in the Weimar Republic (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1970) 106.

[305] LaPorte asserted that the KPD leadership intended to use the *Demonstrationsverbot* to justify their shift in policy. However this argument implies that the KPD leadership possessed a certain level of competency in order foresee the consequences of challenging the *Demonstrationsverbot*. Norman LaPorte, "Presenting a Crisis as an Opportunity: The KPD and the Third Period, 1929-1933," In Search of Revolution: International Communist Parties in the Third Period, ed. Mathew Worley (London and New York: I.B. Tauris & Co., Ltd., 2004) 43.

Finally, and by far the most important outcome of the May Day events, was the way in which the KPD used the events as irrefutable proof that the SPD were indeed Fascists. The Communist International accused Zörgiebel of being "drunk with the blood of the workers." The paper further described "German social-democracy, which plays the role of leader to the other socialist parties has, during these May days, openly taken the road of fascism has openly become a social-fascist party."[306] The assertion that May Day proved the Communists accusations that Social Democracy had delved into Social Fascism neglected the fact that many of the dead and wounded were Social Democratic workers.[307] Rather than use the events to try to recruit fellow members of the working class, the KPD's accusations merely served to further alienate significant numbers of the working class from each other. The police's devastating and demoralising blow to working class communities, coupled with the shift in social make up of the KPD, meant that the divide and conquer tactics of the KPD met with little or no resistance. May Day 1929 was the last time that German Communists erected barricades and engaged in street battles of this nature with the police. Even when the KPD faced an all out ban in 1933 and Nazis surrounded Karl Liebknecht House neither Communists nor Social Democrats took to the streets. The animosity toward one another ran so deep that they failed to see the Nazi assault was being launched against the entire working class and not just their enemies.

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[306] "May Day in Berlin," The Communist International 4.16 (1929): 620.
[307] "Vorbereitung der Maikampagne 1930" Rundschrieben SAMPO RY 1/I2/5/21 FBS 241/11373.

The significance for the German movement of the May Day events in 1929 can not be over emphasised.[308] While it is true that in other countries the perpetuation of Social Fascism did not require a blood bath to launch it as a theory, the situation in Germany was significantly different from other European countries. In Germany the Socialist and Trade Union movements were quite strong and had the support of the working class. Therefore, in order to divide and conquer the movement i.e. irreversibly separate the two working class parties – the Social Democrats and the Communists –an event such as May Day was absolutely necessary. The impact of the May Day events was further exacerbated by the deepening depression. In Germany the acceptance of Social Fascism as a campaign and as a theory reflected the social and political shift in the KPD brought on by the depression. An increase in the number of unemployed, who were only interested in the struggle for their immediate needs, revealed the reasons for the acceptance of the KPD's "Left turn."

III. Pseudo Theory Takes Hold

Prior to the Sixth Congress the Comintern and the KPD were split on their official position on Social Fascism. While the German moderates did not necessarily object to the use of Social Fascism, they were concerned with the rate that it was being introduced into the German party. This was certainly reflected in the programme of the Congress itself. The programme of the Sixth Congress of the Comintern, under the penmanship of Bucharin, took a cautious view toward the notion of Social Fascism. However, this official cautious attitude shifted as the political tide changed. While the shift toward Social

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[308] Siegfried Bahne, " 'Sozialfaschismus' Deutschland zur Geschichte eines Politischen Begriffs," International Review of Social History 10.2 (1965): 233-234.

Fascism may have appeared random and sharp, it was in fact gradual. [309] Tendencies within the Comintern had always existed that favoured a harsher line against Social Democracy, particularly from the German hardliners. Stalin's support for Thälmann during the Wittorf Affair and the police's show of brutality on May Day 1929 turned the tides in favour of the German hardliners. The consequences of these events not only led to the purging of the "Conciliators," but they also created a new environment – one where there was no opposition. The German party followed the Soviet Union's lead and made its "Left turn." As a result Social Fascism experienced a renaissance. The propaganda formulated from *Blutmai* lent the German hardliners the ammunition required to use the Tenth Plenum of the Comintern to turn the concept into a theory.

In its later usage, after the Sixth Congress of the Comintern in 1928 and Bucharin's demise, the term Social Fascism became the dominating theory of the Third Period of the Comintern. This section will attempt to explain the key features of the theory of Social Fascism and the consequence that the adoption of Social Fascism had on the German Communists. The true significance of turning Social Fascism into a theory was that it marked the anti-Marxist and anti-theoretical path that Comintern's parties began to pursue from the 1930's onwards. Social Fascism changed the Marxism of the German Movement in the same way that Soviet Union's adoption of Socialism in One Country changed

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[309] For a discussion on the evolution of Social Fascism see Siegfried Bahne, " 'Sozialfaschismus' Deutschland zur Geschichte eines Politischen Begriffs," International Review of Social History 10.2 (1965): 211-245; Theodore Draper, "The Ghost of Social-Fascism," Commentary 47.2 (1969): 29-42; Theodore Draper, "The Strange Case of the Comintern," Survey – A Journal of East and West Studies 3.84 (1972): 91-137; E.H. Carr, A History of Soviet Russia: Foundations of a Planned Economy 1926-1929, 3 vols. (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1979) 3: 638-643; Mathew Worley, "Courting Disaster? The Communist International in the Third Period," In Search of Revolution: International Communist Parties in the Third Period, ed. Mathew Worley (London and New York: I.B. Tauris & Co., Ltd., 2004) 9.

the Marxism of the Soviet Union. Social Fascism was the final nail in Marxist coffin of the German movement.

1. Social Fascism as a *Specific* Form of Fascism

The theory of Social Fascism insisted that German Social Democracy represented the *specific* form that German Fascism was taking. The Tenth Plenum declared,

> "In this situation of growing imperialist contradictions and sharpening of the class struggle, Fascism becomes more and more the dominant method of bourgeois rule. In countries where there are strong Social-Democratic parties [ie Germany], Fascism assumes the particular form of Social-Fascism, which to an ever-increasing extent serves the bourgeoisie as an instrument for paralyzing of the activity of the masses in the struggle against the regime of Fascist dictatorship."[310]

The Tenth Plenum claimed that it continued to uphold the proclamations of Sixth Congress and insisted that it had been correct in predicting the increasing general crisis of Capitalism. The Tenth Plenum utilised the Political Economy developed by Bucharin for the Sixth Congress in true Stalinist style – picking and choosing what was useful and discarding the rest. The Programme of the Sixth Congress of the Comintern did not directly refer to Social Democrats as Social Fascists. However it did in fact concede that at times "Social Democracy

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[310] The World Situation & Economic Struggle: Theses of the Tenth Plenum of the E.C.C.I. (London: Dorrit Press, Limited, n.d.) 8.

reveals Fascist tendencies."[311] Generally, in the pre-May Day accounts, the Social Fascist propaganda followed Bucharin's lead and claimed that Social Democracy showed signs or "tendencies" towards Social Fascism. [312] The Plenum took Bucharin's analysis that Social Democracy's relationship with the bourgeoisie depicted the general crisis of Capitalism and adapted his claim that at times Social Democracy might take on a Fascist role and reinterpreted this to mean that Social Democracy was actually a form of Fascism. This notion that Social Democracy was actually a wing of Fascism was not new, both Zinoviev and Stalin had made these accusations in 1924.[313] What is significant is the force with which Social Fascism was revived and the way in which the theory was rationalised.

