

THE EVOLUTION OF GERMAN SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

by

HARTMUT KOPSCH

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Department of Political Science

The University of British Columbia  
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## ABBREVIATIONS

ADAV	<u>Allgemeiner Deutscher Arbeiterverein</u> General German Workers' Union
BVP	<u>Bayerische Volkspartei</u> Bavarian People's Party
CDU	<u>Christlich-Demokratische Union</u> Christian Democratic Union
CSU	<u>Christlich-Soziale Union</u> Christian Social Union
DDP	<u>Deutsche Demokratische Partei</u> German Democratic Party
DNVP	<u>Deutschnationale Volkspartei</u> German National People's Party
DP	<u>Deutsche Partei</u> German Party
DVP	<u>Deutsche Volkspartei</u> German People's Party
FDP	<u>Freie Demokratische Partei</u> Free Democratic Party
KPD	<u>Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands</u> German Communist Party
NSDAP	<u>Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei</u> National Socialist German Workers' Party
SAP	<u>Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei</u> Social Democratic Workers' Party
SHB	<u>Sozialistische Hochschulbund</u> Socialist Student Federation
SPD	<u>Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands</u> Social Democratic Party of Germany
USPD	<u>Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands</u> Independent German Social Democratic Party
Z	<u>Zentrum</u> Centre Party

## ABSTRACT

It is the purpose of this thesis to study the evolution of German Social Democracy from its early origin as a "social-movement party" to its development as a "modern pragmatic party" in the post-1945 period. This investigation of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) utilized both party documents and a wide selection of secondary material.

The study was divided into three periods, each of which represented a fairly distinctive stage in the evolution of the SPD. In the early period (1890-1913) it was suggested that the SPD evolved from a "social-movement party" to an "aspiring Volkspartei" (people's party). The transition was indicated by a gradual shift in the emphasis placed on Social Democratic goals. Increasing concentration on electoral victory and a decreasing emphasis on Social Democratic ideology characterized the SPD's evolution in the early period.

In the second period (1914-1933) party leaders sought to extend the influence of Social Democracy in the state, and attempted to escape from the electoral consequences of an exclusively working-class orientation. An examination of the goals pursued by the SPD leadership indicated that efforts were made to convert the SPD into a genuine Volkspartei.



An attempt was made to discover why SPD leaders failed to secure this objective. Party leaders failed to transform the SPD into a genuine Volkspartei primarily because the intensity of ideological cleavages in German society prevented any political party from gaining substantial support from all electorally significant social groups.

An examination of the goals pursued by Social Democratic leaders in the third period (post-1945) suggested that the SPD developed as a "categorical opposition party" under the leadership of Kurt Schumacher. By 1960, however, the SPD was no longer recognizable as "Schumacher's party" and had adopted a programme and a strategy which were based on one overriding goal -- political power. The SPD's emergence as a pragmatic political party was indicated by the willingness of party leaders to subject considerations of principle or ideology to the goal of attaining responsibility for the over-all conduct of government.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Chapter I: Introduction . . . . .	1
Chapter II: The Evolution of German Social Democracy, 1875-1913 . . . . .	19
Chapter III: German Social Democracy: Aspiring People's Party . . . . .	54
Chapter IV: From Categorical Opposition Party to Modern Pragmatic Party . . . . .	86
Chapter V: Summary and Conclusion . . . . .	132
Bibliography: . . . . .	144
Appendix A: . . . . .	154
Appendix B: . . . . .	155
Appendix C: . . . . .	156

## LIST OF TABLES

TABLE		PAGE
I	The Electoral Expansion of the SPD, 1877-1913 . . . . .	42
II	SPD Membership 1906-1913 . . . . .	48
III	Electoral Victory of the Pro-Republican Parties in the 1919 Election . . . . .	65
IV	The Defeat of the Government Coalition Parties and the Corresponding Success of the Right and Left Extremists in the 1920 Election . . . . .	76
V	The Results of the First Federal Election of 1949 . . . . .	94
VI	Religion and Sex as Factors in Voting Behaviour . . . . .	106
VII	Party Preferences of Occupational Groupings . . . . .	108
VIII	A Comparison of the 1957 and 1961 Election Results . . . . .	125
IX	Transferral of Party Vote, 1957-1961 . . . . .	126
X	Attitudes of the Public toward the Major Parties . . . . .	127
XI	German Attitudes to the 'New' SPD . . . . .	128

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## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

The Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), which has a century-old tradition and which has survived three distinctive political regimes, provides the student with an excellent example of a party whose leaders have shown themselves ready to abandon ideological commitments in the interests of securing governmental responsibility. The evolution of German Social Democracy is particularly interesting since it provides an excellent example of how political parties tend to modify their goals as the political environment in which they act changes.

The transition of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) from "social-movement party" to "aspiring Volkspartei" (people's party) in the early period (1875-1913), the party leaders' attempt to convert the SPD into a genuine Volkspartei in the middle period (1914-1933), and the transformation of the SPD from "categorical opposition party" to "modern pragmatic party" in the modern period (post-1945) are the stages which characterize the evolution of German Social Democracy.

A social-movement party may be distinguished from most other political parties by the goals which it pursues. Its major purpose is to bring about fundamental changes in

the prevailing social and political systems.<sup>1</sup> A movement-party represents the interests of a readily identifiable social group whose members share certain grievances against existing society. An 'aspiring' Volkspartei seeks the support of the electorally most important social groups in society, whereas a movement-party seeks the support of only one or a few fairly distinctive social groups. A 'genuine' Volkspartei is a party which is actually supported by a large proportion of nearly all electorally significant social groups.

A categorical opposition party may be defined as a party which categorically opposes the policies of all competing parties. It may be distinguished from most other political parties by its insistence on ideological purity and its unwillingness to adopt compromise solutions to political problems for electoral advantages. Its intransigent opposition to competing parties precludes the party from sharing responsibility in a coalition government. Although, like most opposition parties, it strives to replace the major governing party, it nevertheless refuses to modify

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<sup>1</sup>Rudolf Herberle argues that "the main criterion of a social movement...is that it aims to bring about fundamental changes in the social order, especially in the basic institutions of property and labor relationships." Social Movements: An Introduction to Political Sociology, New York, Appleton, 1951, p. 6. See also C. Wendell King, Social Movements in the United States, New York, Random House, 1956, passim. King distinguishes between revolutionary and reform social movements according to the degree of change that is sought. The former advocate a complete alteration of the social order while the latter seek changes within the framework of the existing social order (See pp. 27-28).

its own policies even if these have been electorally disadvantageous. A categorical opposition party seeks political power but is not prepared to adopt policies purely because they seem to be popular with the electorate. A modern pragmatic party by contrast adopts those policies that are anticipated to appeal to the largest number of voters. Unlike the categorical opposition party, the latter is prepared to modify or even reverse its own position on major political issues if such behaviour is expected to result in electoral gains. The most characteristic features of the modern pragmatic party are its lack of commitment to goals which are not shared by the mass of the electorate and its non-absolutist, "limited" or "relativist" ideological position.<sup>2</sup>

A social-movement party is unlikely to develop in a political system which is fairly responsive to the demands of all important social groups. If, however, a political regime ignores the demands of a potentially significant social group, the legitimacy of the prevailing socio-political order may be questioned by the disadvantaged group. Those whose demands have been rejected may draw closer together and form a political organization in order to radically change or even destroy the existing order.

A movement-party is characteristically based on an "absolutist" ideology, which is defined by Avery Leiserson as

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<sup>2</sup>Avery Leiserson, Parties and Politics: An Institutional and Behavioral Analysis, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1958, p. 137.

a coherent set of principles that are held to be inviolable:

...ideology may be called absolutist, when the party insists upon the sacredness of some religious or ethical doctrine, the solidarity of some racial or national group, or the higher ethical quality of a socio-economic panacea.<sup>3</sup>

The absolutist party ideology is a rationalization of the interests of party members,<sup>4</sup> who are attracted to such an ideology because the prevailing system offers them no opportunities to advance their own economic and political interests.

The individual who is not recognized as a socially acceptable member of society, and who is denied access to the political system, is likely to feel socially isolated and to cherish little hope for future improvements in his socio-economic and political standing. William Kornhauser has

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<sup>3</sup>Loc. cit... Leiserson distinguishes between three types of ideology: totalitarian, absolutist and limited or liberal. Although it is often difficult to distinguish between totalitarian and absolutist ideologies, the former is used by parties which exact "unquestioning obedience and loyalty to its tenets" (Stalinist Communism and German National Socialism are examples), while the latter is based on the assumption that certain "moral beliefs and obligations are absolute, but...not binding in the practical world." A limited, relativist or liberal ideology "arises in a situation in which the party places...the welfare of the Commonwealth as the highest political value, and frankly admits its instrumental, pragmatic role of providing the personnel and policies most conducive to those ends." See pp. 137-139.

<sup>4</sup>Ideologies are defined by Leiserson "as the more or less systematic rationalizations of differing group interests and norms in terms of explicit value preferences." Leiserson, op. cit., p. 137.



suggested that those who feel alienated from society are also likely to feel that they are personal failures:

The separation of the individual (and his family) from major social processes and cultural values tends to separate the individual from himself. Thus people who feel alienated from the social order tend to feel alienated from themselves.... A high proportion of the socially alienated workers also express self-alienation in their low sense of personal accomplishments, their low estimate of chance for personal improvement, and other indications of personal dissatisfaction.<sup>5</sup>

A social-movement party espousing an absolutist ideology which emphasizes the moral superiority of the working class and condemns the existing socio-political order, offers potential members personal satisfaction, a sense of human dignity and above all hope for the future. In other words, the advantages of membership in the party compensates many workers for their "low sense of personal accomplishment" in the outside world.

The failure of the German political system to respond to the demands of a rapidly growing industrial working population in the latter half of the nineteenth century led to the formation of the SPD, which aimed to bring about fundamental social and political changes. German Social Democracy attracted workers who felt isolated in the existing social system, being denied the economic and political

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<sup>5</sup>William Kornhauser, The Politics of Mass Society, Glencoe, Ill., Free Press, 1959, pp. 108-109.

opportunities to advance their own interests. The feeling of isolation was intensified by Bismarck's Sozialistengesetze (anti-socialist laws).

The SPD originated as a social-movement party, directing its appeal for support exclusively to the "socially alienated" industrial workers. The rapid growth of the party in the late nineteenth century enabled it to provide members with a whole host of services which were not available to them outside of the party. These services have been characterized as enveloping the workers' entire life, "from the cradle to the grave, from the workers' infant-care association to the atheists' cremation society."<sup>6</sup> Sigmund Neumann has coined the term "party of integration" to characterize a party whose influence extends to the everyday life of the individual member. He distinguishes between a party of integration, which tries to bind members closely to the party by providing many services and various kinds of activities, and a "party of individual representation," which is organized only during elections and acts as little more than an "electoral committee."<sup>7</sup> A party of integration

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<sup>6</sup> Sigmund Neumann, "Toward a Comparative Study of Political Parties," in Sigmund Neumann, ed., Modern Political Parties: Approaches to Comparative Politics, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1956, pp. 404-405.

<sup>7</sup> Neumann also distinguishes between parties of democratic integration and parties of total integration. Ibid., pp. 403-405.

is likely to correspond to the Gemeinschaft (community)<sup>8</sup> type of party, discussed by Maurice Duverger, because a party is only likely to exercise a considerable influence over the daily lives of members when some fundamental or "natural" proximity between them (for example, through membership in a distinctive social class) encourages the development of membership solidarity.

The SPD acted as a party of integration by providing its members with a host of services, such as educational courses, party newspapers, youth clubs, theatre performances, and health insurance schemes. It was able to gain a considerable influence over party members' every-day lives. In spite of the considerable influence wielded by the party organization, however, the SPD contained two fairly distinctive wings - Lassalleans and Eisenachers or radicals and reformists - who maintained their distinctiveness with respect to each other within the party. In 1917 the radicals formed a splinter socialist party, thereby formally expressing the intra-party division which had originated

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<sup>8</sup> Maurice Duverger, Political Parties, New York, Wiley, 1954, pp. 124-132. Duverger distinguishes between three categories of social groups, Gemeinschaft (Community), Gesellschaft (Association) and Bund (Order). The Gemeinschaft is characterized by the close relationship between its members which is based on a natural proximity, either geographical (a village, for example), physiological (e.g., the family) or social (e.g., a distinct social class, such as the industrial proletariat).

with the birth of German Social Democracy in 1875.<sup>9</sup>

The radical socialists, who emphasized the relevance of Marxist theory to German social conditions, thought of the SPD as a revolutionary movement, while the reformists concentrated on gradual, practical reforms in the economic situation of the German working class. The transition of the SPD from social-movement party to aspiring Volkspartei was partly a consequence of the increasing political influence of the reformists on the party leadership, and the corresponding decline in the influence of the radical wing.

A transformation from social-movement party to aspiring Volkspartei is likely to take place under certain conditions. A party, if it is to become an aspiring Volkspartei, must contain adherents who are prepared to subject considerations of party ideology to the goal of attracting new voters, and these party members must either gain control over the party organization, or at least the sympathy of the party leadership. An attempt to revise the social-movement party's absolutist theory in order to make it more widely acceptable in society is likely to accompany an attempt to broaden the party's electoral appeal.

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<sup>9</sup>Carl E. Schorske, German Social Democracy, 1905-1917, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1955, passim.

The reformist wing of the SPD, whose intellectual leader was Eduard Bernstein, not only argued that the SPD should make efforts to attract non-proletarian voters, but sought to modify the absolutist party ideology, as expressed in the Erfurterprogramm of 1891. These attempts to 'revise' official party theory indicated that a number of Social Democrats were unsatisfied with the status of the SPD as a social-movement party. The gradual ascendancy of the reformist wing and the corresponding decline of the party radicals marked the process of the SPD's transition to aspiring Volkspartei.

Party leaders must appear to take into consideration the views of the major political groupings within the party if they aim to avoid a disruption in party unity. If at the same time they are trying to broaden the social basis of the party's electoral support, and if the pursuit of this aim involves the alienation of an important group of party members, a concession must be made to this group in order to maintain party unity.

The refusal of the party leadership to 'revise' Social Democratic theory along the lines suggested by Bernstein at the turn of the nineteenth century represented a decisive success for the radicals, but was probably intended more as a concession in the interests of party unity. By retaining a Marxist theory of Social Democracy and at the same time by actively seeking political office and electoral expansion,

party leaders sought to maintain a balance between radicals and reformists.

Party leaders, who are confronted by two major party wings which pursue contradictory ends, will generally attempt to maintain a synthesis between the two wings by refusing to settle any conflicts between them, and thus avoid alienating either wing. According to Samuel Eldersveld, parties generally avoid settling intra-party group conflicts:

As a power-aspiring group, "greedy" for new followers, the party does not settle conflict; it defers the resolution of conflict. The party is thus no genuine mediator; it seeks to stabilize subcoalitional relationships and interactions so that these multiple interests will remain committed to the organization, after partial acquiescence to their demands, without permitting intergroup rivalries to collide with the party's grand design for power. Tension between the group goal and subcoalitional demands is, therefore... [a] basic structural dilemma of the party.<sup>10</sup>

SPD leaders certainly attempted to avoid resolving the conflict between radicals and reformists. This is indicated by the unwillingness to modify party ideology on the one hand and by the adoption of a practical course of reformism on the other. Party leaders tried to maintain a synthesis between rival party factions by "deferring the resolution of conflict." Such a strategy was not, however, likely to satisfy either faction, or convincingly appeal

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<sup>10</sup>Samuel J. Eldersveld, Political Parties: A Behavioral Analysis, Chicago, Rand McNally, 1964, p. 7.

to the electorate.

The transformation of the SPD from a social-movement party to an aspiring Volkspartei is indicated by party leaders' increasing concern with electoral victory and by their corresponding de-emphasis on party ideology. By 1913 the precarious balance between radicals and reformists was upset in the latter's favour. The party leadership directed its attention increasingly to the goal of winning political power, and political decisions were made more and more on the basis of their anticipated electoral consequences rather than by reference to official Social Democratic theory. The decision to collaborate with "bourgeois" parties in the 1912 election is one example of the new importance attached to electoral victory.