Obviously the logic followed a faulty path – if Social Democracy showed Fascist tendencies during a period of Capitalist decline, then in a period of severe Capitalist crisis it would become a fully fledged Fascist party. However in aligning Social Democracy with Fascism the Communist's merely demonstrated their own lack of understanding regarding the nature of Fascism as a movement. In hindsight this proved to be a very costly mistake. Bucharin defined Fascism as

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[311] While it is true that Bucharin was cautious over referring to Social Democracy as form of Fascism, his analysis was not significantly different than what was later adopted. Essentially it was not a far jump from Bucharin admitting that Social Democracy sometimes behaved in a Fascist manner to Social Democracy actually *being* a form of Fascism. N. Bucharin, "The Programme of the Communist International Adopted at the VI. World Congress on 1st September 1928, Moscow," International Press Correspondence 8.92 (1928): 1754.

[312] Koenen's article is an excellent example of this as it was published before the May Day events and described German Social Democracy as showing "increasingly definite fascist tendencies." Interestingly, Koenen pointed out that it would be incorrect to assume that Germany would face the establishment of a Fascist government similar to that of Mussolini in Italy. He insisted that the method in which Fascist employed would depend on various circumstances such as the time period and the economic and political situation of each country and in Germany this would take the form of Social Fascism. Wilhelm Koenen, "Social Fascism in Germany," The Communist International 6.11-13 (1929): 529-530.

[313] G. Zinoviev, "Lessons of the German Event," International Press Correspondence 4.14 (1924): 110; J. Stalin, "On the International Situation," International Press Correspondence 4.72 (1924): 792.

> "The Fascist system is a system of direct dictatorship, ideologically masked by the "national idea" and representation of the 'professions'…. It is a system that resorts to a peculiar form of social demagogy…in order to utilise the discontent of the petty bourgeoisie – the creation of a compact well paid hierarchy of fascist units, a party apparatus and a bureaucracy."[314]

Like Zinoviev before him, Gerber defined "Fascism is the general tendency of the development of bourgeois democracy in the period of capitalist decline."[315] Communist training material defined Fascism as "a method of direct dictatorship of the bourgeoisie." [316] Each definition created by the Communists both for theoretical and propaganda purposes led back to Social Democracy and their relationship as the protector of the Weimar State.[317] The theory of Social Fascism clearly had nothing to do with combating the growth of Fascism in Germany. In featuring Social Democracy as Fascist the Comintern completely ignored the growth of the Right.

2. The Third Period and the Upsurge in Revolution

The Comintern's declaration of an upsurge in the revolutionary movement during a non-revolutionary time ran counter to the Bolshevik and

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[314] N. Bucharin, "The Programme of the Communist International Adopted at the VI. World Congress on 1st September 1928, Moscow," International Press Correspondence 8.92 (1928): 1754.

[315] Rudolf Schlesinger used the pseudonym of R. Gerber. R. Gerber, "The Face of German Social Fascism," The Communist International 6.21 (1929): 801.

[316] Lehrbrief Nr. 2: Faschismus und Sozialfaschismus! 1930 SAMPO RY 1/I2/707/100 FBS 248/11599: 3; Kursusmaterial Nr. 4 – Aktuelle Fragen des proletarischen Kassenkampfes SAMPO RY 1/I2/707/97 FBS 248/11598.

[317] Social Democracy was charged with being the "Fascist reserve" of the bourgeoisie. Kursusmaterial Nr. 4 – Aktuelle Fragen des proletarischen Kassenkampfes SAMPO RY 1/I2/707/97 FBS 248/11598: 16.

German Marxist tradition of waiting for the appropriate time to conduct a revolution. The Comintern used the May Day events of 1929 to prove that the proletariat had indeed arrived at the new revolutionary Third Period.

> "The new feature in the situation since the Sixth World Congress is the sharply marked radicalisation of the international working class and the rising of the revolutionary labour movement.... The growth of influence of Communism among the masses is leading the masses of workers to resort to more active methods of fights against the bourgeoisie."[318]

Descriptions of Social Democracy as Social Fascist were used to demonstrate the "correctness" of the Sixth Congress and the notion that the contradictions in the "relative stabilisation" of German economy would lead to a serious crisis in the Capitalist system. Social Democracy's cooperation with Finance Capital merely highlighted the fragility of the system. This type of analysis was meant to bolster the proclamation of the Third Period and spark hope that revolution was indeed on the horizon.[319] Social Democracy's defence of the Finance Capital and the State during the May Day events showed the decay of the system. The workers' answer to the KPD's call for demonstrations meant revolutionary potential had shifted in their favour.

3. Hidden Nature of Social Fascism

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[318] The Comintern claimed that it had control over the situation on May Day and under the guidance and influence of the KPD 200,000 workers took to the streets. The World Situation & Economic Struggle: Theses of the Tenth Plenum of the E.C.C.I. (London: Dorrit Press, Limited, n.d.) 12-14.

[319] To a certain extent this type of campaigning gained the KPD support. Membership increased from 105,744 in May 1929 to 135,160 in December 1929. However, KPD membership never came close to matching its March 1921 figure of 359,000 members. Herman Weber, Die Wandlung des deutschen Kommunismus: Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimarer Republic, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Europaische Verlagsantalt, 1969) 1: 362-363.

In formulating his theory of Social Fascism Schlesinger claimed the hidden nature of Social Fascism made it more dangerous than open Fascism. He conceded that there were different forms of Fascism. He insisted that Social Democracy had an advantage over other Fascist groups in Germany because it began as an anti-Capitalist organisation and continued to propagate "anti-Capitalist demagogy" in which they hoped would win the workers. In an effort to suit a working class who had been brought up in Socialist traditions, "a Socialist label is stuck on to [a fascist] bottle. The contents are unadulterated fascism."[320] Social Democracy hid behind "bourgeois democracy," whereas Fascism in Italy or Poland was "unmasked" and open.

> "Social Fascists prefer a moderate and 'lawful' application of bourgeois class coercion…they guard their 'democratic' drapings, and strive chiefly to preserve its parliamentary forms, for without these, the social fascists would be hampered in carrying out their special function of deceiving the *working masses.* At the same time, the social fascists restrain the workers from revolutionary action against the capitalist offensive and growing fascism, play the part of a screen behind which the fascists are able to organise their forces, and build the road for the fascist dictatorship."[321]

Communist propaganda insisted that as the contradictions within the Capitalist system were becoming more acute the SPD lost its capacity to conceal itself behind a "mask" and "the social fascist character of Social Democracy was

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[320] R. Gerber, "The Face of German Social Fascism," The Communist International 6.21 (1929): 804.

[321] "Thesis of the Twelfth Plenum of the E.C.C.I. on the Report of Comrade Kuusinen," Capitalist Stabilisation has Ended: Theses and Resolutions of the Twelfth Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1932): 11-12.

becoming more and more clear, transparent and unconcealed."[322] However, both Fascism and Social Fascism could be characterised by their use of a parliamentary democracy to rationalise the use of terror against the working class. The only thing that differentiated Social Democracy's (the Social Fascist) programme from other forms of Fascism was its terminology.[323]

4. Attacks on the SPD's Social Basis

The theory of Social Fascism attacked the social basis of Social Democracy. Gerber insisted that Social Democracy's development from a reformist party into a Social Fascist party of the bourgeoisie in turn corrupted the social basis of the party.[324] In Germany, in particular, this led to the corruption of the "aristocracy of labour." [325] The reformist nature of the party led to the development of the "anti-proletarian attitude of the new labour aristocracy." For Gerber this was one of the key characteristics of Social Fascism. The Communist training material explained that Social Fascism was a new stage in the development of Social Democracy in the international arena. In the epoch of Imperialism the bourgeois workers' party used bribes on a small layer of workers, thereby creating the aristocracy of labour. In the pre-war era

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[322] Propaganda insisted that the economic crisis would "unmask" the Social Fascist and expose them. R. Naumann, "The Social Fascists on the 'Solving' of the World Economic Crisis and Unemployment," The Communist International 8.5 (1931): 144; R. Gerber, "Der Bankrott der sozialfaschistischen Theorie," Die Internationale 14.5 (1931): 205.

[323] Trotsky declared "Social Democracy has prepared all the conditions necessary for the triumph of fascism. But by this fact it has also prepared the stage for its own political liquidation. [But even so] it was complete balderdash to identify Social Democracy with fascism." Leon Trotsky, "What Next? Vital Questions for the German Proletariat," The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany, intro Ernest Mandel (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1971) 144-145.

[324] Thälmann referred to the SPD as the "social mainstay" of the bourgeoisie. Ernst Thälmann, "Faschismus und Sozialfaschismus," Im Kampf Gegen die Faschistische Diktatur (Berlin: Ernst Schneller, 1932) 16.

[325] R. Gerber, "The Face of German Social-Fascism," The Communist International 6.21 (1929): 801-802; Kursmaterial Nr. 2: Grundizüge der leninistischen Stragegie und Taktik in der gegenwärtige Periode (Zentral Kommittee der Kommunistschen Partei Deutschlands, 1930) 21-22: SAMPO RY 1/I2/707/99 FBS 248/11598.

this took the form of higher wages and parliamentary protection especially for skilled workers. These workers became accustomed to their privileged positions and felt themselves above their fellow workers. This in turn led to their support of the Capitalist system.

In the post-war era highly skilled workers found their privileged positions under threat due to increased mechanisation and rationalisation of production. The SPD, therefore, was forced to develop a new form of "direct bribery" in the form of State jobs in the civil service. These highly skilled workers also took on the role of community arbitration and other stately and communal undertakings.[326] In essence, in an effort to retain the support of the "aristocracy of labour" Social Democracy was forced to create protected jobs for them. These "workers" were absorbed into the State machine. In an effort to protect their new jobs the "aristocracy of labour" needed to work for the advancement of Finance Capital and consequently toward the subjugation of the revolutionary aspiration of the proletariat. Essentially this new labour aristocracy had aspirations above their station. According to the propaganda their hopes rested on becoming part of the petty bourgeoisie and advancing into the bourgeoisie. The idea was that within the labour bureaucracy their advancement would assist the advancement of the entire working class. However, once they became a part of the State bureaucracy they ceased to be workers and their interests no longer coincided with the members of their fellow class.

Gerber's analysis of the role of the labour aristocracy was rather problematic. While it is true that Lenin warned of the problems associated with

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[326] Lehrbrief Nr. 2: Faschismus und Sozialfaschismus! 1930 SAMPO RY 1/I2/707/100 FBS 248/11599: 16; also see Rudolf Schlessinger, Memoirs: In a Time of Struggle, 2 vols. (Unpublished memoirs, 1957) 1: 364.

the increasing aristocracy of labour, Gerber's association with it in 1929 appears out of date. When Lenin addressed the issues of the aristocracy of labour, the world economy was on an up turn and the working class was benefiting from this. By 1929 the world economy was very clearly on a downturn – the Young Plan was being draw up in Paris to avert an economic crisis and Black Friday would occur a few months after the publication of his article in October 1929. While it is true that the nature of German Social Democracy had become increasingly bureaucratic, particularly during the Weimar period, Gerber's analysis did not offer any in depth reasons for why this tendency, during this specific period, was any different than during any other period. Why was a supposed increase in the aristocracy of labour a sign of Social Fascism as opposed to what occurred during Lenin's time? In this area, Gerber made no attempt to offer a Marxist analysis for the correlation between Fascism and Social Democracy. Unemployment was indeed on the rise and those in privileged positions certainly guarded their jobs. However, this did not mean that certain sections of the working class were becoming Fascist.

5. Attack on Trade Unions and Finance Capital

Gerber insisted that the economic programme of Social Democracy had become "reformist" and had revived the old revisionist notion of "growing into socialism." The Communists claimed that Social Democracy's "reformist" relationship with the economic system led it to its Social Fascist conclusions.[327]

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[327] In 1930 KPD propaganda claimed that the process of Fascism displayed itself in all Capitalist countries through the emergence of Monopoly Capitalism. "Arbeitsplan zum Kampfkongress gegen Faschismus," Agitprop SAMPO RY 1/I4/9/1 FBS 317/13188; Kursmaterial Nr. 2: Grundizüge der leninistischen Stragegie und Taktik in der gegenwärtige Periode (Zentral Kommittee der Kommunistschen Partei Deutschlands, 1930) 21: SAMPO RY 1/I2/707/99 FBS

Gerber's analysis of Social Democracy's economic programme appeared regressive as it merely regurgitated the old revisionist debates.[328] He insisted that Social Democracy amalgamated the State apparatus with the "reformist" Trade Unions, while at the same time joining the party and the Trade Unions together with Finance Capital. This, according to the KPD material, was the foundation of Social Fascism, essentially the amalgamation of the SPD, the State, Trade Unions, and Finance Capital. Gerber further insisted "The greatest practical advance of German social-fascism at the present time is probably the progress of the trade unions and other mass organisations controlled by the reformists."[329] The Social Democrats use of Trade Unions granted them the support of mass organisations outside the State. This tactic was one of the key features of the Fascist dictatorship. In order to maintain ideological and organisational unity, it was necessary for these unions to exclude any anti-Fascist tendencies, i.e. Communists. Clearly Gerber's analysis attempted to offer an explanation as to why Communists had been excluded from Social Democratic Trade Unions. His line of reasoning in no way attempted to address the reality of the economic situation existing at the end of the Weimar Republic.

Consequence for German Communism

In his definition of Social Fascism the American Communist Earl Browder asserted, "Fascism is a distinctive characteristic of the post-war period of capitalism. That is, it is one of the expressions of the efforts of the capitalist

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248/11598; Siegfried Bahne, " 'Sozialfaschismus' Deutschland zur Geschichte eines Politischen Begriffs," International Review of Social History 10.2 (1965): 235.

[328] The World Situation & Economic Struggle: Theses of the Tenth Plenum of the E.C.C.I. (London: Dorrit Press, Limited, n.d.) 9.

[329] R. Gerber, "The Face of German Social-Fascism," The Communist International 6.21 (1929): 807.

class to bolster up and defend its declining rule."[330] In his speeches he described Social Fascism as the "new prop" that held Capitalism in place and it was *these* Fascist forces that mobilised Capitalism for the destruction of the working class. He also insisted that using the term Social Fascism to describe Social Democracy was not mere name calling, but was a *scientific* description. Browder's over simplified definition of Social Fascism summed up the logic behind referring to Social Democracy as Social Fascist. The consequences of the German Communist Party's development and adoption of Social Fascism were fairly disastrous for both the Comintern and the KPD. The Communists focus on Social Democracy as the main enemy prevented them from properly assessing the nature of Fascism.[331]

First, the theory of Social Fascism created an enemy within the working class – the Communists' fellow workers in the SPD. One of the key features of the theory of Social Fascism was that it insisted Social Democracy, in particular the "Left" wing, was the main enemy of the working class.[332] This line of reasoning certainly intensified after the May Day events in 1929 and was reinforced at the Twelfth Party Congress of the KPD in which the "Left" wing's

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[330] Earl Browder, The Meaning of Social-Fascism: Its Historical and Theoretical Background (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1933) 1-4.

[331] In early 1933 Wilhelm Piek claimed, "If the Nazis come to power, they will be at the end of their rope in two months, and then it will be our turn." As quoted in Babbette L. Gross, "The German Communists' United-Front and Popular-Front Ventures," The Comintern: Historical Highlights Essays, Recollections, Documents, ed. Milorad M. Drachovitch and Branko Lazitch (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publishsers, 1966) 117.