The year 1913 has been chosen to conclude the first stage in the evolution of the SPD. The party's decision to vote for the 1913 military tax bill was perhaps the most important indication of the extent to which the reformists had gained control over the SPD.<sup>11</sup> The party's support for this bill contradicted the Social Democratic practice of "pure opposition" by which the SPD members of the Reichstag (Fraktion) had traditionally expressed their party's fundamental opposition to the political system.<sup>12</sup> The decision to abandon

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<sup>11</sup>For a discussion of the military tax bill see below pp. 51-53.

<sup>12</sup>The practice of "pure opposition" is described in Chapter II, footnote 17.

the practice of "pure opposition" symbolized the transition of the SPD from movement-party to aspiring Volkspartei.

In 1914 the SPD approved the war credits and accepted the Burgfrieden (civil peace).<sup>13</sup> The desire of many Social Democrats to gain acceptance as loyal German citizens replaced the earlier negative attitude towards the state. Bismarck's reference to Social Democrats as vaterlandslose Geselle (vagabonds without a fatherland) was a fairly accurate description of Social Democratic attitudes in the 1890's but was no longer appropriate by 1914, when many Social Democrats showed themselves ready to go to the defense of the 'fatherland.' The fact that Social Democrats supported the national cause as enthusiastically as other Germans encouraged many SPD leaders in their efforts to make German Social Democracy more 'respectable' so that it would attract support from non-working class voters.

In the period from 1914 to 1933 the SPD attempted to escape from the political isolation of the pre-1914 period and to attract large numbers of middle-class voters in order that it might become a governing party. In spite of these efforts the SPD leadership failed to transform the SPD from aspiring to genuine Volkspartei.

A party that aims to gain substantial electoral support from all sectors of the population must adopt an ideological position that attracts voters from all major

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<sup>13</sup>For an account of the Burgfrieden see Chapter II, footnote 8.



social groups. As long as ideological differences between social groups are intense enough to produce many different parties, it is unlikely that one party can gain support from all major population groups. A society which is divided by intense ideological cleavages is likely to adopt a multiparty system,<sup>14</sup> and an aspiring Volkspartei cannot transform itself into a genuine Volkspartei within the framework of a multiparty system, since each party is likely to act as the political instrument of particular social classes or groups.

The SPD failed to transform itself into a genuine Volkspartei for reasons that were largely beyond its own control. The Weimar multiparty system, reflecting such ideological cleavages as pro-republican versus anti-republican, working class versus middle class, and clericalism versus anti-clericalism, limited the SPD to the support of the largely Social Democratic working class, and to less than one-third of the total votes cast in elections to the Reichstag (the 1919 election was the only exception).

The conceptualization of the SPD as an aspiring Volkspartei in the 1914-1933 period is suggested by the decision to modify the Social Democratic absolutist ideology (by adoption of the 1921 G8rlitz Programme), by the party's willingness to join in coalition governments with bourgeois

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<sup>14</sup>Leiserson, op. cit., p172. Cf. also Carl Friedrich, Constitutional Government and Politics, New York and London, Harper, 1937, Chapter 21.

parties, and by the party's resolute opposition to the extreme leftists and Communists.

If ideological cleavages are so fundamental that political parties oppose each other on questions which concern the nature of the political regime, a two-party system cannot develop. Similarly if one of the major parties in a political system is totalitarian a two-party system is also inoperable. Since a political party is only likely to assume the characteristics of a Volkspartei under a two-party system it follows that a Volkspartei is only conceivable where there is a basic consensus concerning the nature of the political regime.

The SPD was prevented from effectively disassociating itself from its working-class image since it had to compete with the German Communist Party (KPD) for working class votes. Its leaders anticipated that by making an enthusiastic, open appeal to middle-class Germans the SPD would drive its more radical supporters to the communist camp. The SPD's adoption of the orthodox, Marxist Heidelberger-programm (1925) in preference to the more moderate Görlitz programme was probably related to the KPD's astounding electoral success in 1924.<sup>15</sup> The failure of SPD leaders to

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<sup>15</sup> In the 1920 Reichstag election the KPD polled only two per cent of the total vote. In the next Reichstag election (1924) the party increased its percentage of the total vote to 12.6. In 1920 it had attracted only just over half a million votes. In 1924 it won more than three and a half million votes.

transform the SPD into a genuine Volkspartei is most dramatically indicated by the party's failure to attract the mass of lower middle class Germans who preferred the Nazi Party (NSDAP) to the SPD towards the end of the Weimar period.

The SPD was the only major political party to survive the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich. In the post-1945 period the SPD emerged as a categorical opposition party under the leadership of Kurt Schumacher, but by 1960 had been transformed into a modern pragmatic party.

The conceptualization of the SPD as a categorical opposition party seems to be justified in the light of the party's behaviour in the early post-1945 period. Under Kurt Schumacher's leadership the SPD emphasized that it was the only party that could be relied upon to promote political democracy. Schumacher, as Lewis Edinger has shown, believed that only Social Democracy could "save Germany" and that the SPD had an exclusive moral right to assume the responsibility for government:

To Schumacher only Social Democrats were intellectually and morally equipped for the task of leadership....

In short, he claimed for Social Democrats an exclusive historical, moral, and intellectual mandate to save Germany and the world by teaching the German people political responsibility and giving them a new self-confidence.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Lewis J. Edinger, Kurt Schumacher: A Study in Personality and Political Behavior, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1965, pp. 85-86.

Schumacher's intense opposition to all rival parties, especially to Adenauer's Christian Democratic Party (CDU), was based on his judgement that these parties were "anti-democratic," which, if elected, would jeopardize Germany's political future. The great failure of Weimar Social Democracy, Schumacher argued, had been the willingness of the SPD to collaborate with bourgeois parties. The SPD, he insisted, must avoid accepting responsibility for 'compromise' policies. Schumacher's leadership of the SPD had the effect of polarizing German political parties. That the SPD played the role of categorical opposition party is indicated by the fact that the major government party (CDU) and the SPD, during the period of Schumacher's leadership (1945-1952), were divided on almost all major domestic and foreign policy issues.

Under Schumacher's leadership the SPD was able to attract large numbers of voters only amongst the German working class, and the great majority of middle class voters gave their support to the SPD's competitors. Schumacher also failed to improve the SPD's unfavourable image amongst Catholics. Schumacher's frequent attacks on the Catholic clergy only re-enforced the public's image of the SPD as an anti-clerical, and especially anti-Catholic party.

The failure of the SPD to make significant gains in the federal elections of 1953 and 1957 was largely the result of the "Schumacher course" which had committed the SPD to the

role of 'negative' opposition. Influenced by three successive electoral defeats, party leaders after 1957 recognized that the SPD would be destined to play the role of a permanent minority opposition party unless all major Social Democratic policies were brought into line with the CDU's policies, which had proven to be successful with the electorate. The "Schumacher course" had to be abandoned and the party "modernized," if the SPD was to replace the CDU as the major government party. The acceptance of this viewpoint by Social Democratic leaders cleared the way for the transition of the SPD from categorical opposition party to modern pragmatic party.

The SPD's transformation from categorical opposition party to modern pragmatic political party is indicated most dramatically by the party's adoption of the Godesberger Programm in 1959. With the adoption of this basic programme the SPD abandoned its "absolutist" ideology and its "negative" opposition to the government parties. The major aim of the programme was to modernize the SPD and to demonstrate to the German electorate that the party could be entrusted with responsibility for the conduct of government. In effect the party admitted that its earlier foreign and domestic policies were no longer feasible, and that it was prepared to accept responsibility for policies which had been developed by its major rival, the CDU, and which it had intransigently opposed under Schumacher's leadership.

Pragmatic political parties are likely to develop only in a political system where there is a basic consensus on the nature of the political regime, and where ideological cleavages are so moderate that parties do not become the tools of opposing ideological forces. The transformation of the SPD from categorical opposition party to modern pragmatic party was possible because of a reduction in the intensity of societal ideological cleavages, and because the great majority of the German electorate accorded legitimacy to their democratic political system.

Chapter Two will deal with the evolution of the SPD from social-movement party to aspiring Volkspartei in the early period (1890-1913). Chapter Three will discuss the development of the SPD as an aspiring Volkspartei and the failure of party leaders to transform German Social Democracy into a genuine Volkspartei in the second period (1914-1933). Finally, Chapter Four will examine the evolution of the SPD in the post-1945 period.

## Chapter 2

### THE EVOLUTION OF GERMAN SOCIAL DEMOCRACY, 1890-1913.

It is the purpose of this chapter to discuss the evolution of German Social Democracy from social-movement party to aspiring Volkspartei in the period from 1890 to 1913. The major focus will be on the goals pursued by the opposing factions - radicals and reformists - of the SPD. The reformists sought to expand the political influence of Social Democracy within the existing state and were prepared to subject considerations of party principles to this aim. The radicals sought to preserve those party theories and practices which gave the SPD its character as a movement-party. Party leaders attempted to avoid a disruption in party unity by favouring neither reformists nor radicals exclusively. After 1906 the precarious balance which had been maintained between the party's two wings was upset in favour of the reformists. An attempt will be made to show that the gradual ascendancy of the party's reformists made possible the emergence of the SPD as an aspiring Volkspartei. A summary of the pre-1890 evolution of the SPD will precede the main analysis.

The SPD was created at Gotha in 1875 by the amalgamation of two socialist organizations: the General German

Workers' Association (ADAV), founded in 1863, and the Social Democratic Labour Party (SAP), founded at Eisenach in 1869.<sup>1</sup> The ADAV was largely the creation of its founder, Ferdinand Lassalle,<sup>2</sup> whose authority over the organization approached that of a great charismatic leader. By establishing a highly centralized organizational structure Lassalle managed to gain complete domination over the ADAV. The Lassalleans, as members of the ADAV came to be known, demanded universal and equal suffrage, abolition of the "iron law of wages" by the establishment of producers co-operatives, and the unification of Germany, to be effected by Prussia. Lassalle believed that the economic and social conditions of German workers could be improved only by establishing political democracy, by offering workers the opportunity of participating in the affairs of government. Lassalleans did not advocate revolutionary methods and disagreed strongly with the Marxist view that the state must be destroyed before socialism could be achieved. In the Lassallean scheme of things, the state was to play a major role in establishing a

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<sup>1</sup>The party formed at Gotha was actually named Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands (German Socialist Labour Party) and was renamed Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (German Social Democratic Party) at the Halle Party Congress in 1890.

<sup>2</sup>Ludwig Bergsträsser, Geschichte der Politischen Parteien in Deutschland, München and Wien, Günter Olzog Verlag, 1965, pp. 116-118.



socialist society - for example, by financing co-operative factories.<sup>3</sup> Lassalleans were also Prussian nationalists and rejected the Marxist vision of an "International Brotherhood of the Proletariat."

The SAP, being based on autonomous local units, was organizationally highly decentralized, final authority on major issues resting with the rank and file membership. It provided a striking contrast to the highly centralized structure of the ADAV.<sup>4</sup> Members of the SAP, who came to be known as Eisenachers,<sup>5</sup> were very much influenced by the teaching of Karl Marx and the SAP's two leaders, Wilhelm Liebknecht and August Bebel, were both ardent Marxists.

In spite of bitter rivalry between Eisenachers and Lassalleans, unification between their organizations was achieved at Gotha in 1875. The most important factors leading up to unification were the increasing persecution of socialists by the Bismarckian government after the elections of 1874,<sup>6</sup> and the realization among socialist leaders that the divisions between socialist organizations

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 117.

<sup>4</sup>R.P. Morgan, The German Social Democrats and the First International, 1864-1872, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp. 12-13.

<sup>5</sup>Günther Roth, The Social Democrats in Imperial Germany: A Study in Working-Class Isolation and National Integration, Totowa, New Jersey, Bedminster Press, 1963, p. 52.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p.55.

would benefit only the established socio-political order.

The Gotha unification programme relied heavily on the Lassallean doctrine that the state could bring about a socialist society by granting universal and equal suffrage and by establishing producers' co-operatives. The absence of Marxist theory in the new programme is indicated by Marx's own scathing criticism of it. The Eisenachers, Marx argued, had been completely dominated by the Lassalleans.<sup>7</sup> This criticism was not entirely warranted since Bebel's SAP did manage to retain its Organisationsprinzip (principle of organization), the Lassalleans agreeing to modify their highly centralistic organizational conception. Neither did the new programme extol the Prussian nationalistic sentiment which the ADAV had inherited from Ferdinand Lassalle. Indeed the new programme at least paid lip-service to the international character of socialism:

Though limiting its activities to national boundaries, the party recognizes the international character of the labour movement and is determined to fulfil all duties which may lead to the realization of the universal brotherhood of mankind.<sup>8</sup>

The Gotha programme was a synthesis of the different interests and commitments of Lassalleans and Eisenachers. Its adoption

<sup>7</sup>Karl Marx, "Kritik des Gothaer Programms, 1875," in W. Mommsen, Deutsche Parteiprogramme, München, Isar Verlag, 1960, pp. 314-331.

<sup>8</sup>"Das Gothaer Programm der Sozialistischen Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands, 1875," in Mommsen, op. cit., p. 313.

in 1875 could not disguise the very real differences that still divided the Lassallean and Marxist brands of socialism. The dilemma of democratic socialism, the attempt to contain within one organization differing sets of beliefs, alternative theories of socialism and therefore divergent views on the most appropriate methods for establishing the socialist society, had its earliest origins in the attempt to reconcile the differences that divided socialist organizations before 1875.

The Gotha programme called for universal, equal and direct suffrage, abolition of the "iron law of wages," and the establishment by all 'legal' means of a socialist society.<sup>9</sup> Thus implicitly the SPD renounced revolutionary methods in its struggle to create the "free state;" socialist goals were to be pursued only within the constitutional structure of the polity. In spite of the SPD's cautious moderation, however, Bismarck managed to persuade the Reichstag, after two unsuccessful attempts had been made on the life of Emperor Wilhelm I, that socialist ideas were responsible, and that socialists were aiming at a complete overthrow of existing society. Bismarck's Sozialistengesetze (anti-socialist laws), operative from 1878 to 1890, were quickly adopted as a measure thought capable of destroying German Social Democracy.

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<sup>9</sup>Loc. Cit..

It was with the passing of the Sozialistengesetze that the SPD began to assume the characteristics of a social-movement party. During the twelve years of suppression under Bismarck's anti-socialist laws German Social Democracy turned from the Lassallean, non-absolutist theory of socialism to an absolutist, Marxist ideology. Bismarck not only rejected Social Democratic demands for free universal suffrage but called for the complete suppression of the SPD on the grounds that the party's existence constituted a threat to the Reich.<sup>10</sup> The failure of the Bismarckian regime to respond to Social Democratic demands and the systematic repression of the SPD had the effect of intensifying Social Democrats' negative political attitudes toward the state. The Sozialistengesetze led the SPD to advocate non-legal means for the attainment of socialist goals;<sup>11</sup> inevitably they had the effect of strengthening radical elements in the party. Bismarck's attempt to render the politically "dangerous" proletariat harmless, by suppressing the political party which claimed to express its interests, was followed by a positive attempt to gain working-class support. By promoting certain social

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<sup>10</sup>W.H. Dawson, German Socialism and Ferdinand Lassalle: A Biographical History of German Socialistic Movements during this Century, London, Swan Sonnenschein, 1891, pp. 149-152.

<sup>11</sup>At the secret party congress at Wyden Castle in 1880 in Switzerland the SPD struck out the word 'legal' from the Gotha resolution that the SPD undertakes to establish "by all legal means" a free state and the Socialist society. Similarly, at the secret party congress in Copenhagen in 1884 the SPD determined to proceed ruthlessly. W. Schröder, ed., Handbuch der Sozialdemokratischen Parteitage, Munich, Birk, 1910, p. 534.

measures, such as an Accident Insurance Law and a Sickness Insurance Law, Bismarck sought to pacify the German proletariat. In a speech to the Reichstag in 1884 Bismarck expressed the government's new attitude toward the German working class:

Give the working-man the right to work as long as he is healthy, assure him care when he is sick, assure him provision when he is old....if the State will show a little more Christian solicitude for the working-man, then I believe that the gentlemen of the Wyden programme [SPD programme of 1880] will sound their bird-call in vain, and the thronging to them will cease as soon as working-men see that the Government and legislative bodies are earnestly concerned for their welfare.<sup>12</sup>

The failure of the social measures introduced by Bismarck to arrest the growth of German Social Democracy after 1890 is an indication of the extent to which the urban working class felt alienated from the state. Bismarck failed to realize that the German working class would not be content merely with the fruits of certain social legislation. The sense of social inferiority, nurtured by the class-conscious industrial proletariat, could not be changed by certain 'concessions' from the government. The goal of the SPD was to bring about fundamental changes in social relationships, to change a socio-political system which accorded only second-class status to the masses of German workers. Bismarck's aim was to pacify the labour movement by granting certain

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<sup>12</sup>Cited in Dawson, op. cit., pp. 269-270, footnote 2.

concessions in the realm of social legislation. Demands for political equality were rejected. It is hardly surprising that Bismarck failed to capture the imagination of the "socially alienated," who after 1890 supported the SPD in increasing numbers. Bismarck did not offer German workers opportunities of advancing their own interests by political means. Social legislation that was not aimed at fundamentally improving the social status of the industrial masses was unlikely to radically change the workers' feelings of resentment toward a regime which offered them only concessions.

German Social Democracy survived the repressive Sozialistengesetze because it offered its adherents a meaning to life which could not be found in the outside world. Bismarck's "state socialism" could not compensate many workers for the advantages realizable through membership in the SPD. Guenther Roth has expressed well the importance attached by many workers to their membership in the SPD:

Inversely corresponding to the class cleavage in Imperial Germany and the alienation of the Social Democratic workers from the dominant system was the extraordinary personal importance of the labor movement for many of its members....The labor movement came to mean for many workers the enrichment of a life which offered relatively few satisfactions on the industrial job and little social recognition by the dominant system.<sup>13</sup>

By fostering a complete network of organizations and by providing Social Democrats with services and activities which were

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<sup>13</sup>Roth, op. cit., p. 193.

available to workers only through membership in the SPD, party leaders accentuated the political isolation of German Social Democracy. The adoption of an absolutist Marxist ideology shortly after the lapsing of the Sozialistengesetze emphasized the hostility of the SPD to the existing socio-political order. Adoption of the Erfurt programme in 1891 clearly implied a rejection of Lassallean social theory as expressed in the 1875 Gotha programme, in favour of the more radical Marxist theory. The preamble to the new programme, although prepared by a leading party theorist, Karl Kautsky, might have been written by Marx himself:

The economic development of bourgeois society leads inevitably to the decline of small business....It separates the worker from his means of production, transforming him from a proletarian without property, while the means of production become the monopoly of a few capitalists and large landowners....

The number of proletarians grows larger and larger, the army of superfluous workers gets bigger and bigger, the chasm between exploiters and exploited grows deeper and deeper, the class struggle between bourgeoisie and proletariat, which divides modern society into two hostile camps, and is a common feature of all industrial societies, grows increasingly bitter.<sup>14</sup>

The Erfurt programme called for the "transformation" from a capitalist to a socialist society implying that the "class struggle" would bring about a transformation. The theoretical dependency on Marx gave the SPD the appearance of having revolutionary intentions. But the programme also

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<sup>14</sup>"Das Erfurter Programm, 1891," in Mommsen, op. cit., pp. 349-350.

contained a statement of socialist objectives attainable without recourse to revolutionary activity and within the framework of existing society.

The first part of the programme dealt mainly with the "final aims of socialism," while the second part specified the immediate political demands realizeable through parliamentary legislation. These two seemingly unrelated aspects of the Erfurt programme reflected the coexistence within the SPD of the Lassalleans or 'reformists,' who were primarily engaged in seeking political and economic improvements for the German working class, and the Eisenachers or 'radicals,' many of whom were prepared to use revolutionary tactics in order to achieve the "final aims of the socialist movement." In short, the unification congress at Gotha had been unable to heal the rift between Lassalle and Marx, between 'reformists' and 'radicals.'

The Erfurt programme represented a synthesis of the divergent political views expressed by Social Democrats. It was an attempt to compromise between those who sought a speedy 'transformation' from capitalist to socialist society and those who sought political and economic improvements for workers by legal parliamentary methods. There were two major reformist forces -- the trade-unions and the South German Social Democrats -- which urged the SPD to concentrate all its efforts on bringing about every-day practical reforms, and to abandon its absolutist ideology.



The German Free Trade Unions played an extremely important role in influencing the historical development of German Social Democracy.<sup>15</sup> Trade-union leaders concentrated their efforts on gaining real economic and social improvements within existing society, showing little interest in social theories.

The rapid expansion of the Free Trade Unions in the period from 1890 to 1913 meant that Social Democratic leaders had to take into account increasingly the demands of the politically 'neutral' trade-unions.<sup>16</sup> The principle of political neutrality, by which the Free Trade Unions remained unaffiliated to any political party, assured trade-union leaders of a strong bargaining position vis-à-vis the SPD. Major union demands were for concrete economic improvements in the situation of the industrial proletariat. Union leaders, such as Carl Legien, believed that progress could be made within the framework of the capitalistic system, and expressed little interest in the intangible, "final aims of socialism."

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<sup>15</sup>For the role played by the trade unions as a reformist influence on the Social Democratic leadership, see Schorske, op. cit., pp. 8-16 and pp. 88-115.

<sup>16</sup>Trade union membership had increased from about 300,000 in 1890 to 1,345,000 in 1905 and to 2,525,000 in 1913. See Wolfgang Hirsch-Weber, Gewerkschaften in der Politik, Köln, and Opladen, West-deutscher Verlag, 1959, pp. 18-19. The ratio between Social Democratic voters and trade union members was eight to one in 1893, four to one in 1898, and three to one in 1903. By 1907 the ratio was two to one and one quarter. The ratio remained the same in 1912 when the SPD had 4,250,000 voters while the trade unions had 2,530,000 members. See Schorske, op. cit., pp. 12-13.

Southern Social Democrats also exercised an important reformist influence on the SPD. The rapid industrialization of Germany in the 1860's and 1870's had a tremendous impact on life in Northern and Central Germany, but had left Southern Germany relatively untouched. The peasantry rather than the industrial proletariat formed the core of Social Democratic support in South Germany. Leading Bavarian Social Democrats, such as Georg von Vollmar and Ignaz Auer, objected to the statement of Marxist ideas in the Erfurt programme, and urged the SPD to direct all its energies to the task of improving the economic and social situation of peasants and workers. They argued that the party could only gain greater support from the peasantry by abandoning its Marxist revolutionary slogans, and by working for social reforms within parliament. In 1894 Bavarian Social Democrats in the Landtag refused to follow the official SPD parliamentary principle of "pure opposition" <sup>17</sup> by voting for a state budget which contained provisions <sup>18</sup> favouring the interests of the peasantry. In 1894 the Frankfurt Party Congress condemned the 'positive' parliamentarism of the Bavarian Social Democrats. This condemnation was

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<sup>17</sup>As a matter of principle Social Democrats always voted against national budgets. This principle was known as "pure opposition" and had gained great symbolical significance since it implied the complete opposition of the SPD to the state. See Schorske, op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>18</sup>Franz Schade, Kurt Eisner und die Bayerische Sozialdemokratie, Hannover, Verlag für Literatur und Zeitgeschehen, 1961, pp. 20-22.

significant because it suggests that socialist principles were still very important in determining the practical policies of the SPD. That electoral considerations were subordinated to questions of fundamental party principles indicates that the SPD was still very much a social-movement party. In 1908 not only the Bavarian but the Württemberg and Baden state budgets were approved by the Social Democratic representatives. The action of these South German Social Democrats was strongly condemned at the Nuremberg party congress in 1908, and the principle of "pure opposition" was reaffirmed in the 'orthodox' resolution adopted by the party:

The refusal of the budget fully accords with the class position of the propertyless masses of the population which necessitates an implacable opposition to the existing state power that is subservient to capitalism.<sup>19</sup>

The SPD adopted the Nuremberg resolution not because it felt incompetent to achieve immediate socialist objectives by legal parliamentary methods -- the SPD was engaged in trying to secure practical reforms through parliament -- but because of the symbolic significance relating to the budget issue. Automatic rejection of state and national budgets represented the SPD's hostility to the existing established social order, and emphasized the 'movement' characteristics

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<sup>19</sup> Protokoll über die Verhandlungen des Parteitages der SPD, 1908, Berlin, p. 550, cited in Peter Gay, The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism: Eduard Bernstein's Challenge to Marx, New York, Collier, 1962, p. 234.

of German Social Democracy. That the uncompromising repudiation of budgets contradicted the SPD's conscious efforts in seeking social and political change was clarified by Eduard Bernstein, who expressed the demands of reformists<sup>20</sup> in theoretical terms.

The very real division between those who sought moderate social and economic improvements through existing institutions, and those who sought to bring about the "final aims" of socialism by extra-parliamentary methods, was accentuated by the intra-party ideological disputes among such socialist intellectuals as Karl Kautsky, Rosa Luxemburg, and Eduard Bernstein. The existence within the SPD of leading socialist intellectuals, South German Social Democrats and trade unionists, many of whom wanted the SPD to assume a more positive parliamentary role and who called for a less 'absolutist,' more 'limited' ideology, suggests that some Social Democrats were not satisfied with the SPD's role as a movement-party.

At the turn of the twentieth century Eduard Bernstein became the intellectual leader of the 'reformists,' and his 'revision' of Marxist theory replaced the Communist Manifesto as the theoretical expression of socialism for many

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<sup>20</sup>The most comprehensive treatment of reformist demands in theoretical terms appears in E. Bernstein, Die Voraussetzungen des Sozialismus und die Aufgaben der Sozialdemokratie, Stuttgart, J.H.W. Dietz, 1906.

Social Democrats. Bernstein's "revisionism" was based on his observations that the conditions of the proletariat had not deteriorated under the German capitalistic economy, but had improved substantially, especially during the 1890's. Bernstein predicted continuing prosperity for German workers and urged the SPD to abandon its belief that an economic crisis under capitalistic society was inevitable. Revolution, Bernstein argued, was unnecessary since the "class struggle" between bourgeoisie and proletariat had not taken the form predicted by Marx. Moreover, by abandoning its revolutionary incantations, the SPD, Bernstein argued, could win the support of a considerable segment of the peasantry and the lower middle class.

Bernstein was, above all, aware of the great gulf between the Marxist theory incorporated in the Erfurt Programme and the practical work of 'reform' in which the party engaged:

Is there any sense...in maintaining the phrase of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" at a time when in all possible places representatives of social democracy have placed themselves practically in the arena of Parliamentary work, have declared for the proportional representation of the people, and for direct legislation -- all of which is inconsistent with a dictatorship.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>E. Bernstein, Evolutionary Socialism, A Criticism and Affirmation, trans. E.C. Harvey, New York, Schocker Books, 1961, p. 146.

Bernstein argued that German Social Democracy should adopt a social theory that was based on an interpretation of objective economic conditions rather than on a dialectical interpretation of history.<sup>22</sup> Socialist theory of the SPD must be made compatible with the party's acceptance of legal parliamentary activity, and with the facts of contemporary economic history.

Bernstein's revisionism was enthusiastically received by those who had already objected to the Marxist phrases in the Erfurt Programme. The trade-unions, which became an established economic force in Germany during the early twentieth century, welcomed the revisionist emphasis on gradual social and economic reform. Above all, the trade-unions did not want to jeopardize the progress they had made within the framework of existing institutions, and therefore called for SPD policies that would mute the revolutionary ideology of the party. Similarly many South German Social Democrats who had gained influence in the southern Landtage welcomed unreservedly Bernstein's revisionism, since it provided a theoretical basis for reformist activity.

The radicals in the SPD strongly resisted all attempts by revisionists to modify the party's Marxist theoretical position. Rosa Luxemburg, their intellectual

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<sup>22</sup>Gay, op. cit., pp. 141-165.

leader, denounced revisionism as mere opportunism and tried to show that orthodox Marxist theory was not only relevant to German Social Democracy, but the only foundation upon which socialist goals could be achieved.<sup>23</sup> She argued that under capitalist society the conditions of the proletariat could not improve in the long run and must inevitably deteriorate, that only by preparing the proletariat for revolution by employing extra-parliamentary tactics could the SPD achieve the "final aims" of socialism.<sup>24</sup> Luxemburg urged the SPD to expel the revisionists from the party since they had rejected the party's fundamental principles and could no longer be called socialists.

The emergence of revisionism presented the party leadership with a problem that had originated with the formal unification of two divergent socialist groups. The problem was one of containing within one organization socialists as divergent in outlook as Luxemburg and Bernstein. At the beginning of the twentieth century the SPD contained two factions that could agree neither on the goals of socialism nor the means of achieving it. At the Dresden party congress in 1903 the revisionist demands for

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., pp. 267-269.

<sup>24</sup>Rosa Luxemburg, Gesammelte Werke, Vol. III, Berlin, Vereinigung Internationaler Verlagsanstalten, 1925, pp. 35-100.

a restatement of fundamental party principles were emphatically repudiated:

The party congress most decisively condemns the Revisionist endeavour to alter our time-tested and victorious tactics based on the class struggle. The Revisionists want to substitute for the seizure of political power through overcoming our enemies a policy of meeting the existing order of things halfway.

The consequences of such Revisionist tactics would be to change our party. Now it works towards the rapid transformation of the existing bourgeois order of society into a Socialist one (in other words it is truly a 'revolutionary party'....) It would become a party that is content with reforming bourgeois society [if the Revisionist policies were adopted].<sup>25</sup>

The SPD could not however expel the leading revolutionaries from the party without alienating the Free Trade Unions, incurring the hostility of the southern Social Democrats, and possibly provoking the formation of a splinter party. On the other hand, acceptance of the revisionist position and rejection of an absolutist ideology would similarly have alienated a considerable number of Social Democrats.

The party leadership, in refusing to reformulate the theoretical basis of the Erfurt programme in the revisionists' favour, and at the same time in refusing to expel key revisionists from the party, satisfied neither the 'radicals' nor 'revisionists.'

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<sup>25</sup>Protokoll über die Verhandlungen des Parteitag, 1903, Berlin, Vorwärts, cited in Gay, op. cit., pp. 269-270, original emphasis.



Revisionism was really an expression of the incompatibility of an absolutist theory and reformist practice. The party leadership was unable to successfully reconcile fundamental principles, which called for a rejection of the established order, and the practice of working for every-day social reforms within the existing political system. The Dresden party congress accomplished very little. A major problem of German Social Democracy, which the Revisionists had brought out into the open, was shelved because there appeared to be no reasonable solution to it:

...the SPD continued to behave as a Revisionist party, and, at the same time to condemn Revisionism; it continued to preach revolution and to practice reform.<sup>26</sup>

The revisionist position was rejected not so much because it attacked the fundamental principles of democratic socialism, but because party leaders sought at all costs to avoid a major split in the party. By continuing to uphold Marxist theory while at the same time continuing to practice reform, party leaders hoped to avoid a disruption in party unity. The issues which had divided Lassalle and Marx and had delayed the unification of Lassalleans and Eisenachers until 1875 had not been satisfactorily resolved. The revisionists were in

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<sup>26</sup>Gay, op. cit., p.270.

many respects Lassalleans and the radicals, Marxists. Although party leaders had appeared to settle the conflict between radicals and reformists by condemning the latter's attempt to revise the party's absolutist ideology, the resolution of the conflict was effectively postponed. The leading revisionists were not expelled from the party as demanded by the radicals, and party leaders, having made a concession to the left, felt free to continue a policy of "meeting the existing order of things halfway."