[332] While the KPD propaganda conceded that it was incorrect to lump every single Social Democrat into a Social Fascist pile, this courtesy did not extend to the "Left" wing of the SPD. Lenzner referred to the "Left" Social Democracy as the "most dangerous" enemy of the proletarian revolution and the Communist movement. Lehrbrief Nr. 2: Faschismus und Sozialfaschismus! 1930 SAMPO RY 1/I2/707/100 FBS 248/11599: 16; N. Lenzner, Über die rechte Gefahr in der Komintern (Hamburg-Berlin: Verlag Carl Hoym Nachfolger, 1929) 23; Herman Weber, Die Wandlung des deutschen Kommunismus: Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimarer Republic, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Europaische Verlagsantalt, 1969) 1: 241.

methods were classified as dangerous and illusionary.[333] The Tenth Plenum further deepened the hostility toward the SPD Left and instructed all its sections to pay special attention to the struggle against the SPD's "Left" wing which "retards the process of the disintegration of Social Democracy by creating illusions that it...represents an opposition to the policy of the leading Social Democratic bodies, whereas a matter of fact, it whole-heartedly supports the policy of Social Fascism."[334] Essentially the "Left" wing of the SPD stood in the KPD's way as the revolutionary agent of the Germany working class. Indeed the Social Democrats were their greatest rivals and wielded more influence over the working class than the Communists.[335] The phraseology that they utilised was Marxist and pro-revolutionary in tone, but they still remained a part of the SPD as a whole and the KPD claimed they whole heartedly supported the State's violent suppression of the working class.[336]

> "The role of the 'Left', currently in the Social Fascist development phase of the SPD, is no better than its leadership. On the contrary, they mask Fascist party politics with left 'Marxist' phrases, play the opposition, inspire in the workers

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[333] Weber insisted that the Twelfth Party Congress was no longer a forum to discuss the party line but a show event with acclamation, which became the picture of a typical Stalinised party conference. Bericht des Zentralkommittees der Kommunistischen Partei Deutschlands an den 12. Parteitag (Berlin: Internationaler Arbeiter-Verlag, G.m.b.H., 1929) 185; Waffen für den Klassenkampf: Bechlüsse des XII. Parteigages der K.P.D (Berlin: Internationaler Arbeiter-Verlag, G.m.b.H., 1929) 19; Herman Weber, Die Wandlung des deutschen Kommunismus: Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimarer Republic, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Europaische Verlagsantalt, 1969) 1: 226.

[334] The World Situation & Economic Struggle: Theses of the Tenth Plenum of the E.C.C.I. (London: Dorrit Press, Limited, n.d.) 12; Kursmaterial Nr. 2: Grundizüge der leninistischen Stragegie und Taktik in der gegenwärtige Periode (Zentral Kommittee der Kommunistschen Partei Deutschlands, 1930) 25: SAMPO RY 1/I2/707/99 FBS 248/11598.

[335] Hence the Central Committees insistence on the "liquidation of the Social Fascists mass influence." J. Lenz, "Die Internationale des Sozialfaschismus in der Krise," Die Internationale 14.8 (1931): 365.

[336] Kursusmaterial Nr. 1 Was wollen die Kommunisten? Die Aufgaben des Proletariats in der Organisierung der Revolution (Zentralkommitee der Kommunistischen Partei Deutschlands, n.d.) 16. Hoover Library: KPD Zentralkomitee.

> the belief of the SPD's promotion of a revolutionary party, and take part in all Social Fascist swinishness and terrorist activities against the proletariat under the pretence of party discipline.... In any case their phrases and political methods are more dangerous than the open Social Fascist."[337]

The KPD's attack on the SPD Left proved useful in subordinating the German working class' desire for revolution. It may be assumed that the most natural ally for a radical Left wing party would be another Left wing party. That is also assuming that the parties involved wish to create a mutually beneficial change. The KPD's adoption of Social Fascism and its hostility toward the Left wing of the SPD made this impossible. With the SPD Left branded as Social Fascist and the "most dangerous" elements in Germany a useful enemy had been created. Social Democracy's involvement with the Weimar State – both as creator and protector of the State – made it an excellent target for "enemy" status. The creation of an enemy was extremely important for the perpetuation of Social Fascism as a theory. Draper correctly asserted that Social Democracy was not the real issue. The concept of the enemy was something far more general. Anyone who posed any type of opposition to the Comintern could be branded a Social Fascist and ostracised.[338]

Second, the theory of Social Fascism removed itself from reality. Contrary to Comintern propaganda the reality of the world political and economic situation did not coincide with their claim of an "upsurge in revolutionary potential." Trotsky, writing from exile in September 1930, pointed out that there was nothing to suggest that the revolutionary prospects of

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[337] Lehrbrief Nr. 2: Faschismus und Sozialfaschismus! 1930 SAMPO RY 1/I2/707/100 FBS 248/11599: 18-19.
[338] Theodore Draper, "The Ghost of Social-Fascism," Commentary 47.2 (1969): 34.

the world had changed. There had been no changes in the "objective situation." The tactical turn of the Third Period was "directly contradictory to the actual turn of the historic road." The Comintern had adopted the notion of the "rise in revolutionary tide" during a time in which Communist parties throughout the world were becoming increasingly weaker, Capitalism appeared to be experiencing a commercial and industrial boom, and the working class appeared increasingly fragmented instead of united. [339]

The Wittorf Affair inadvertently accelerated the shift in attitude toward the SPD rank and file and helped lead to the acceptance of Social Fascism. Prior to 1928 the Right wing of the KPD was reluctant to adopt anti-Social Democratic propaganda. As previously discussed many had been members of the SPD and SPD Trade Unions prior the outbreak of the First World War. The purge of the "right deviators" coupled with a downward shift in the socio-economic conditions of the German working class brought on by the Great Depression led to shift in party membership. The party increasingly became the party of those who had nothing left to lose (not even their chains) – the unemployed.[340] Very often Communists were expelled or quite simply

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[339] While Trotsky accurately described the flaws in the Comintern's proposed course, as an exile of the Communist movement, he was doomed like Cassandra to be ignored. Leon Trotsky, "The Turn in the Communist International and the Situation in Germany," The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany, intro Ernest Mandel (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1971) 55-56.

[340] The KPD failed to assess the damage that the waves of depression had had on all strata of German society. The working class were battling constant unemployment and the middle class and the peasantry were financially devastated. For Trotsky's assessment of the effect the "post war chaos" see Leon Trotsky, "What is National Socialism? (June 10, 1933)," The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany, ed. Ernst Mandel (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1971) 400-402. Eric D. Weitz, "State Power, Class Fragmentation, and the Shaping of German Communist Politics, 1890-1933," Journal of Modern History 62.3 (1990): 289; Eric D. Weitz, Creating German Communism, 1890- 1990: From Popular Protests to Socialist State (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997) 159; Herman Weber, Die Wandung Des Deutschen Kommunismus: Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimarer Republic, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1969) 1: 351.

excluded from the dominant Social Democratic Trade Unions.[341] In times of economic crisis, the Communists were the first to be laid off, thus furthering the working class division that already existed between skilled and semi-skilled workers and unskilled workers, as well as between young and old workers. As KPD became a party of the unemployed its members increasingly favoured confrontation with the SPD. This was naturally due to the SPD's association with the Weimar state and therefore, they were responsible party for the circumstances of the unemployed. However, the unemployed were extremely fickle and did not unconditionally support the KPD. Unlike the KPD Right who were interested in long-term campaigns, the unemployed tended to only support policies and participate in campaigns that reflected their immediate needs.[342]

The working class' reaction to the *Demonstrationsverbot* in May 1929 and their intentions of holding separate activities certainly signified something. However it was not an increase in revolutionary upsurge, but rather the opposite. The working class' insistence on holding separate events suggested that the two parties of the Left were becoming increasingly alienated from one another. With the working class thus divided, there was no chance of a revolutionary upsurge taking place. The Comintern's determination to create enemies – Right Deviators, Luxemburgists, Trotskyists, Concilliators, etc – meant that rather than seeking methods to unite the working class the true turn

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[341] McDermott and Agnew claimed that "the behaviour of the social democrats themselves played an important role in legitimating 'social fascism'. The expulsion of communists from reformist trade unions in Germany and Britain the conciliatory stance of the SPD leaders towards capitalist rationalization provided longer-term evidence of social democracy's 'degeneration'." Kevin McDermott and Jeremy Agnew, The Comintern: A History of Communism From Lenin to Stalin (London: Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1996) 101, 115-116.