The issue of the political mass strike which dominated the German labour scene from 1905 to 1906<sup>27</sup> revealed again how incompatible were Social Democratic theory and practice. The radicals, encouraged by the example of the Russian revolution of 1905, pressed for the use of the political mass strike, considered by Rosa Luxemburg as a revolutionary form of the proletariat's struggle.<sup>28</sup> At the Jena party congress in 1905 the SPD adopted a resolution favouring the mass strike as a "defensive weapon" to be used<sup>29</sup> in protecting universal suffrage and the right of association. Theoretically the use of the mass strike was defended under

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<sup>27</sup>Hirsch-Weber, op. cit., pp. 8-11.

<sup>28</sup>Schorske, op. cit., p. 55.

<sup>29</sup>August Bebel, "Resolution zu der politischen Massenstreik und die Sozialdemokratie, 1905" in Mommsen, op. cit., pp. 377-379.

conditions, but in practice it was not encouraged. That the Jena resolution was little more than a gesture designed to gain the loyalty of radicals was made crystal clear at the 1906 Mannheim Party Congress. The major issue at Mannheim was the relationship between party and Free Trade Unions which had become very strained during the discussions concerning the mass strike. The resolution adopted by the congress declared parity of the trade-unions with the party,<sup>30</sup> and thus made nonsense of the Jena resolution since the unions had already condemned even discussion of the political mass strike at the Köln Trade-Union Congress in 1905. By recognizing the parity of trade unions, the SPD in effect closed the door on a mass strike, and even more important gave the unions considerable control over social democratic policies:

The party's recognition of parity in principle meant the recognition of control by the trade-unions in practice. Whenever the party wished to move in a direction which threatened... the trade unions' need for peace, the unions could legally withhold their sanction, and thus act as a brake

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<sup>30</sup>The Mannheim resolution stressed the complete independence of the unions from the party and even provided for meetings between party and union leaders on an equal footing: "In actions which affect equally the interests of trade-unions and party the central leadership of both organizations should seek a mutual understanding in order to achieve a unified procedure." Protokoll über die Verhandlungen des Parteitag der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands, Berlin, 1906, pp. 131-132, cited in Schorske, op. cit., p. 49.

on any overt attacks on the existing order. The relationship of parity between trade-unions and party was, as Luxemburg observed, like the arrangement by which a peasant woman sought to regulate her life with her spouse: "On matters of question between us, when we agree, you will decide; when we disagree, I shall decide."<sup>31</sup>

The radicals strongly opposed the Mannheim resolution arguing that the trade-unions must be subordinated to the SPD if the final aims of socialism were to be achieved. The Mannheim resolution was an important turning point in the history of German Social Democracy since it effectively strengthened the reformist wing in the party, thereby inevitably alienating the radicals, and thus preparing the ground for the political estrangement of the radicals and the formation of a splinter party in 1917.

The Mannheim resolution was adopted because party leaders could not afford to alienate the trade-union movement. An important proportion of the votes cast for the SPD in elections to the Reichstag came from trade-unionists, and the increasing importance attached by party leaders to electoral success meant that trade-union demands could not be rejected. The reformists began to gain the sympathy of the party leadership because the latter became convinced that Social Democratic aims could only be realized through parliamentary activity and therefore through Social Democratic electoral victories. After 1905, political decisions -- the

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<sup>31</sup>Schorske, op. cit., p. 52.

Mannheim resolution is a good example -- were made more and more on the basis of their anticipated electoral consequences, while party ideology and the final goal of establishing a socialist society tended to fade into the background.

The extent to which considerations of electoral success were influencing the political decisions made by the SPD leadership is illustrated by the behaviour of the German delegation at the Socialist International in Stuttgart in 1907. The German representatives, led by August Bebel, voted against a resolution which reaffirmed in principle the International's complete rejection of colonialism. The electoral consequences of renouncing a German foreign policy that was popular with voters was probably the major consideration leading to the SPD's defence of colonial policies. Schorske argues convincingly that an anti-colonial policy would have hurt the SPD electorally:

The party realized now that electoral success on the one hand, and a hostile attitude toward the imperial nation-state and its foreign policy on the other, were increasingly incompatible.<sup>32</sup>

The spectacular electoral expansion of the SPD probably convinced members of the party executive <sup>33</sup> that the

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 86.

<sup>33</sup>The Parteivorstand (Party Executive) was effectively the most important decision-making body in the SPD. Theoretically it was responsible to the Parteitag (Party Congress), overseen by the Kontrollkommission, (Control Commission) and after 1912 by the Parteiausschuss (Party Council). Richard Hunt, German Social Democracy, 1918-1933, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1964, pp. 63-75.

SPD would be able to pursue some of its major demands through positive parliamentary work. The party's record in the elections to the Reichstag was quite remarkable.

Table I

## THE ELECTORAL EXPANSION OF THE SPD, 1877-1912

<u>Year</u>	<u>SPD votes</u> (to nearest '000)	<u>Per cent</u> <u>of total</u>	<u>Reichstag</u> <u>Seats</u>
1877	493,000	9.1	12
1878	437,000	7.5	9
1881	312,000	6.1	12
1884	550,000	9.7	24
1887	763,000	7.1	11
1890	1,427,000	19.7	35
1893	1,787,000	23.3	44
1898	2,107,000	27.2	56
1903	3,011,000	31.7	81
1907	3,259,000	29.0	43
1912	4,250,000	34.8	110

Source: Mommsen, op. cit., pp. 790-793.

As Table I shows, the SPD managed to survive Bismarck's Sozialistengesetze remarkably well. In the year that these laws were allowed to lapse (1890), the party polled almost twenty per cent of the total vote compared to nine per cent in the year preceding the passing of the laws (1877). Except for the election of 1907, the SPD increased its percentage of the total vote in each post-1887 election and in 1912 polled over four million votes with almost thirty five per cent of the total vote and 110 Reichstag seats. In spite of great electoral gains, however, the political isolation of the SPD prevented Social Democratic Deputies from

working effectively in the Reichstag. Party reformists pressed the SPD leadership to adopt a more positive Social Democratic parliamentary role and to enter into an alliance with the Progressive Party. The goal of the reformists was to increase the strength of the SPD in the Reichstag, and if this could be attained only by promoting an alliance between bourgeois parties and the SPD such a tactic was acceptable to the reformists. In spite of the opposition anticipated from radicals, the party leadership, during the 1912 elections, negotiated a nation-wide electoral alliance with the Progressive Party for the purpose of increasing Social Democratic strength in the Reichstag.

Clearly by 1912 party leaders were no longer satisfied with the SPD's role as a movement-party; they intended to break down the political isolation of the SPD, to engage in more positive parliamentary work, if necessary by co-operating with bourgeois parties, and to attract lower middle-class voters by toning down the revolutionary aspects of the party's ideology.

Party leaders thought of elections more and more as a means of gaining political power for the SPD and less and less as an opportunity to "educate" the masses by the use of systematic Social Democratic propaganda. Rosa Luxemburg, representing the radicals, criticized the SPD's 1912 electoral alliance with the Progressives. Her criticism of the party leadership is instructive in revealing how wide

the gap between reformists and radicals had become:

Up to now [before 1912] it has been a fundamental principle of Social Democracy that an election serves first and foremost as a vehicle of agitation, of enlightenment concerning the aims of Social Democracy, and in this sense it was a sacred duty and a matter of honor to use every day, every hour of the campaign to perform the maximum of agitational work. Instead the party executive, for the sake of the Progressives, forbade our comrades to agitate for their own party....For the bourgeois liberal politician, constituencies are worth consideration and agitation rewarding only if a mandate is to be won; for Social Democracy, the agitation [should come] first and the mandate last.<sup>34</sup>

The radicals wanted to use elections in order to propagate the aims and principles of Social Democracy, while the reformists argued that political decisions should be made on the basis of their anticipated electoral consequences. Party leaders adopted a reformist position since they accepted the view that political power could be gained only by electoral victory, and once political power had been won Social Democratic policies could be implemented. The radicals aimed to maintain the SPD's status as a movement-party, by stressing the Social Democratic principles based on theoretical Marxism, and by emphasizing the political isolation of German Social Democracy. Intransigent opposition to the existing order, symbolically expressed in the practice of "pure opposition," was the only policy con-

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<sup>34</sup> Luxemburg, op. cit., pp. 500-501; cited in Schorske, op. cit., p. 242.



sistent with the SPD's absolutist ideology. The political education of the masses, in preparation for a "transformation" from capitalistic to socialistic society, was to receive highest priority.

The transformation of the SPD from movement-party to aspiring Volkspartei could be achieved only by rejecting radical demands, by escaping from political isolation, by adopting policies capable of attracting middle-class voters and by abandoning the practice of "pure opposition." The aim of the reformists was to transform the SPD into a governing party within the existing state; this could be achieved only by attracting non-proletarian voters and by generally broadening the social composition of the party. After 1906 party leaders increasingly adopted the aims of the reformists. The co-operation with a bourgeois party in the 1912 election could not be well defended on the basis of party principles,<sup>35</sup> but since it was expected to increase Social Democratic strength in the Reichstag, it gained the approval of most party leaders.

A major reason for the failure of the radicals to maintain the SPD's status as a movement-party was the

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<sup>35</sup>Harry J. Marks, "The Sources of Reformism in the Social Democratic Party of Germany, 1890-1914," Journal of Modern History, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, Vol. XI, 1939, pp. 346-347.

centralization and bureaucratization of the party after  
<sup>36</sup>1905. A party statute adopted at the Jena Party Congress  
 in 1905 provided for a highly centralized organizational  
 structure, and was at first welcomed by the radicals, since  
 it seemed to ensure the preservation of doctrinal purity  
 in the face of attacks from the revisionists. But the radicals  
 soon became the main critics of the new centralism, since  
 after 1906 the party executive was increasingly guided by  
 reformists.<sup>37</sup> Ironically the radicals, who had supported the  
 party statute of 1905 in the face of the revisionist threat,  
 became the most fervent advocates of intra-party democracy  
 as soon as it was apparent that the party executive  
 sympathized more with reformist rather than radical aims.  
 A 1904 party resolution invested the executive with the power  
 to appoint as many paid secretaries as it deemed necessary.  
 This provision paved the way "for the creation of a permanent  
 bureaucratic majority in the executive."<sup>38</sup>

The principal function of the party bureaucracy  
 was to prepare the SPD for elections and to expand the party's  
 membership. The party functionary was concerned with

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<sup>36</sup>Much has been written on the effects of bureaucratization  
 on the SPD, and it is not the intention here to analyze the  
 arguments of Roberto Michels or of Max Weber. The bureau-  
 cratization of the party will be treated only in so far as  
 it is considered relevant to the transformation of the SPD  
 from movement-party to aspiring Volkspartei.

<sup>37</sup>Schorske, op. cit., p. 122.

<sup>38</sup>Loc. cit.

attracting new members and voters to the party. He was not engaged in trying to bring about changes in the existing order, but exclusively with increasing the number of socialist supporters. In order to increase support it was above all important to attract the 'marginal' voter and thus to avoid any extreme policies that might alienate him. The party bureaucrats pressed for a moderate party programme that would attract the largest possible number of voters.

Concern with winning elections and attention to administrative detail meant that the administrative officials paid attention only to the effectiveness of party programmes in winning votes and new members, and ignored the political principles on which party programmes were based.

For them [paid party] officials the business of electioneering was an end in itself. Whether or not one agreed with the election programs had only secondary importance.<sup>39</sup>

The party bureaucracy was very successful not only in mobilizing potential Social Democratic supporters during election campaigns but also in expanding the membership of the SPD. By 1913 the party had almost a million members, nearly three times as many as in 1906.

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<sup>39</sup> Richard Hunt, German Social Democracy, 1918-1933, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1964, pp. 60-61.

Table II  
SPD MEMBERSHIP 1906-1913

<u>Year</u>	<u>Members</u> (to nearest '000)	<u>Yearly Percentage</u> <u>Increase</u>
1906	348,000	-
1907	530,000	38.0
1908	587,000	10.7
1909	633,000	7.8
1910	720,000	13.6
1911	837,000	16.1
1912	970,000	15.9
1913	983,000	1.5

Source: A.J. Berlau, The German Social Democratic Party, 1914-1921, New York, Columbia University Press, 1949, p. 348.

Although there are no reliable estimates of the social composition of the party membership,<sup>40</sup> Roberto Michels' conclusion that the SPD "reveals a quite predominantly proletarian character, if not in voters then certainly in party membership,"<sup>41</sup> is probably correct as long as skilled workers ("the aristocracy of labor") are included in the

<sup>40</sup> There are however fairly reliable estimates of the social composition of the Social Democratic Fraktion (SPD members of the Reichstag):

<u>Occupational Status</u>	<u>1903</u>	<u>1912</u>
	Percentage	
Middle Class	16	34
Working Class	84	66

See Hunt, op. cit., pp. 91-92.

<sup>41</sup> Roberto Michels, "Die deutsche Sozialdemokratische Partei - Mitgliedschaft und soziale Zusammensetzung," Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik, XXIII (1906), p. 555, cited in Marks, op. cit., p. 351.

term "proletarian."<sup>42</sup> In spite of the predominantly working-class background of most party members, many of those who were given salaried white-collar positions in the party adopted middle-class values and ideas, and abandoned their original exclusively working-class orientation.<sup>43</sup> Many party functionaries developed a less hostile attitude toward the German middle classes, and, with the approval of the party leadership, encouraged especially lower middle-class voters to support the SPD.

The attempt by leading reformists to transform the SPD into a Volkspartei was furthered by the fact that the party leadership began to rely increasingly (after 1906) on the party's bureaucratic experts. The administrative official had been hired to aid in building up an efficient electoral party machine. His major concern was to attract new members and voters for the party, and he tended to judge strategies on the basis of how efficient they would be in terms of this aim, rather than by reference to the primary goals of Social Democracy. According to Michels, party experts tended to scorn those who discussed issues.

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<sup>42</sup>Marks, op. cit., p. 351.

<sup>43</sup>A good account of the effects of Verbürgerlichung (embourgeoisement, or the process of adopting a middle-class way of life) appears in Hunt, op. cit., pp. 142-148.

on an ideological basis:

...he [the specialist] would incline more and more to regard everyone as an "incompetent," an "outsider," and "unprofessional," who might wish to judge questions from some higher outlook than the purely technical; he would incline to deny the good sense and even the socialism of all who might desire to fight upon another ground and by other means than those familiar to him....<sup>44</sup>

The original goal of the SPD was to bring about major social and political changes in German society. The bureaucratization of the SPD led to an increasing concern with the self-preservation and expansion of the organization, and to a de-emphasis on party ideology and original aims. The bureaucratization of the SPD was an important factor leading to a greater concentration on electoral victory and a decreasing concern with the original goals and the absolutist ideology of the party.

The party managed to gain a substantial increase in support, not from those who were committed to the fundamental principles of social democracy, but from those who "went along" with the short term electoral platforms of the party. G. Sinowjew argues convincingly that these Mitläufer (sympathizers) exercised an important influence over social democratic policy:

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<sup>44</sup> Roberto Michels, Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies in Modern Democracy, trans. Eden and Cedar Paul, New York, Collier Books, 1962, p. 191.

...the strata of the electorate recruited mainly from the petty bourgeoisie who do not belong to the Social Democratic party, are not convinced socialists, but who...adhere for the time being to Social Democracy and in the elections give it their vote....