[342] LaPorte referred to the unemployed as "paper soldiers." Norman LaPorte, " 'Social Fascism', 'Stalinisation' and the Case of the Saxon Communist Party, 1928-9," Labour History Review 67.1 (2002): 76.

that the Comintern was taking was not towards revolution, but towards a divide and conquer strategy that would subjugate and stagnate the working class.

The outcome of the German Communist's adoption of the theory of Social Fascism was a catastrophic for the Marxist movement. History has told us the consequences of Social Fascism enabled the rise of Hitler's National Socialists and was disastrous for the German working class.[343] The Nazis made no distinction between the Social Democrats, Communists, and Trade Unionists when they rounded them up and placed them in concentration camps. The most common reason is the Communists failure to assess the dangerous nature of Fascism. KPD propaganda insisted that Fascism was "rooted" in Monopoly Capitalism and "Fascism is the direct dictatorship of the bourgeoisie in the present under the conditions of the general crisis of capitalism."[344] It was true that certain members of big business supported Hitler financially.[345] However this did not mean that the National Socialists and the Social Democrats were the "instruments" of the bourgeoisie.[346] The point here is not merely that the KPD failed to assess the growth of Fascism during the Weimar Republic, but rather that the KPD had no intention of creating theory that reflected the reality of the Weimar period and this included assessing the nature of Fascism. The theory of

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[343] Kevin McDermott and Jeremy Agnew, The Comintern: A History of Communism From Lenin to Stalin (London: Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1996) 117.

[344] KPD propaganda insisted that Fascism's economic basis – Monopoly Capitalism – differentiated it from backward forms of bourgeois reaction. "Arbeitsplan zum Kampfkongress gegen Faschismus," Agitprop SAMPO RY 1/I4/9/1 FBS 317/13188; Lehrbrief Nr. 2: Faschismus und Sozialfaschismus! 1930 SAMPO RY 1/I2/707/100 FBS 248/11599: 3-4.

[345] Contrary to KPD propaganda big business did not celebrate the rise of Hitler's Nazis and those that supported Hitler financially were in the minority. Trotsky made the point in 1933 that the big bourgeoisie did not consider Hitler's party their own, not even those that gave him money. See Henry Ashby Turner, Jr., German Big Business and the Rise of Hitler (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985) 340-342; Paul Sweezy, The Theory of Capitalist Development: Principles of Marxian Political Economy (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1968) 334; Leon Trotsky, "What is National Socialism?," The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany, intro Ernest Mandel (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1971) 402.

[346] Kursmaterial Nr. 2: Grundizüge der leninistischen Stragegie und Taktik in der gegenwärtige Periode (Zentral Kommittee der Kommunistschen Partei Deutschlands, 1930) 23: SAMPO RY 1/I2/707/99 FBS 248/11598.

Social Fascism had very little, if anything, to do with Fascism. The KPD and the Comintern utilised revolutionary rhetoric for the sole purpose of creating an enemy. The theory of Social Fascism epitomised the decay of Marxist theory in Germany.

Summary

The term Social Fascism experienced an interesting evolution. It originated from humble beginnings – a fusion of insults hurled at Social Democracy for their perceived betrayal of the working class movement. In his first attempts to validate this accusation, Zinoviev attempted to utilise the theory of Imperialism to explain why the alliance had taken place. Zinoviev's name calling was soon superseded by the Comintern's policy of Bolshevisation. The Maslow-Fischer group took up the anti-Social Democratic banner as a means of securing their own power. The former Social Democrats were targeted and purged from the party, thus leaving little Soviet opposition.

Zinoviev possessed little capacity to offer a theoretical basis for Social Fascism. Zinoviev may have failed to provide the theoretical basis for Social Fascism, but his intensification of the hostility toward Social Democracy after 1923 paved the way for what became the theory of Social Fascism. This task was inadvertently taken up by Bucharin and the *Programme of the Sixth Congress*. Bucharin provided the social, political, and economic rationale for the Social Fascist line that developed in the post-Sixth Congress Comintern. It is clear that Bucharin approached Social Fascism with moderation and attempted to make a distinction between Social Democracy and Fascism. But the distinctions he made were not significant enough to actually separate the

two. As a result Bucharin played a key role in the intensification of hostilities against the Social Democracy and the Left in particular. It is true that much of the Programme of the Sixth Congress was exaggerated and distorted to suite the needs of the Comintern spin doctors. Regardless of whether Bucharin's tone was too moderate for the German hardliners or not, Bucharin nonetheless pursued an anti-Social Democratic course in his attacks against the Left wing of the SPD. Each of the Comintern's leaders in his own way played a significant role in the development of Social Fascism into a theory.

After Bucharin's demise Social Fascism was propagated as a theory. This theoretical shift was devastating. It created divisions within the working class pitting Social Democrats and Communists against one another. To a certain extent animosity already existed within the two parties of the Left, but in the past Comintern and Communists pursed a policy of cooperation. This was in an effort to lure SPD workers over to the side of the communists. Under Social Fascism these alliances no longer seemed natural. Social Fascism also marked the anti-theoretical and anti-Marxist path that the KPD and the Comintern had begun to pursue. While claiming to be a theory Social Fascism was not theoretical, but rather long winded propaganda. Its meaning was so ambiguous and detached from any theoretical underpinnings. The analysis that Social Fascism offered, in an effort to demonstrate its correctness, was taken from other sources and either watered down or manipulated to mean whatever the Comintern required it to mean. Essentially each course that the KPD pursued under the guidance and pressure from Moscow led it to its Social Fascist end. Social Fascism used slogans to explain itself rather than draw on the already

existing theory. The use of slogans to explain theory was one of the enduring legacies of Social Fascism.

Chapter: Conclusion

The game that was played in Germany has this singular feature, that Hitler played checkers and his opponents played to lose. As for political genius, Hitler has no need for it. The strategy of his enemy largely compensated for anything his own strategy lacked.[347]

This thesis has attempted to decipher how KPD theory changed from a revolutionary theory whose purpose was to improve the lives of the proletariat to an anti-Marxist theory whose purpose was to contain and control the revolutionary aspirations of the working class. This thesis has agued that the historical process was gradual and occurred in steps. While it is true that the history of the Weimar Republic was complex and turbulent, this thesis has attempted to point out the key events that significantly contributed to the course that the KPD pursued. Each step the KPD took brought it closer to the acceptance of Social Fascism.