Petty bourgeois influence becomes stronger and stronger. Social Democracy itself becomes a campfollower of campfollowers, the sympathizers [Mitlaufer] do not adapt themselves to it, but it adapts itself to the sympathizers.<sup>45</sup>

Although Sinowjew probably overestimated the influence of the "sympathizers," they nevertheless exercised an important reformist influence on the party executive. An aspiring Volkspartei will try to retain the support it has gained from a social class whose members normally support competing parties. Many leading Social Democrats, supported by the party bureaucracy, sought to make the SPD more "respectable" by recommending that the party should abandon its tactic of "pure opposition," acknowledge the 'positive' role it played within the existing political system and dispel all suspicions that the SPD was only waiting for an opportunity to overthrow the state and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The government's 1913 military tax bill provided the reformists with the opportunity of demonstrating that the SPD was ready to abandon its traditional opposition to governmental budgets. The SPD's approval of the military tax

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<sup>45</sup> G. Sinowjew, Der Krieg und die Krise des Sozialismus, Vienna, 1924, cited in Marks, op. cit., pp. 483-485.

bill, which provided for the levying of Reich property taxes, clearly contradicted the Social Democratic principle of "pure opposition" and established a precedent for the role the SPD was to play throughout the period of World War I. The Social Democratic Fraktion actually opposed the bill which called for a strengthening of the army, but at the same time approved the corresponding tax measure. Eduard Bernstein, convinced of the logical inconsistency of such behaviour, opposed both bills:

It seemed to me illogical and a serious deviation from the path of Social Democracy to grant money for a purpose which we considered pernicious merely because it was to be raised in the form of a popular tax.<sup>47</sup>

The SPD voted for the new tax in order to prevent the government from introducing heavy indirect taxes,<sup>48</sup> which would have been unpopular not only among working-class voters but also with a large proportion of middle-class -- especially lower middle-class -- voters. The majority of the Social Democratic Fraktion simply ignored the purpose for which the new tax was to be levied.<sup>49</sup> The radicals in the SPD wished

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<sup>46</sup>The taxes were to be used for financing a proposed increase in the strength of the German army. See Schorske, op. cit., p. 265. Cf. Johannes Ziekursch, Politische Geschichte des neuen deutschen Kaiserreichs, Frankfurt am Main, Frankfurter societäts-druckerei, 1930, Vol. III, p. 256.

<sup>47</sup>Bernstein, "Entwicklungsgang eines Sozialisten," Die Volkswirtschaftslehre der Gegenwart in Selbstdarstellungen, Leipzig, Meiner, 1924, Vol. I, pp. 1-58, cited in Gay, op. cit., p. 275.

<sup>48</sup>Schorske, op. cit., p. 266.

<sup>49</sup>W. Maehl, "The Triumph of Nationalism in the German Socialist Party on the Eve of the First World War," Journal of Modern History, Vol. 24, (1952) pp. 36-37.



to maintain the Social Democratic practice of "pure opposition" in order to express their opposition to the state and to militarism. The reformists, who had expressed their opposition to this practice by voting for provincial budgets in the 1890's, sought to expand the political influence of Social Democracy within the constitutional framework of the state, and argued that this aim and the practice of "pure opposition" were incompatible.

By 1913 most party leaders were prepared to subject ideological considerations to the goal of winning political power within the institutional framework of the state. By abandoning the practice of "pure opposition" in 1913 party leaders indicated that they were no longer satisfied with the SPD's status as a movement-party. The majority of party leaders had by 1913 adopted precisely the same goals as the reformists. The Social Democratic decision to support the 1913 tax bill was electorally the least 'unpopular' decision; it was least likely to impair the party's chances for future electoral victory. A political party that aspired to gain the support of the most electorally important social groups in German society would, like the SPD, have voted for the military tax bill.

The SPD's support for the 1913 tax bill symbolized the transformation of German Social Democracy from movement-party to aspiring Volkspartei; it suggested that Social Democratic principles would be subjected to the quest for political power.

### Chapter III

#### GERMAN SOCIAL DEMOCRACY: ASPIRING PEOPLE'S PARTY

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse the development of the SPD as an aspiring Volkspartei, and to account for the failure of the party leaders' attempt to convert the SPD into a genuine Volkspartei in the 1914-1933 period. A transition from aspiring to genuine Volkspartei is likely to take place only under certain environmental conditions.<sup>1</sup> It is also only likely to take place if party leaders pursue the goal of political power in preference to all other goals. Attention will be focussed on the behaviour of Social Democratic leaders and on the environment in which they acted in order to discover why the SPD did not become a genuine Volkspartei.

An aspiring Volkspartei which was formerly a movement-party will try to demonstrate to the electorate that it has disassociated itself from its past; it will attempt to convince voters that it has a 'positive' role to play within the existing political system and that it has abandoned its traditional hostility to the state. The events of August 1914 provided the Social Democratic leaders with an excellent opportunity to discredit Bismarck's view that

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<sup>1</sup>These conditions were discussed in Chapter I.

Social Democrats were "vagabonds without a fatherland," and that the SPD, far from seeking to overthrow the state was ready to go to its 'defence.'

On August fourth, 1914, the Social Democratic Fraktion (SPD members of the Reichstag) unanimously voted in favour of the war credits. Many factors led SPD leaders to the decision of August fourth; not the least of these was the necessity of supporting the national war effort in the interests of survival. By voting against the war credits the SPD would almost certainly have been suppressed and probably made illegal. The fear of provoking renewed Sozialistengesetze, perhaps even more repressive than Bismarck's earlier laws, was undoubtedly a significant factor. Fear and hatred of czarist Russia, which was widespread in Germany especially among the working class,<sup>2</sup> may have also been an important factor influencing the SPD voter. Konrad Haenisch, editor of the radical Social Democratic newspaper, Dortmunder Arbeiterzeit, expressed the rampant anti-Russian feeling in the following way:

All the hatred, all the disgust which for decades we [Social Democrats] had been feeling against Russia and her accursed despotism...suddenly burst out when, in the first days of August 1914, many millions of voices joined in the mighty chorus that sounded throughout the German lands: "Against Russia!!!-- Down with Tsarism!!!"<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> A.J. Berlau, The German Social Democratic Party, 1914-1921, New York, Columbia University Press, 1949, p. 72.

<sup>3</sup> Cited in E. Anderson, Hammer or Anvil, London, Victor Gollancz, 1945, pp. 19-20.

Although fear of renewed Sozialistengesetze and anti-Russian sentiments played a part in determining the reaction of the SPD to the war, the major consideration was electoral. The widespread enthusiasm for the national cause in the early days of August gave Social Democratic leaders their opportunity in supporting a policy which was popular with the great majority of citizens of all social strata. An aspiring Volkspartei will always support policies which are popular with the great mass of voters, since by doing so it expects not only to retain the loyalty of existing party sympathizers but to improve its image amongst those who are normally either hostile or indifferent toward the party. Since the SPD was the only German political party that could not be counted on to automatically support the 'fatherland' in a time of crisis, it stood to gain more than any other party by voting for the war credits. Many SPD leaders used the outbreak of war as an opportunity to demonstrate that Social Democrats were loyal and even patriotic Germans as well as socialists. By voting for the war credits the SPD sought to allay the suspicion of many middle-class voters that Social Democrats were vaterlandslose Geselle (vagabonds without a fatherland). The SPD resolution, read to the Reichstag on August fourth, was intended to dispel all doubt concerning the patriotism of Social Democrats:

We need to secure the culture and independence of our country....We shall not abandon our Fatherland in its hour of peril....<sup>4</sup>

This resolution reflected the attitude of many party members. The outbreak of war presented many Social Democrats with an opportunity of actively participating in the affairs of the state.<sup>5</sup> Konrad Haenisch spoke for many Social Democrats when he expressed the reaction of German socialists to the war:

[On the one hand] this driving, burning desire to throw oneself into the powerful current of the general national tide, and, on the other, the terrible spiritual fear of following that desire fully, of surrendering oneself to the mood which roared about one and which...had long since taken possession of the soul. This fear: will you not also betray yourself and your cause? Can you not feel as your heart feels? Thus it was until suddenly...the terrible tension was resolved; until one dared to be what one was; until -- despite all principles and wooden theories -- one could, for the first time in almost a quarter century, join with a full heart, a clean conscience and without a sense of treason in the sweeping, stormy song: "Deutschland, Deutschland, über alles."<sup>6</sup>

Party leaders came out in support of the German war effort with the secure knowledge that many party members

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<sup>4</sup>Verhandlungen des Deutschen Reichstags, Vol. CCCVI, pp. 8-9, cited in Berlau, op. cit., p. 75, my emphasis.

<sup>5</sup>Anderson, op. cit., pp. 22-25.

<sup>6</sup>Cited in E. Prager, Die Geschichte der U.S.P.D.: Entstehung und Entwicklung der Unabhängigen Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands, Berlin, Freiheit, 1922, p. 34, also cited in Schorske, op. cit., p. 290.

and trade unionists<sup>7</sup> supported the national cause. By accepting the Burgfrieden<sup>8</sup> the SPD voluntarily withdrew from the class struggle, was drawn closer to the established order and gained respectability.

The renunciation of the class struggle could not however be achieved without jeopardizing the unity of German Social Democracy. The party leadership which had in the prewar period maintained party unity by retaining its Marxist theoretical position while acting mainly as a reformist party, had to pay the price for its support of the German war effort, its acceptance of the Burgfrieden and its

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<sup>7</sup>The trade-union leaders' decision -- made two days before the August fourth vote in the Reichstag -- to co-operate with the government by suspending all strike activity and to agree to divert trade union funds to the support of German war victims, must have made a considerable impression on the SPD, which relied heavily on trade-union supporters. See E. Bevan, German Social Democracy during the War, New York, Dutton, 1919, p. 15, and Schorske, op. cit., p. 289. For the role played by Socialist Unions in the war period see John L. Snell, "Socialist Unions and Socialist Patriotism in Germany, 1914-1918," American Historical Review, Vol. 59:1, (1953-54) pp. 66-76.

<sup>8</sup>The Burgfrieden, or civil peace, surprisingly accepted by Social Democrats, established the unobstructed authority of the Government on all major national questions. Political parties agreed to cease all inter-party competition and to refrain from any opposition to the Government. The SPD's acquiescence in the matter of the Burgfrieden represented a complete break with the party's Weltanschauung. With the assent of the SPD, the Government was empowered "to decide all military, political and economic questions, and was in a position...to suppress all public expression of political opinion." Arthur Rosenberg, Entstehung der Weimarer Republik, Frankfurt am Main, Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1961, p. 71, and pp. 67-100.

acknowledgement that Social Democratic interests lay entrenched in the state.

At the meeting of the SPD Fraktion on August third, 1914, fourteen Social Democrats favoured a proposal to abstain from voting on the war credits (this group included Hugo Haase, President of the party) as against seventy-eight who supported the demand for war credits.<sup>9</sup> On August fourth the minority subordinated its opposition to party discipline by voting with the majority in the Reichstag. The tradition of party discipline was not however sufficiently strong to conceal the minority Socialists' opposition to the war. In December 1914 Karl Liebknecht voted against the second war credits bill in the Reichstag. In March 1915 thirty Social Democrats abstained from voting for the Imperial Budget, and conspicuously left the Reichstag in a group just before the voting took place.<sup>10</sup> The division between majority and minority Socialists became so acute that a break-away by the minority radicals from the SPD appeared immanent. In March 1916, after voting against the Emergency Budget, eighteen Social Democrats were expelled from the SPD and promptly formed themselves into a new parliamentary group -- the Sozialdemokratische Arbeitsgemeinschaft.<sup>11</sup> In 1903 the radicals had demanded the expulsion of the revisionists

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<sup>9</sup>Mommsen, op. cit., pp. 381-382.

<sup>10</sup>Bevan, op. cit., p. 46.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 95.

from the SPD.<sup>12</sup> This demand had been rejected because leading Social Democrats wanted above all to preserve party unity. The expulsion of the minority Social Democrats in 1916 indicated that the party leadership was prepared to disrupt party unity in order to preserve the SPD's new image as a party which had supported the national cause in 1914 as enthusiastically as all the other parties. By 1916 the goal of gaining political power was valued more highly than party unity. By expelling the minority of the SPD Reichstag Fraktion from the party, Social Democratic leaders hoped to demonstrate to the German electorate that the SPD could be 'trusted' and that it would even spurn those who obstructed governmental efforts to secure the 'safety' of the state.

In 1917 the minority socialists formed a splinter party -- the Independent German Social Democratic Party (USPD) -- at Gotha. The USPD professed adherence to the Erfurt Programme and criticized the SPD's acceptance of the Burgfrieden.<sup>13</sup> Many of those Social Democrats who had consistently elevated party principles above political pragmatism transferred their allegiance to the USPD, while most of the reformists -- including Georg von Vollmar, Wilhelm Kolb and Dr. Eduard David -- remained in the

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<sup>12</sup>Gay, op. cit., p. 269.

<sup>13</sup>"Organisationsgrundlinien für die Opposition der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands (USPD), 1917" in Mommsen, op. cit., pp. 388-391.



<sup>14</sup>  
SPD.

The USPD was not only a result of the war. It was rather the logical outcome of the controversy between those who adhered rigidly to socialist principles and those who sought to extend the influence of Social Democracy in the state.<sup>15</sup> The creation of the USPD clearly demonstrated that the goal of maintaining the unity of German Social Democracy and at the same time of moulding the SPD into an aspiring Volkspartei were incompatible. The secession of many radicals from the SPD only served to strengthen the position of those Social Democrats who sought to transform the SPD into a genuine Volkspartei, and who were prepared to abandon all party principles which seemed to conflict with this goal. The extent to which the SPD abandoned the basic principles of Social Democracy is most clearly indicated by the role played by the SPD in the German Revolution.

In October of 1918, a month before the outbreak of the Revolution, the SPD actually became a government party by joining the coalition cabinet under the leadership of

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<sup>14</sup> Although the majority of Independent Socialists had belonged to the radical wing of the SPD, some leading revisionists did join the USPD -- for example, Eduard Bernstein and Kurt Eisner. A few of the leading radicals remained within the SPD and even became fervent supporters of the German war effort -- most notably Konrad Haenisch and Paul Lensch. See Berlau, op. cit., p. 146 and Cf. Gay, op. cit., pp. 280-281.

<sup>15</sup> Schorske, op. cit., pp. 285-313.

Prince Max of Baden. That such a step was completely alien to traditional Social Democratic views was revealed by the lengths to which SPD leaders went to defend the party's new assumption of governmental responsibility.<sup>16</sup> Some party leaders even criticized the party's many years of passivity in order to try and justify the SPD's new role as a government party. At the party congress of 1919, for example, Herman Müller criticized the SPD's traditional unwillingness to assume responsibility:

Responsibility is a virtue which we used to neglect somewhat, when we were still an agitating, organizing party.<sup>17</sup>

Otto Braun spoke for the dominant wing within the SPD when he declared that the party could not achieve its goals by remaining for ever an agitating movement-party:

We deal with the transformation of our party from agitation to government.... If we want to exercise power actively, the keenest opposition on our part in parliament will not do us any good.<sup>18</sup>

In October of 1918 the SPD showed itself ready to undertake 'responsibility' for the conduct of government. It agreed to co-operate with bourgeois parties in order to prevent the collapse of the Reich which threatened to follow the military defeat of Germany. At a time when the SPD had a

<sup>16</sup> Berlau, op. cit., p. 189.

<sup>17</sup> Protokoll des Parteitages 1919, pt. 2, p. 133, cited in Berlau, op. cit., p. 198.

<sup>18</sup> Protokoll des Parteitages 1919, pt. 2, pp. 192ff., cited in Berlau, op. cit., p. 199.

great opportunity to organize and lead a revolution it preferred to exercise all its influence over German workers in order to prevent one.

As a government party in October 1918 the SPD did not support the general call for the abdication of the Emperor. Only after realizing that a revolution might be evaded by the voluntary abdication of the Emperor did the SPD come out in favour of abdication. The refusal of the Emperor to abdicate and the increasing intensity of public opinion demanding abdication brought about the resignation of the SPD members from the cabinet on the ninth of November, 1918.<sup>19</sup> Only when the revolution could no longer be avoided did the Social Democratic members resign from the cabinet, and only by placing itself at the head of the revolution could the SPD hope to stem the tide of revolutionary activity. In order to avoid the consequences of a Bolshevik revolution the leaders of the SPD made every effort to gain control over the revolutionary forces. It was in order to wrest control over the revolution from the USPD and the Spartakists that the SPD called for a general strike on November ninth.<sup>20</sup>

Social Democrats, Independent Socialists and Spartakists all struggled to gain control of the revolution.

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<sup>19</sup>R.H. Lutz, The German Revolution, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1922, p. 49.