Rosa Luxemburg's influence in shaping the course of German Communism was limited but enduring. Throughout her time with German Social Democracy Rosa Luxemburg sought to develop Marxist theory that would bring the proletariat closer to fulfilling their revolutionary ambitions. This was very clearly demonstrated threw her contribution to the various debates within the SPD, but especially with her contribution to the Mass Strike debates after the 1905 Russian Revolution. Luxemburg sought to utilise the lessons learned from the Russian experience and develop a theory that would solidify the bond between the consciousness of the masses and their actions – essentially she

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[347] Leon Trotsky, "The German Catastrophe: The Responsibility of the Leadership (May 28, 1933)," The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany, intro. Ernest Mandel (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1971) 398.

sought to develop a theory that joined theory with political practice. But her efforts were thwarted by the changing nature of German Social Democracy. She had not realised until 1906 that German Social Democracy had changed to such a degree that they were slowly moving away from their Marxist rhetoric. Although Luxemburg and her supporters realised that the SPD was no longer revolutionary she remained within the party for fear of degrading into a sect, that was until the majority SPD expelled the Left and Centre in 1917. When Rosa Luxemburg and the other Spartacists formed the German Communist Party in 1918 she had a clear idea of the type of party she hoped to form. Indeed her pamphlet, Was will der Spartakusbund? (What does the Spartacus League Want?) outlined a party that was similar to the pre-1906 SPD, but one that was not bureaucratic and more democratic.

However from its birth the German Communist Party was plagued with problems. A few weeks after its founding conference Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht were murdered by *Freikorps* and the party never recovered. Luxemburg and Liebknecht's successors were forced to take over the new party during a chaotic period. This thesis has argued that the KPD's inability to develop into a fully formed revolutionary party happened, in part, because the party leadership failed to acknowledge their role and duties as leaders of a political party and in part because of Bolshevik meddling. The successful Russian Revolution meant that the KPD's rank and file looked eastward – toward the Bolsheviks – rather than within for revolutionary guidance. Unfortunately the KPD's leadership was weak and could not control the influence that the Bolsheviks exercised. When faced with Comintern policies in

which they fundamentally disagreed with, the party leadership resigned their posts rather than fight the Bolsheviks or withdraw the party from the Comintern.

This thesis has also argued that Lenin and the Bolsheviks' attempts to forcibly impose their model onto the German party were governed by their desperation to spread the revolution to Europe. Lenin believed that a revolution in Germany was imperative to the survival of the Russian revolution. Both Luxemburg and Lenin agreed that theory existed to guide the revolutionary movement and help the proletariat develop their consciousness as a class. Lenin's attempt to bypass the development of revolutionary consciousness of the working class by transplanting his model onto the German movement defied one of the fundamental features of Marxism. His insistence that the German party follow the Russian model did not force the revolution forward, but rather it merely served to undermine the fledgling party's efforts to develop a party that reflected the historic needs and traditions of the German movement. As a result, Bolshevik interference prevented the party from developing into a Marxist revolutionary party. Armed with arrogance and a victory in Russia the Bolsheviks truly believed that they possessed the *correct* revolutionary model that could be transplanted all over Europe. Desperation and arrogance prevented Lenin from seeing that the conditions that existed in Germany were fundamentally different than those that existed in Russia.

In reality the Bolsheviks represented an outside force attempting to impose their will on the internal dynamic of the German working class. As a consequence of Bolshevik interference, the KPD did not develop the basic foundations to become either a revolutionary party or a main stream political party. During a crucial point in the development of the party the German

leadership surrendered the ability to control the future course of the party. This initial surrender of power merely demonstrated the party's weakness in the face of the Comintern. By 1921 Paul Levi, the KPD leader, was expelled from the party over his controversial criticism of the "1921 March Action." In expelling Levi the Comintern demonstrated their priorities – discipline, loyalty, and obedience above all.

By the end of 1920 and the beginning of 1921 Lenin had come to realise that the world revolution was not around the corner. Trotsky declared at the Third Congress of the Comintern, "The first revolutionary period of the revolutionary movement after the war...may be regarded as by and large as terminated."[348] In the Soviet Union this meant the introduction of the New Economic Policy (NEP). Through NEP the Soviet government began a process of industrialisation and collectivisation, as well as rebuilding trade relationships with Capitalist countries.

In Germany the instability of the Weimar economy and the government meant that the Communists held onto to hope that revolution was still possible. The Ruhr crisis at the beginning of 1923 and the rising inflation sparked new revolutionary hope in Germany and the Comintern. However the disorganised efforts of the Communists and the Comintern shattered those hopes. By the end of 1923 the world socialist revolution had not materialised and many Communist Parties in Western and Eastern Europe operated on an illegal or semi-legal basis. The German party finally accepted that the revolutionary period had come to an end. The acceptance of the Dawes Plan in April 1924 meant that Capitalism had managed to re-establish itself and a period of relative

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[348] Leon Trotsky, "Theses on the International Situation and Tasks of the Comintern: Adopted unanimously at the Sixth Session, July 4, 1921," The First Five Years of the Communist International, 2 vols. (London: New Park Publications, Ltd., 1973) 1: 291.

stabilisation followed. The defeat of the "German October" marked a crucial turning point in the history of the KPD. From 1923 onward the German party became alienated from Marxism as a theory of revolution. It was during this transitional period that Marxism became dogmatic and associated with repression. So what happened?

A combination of events changed the theoretical and practical course that the Comintern and the KPD pursued. This thesis has highlighted those events that the author felt to be the most crucial to the KPD's transition from a revolutionary party to a dogmatic party of repression. First, the failed revolution in 1923 and the subsequent economic stabilisation of the German economy was catastrophic. In the Comintern the failed revolution of 1923 affected all the parties as the Soviets' struggle for power lurked in the background. Rather than analyse the events that led to the defeat of 1923 and draw on any lessons that could be learned, Zinoviev strategically removed any responsibility away from himself and blamed the German leaders and the Social Democrats. Regardless of the fact that Brandler did not believe the situation in Germany was revolutionary, he, Thalheimer, and Radek were removed from their positions. Trotsky was also implicated in the failure of the "German October." It was during this period that Zinoviev began throwing around the term "Social Fascism" to describe the situation in Germany.

Second, Lenin's death in 1924 struck a tremendous blow to the Russian party and the Comintern. His incapacitated state in the months leading up to his death created instability and confusion in the Soviet leadership, which resulted in a power struggle. This power struggle concluded with Stalin emerging as the premier lone leader and an increase in centralisation and bureaucratisation of the

Comintern's parties. In contrast to the revolutionary rhetoric put forth by Lenin, Stalin adopted a more sedentary approach in the form of the doctrine of Socialism in One Country. Socialism in One Country was adopted for the specific purpose of challenging Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. It focused inwardly and appealed to Soviet nationalism with its claim that the Soviet Union did not require an international revolution to be successful. The acceptance of Socialism in One Country changed the Russian party's relationship with the Comintern as it paved the way for the emergence of Third Period.

The Soviets' struggle for power was reflected in the Comintern by the introduction of Bolshevisation at the Fifth Comintern Congress in June-July 1924. Bolshevisation of the Comintern not only served to contain and control the member parties but also to neutralise any opposition. Bolshevisation set out to "Russify" the Comintern's parties by realigning the relationship between the Comintern central bodies and the Russian party. Bolshevisation set out to create strictly disciplined organisations that were loyal to the Russian party and were against the "Trotskyist opposition." In reality "Trotskyist opposition" meant all opposition.

In the German party Bolshevisation bitterly attacked all remnants of Social Democracy within the party. With the Right and the Centre wings of the German party bearing the blame for the 1923 catastrophe, the Left wing of the party was able to come to power. Although Maslow and Fischer were not Stalinists, their enthusiastic adoption of the policy of Bolshevisation helped lay the foundations for the Stalinisation of the KPD. With the Comintern's support the German Left used the policy of Bolshevisation to destroy the KPD's

theoretical traditions by targeting the enduring legacy of Rosa Luxemburg. The main victims of the assault were her supporters – the Right and Centre wings of the German party. As the Social Democratic Party was the most influential party in the Second International most if not all of the old Spartacists had been members.[349] The old Spartacists were sceptical of Bolshevik interference and as a result they posed a threat to an increasingly bureaucratised and centralised Comintern. They targeted and either marginalised or purged. Under the banner of Bolshevisation the Left blamed the KPD's Social Democratic past for the party's failings. While the memory of Rosa Luxemburg lived on, the Comintern managed to manipulate the influence her ideas had on the party. They reduced her from being a Marxist revolutionary theoretician to a martyr – a woman who died for a cause she believed in and whose ideas were subordinated to those of Lenin.

The impact of Bolshevisation on the German party was devastating. Bolshevisation, in many ways, was the predecessor of the theory of Social Fascism. Like Bolshevisation, the theory of Social Fascism served to exaggerate all ready existing divisions within the German working class. After Zinoviev's demise, Bucharin took over the Comintern. While Bucharin was reluctant to directly link Social Democracy to Fascism, the Programme of the Sixth Congress of the Comintern provided the much of the rationale for what became the theory of Social Fascism. The rhetoric of the Programme of the Sixth Congress claimed to strive for the advancement of the proletarian revolutionary movement, but it in fact further restricted the revolutionary

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[349] Carr pointed out that as late as 1929 60% of all KPD members had once belonged to the SPD or the USPD. Therefore, the notion of purging all the remnants of Social Democracy out of the KPD was farcical. E.H. Carr, A History of Soviet Russia: Foundations of a Planned Economy 1926-1929, 3 vols. (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1979) 3: 463.

aspirations of the working class by removing any remaining autonomy away from the Comintern's parties. The Sixth Congress not only laid the foundations for the theory of Social Fascism it declared the arrival of the "Third Period."

This thesis has argued that the development of Social Fascism as a campaign and as a theory was contrived. First by Zinoviev as a way of redirecting blame for the failed revolution in 1923 and later by the Stalinised Comintern who used the "Third Period" to rationalise their repressive measures. The Comintern used the suppression of the May Day demonstrations to prove that the Social Democrats had indeed become a wing of Fascism – Social Fascists. In reality the theory of Social Fascism replaced Marxism as the Comintern's dominant theory. It was here during this period that world Communists movements became anti-Marxist, anti-theoretical, dogmatic, and completely removed from reality.

The consequence of theory of Social Fascism was disastrous for the German party and Communists movements around the world. By January 1933 Hitler's Nazi party had ascended to power. Hitler made no distinction between the parties of the Left and by March both Communists and Social Democrats were arrested. Even then the Comintern did not retract its accusation that "Social Democracy was Social Fascist." The Comintern succeeded in fragmenting the German working class and this was replicated in the other Comintern parties. Marxist theory as a theory of revolution was overshadowed by the Soviet Union's Stalinised interpretation. This thesis has showed how under the unique conditions of Weimar Germany Marxist theory arrived at the theory of Social Fascism.

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APPENDIX

Chronological Table

1875	14-15 February	Gotha Conference – formation of the SAPD.
1878-1890		Anti-Socialist Laws
1905	9 January	Soldiers fire on peaceful demonstrators in St. Petersburg.
	September	Jena Congress.
	3 December	Russian government arrest 260 members of St. Petersburg Soviet, including Leon Trotsky.
1906		Friedrich Ebert becomes General Secretary of the SPD.
	16 February	Secret agreement between SPD Executive and Trade Unions.
	March	Luxemburg discovered and arrested in Poland.
	23 September	Mannheim Congress.
1913		Bebel dies.
1914	August	SPD ministers vote for war credits.
	2 December	Liebknecht alone votes against war credits.
1915	7 February	Liebknecht called up.
	18 February	Luxemburg arrested.

	18 March	Liebknecht and Rühle vote against war credits.
	21 December	18 Centrist deputies vote against war credits.
1916	January	Liebknecht expelled from the Reichstag.
	1 May	Workers' demonstrations for peace. Liebknecht in uniform distributes anti-war leaflets.
	27-30 June	Strikes and demonstrations in support of Liebknecht.
	28 June	Karl Liebknecht sentenced.
1917	7 January	Opposition conference takes place including Centre and Left.
	16 January	SPD expel Left and Centre for holding opposition conference.
	6-8 April	Gotha Congress – USPD formed.
	16-23 April	Strikes in Berlin and Leipzig.
	2 August	Sailors' demonstrations.
1918	28-31 January	Strikes in Berlin and other working class areas.
	28/29 September	The German High command advises the Kaiser to establish a parliamentary cabinet and sue for peace.
	1 October	Prince Max Baden appointed Chancellor.

	21 October	Liebknecht released.
	28 October	Navel mutinies begin in Kiel.
	7/8 November	Bavarian monarchy overthrown and a republic declared in Munich.
	9 November	The Kaiser flees to Holland. Republic declared in Berlin. Ebert heads first Republican government – a coalition of Majority (Ebert, Scheidmann, Landsberg) and Independent Social Democrats (Hasse, Dittman, Barth). Rosa Luxemburg released from prison.
	11 November	Organisation of Spartacus League with Zentrale.
	16-20 November	Congress of Workers' and Soldiers' Councils in Berlin votes to hold elections for a National Assembly.
	27 December	Volunteer Corps mobilise and enter Berlin. Independents agree to reinstatement of old Hohenzollern generals and to raising a standing army to defend frontiers against Russians and Poles.
	29 December	Independent Social Democrats leave the Government.
	30-31 December	Foundation of the German Communist Party in Berlin.
1919	5-12 January	"Spartakist" uprising in Berlin.
	6-12 January	Freikorps unleash terror in Berlin.
	15 January	Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht murdered by government forces.

	19 January	Elections for the National Assembly.
	29 January	Franz Mehring dies
	21 February	USPD leader, Kurt Eisner assassinated by Count Arco in Bavaria. Erhard Auer (SPD) murdered in retaliation.
	March	General strike in Munich.
	2-6 March	1st Comintern Congress.
	10 March	Leo Jogiches murdered by government forces. Paul Levi becomes the leader of the KPD
	7 April	Bavarian Soviet Republic proclaimed in Munich.
	1 May	Bavarian Soviet suppressed by Reichswehr and Bavarian Freikorps. Leaders of uprising are tried and executed.
	28 June	Treaty of Versailles signed.
	11 August	The Constitution of the German Republic formally promulgated.
	21 August	Friedrich Ebert takes the oath as President.
	September	Hitler joins the German Worker's Party in Munich.
1920	13 March	Kapp Putsch. Ebert and ministers flee to Stuttgart. General Federation of Labour call general strike. Berlin brought to stand still.

	17 March	Collapse of Putsch. Legien gives Ebert ultimatum, vows to continue strike until demands are met. Ebert ignores him.
	18 March	USPD workers return to work. Workers in Ruhr continue to strike.
	24 March	Defence Minister Noske and army chief Reinhardt resign. Gessler and von Seeckt take their places.
	28 March	Ruhr fails to meet government ultimatum. Reischswehr unleash terror.
	April	Founding of the KAPD – first leftward split in a Communist Party.
	6 June	1st Reichstag election. SPD wins 102 seats, USPD 84, DNVP 71, DVP 65, Centre 64, DDP 39, BVP 21, KPD 4.
	19 July-7August	2nd World Congress of the Comintern held in Leningrad and Moscow – 37 countries represented.
1921	February	Ernest Meyer became leader of the Politburo – leader of the KPD
	March	Mansfield uprising. Levi openly condemns Soviet orders to take part. Paul Levi expelled from KPD. NEP in Russia.
	27 April	Reparations Commission sets German debt at 132 thousand million gold marks.
	5 May	Allied ultimatum delivered in London requiring German compliance with conditions about disarmament, reparations and war criminals.
	22 June-12 July	3rd Comintern Congress.