<sup>20</sup>The Spartakus League was the immediate forerunner of the German Communist Party (KPD). In December of 1918 the Spartakists left the USPD and founded the KPD. Cf. W.T. Angress, Stillborn Revolution, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1963, p. 23.

The SPD sought to establish parliamentary democracy out of the chaos that had been engendered by revolutionary activity. Its immediate aims were the restoration of order and the weakening of the Workers' and Soldiers' councils which had seized power throughout Germany. It hoped to establish parliamentary democracy by calling a National Assembly which was to be invested with supreme legal authority. The Independent Socialists called for the immediate socialization of the means of production and the recognition of Workers' and Soldiers' Councils as the supreme political authorities in Germany. The Spartakists aimed to establish the "dictatorship of the proletariat" by legalizing the political power of the councils. They aimed to establish a political system on the Russian model. The SPD's main task was to end the "dictatorship of the proletariat" by wresting political power from the councils which had formed the backbone of the November Revolution.<sup>21</sup>

In December of 1918 the Congress of Councils -- a congress representing all the councils in Germany -- met to discuss the political future of Germany. The major question dealt with by the Congress was whether Germany should adopt either a council or a parliamentary system. The SPD's demand for a democratic parliamentary system was

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<sup>21</sup>G.D.H. Cole, A History of Socialist Thought: Communism and Social Democracy, 1914-1931, London, Macmillan, 1958, Vol. 4, part 1, pp. 136-142.

accepted by the Congress, and elections for a National<sup>22</sup> Assembly were called for January 19, 1919.

Although the pro-republican parties won a decisive victory at the 1919 election, the socialist parties failed to secure the absolute majority which<sup>23</sup> had been anticipated. The SPD and USPD combined polled 45.5 per cent of the total vote:

Table III  
ELECTORAL VICTORY OF THE PRO-REPUBLICAN PARTIES  
IN THE 1919 ELECTION

<u>Party</u>	<u>Votes in millions</u>	<u>Per cent of total vote</u>	<u>Seats</u>
SPD	11.5	37.9	163
USPD	2.3	7.6	22
DDP	5.6	18.6	75
Zentrum	6.0	19.7	91
Total of Pro- Republican Parties	25.4	83.7	351
DNVP	3.1	10.3	44
DVP	1.4	4.4	19
Other	0.5	1.6	7
Total	30.4	100.0	421

Source: Mommsen, op. cit., p. 794.

<sup>22</sup> Bergsträsser, op. cit., p. 200.

<sup>23</sup> The pro-republican parties were the SPD, the USPD, the Zentrum (Centre Party) and the German Democratic Party (DDP). The major anti-Republican parties were the German National People's Party (DNVP), the German People's Party (DVP), the German Communist Party (KPD), and after 1923 the Nazi Party (NSDAP).

The results of the 1919 election presented the SPD with the opportunity of accepting governmental responsibility. In order to extend its political influence in the new republic the SPD showed itself ready to co-operate with bourgeois parties -- the DDP and the Centre Party -- in a coalition government. By contrast the Independent Socialists spurned an invitation to join in a coalition government which<sup>24</sup> included bourgeois parties. The willingness of the SPD to co-operate with non-socialist parties indicates the extent of the gap between Social Democratic ideology and practice; it also suggests that the SPD was ready to modify major Social Democratic policies to make them acceptable to its coalition partners. A major goal of German Social Democracy during the Weimar period was to protect the new republic against all threats from the extreme Right and Left. The SPD leadership made no strong demands for socializing the means of production, and made every effort to weaken the power of the workers' councils, which demanded that workers be placed<sup>25</sup> in positions of control over the running of industry.

In attempting to secure the safety of the new republic the SPD even relied on the support of military officers of the old imperial army. These officers were often anti-republican in outlook. Gustav Noske's Freikorps (free corps) were authorized by the Government to suppress all

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<sup>24</sup>Bergsträsser, op. cit., p. 203.

<sup>25</sup>Cole, op. cit., p. 154.

attempts by the Communists to establish Soviet republics in Germany. The SPD thus relied on regular and volunteer units of the army to suppress the continuation of all revolutionary activity.<sup>26</sup> By establishing a system of economic factory councils the SPD sought to limit all council activity to the strictly economic sphere. The Weimar Constitution (Article 165) called for the setting up of workers' economic councils within factories. This provision was not sponsored by the SPD with a view to socializing the means of production, but was little more than a concession to German workers, designed to gain their support for the new republic.<sup>27</sup> The councils were given no political function; they were intended to promote industrial democracy by providing the machinery through which employees could defend their economic interests vis-a-vis employers.<sup>28</sup>

That the new factory councils were little more than an attempt to pacify workers who had hoped to exercise political power through the revolutionary workers' councils.

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<sup>26</sup>The SPD has been strongly criticized for re-establishing the military power of the army and for relying on the support of anti-republican officers who welcomed a return to a monarchic or authoritarian regime. Cf. E.A. Mowrer, Germany Puts the Clock Back, New York, W. Morrow & Co., 1933. C. Landauer however argues that the SPD had to rely on the Freikorps, and later the Reichswehr, unless willing to yield power to the Communist minority. Cf. C. Landauer, European Socialism, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1959, pp. 818-821.

<sup>27</sup>Berlau, op. cit., pp. 261-265.

<sup>28</sup>Anderson, op. cit., pp. 66-70.

and who were disappointed with the results of the revolution is well illustrated by the view of Dr. Hugo Sinzheimer, who was the official Social Democratic spokesman on the new economic workers' councils:

A new political democracy had been erected. But the masses felt that in spite of this change in political respects their social content of life had not been changed. The old social system had remained the same....Parliament is and must remain the organ of political democracy...The councils are the organ of economic democracy.<sup>29</sup>

Many workers felt that the newly established democratic republic had barely changed their social position in society. Dissatisfied with the results of the Revolution they were critical of the SPD's involvement in the suppression of workers' councils. By setting up the economic factory councils the SPD hoped to remedy the widespread disappointment with the Revolution. The USPD and the KPD strongly opposed the substitution of economic councils for the political workers' councils, arguing that the new councils would undermine the aims of the Revolution. Supported by the Centre Party and the German Democratic Party the SPD succeeded in having the bill on economic councils passed by the National Assembly.<sup>30</sup>

On January 13, 1920, five days before the bill on economic councils was passed, thousands of Berlin workers,

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<sup>29</sup>Protokoll des Parteitages 1919, pp. 406-418, cited in Berlau, op. cit., pp. 263-264.

<sup>30</sup>S.W. Halperin, Germany Tried Democracy, New York, Cromwell, 1946, pp. 162-164.



led by the USPD and the KPD, protested against the bill in front of the Reichstag building. In the ensuing conflict between the crowd and police, forty-two persons were killed.<sup>31</sup> By ruthlessly suppressing demonstrations and strikes the SPD alienated many of the socialists who had voted for the SPD in the 1919 election. Many of these transferred their support to the USPD in the 1920 election. As a government party the SPD was responsible for the maintenance of law and order. It used every means available to it in order to safeguard the new democratic republic. As a government party the SPD could not expect to win the support of all socialists. Instead it hoped to attract a large section of the middle-class vote. The SPD was expected, by those who had made the Revolution possible, to realize the final aims of socialism, to socialize all means of production, to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat, in short to fulfill the prophecies of Karl Marx. It fell very far short of these expectations. Far from using the opportunity provided by the Revolution to establish a 'socialist' republic, the SPD devoted itself to the task of creating a parliamentary 'democratic' republic.

Such traditional socialist goals as the socialization of the means of production were openly questioned by leading Social Democrats. Since such socialist aims were strongly

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<sup>31</sup>Anderson, op. cit., p. 70.

opposed by middle-class voters, they were explicitly rejected. Many leading Social Democrats openly questioned the relevance of socialization to the problems facing Germany. The willingness of the SPD to dispense with traditional aims in response to conditions that were thought to render these aims irrelevant testifies to the increasing pragmatism of German Social Democracy. During the Weimar period Social Democratic actions were increasingly based on interpretations of existing conditions, and decisions very rarely made on the basis of Social Democratic ideology. It is true that the extensive socialization would not have been possible since the SPD had to rely on the support of its non-socialist coalition partners, which were opposed to a comprehensive scheme of socialization.<sup>32</sup> But more important for the evolution of the SPD was the fact that many leading Social Democrats no longer viewed the socialization of major industries as an unchangeable socialist goal. In the view of the SPD Germany could not afford to risk "costly experiments," since these might reduce the level of output and thereby jeopardize the rapid recovery

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<sup>32</sup>Dr. David, however, explicitly denied that the SPD's unwillingness to advocate extensive socialization of industries was due to the restraining influence of the bourgeois parties in the coalition government: "I state here in public that from the membership of the non-socialist members of the cabinet, no difficulties in this field [socialization] have been raised." See Protokoll des Parteitage, 1919, pp. 374 ff., cited in Berlau, op. cit., p. 278.

of the German economy:

We are....a poor people, and therefore we cannot afford expensive experiments [socialization of the means of production]. Such experiments might probably have been undertaken in Germany before the war, although even then they would have constituted a crime against the national wealth. But today, we must decidedly reject such plans....We know that the many-branched blood vessels of the German economy are extremely sensitive....For that reason it is in our opinion not possible to interfere with economic life with too rough a hand....We have had enough experience with the Russian example.<sup>33</sup>

By rejecting demands for extensive socialization, Social Democratic leaders also helped to improve the SPD's image among middle-class voters. They hoped to demonstrate to middle-class voters that the SPD was not simply the political arm of German labour and that it could be trusted with governmental responsibility. Such leading Social Democratic figures as Heinrich Cuno suggested that the SPD should renounce its ideological position and actively pursue Realpolitik:

Revolutionary parties yearning to reform the political or social order have at all times shown a strong inclination toward utopian constructions of the future and illusory self-deception in respect to their existence, their progress and their victory....Away with these illusions!...This continued hatching of various impossible, impracticable plans is a serious danger to our future political development....It is inevitable that the demands and hopes raised by such

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<sup>33</sup>Verhandlungen des Deutschen Reichstags, CCCXXVI, March 12, 1919, speech of Dr. Otto Braun, 718ff., cited in Berlau, op. cit., p. 268.

projects change into accusations against the party and against the government if they remain unfulfilled....We must pursue 'Realpolitik'....We cannot conserve old party views and illusions.<sup>34</sup>

The SPD was hardly set upon reforming the Weimar political system; indeed it had played a major role in its creation. Rather its goal was to defend the newly born republic against all attacks, whether from the Right or Left. The SPD co-operated both with the revolutionary Left in defending the republic against the threats from the nationalists, and with the anti-republic Reichswehr officers in crushing the revolutionary activity of German workers.

In March of 1920 Dr. Wolfgang Kapp and his Ehrhardt Brigade made an attempt to overthrow the Weimar Republic.<sup>35</sup> Gustav Noske, Social Democratic Minister of War, reported that his Reichswehr officers refused to defend the Republic against a rebellion from the Right:

Only General Reinhardt and Major von Gilsa were prepared to comply with my order to engage the troops in battle. The remaining officers made objections arguing that Reichswehr would not fight against Reichswehr.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>H. Cuno, "Weg mit der Illusionspolitik," Neue Zeit, Vol. XXXVIII, pt. 1, no. 5, October 31, 1919, pp. 97-104, cited in Berlau, op. cit., pp. 273-274.

<sup>35</sup>Landauer, op. cit., pp. 854-856.

<sup>36</sup>Ursachen und Folgen Vom Deutschen Zusammenbruch 1918 und 1945 bis zur staatlichen Neuordnung Deutschlands in der Gegenwart, Dokumenten-Verlag Dr. Herbert Wendler, Berlin, Vol. 4, p. 87.

Since the government could not rely on its own army to defend the Republic it called for a general strike and was supported by the Trade Unions.<sup>37</sup> The USPD and the SPD's coalition partners joined in calling for the strike as did the Communist party after some delay.<sup>38</sup>

The General Strike was successful in effecting the complete defeat of the Kappists. But the Strike Committee under the leadership of Carl Legien refused to call an end to the strike until the Government accepted certain demands made by the committee.<sup>39</sup> Under pressure from the strikers the SPD tried to form a new coalition government with the USPD, but this attempt proved futile since the Independent Socialists refused to co-operate with the SPD. A new coalition Government was formed which differed only marginally from the previous one. Ruhr workers under the leadership of the USPD and the KPD refused to return to work after the strike had been officially called off. The new Government was faced with the difficult problem of ending the strike.

The cabinet, under the leadership of the new Social

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., pp. 91-98.

<sup>38</sup>Anderson, op. cit., pp. 71-72.

<sup>39</sup>Major demands were: 1. the formation of a new government in which "decisive influence" would be exercised by trade-unions; 2. thorough purge of the army and the civil service; 3. immediate socialization of 'key' industries; 4. punishment of the Kappists; Cf., Hunt, op. cit., p. 82.

Democratic Chancellor Hermann Müller, authorized the Reichswehr, which only a few weeks earlier had refused to defend the Republic against the Kappists, to occupy the Ruhr district and to suppress the workers' "rebellion." E. Anderson sums up well the relationship between the Government, the Reichswehr and the radical workers:

Against Kapp and his soldiers the Government could rely only on the working class, because the army would not defend it. Against the radical workers however, the Government relied on this very army....<sup>40</sup>

The general dissatisfaction of the workers with the SPD was undoubtedly intensified when the Reichswehr was authorized to suppress the rebellion in the Ruhr. The defeat of the Government parties at the general election in June of 1920 gives some indication of the unpopularity of the SPD, the DDP, and the Centre Party. As early as June 1919, Rudolf Wissel, who was the Social Democratic advocate of a "planned economy" and Minister of Economics for a short period,<sup>41</sup> gave an account of the widespread disappointment with the performance of the Weimar political system:

In spite of the revolution the hopes of the people have been disappointed. The Government has not lived up to the expectations of the people. We have constructed a formal political democracy....The masses are angry and we did not satisfy them because we had no proper programme....Essentially, we have governed in the old ways and we have not been very

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<sup>40</sup>Anderson, op. cit., p. 75.

<sup>41</sup>Landauer, op. cit., p. 848.

successful in creating a new spirit....The people believe that the achievements of the Revolution are of a merely negative character; they believe... that the present principles of government do not fundamentally differ from those of the old regime....<sup>42</sup>

The results of the 1920 election would appear to give credence to the gloomy picture painted by Wissel. The SPD polled only 5.6 million votes, less than half the number of votes it had received in the election of 1919. The two other parties in the Government coalition also fared very badly. The German Democratic Party polled only 2.3 million votes after having won 5.6 million at the previous election, and the Centre Party polled 3.8 million votes as compared to the six million it received at the 1919 election.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Cited in Anderson, op. cit., p. 73.

<sup>43</sup>The fall in support for the Centre Party may be partly accounted for by the competition in Bavaria from the new Bavarian People's Party.

Table IV

THE DEFEAT OF THE GOVERNMENT COALITION PARTIES AND THE  
CORRESPONDING SUCCESS OF THE RIGHT AND LEFT EXTRE-  
MISTS IN THE 1920 ELECTION

	1919 election			1920 election		
	<u>Votes*</u>	<u>Per cent of total</u>	<u>Seats</u>	<u>Votes*</u>	<u>Per cent of total</u>	<u>Seats</u>
SPD	11.5	37.9	163	6.1	21.6	102
Z	6.0	19.7	91	3.8	13.6	64
DDP	5.6	18.6	75	2.3	8.4	39
Government parties	23.1	76.2	329	12.2	43.6	205
USPD	2.3	7.6	22	5.1	18.0	84
BVP	--	--	--	1.2	4.3	21
DNVP	3.1	10.3	44	4.3	15.1	71
DVP	1.4	4.4	19	3.9	14.0	65
KPD	--	--	--	0.6	2.0	4
Other	0.5	1.5	7	0.9	3.0	9
Total	30.4	100.0	421	28.1	100.0	459

\* in millions

Source: Mommsen, op. cit., p. 794.

Table IV reveals a swing from the moderate republican parties to those parties which expressed dissatisfaction with the achievements of the Republic both on the Right and on the Left. The DNVP and the DVP taken together gained 29.1 per cent of the vote and 136 mandates in 1920, compared to



14.7 per cent of the vote and sixty-three mandates in 1919. The Social Democratic percentage of the total vote decreased from 37.9 to 21.6. Undoubtedly a large number of the defectors from the SPD cast their votes for the more radical USPD, which suddenly became the second largest parliamentary party in the Republic.

The USPD differed from the SPD primarily in its refusal to abandon the traditional socialist attitude to the state. The policy of opposition, argued Independent Socialists, was just as relevant in a democratic republic as in a monarchical political system. Co-operation with bourgeois parties in a coalition government, they argued, would betray the cause of the Revolution. The explicit aim of the USPD was the overthrow of capitalism and the creation of a socialist society by a proletarian revolution:

Only through the proletarian revolution can capitalism be overthrown, socialism made real<sup>44</sup> and the freedom of the working class secured.

At the Halle Congress of the USPD in 1920, a few months after the party's great electoral victory, the question of affiliation to the Third Communist International divided the party into hostile factions. The Left wing of the party joined the KPD and the USPD was drawn closer to the SPD.

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<sup>44</sup>"Aktionsprogramm der Unabhängigen Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands, Dezember 1919," in Mommsen, op. cit., p. 448.

Except for nine Independent Socialists, led by Georg Ledebour, the USPD delegates at the 1922 Gera Congress voted in favour of uniting the two Social Democratic parties.<sup>45</sup> The SPD favoured unification, hoping thereby to increase the SPD's voting strength, and the two parties were re-united at the Nuremberg Congress in 1922.

The SPD welcomed re-unification especially since the Independents had been so successful in the 1920 election. The re-unification did not however improve the SPD's electoral position\* -- many of the former USPD voters preferred the KPD to the SPD in the 1924 election -- and it revitalized the radical wing in the SPD. In its attempt to gain electoral support from the middle classes by co-operating with non-socialist parties and by suppressing all revolutionary activity, the SPD was not successful. Instead -- in the 1920 election -- it lost many of its former working-class supporters to the USPD. By reuniting with the Independents the SPD hoped to regain the electoral support it had won in the 1919 election. The Nuremberg re-unification had the effect of re-introducing into the SPD an implacid left-wing opposition which demanded that the SPD should refrain from all co-operation with bourgeois parties. The new radicals expressed dissatisfaction with the SPD's relentless determination to protect the Weimar Republic against all

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<sup>45</sup>Hunt, op. cit., pp. 206-207.

\*For electoral statistics see Appendix A.

threats, and opposed all attempts to transform the SPD into a Volkspartei.

A few months after the Nuremberg re-unification French troops occupied the Ruhr, and the German Government advocated 'passive' resistance. The SPD officially endorsed the Government's recommendation, but the former Independent Socialists spoke out against the Government's attitude and recommended negotiations with France. Although the conservative leadership of the SPD tended to ignore the protests of the left wing SPD minority on this issue, as in most of the major issues that confronted the party, it was nevertheless necessary to make some concessions to the radicals in the interests of maintaining their support. The "Saxon conflict"<sup>46</sup> was one issue over which SPD leaders felt

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<sup>46</sup>The "Saxon Conflict" concerned the problem of selecting coalition partners. At a Saxon Land Party Congress (1923) the great majority of SPD delegates favoured a coalition with the KPD. An SPD-KPD coalition government was legally established in Saxony. Stresemann's national cabinet, objecting to the inclusion of Communists in the Saxon cabinet, ordered the Saxon Reichswehr to depose the Saxon Government. The Government was deposed and a new Government had to be established. The SPD Land Fraktion majority favoured a coalition with bourgeois parties, but the great majority of the delegates of the Saxon Land Congress favoured another coalition with the Communists. The SPD national leadership favoured the coalition tactics of the Fraktion majority but was not prepared to alienate Saxon party members by supporting the Fraktion. The SPD expelled the twenty-three members of the Fraktion who refused to submit to the commands of either the Saxon Party Congress or of the SPD National Executive. The SPD was obliged to support the left-wing Saxon membership although it was politically much closer to the Fraktion majority. The Saxon Conflict emphasized the problems that the SPD leaders would have to face as a result of the Nuremberg re-unification, which had brought the radical socialists back to the SPD camp. For a comprehensive analysis of the "Saxon Conflict" see Hunt, op. cit., pp. 211-221.

obliged to yield to the demands of their more radical members. The conservative Social Democratic leadership of the SPD was obliged to make a concession to the radical socialists of Saxony since it could not afford to alienate its Saxon membership.

The radicals in the SPD argued that it was no longer necessary for the party to join coalition governments in order to safeguard the Republic, since the bourgeois parties no longer presented a threat to the Republic's safety. The position of the radicals was made perfectly clear by a resolution which they presented to the 1927 Party Congress:

The task of Social Democracy in the German Republic is to represent the class interests of the proletariat against the class rule of capitalism, the struggle for social improvements and for socialism. As against this task, the struggle to maintain the Republic, with which the bourgeoisie is now satisfied, recedes in importance.

The political alignments in the German Republic no longer should be formed under the words: republican versus monarchist, but socialist versus capitalist.

Considering this political constellation, the tactic of Social Democracy must be: opposition not coalition.<sup>47</sup>

The left-wing of the SPD refused to deviate from the traditional SPD principle of opposition to the state. The party leadership was embarrassed by the position taken by the radicals since the party had abandoned its policy of opposition at the outbreak of the First World War. Furthermore the SPD leadership was actively engaged in trying to

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<sup>47</sup>Protokoll des Parteitage, 1927, p. 272, cited in Hunt, op. cit., p. 223.

broaden its electoral appeal, while the radicals sought to maintain the SPD's working-class image.

After assuming the position of a government party the SPD no longer concerned itself exclusively with the demands of the German working class. In order to strengthen its position as a government party the SPD made strenuous efforts to attract middle-class voters. The party leadership realized that the SPD could not gain a majority<sup>48</sup> by relying on working-class support.

The SPD's adoption of the G<sup>ö</sup>rlitz Programme<sup>49</sup> in 1921 represented a break with Social Democratic ideology. The programme replaced the Erfurt Programme of 1891; it carefully avoided Marxist terminology and pronounced that the SPD was the party of all "working people." By emphasizing

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<sup>48</sup>Hunt quotes figures to demonstrate that the number of proletarians was actually decreasing in size throughout the Weimar period, and that a "new" middle class, including sales people, clerical personnel and salaried technicians, was expanding rapidly. The new middle class constituted 4.4 per cent of all "gainfully employed" in 1895, 6.8 per cent in 1907, and 11.4 per cent in 1925 (14.8 per cent in 1925 if civil servants are included). According to the occupational census the proportion of industrial and agricultural wage workers declined from 56.8 per cent in 1895 to 55.1 per cent in 1907 and 45.1 per cent in 1925. Factory production workers -- the industrial proletariat -- constituted only 30.6 per cent of the 1925 occupational census. Hunt concludes that "far from becoming the immense majority, the proletariat was actually shrinking in relation to the total population!" See Hunt, op. cit., pp. 132-133.

<sup>49</sup>"Das G<sup>ö</sup>rlitzer Programm der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands," in Mommsen, op. cit., pp. 453-458.

that the SPD represented the interests of all "working people" -- rather than merely of the working class -- the programme was intended to allay middle-class fears of socialism. The Görlitz Programme signified the attempt by party leaders to transform the SPD into a genuine Volkspartei.

Party leaders failed to maintain a consistently 'moderate,' non-Marxist programme, because of the electoral success of the KPD in 1924 and because of the fear that a 'moderate' programme might not be able to attract a sufficient number of middle-class voters to compensate for an anticipated loss of working-class voters to the KPD. In the 1920 election the KPD had won just over half a million votes or two per cent of the votes cast. In the election of May 1924 the KPD attracted more than three and a half million votes or 12.6 per cent of the total votes. The necessity of having to compete with the KPD for working-class votes and intra-party pressure for a more 'orthodox' Social Democratic programme led to the adoption of the Heidelberg Programme in 1925. This programme clearly represented a return to theoretical Marxism. Significantly it was the programme of the Vereinigten (United) SPD,<sup>50</sup> and reflected the influence of the former Independent Socialists. Theoretically the programme is hardly distinguishable from the

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<sup>50</sup>The term Vereinigt was subsequently dropped. See Mommsen, op. cit., p. 461.

Erfurt position.

The number of the proletariat grows increasingly large; the conflict between exploiters and exploited grows more and more intense; the class warfare between the capitalist rulers of the economy and those whom they rule over grows increasingly bitter....

The war of the working class against capitalist exploitation is not an economic conflict, but inevitably a political struggle.<sup>51</sup>

The Heidelberg Programme was also adopted because the SPD failed -- in spite of its willingness to co-operate with bourgeois parties, its refusal to yield to demands for the socialization of industry and its 'moderate' programme of 1921 -- to attract a large number of middle-class votes.<sup>52</sup> With no certain prospects of making a major breakthrough among middle-class voters, the SPD was obliged to adopt a programme that could retain the loyalty of its own supporters and arrest the electoral expansion of the Communist Party. Party leaders thus maintained the basic tenets of Social Democratic ideology because the German middle classes refused to lend their support to a party, which had a tradition

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<sup>51</sup>"Das Heidelberger Programm der Vereinigten Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands," Mommsen, op. cit., p. 463.

<sup>52</sup>Hunt cites figures to suggest that the proportion of petty bourgeois Social Democratic voters rose by only five per cent in between 1903 and 1930. Hunt, op. cit., pp. 129-130. Cf. Hans Neisser, "Sozialstatistische Analyse der Wahlergebnisse, " Die Arbeit, 7 (1930), p. 655, pp. 657-658.

as an agitating political movement and which, in spite of its record in the early years of the Weimar Republic, was still thought of as the party of the proletariat.

Richard Hunt argues that the SPD "ceased to be exclusively the class party of the proletariat" during the Weimar period.<sup>53</sup> But the SPD had already ceased to be an "exclusively class party" before the outbreak of the First World War. More significant than the minor gains which the party made amongst the lower middle class was the failure of the SPD to attract the millions of German middle-class voters who preferred the NSDAP to the SPD after 1929.

SPD leaders failed to transform the SPD into a genuine Volkspartei because the German middle classes wished above all to maintain those distinctions by which they were able to differentiate themselves from wage-earners. The egalitarian ethic of German Social Democracy was hardly likely to meet the approval of non-wage earners who prided themselves on the prestige of their non-working-class status rather than on their objective economic circumstances.

After the economic collapse in 1928 the SPD sought to gain the support of the lower middle class voters by emphasizing that their situation was comparable to that of the proletariat, and that Social Democracy would be best

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<sup>53</sup>Hunt, op. cit., p. 130.



able to serve their interests, which were now identical to the interests of the proletariat. As Evelyn Anderson has vividly described, German lower middle-class voters feared nothing more than the prospect of proletarianization:

Both parties [the SPD and KPD]...failed to catch the imagination of those millions of common people whose means of independent existence had disappeared, but who dreaded nothing more than the nightmare of 'proletarianisation'.

For this class...the Labour movement had no message at all no hope, no offer of a solution that allowed them to remain what they were. What the working-class movement had to say to the frightened petit-bourgeois was in essence a prediction of his doom. "Go on struggling for your existence -- it won't help you. Your class is finished. You cannot fight historical necessity. You will become proletarians anyhow. You might as well give in and support us now."

The mass of the German petit-bourgeois turned to Hitler, who promised them not decline but new glory and social security in a national renaissance.<sup>54</sup>

SPD leaders failed to transform the SPD into a genuine Volkspartei because the party could not escape from its traditional working-class orientation, due to the intensity of class cleavages in Weimar Germany.

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<sup>54</sup>Anderson, op. cit., p. 137.

## Chapter IV

### FROM CATEGORICAL OPPOSITION PARTY TO MODERN PRAGMATIC PARTY

After a twelve year period of illegality, the SPD re-entered the German political scene in 1945. This chapter will deal mainly with the goals pursued by the SPD in the post-war period. Since it is hypothesized that the SPD emerged as a categorical opposition party in the early post-war period emphasis will be placed on the relationship between the SPD and its competitors and on the willingness or reluctance of Social Democratic leaders to modify SPD policies in the interests of electoral victory. By comparing the behaviour of the party in the early and late modern period it should be possible to determine whether a transition from categorical opposition party to modern pragmatic party adequately describes the post-war evolution of German Social Democracy.

As soon as the Second World War approached an end strenuous efforts were made to rebuild the SPD.<sup>1</sup>

The Buro Schumacher, founded immediately after the war by Kurt Schumacher, was recognized in the "Western Zones"

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<sup>1</sup>The amazing success of these efforts is best demonstrated by the party membership figures for 1946. In December of 1946 the SPD had more than 700,000 members. About two thirds of these had been SPD members before 1933. See Klaus Schütz, "Die Sozialdemokratie im Nachkriegsdeutschland," in Gustav Lange et. al., Parteien in der Bundesrepublik, Stuttgart, Ring-Verlag, 1955, pp. 160-163.

as the executive authority of the party at the 1946 Hannover Party Congress.<sup>2</sup> Schumacher was quickly recognized as the undisputed leader over the SPD. So successfully did he establish his role as party leader that all the major policies adopted by the SPD between 1945 and 1952 were dictated by Schumacher himself.<sup>3</sup>

A major task confronting Schumacher was to define the position of German Social Democracy towards the German Communist Party (KPD). Otto Grotewohl, leader of the SPD in the Soviet zone, declared himself in favour of amalgamation with the KPD, and in April of 1946 the unification of the SPD and the KPD in the Soviet zone led to the elimination of German Social Democracy in East Germany.<sup>4</sup> Schumacher, who consistently opposed close collaboration with the KPD,<sup>5</sup> was officially recognized as the Chairman of the SPD at the Hannover Congress.<sup>6</sup>

The amalgamation of SPD and KPD and the outlawing of the SPD in the Soviet zone had serious consequences for the future of German Social Democracy. Protestant Eastern Germany

<sup>2</sup>Schütz, op. cit., pp. 160-163.

<sup>3</sup>Edinger, op. cit., pp. 111-121.

<sup>4</sup>A. Grosser, Die Bonner Demokratie, trans. Dr. Marlis Steinert, Düsseldorf, Karl Rauch Verlag, 1960, p. 137.

<sup>5</sup>Edinger, op. cit., p. 99.

<sup>6</sup>A. Grosser, Western Germany: From Defeat to Rearmament, trans. Richard Rees, London, George Allen & Unwin, 1955, p. 191.

had traditionally provided the SPD with strong support while Western Germany, which is divided about equally between Protestants and Catholics, had been traditionally hostile to Social Democracy.<sup>7</sup> The post-war SPD, cut off from its main source of strength in the East, was faced with the problem of reformulating Social Democratic aims and policies in the light of the new conditions which confronted Germany.

The surprising unity of the SPD in the immediate post-war period can be attributed primarily to the charismatic leadership of Schumacher. Schumacher was able to establish for himself a position within the party that enabled him to determine the party's position on all major issues.

Schumacher's aims for Germany became the aims of the SPD:

More than any other political leader in West Germany... Schumacher could speak and act with the assurance that whatever he said or did would be accepted by the overwhelming majority of his party.<sup>8</sup>

At the Hannover Congress, Schumacher argued that the SPD should do without a new Grundsatzprogramm (basic programme) until the Periode des Übergangs (transition period) and the

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<sup>7</sup>Edinger, op. cit., p. 104.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 112.

uncertain circumstances in which Germany found herself were replaced by a more predictable future.<sup>9</sup> Schumacher probably resisted demands for a new Grundsatzprogramm because he felt that such a programme might be used as a limitation on his own initiative as party leader. Without a basic programme Schumacher was free to formulate Social Democratic demands and policies on the basis of his own assessment of the immediate problems facing Germany and was unhampered by a statement of basic Social Democratic principles that might conflict with his own interpretation of developments in Germany. Schumacher's main aim was to gain political power for the SPD. He insisted that only by entrusting the political leadership of Germany to the SPD could Germany develop along 'democratic' lines.<sup>10</sup> The SPD's failure in attaining this objective was due not only to the loss of German territories which had traditionally been Social Democratic strongholds, but also to the foreign and domestic Social Democratic policies for which Schumacher was himself primarily responsible.