1922	16 April	German-Soviet Agreement signed at Rapallo.
	22 April	Stalin becomes General Secretary.
	18 July	'Law to Protect the Republic' passed by the Reichstag.
	5 Nov-5 Dec	4th Congress of the International – theses on the United Front is agreed.
1923	January	Ernest Meyer is replaced by Brandler as Chairman of the KPD.
	10 January	Germany declared default on reparations payments.
	11/12 January	Franco-Belgian forces occupy the Ruhr and the German government declares passive resistance.
	Summer	Inflation of currency completely out of control.
	13 August	Stresemann becomes Chancellor.
	26 September	Passive resistance ended. Von Kahr declares state of emergency in Bavaria and establishes himself as State Commissioner.
	27 September	Ebert declares state of emergency throughout Germany. Gessler given full powers under Article 48 of Constitution.
	10 October	Brandler, Bötcher, Heckert join Zeigner's government in Saxony and Thuringia.
	23/24 October	Hamburg insurrection.

	29 Oct – 9 Nov	Socialist-Communist governments suppressed in Saxony and Thuringia.
	2 November	SPD ministers in Berlin resign.
	8/9 November	Hitler Putsch in Munich.
	15 November	First Rentenmark notes issued.
	23 November	Stresemann resigns as Chancellor but continues to serve as Foreign Minister. KPD declared illegal.
1924	January	Lenin dies.
	13 February	President Ebert declares end of state of emergency.
	19 February	Brandler replaced by Remmele
	1 April	Hitler sentenced to 5 years' fortress arrest.
	7-10 April	9th KPD Congress in Frankfurt – Left take leadership.
	16 April	German Government accepts Dawes Plan.
	4 May	2nd Reichstag election. SPD wins 100 seats, DNVP 95, Centre 65, KPD 62, DVP 45, Racialists 32 DDP 28, BVP 16 Landbund 10, Economics Party 10.
	17 June-8 July	5th Comintern Congress – announced slogan of Bolshevisation.
	July	Expulsion of Right wing of KPD.

	December	Stalin introduces Socialism in One Country.
	7 December	3rd Reichstag election. SPD wins 131 seats, DNVP 103, Centre 69, DVP 51, KPD 45, DDP 32, BVP 19, Economics Party 17, Racialists 14, Landbund 8.
1925	28 February	President Ebert dies.
	26 March-6 April	5th Comintern Plenum.
	27 April	Hindenburg elected President.
	August	Zinoviev's open letter.
1926	24 April	German-Soviet Non-aggression pact.
	8 September	Germany elected to the League of Nations.
	9 October	Von Seeckt resigns as head of the Reichswehr. Succeeded by Heye.
	December	Session of the executive committee. Thälmann is installed as head of the party.
1927	31 January	Allied Control Commission withdrawn from Germany.
1928	30 January	Defence Minister Gessler resigns. Groener becomes Minister of Defence.
	20 May	4th Reichstag elections. SPD wins 153 seats, Centre 62, DNVP 73, KPD 54, DVP 24, DDP 25, Economics Party 23, BVP 16, Nazis 12, Landvolk 10, Farmers' Party 8, Landbund 3.

	17July-1 Sept	6th Comintern Congress.
	October	Wittorf Affair
1929	23 April	Bucharin removed from Comintern
	1 May	"Blutmai" – Police chief Zörgiebel (SPD) banned outdoor rallies. Battles between police and workers ensued – over 30 people died, 194 injured, and 1228 arrested.
	7 June	Young Plan drawn up in Paris.
	3-19 July	10th Plenum of the ECCI – formally expounded the theory of Social Fascism and branded "left" Social Democrats more dangerous than Right. Bucharin officially relieved of Comintern duties.
	6-31 August	First Hague Conference on Young Plan. Agreement on the evacuation of the Rhineland.
	3 October	Stresemann dies.
	24 October	Black Friday, New York Stock Exchange crashes sending western economies into a depression.
	November	Bucharin removed from CPSU Political Bureau
1930	30 March	Brüning appointed Reich Chancellor.
	14 September	5th Reichstag election, SPD wins 143 seats, Nazis 107, KPD 77, Centre 68, DNVP 41, DVP 30, Economics Party 23, DDP 20, BVP 19, Landvolk 19, German farmers' Party 6, Landbund 3.
1931	13-14 July	DANAT Bank closes its doors. 'Bank Holiday' in Germany.

1932	10 April	Hindenburg re-elected President.
	13 April	SA and other Nazi paramilitary formations suppressed.
	13 May	Groener resigns post as Defence Minister.
	30 May	Brüning resigns. Von Papen Chancellor.
	17 June	Ban on SA lifted.
	20 July	Von Papen deposes Prussian government.
	31 July	6th Reichstag election. Nazis win 230 seats, SPD 133, KPD 89, Centre 75, DNVP 37, BVP 22, DVP 7, DDP 4, Economics Party 2.
	6 November	7th Reichstag election. Nazis win 196 seats, SPD 121, KPD 100, Centre 70, DNVP 52, BVP 20, DVP 11.
	17 November	Von Papen resigns.
	2 December	Von Schleicher appointed Chancellor.
1933	28 January	Von Schleicher resigns.
	30 January	Hitler appointed Chancellor.
	27 February	Reichstag fire
	28 February	Decree to Protect the German People and the State.

3 March	Nazis arrest several KPD and other left wing leaders including Ernest Thälmann.
5 March	8th Reichstag election. Nazis win 288 seats, SPD 120, KPD 81, Centre 74, DNVP 52, BVP 18, DVP 2.
23 March	Enabling Act passed throughout the Reichstag.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

ADAV – (*Allgemeiner Deutsche Arbeiterverein*) – General German Worker's Association

Agit-prop – Department of the Central Committee for Propaganda and Agitation

BVP – *Bayerische Volkspartei*) – Bavarian People's Party

Bezirk – Party district

BL – *Bezirksleitung* – Party leadership in a district

CPSU – The Communist Party of the Soviet Union

Comintern – Communist International

DAP – (*Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*) –German Workers' Party

DDP – (*Deutsche Demokratische Partei*) –German Democratic Party

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

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

Deutsche Zentrumspartei or *Zentrum* – German Centre Party (often called the Catholic Centre Party or Centre)

ECCI aka EKKI – Executive Committee of the Communist International

KAPD – (*Kommunistische Arbeiter-Partei Deutschlands*) – Communist Workers Party of Germany

KPD – (*Kommunistische Partei Deutchlands*) – German Communist Party

NSDAP – (*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*) – National Socialist German Workers' Party

NEP – New Economic Policy

PPS – (*Polska Partia Socjalistyczna)* – The Polish Socialist Party

RBF – (*Rote Frontkämpferbund*) – Red Front Fighters' League (Association)

SA – (*Sturmabteilung*) – the "Brown Shirts" or Storm Troopers

Sächsische Volkspartei – Saxon People's Party

SAP – (*Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei*) – Socialist Workers' Party

SDAP – (*Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei Deutchlands*) – Social Democratic Workers' Party of Germany

SDKPiL – (*Socjaldemokracja Krolestwa Polskiego i Litwy*) – The Social Democratic Party of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania

Spartakusbund – Spartacus League (Spartacists)

SPD – (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*) – German Social Democratic Party

SS – (*Schutzstaffel*) – Protective Squadron

Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands – USPD – Independent Social Democratic Party

Zentrale – Centre – leadership of the Communist Party

Zentralausschuss – Central Committee – broader leadership of the Party composed of representatives from various regions.