In order to gain power in West Germany the SPD had to create an image of itself as a Volkspartei and thus to destroy the belief held by the majority of Germans that the SPD was the party of the working class, held together by a

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<sup>9</sup>K. Schumacher, "Aufgaben und Ziele der Deutschen Sozialdemokratie" in Kurt Schumacher, Reden und Schriften, eds. Arno Scholz and Walther G. Oschilewski, Berlin-Grünwald, Verlags-GMBH, 1962, p. 75.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., pp. 75-101. Cf. Schütz, op. cit., p. 169.

socialist ideology and characterized by a non-compromising rigid outlook on social and political questions. Party leaders had during the Weimar period attempted to transform the SPD from a class party to a people's party, but the attempt had not been successful. The attempts by Schumacher to create a broadly based Volkspartei proved to be similarly unsuccessful. The failure in achieving such a transformation during Weimar had primarily been due to circumstances which were beyond the control of the SPD, whereas the failure to create a new image of Social Democracy in the immediate post-war period was due to a large extent to the position taken by Schumacher on the role the SPD should play in the Federal Republic.

Schumacher's dependence on theoretical Marxism predisposed him to view post-war political developments in terms of the class struggle. Far from rejecting the traditional association between Social Democracy and Marxism, Schumacher declared that Marxist was "an indispensable analytical method in the fight for the liberation of the workers."<sup>11</sup> In a speech at the 1947 Nuremberg Party Congress Schumacher took a position which was hardly discernible from the descriptive pronouncements of the Heidelberger programme:

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<sup>11</sup>See Edinger, op. cit., p. 78.

When one looks at Germany today and sees how classes are becoming more distinct, how the poor are becoming poorer while the rich are getting richer, then it is clear that those who are excluded from the process of production and those who have nothing to sell but their own labour, are powerless in a world dominated by producers.<sup>12</sup>

Schumacher anticipated a political struggle not between bourgeoisie and proletariat but between the small number of large property owners or capitalists and the mass of the German people. The impoverished masses, Schumacher believed, would rally to the cause of Social Democracy, since the stated aim of the SPD was to liberate all working people from their capitalist oppressors. Schumacher's belief that the SPD would be able to gain the support of the majority of the German electorate was based on the assumption that objective economic circumstances had "proletarianized" the German middle classes and turned them against capitalism.<sup>13</sup> The political and economic disorganization of the immediate post-war period led Schumacher to emphasize the class struggle and to reject all suggestions of collaboration with the new 'bourgeois' parties. Co-operation with 'bourgeois' parties, Schumacher argued, had proved fatal during the Weimar period and the reluctance of the SPD to take advantage of the 1918 Revolution had been a great error. Schumacher was determined to prevent the SPD from making the same mistakes he felt it had made in the past. He was convinced that the extreme

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<sup>12</sup> K. Schumacher, "Von der Freiheit zur Sozialen Gerechtigkeit," in Schumacher, op. cit., p. 118.

<sup>13</sup> Edinger, op. cit., p. 79.

economic hardship and foreign occupation were conditions that favoured the SPD, and that co-operation with bourgeois parties was both unnecessary and undesirable. In his efforts to avoid what he considered the mistaken tactics of Weimar Social Democracy, Schumacher gained the reputation of being dogmatic and kompromisslos (unwilling to compromise).<sup>14</sup> He felt that the SPD alone had the moral right to undertake the political leadership of a new Germany. Should the SPD be denied its 'legitimate' claim for political leadership then it could only follow a course of intransigent opposition to a non-socialist government. The SPD's policy of categorical opposition to all bourgeois parties was based on Schumacher's belief that economic and social conditions in Germany were rapidly deteriorating and that by co-operating with the bourgeois parties the SPD would lose its chance of gaining the support of the masses.

By refusing to co-operate with the Christian Democratic Party (CDU) and the Free Democratic Party (FDP) in the Bizonal Economic Council, set up in Frankfurt in 1947, Schumacher hoped to absolve the SPD of all responsibility for the further deterioration in the economy which he thought inevitable in spite of all the measures the Council proposed

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<sup>14</sup>L.J. Edinger, "Kurt Schumachers Politische Perspektive," Politische Vierteljahresschrift, Vol. 5, 1964, p. 361.



to take in setting the German capitalistic economy back on its feet. By stressing his opposition to the aims of the bourgeois parties, Schumacher hoped to gain political support for the SPD, which would be the only party that could not be implicated in the impending economic disaster.<sup>15</sup> By refusing to co-operate with bourgeois parties in the economic reconstruction of Germany, the SPD prepared the way for the role it was to play as a party of categorical opposition.

The most important event which influenced the role the SPD was to play in post-war Germany was the first Bundestag election of August 1949. The failure of the SPD to make a good showing in the election had far-reaching consequences for the post-war development of the party. Had the SPD gained a decisive victory, as Schumacher had anticipated, the party would have undoubtedly been influenced by its assumption of governmental responsibility. In spite of the great discontent of the mass of German people with economic conditions, only 29 per cent of all voters supported the SPD -- the party which claimed to represent the interests of the discontented masses.

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<sup>15</sup>Edinger, Schumacher: A Study in Political Behavior, pp. 200-204.

Table V

## RESULTS OF THE FIRST FEDERAL ELECTION OF 1949

<u>Party</u>	<u>votes (in millions)</u>	<u>per cent</u>	<u>Seats</u>
Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU)*	7.4	31.0	139
Social Democrats (SPD)	6.9	29.2	131
Free Democrats (FDP)	2.8	11.9	52
Communists (KPD)	1.4	5.7	15
Bavarian Party (BP)	1.0	4.2	17
German Party (DP)	0.9	4.0	17
Others	3.3	14.0	31
 Total	 23.7	 100.0	 402

Source: Wilhelm Mommsen, Deutsche Parteiprogramme, München, Isar Verlag, 1960, p. 797.

A major reason for the Social Democrats' poor showing at the polls was of course that the SPD had to limit itself to West Germany, where it had never enjoyed great support. The loss of Social Democratic strongholds in the East was certainly a prominent factor but it cannot explain the poor Social Democratic showing in Länder such as Lower Saxony and Schleswig-Holstein, where the SPD had been much stronger in earlier elections. The electoral failure of

<sup>16</sup>In the Schleswig-Holstein state diet election of April 1947, for example, the SPD got 44.4 per cent of the votes while the CDU got only 34.5 per cent. In the federal election of 1949 the SPD got only 29.6 per cent of the votes cast in Schleswig-Holstein, while the CDU got 30.7 per cent. Cf. Edinger, op. cit., p. 199 and Grosser, op. cit., p. 177.

\*The Christian-Social Union (CSU) is the Bavarian counterpart of the CDU. The abbreviation for the partnership of these two parties is CDU/CSU.

the SPD can best be accounted for by the success of the CDU in 'persuading' the electorate that the SPD was a socialist 'unchristian' party, and that socialism was incompatible with Christianity. By creating an image of itself as the 'Christian' party the CDU managed to do especially well in areas where the Catholic church was traditionally strong. Schumacher himself was convinced that the influence wielded by the Roman Catholic clergy over German Catholics turned many potential Social Democratic supporters away from the SPD. He claimed that the active campaigning of the Roman Catholic clergy had decisively helped the Christian Democrats in the election:

This [the SPD's favorable] situation was partly destroyed by the political agitation of the church...., [this agitation] went so far that the higher clergy instructed the great bulk of its subordinates to declare themselves in favor of the CDU....It has gone so far that in one place...a priest told his believers that they would be committing a sin even by voting for the Centre Party.<sup>17</sup>

Schumacher openly attacked the Roman Catholic church, which had managed to gain the support of the CDU in its drive to  
<sup>18</sup>  
 preserve denominational schools. The anti-clerical and

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<sup>17</sup>K. Schumacher, "Um die Lebensnotwendigkeiten des Volkes," in Schumacher, op. cit., p. 209.

<sup>18</sup>Schumacher, who referred to the Vatican as the "fifth occupation power," has been criticized for accentuating the hostility between Catholics and the SPD. See Klaus-Peter Schulz, Sorge um die Deutsche Linke, Köln, Verlag für Politik und Wirtschaft, 1954. Cf. F.R. Allemann, Bonn ist nicht Weimar, Köln and Berlin, Kiepenheuer and Witsch, 1956, p. 250.

particularly anti-Catholic speeches of Schumacher made it quite easy for the CDU to denounce German Social Democracy as anti-Christian. The hostility between the Catholic church and the SPD, which became increasingly bitter with the direct intervention of the Roman Catholic clergy in the 1949 federal election, had unfortunate electoral consequences for the SPD. In the pre-1954 German Reich, Catholics were in the distinct minority. Within the boundaries of Western Germany however about fifty per cent are Protestants and forty-seven per cent Catholics. The hostility between Social Democracy and Roman Catholicism has been more intense and electorally more important than it was traditionally in the German Reich. Moreover since the ratio of Catholics is above average for workers, small farmers and the lower ranks of the Civil Service <sup>19</sup> -- the lower strata of society which are more likely to identify their interests with Social Democracy -- the antagonism between the SPD and the Roman Catholic church has been especially disadvantageous for the SPD electorally. The CDU on the other hand has openly supported the demands of the Catholic church and has been able to rely on the support of a powerful organized force in society. The widely publicized anti-clerical attitude of Schumacher and the SPD only brought Catholic workers, who were in sympathy with the economic

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<sup>19</sup>Bernhard Vogel and Wolfgang Kralewski, "The State and the Community in Germany today," in Walter Stahl, ed., The Politics of Postwar Germany, New York, F.A. Praeger, 1963, p. 24.

policies of the SPD. more firmly into the Christian  
<sup>20</sup>  
 Democratic camp.

Although some leading Social Democrats and  
 Christian Democrats favoured a "grand coalition" between  
 the CDU/CSU and the SPD,<sup>21</sup> Schumacher strenuously opposed  
 all suggestions of a coalition, arguing that the SPD could  
 not afford to repeat the mistake of compromising its goals  
 and principles by collaborating with 'anti-democratic'  
<sup>22</sup>  
 parties. Schumacher emphasized the role the SPD was to  
 play as a categorical opposition party by his decision to  
 contest the election for the federal presidency. It was  
 certain that Theodor Heuss, leader of the Free Democrats,  
 would win the presidency, since he was assured of support  
 from the CDU and the other major bourgeois parties. Schumacher  
 nevertheless contested the election in order to demonstrate  
 his party's categorical opposition to the new government.

The belief that the SPD alone had the legitimate  
 right to govern over the destiny of the German people and that  
 only the enactment of Social Democratic policies could  
 ensure the development of political democracy in Germany,  
 made all co-operation with the CDU impossible. Schumacher  
 believed that by opposing all governmental policies the SPD

<sup>20</sup> F.R. Allemann, op. cit., pp. 250-251.

<sup>21</sup> Schütz, op. cit., p. 237.

<sup>22</sup> K. Schumacher, "Aufgaben und Ziele," in Schumacher,  
op. cit., pp. 75-101.

alone would be absolved from responsibility for policies which were bound to incur the disapproval of the electorate.

Speaking at the 1950 Party Congress at Hamburg, Schumacher explained why co-operation of the SPD with the government parties was undesirable:

Time shows that this government, in order to govern ably and to be successful, lacks above all one quality: agreement in...judgment and agreement in conviction over goals and the future. This lack of planning leads to a lack of ideas...and a lack of achievement.

Social Democracy cannot let itself be used by agreeing through petty compromises in the service of these plans, intentions and attitudes.<sup>23</sup>

Schumacher gained the reputation of dogmatically adhering to his own conception of Social Democracy and of refusing to compromise or bargain with any parties or groups, which could not accept that only Social Democratic policies could ensure a secure future for Germany. Since he had virtually complete control over federal SPD policies (the SPD was commonly referred to as "Schumacher's party") the SPD gained the reputation of being an inflexible, radical socialist party which refused to modify any of its policies in the light of modern developments that were reshaping German society. In its role as a categorical opposition party the SPD not only opposed the government on all major economic and social questions but attacked the government even more harshly on its foreign policy.

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<sup>23</sup>K. Schumacher, "Deutschland und Europa," in Schumacher, op. cit., p. 247.

Schumacher's main foreign policy concern was the re-unification of Germany, and thus the SPD opposed all governmental policies which seemed to threaten the attainment of this goal. In particular Schumacher condemned the willingness of Adenauer and the CDU to commit the destiny of Germany to the Western powers thereby alienating East Germany, and thus in Schumacher's view jeopardizing the prospects for re-unification. Adenauer and the CDU welcomed the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community and followed a foreign policy of European integration. In 1952 Adenauer signed the European Defense Community (EDC) treaty. Schumacher rejected the treaty as entirely unacceptable. He best expressed his reaction to the EDC treaty when he said: "Whoever approves this treaty ceases to be a German."<sup>24</sup> Schumacher categorically rejected all foreign policy proposals that gained priority over German reunification.<sup>25</sup> In a speech to the Dortmund Party Congress in 1952 he committed the SPD to pursue the goal of German unity in preference to all other foreign policy aims:

Social Democracy considers German unity...to be the national goal of the present. It will reject every attempt to integrate parts of Germany with other nations in preference to the aims of German reunification.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Richard Hiscocks, Democracy in Western Germany, London, Oxford University Press, 1957, p. 83.

<sup>25</sup>Edinger, Schumacher: A Study in Political Behavior, pp. 168-173.

<sup>26</sup>"Aktionsprogramm, 1952," in Mommsen, op. cit., p. 624.

Thus in foreign as well as domestic policy Schumacher committed the SPD to a rigid, dogmatic programme which contrasted sharply with Konrad Adenauer's seemingly broad policies. Unlike Schumacher, Adenauer avoided committing the CDU to concisely defined policy objectives, preferring vague and ambiguous policies which could be broadly interpreted. Adenauer, as Lewis Edinger has put it, showed "great flexibility in adjusting his actions to the immediate demands of a situation."<sup>27</sup> This quality Schumacher lacked entirely. Firmly convinced that Social Democratic policies both in domestic and foreign affairs were the only policies that Germany could pursue without encountering a major economic and political disaster, Schumacher refused to make compromises on any major issue, even in the face of domestic economic and international developments that made his party's position electorally unfeasible.

Schumacher's political intransigence, his insistence that only Social Democratic leadership could bring about the economic and political recovery of Germany, his refusal to co-operate with leaders of all other political parties, were important factors which helped to alienate the SPD from a people who had had enough experience with uncompromising, monocratic political leadership. The SPD was unable to gain the confidence of the German electorate because it showed

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<sup>27</sup> Edinger, Schumacher: A Study in Political Behavior, p. 242.



itself unready to govern. Any aspiring government party must show itself prepared to adopt compromise solutions to difficult problems. The CDU's emergence as a modern bargaining party made it all the more essential for the SPD to dispense with principles and goals that appealed to only a certain segment of the electorate and antagonized other powerful blocs of voters.

The policy of belligerent opposition to the 'bourgeois' government could hardly be expected to attract middle-class voters, who could only have been won over to the SPD if the party had shown itself willing to co-operate with non-socialist parties on such matters as the economic organization of the Federal Republic and foreign policy. Against a background of hostile opposition to the CDU-led government, which had endorsed Ludwig Erhard's free market enterprise system<sup>28</sup> and was engaged in furthering the political and economic integration of Europe, the SPD entered the federal election campaign of 1953. As a categorical opposition party the SPD was not simply trying

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<sup>28</sup>The SPD's fundamental opposition to Erhard's soziale Marktwirtschaft was almost certainly an electoral liability since the CDU claims that Erhard's economic policies were responsible for German economic recovery were widely accepted. The SPD's position with respect to Erhard's soziale Marktwirtschaft was stated by Professor Dr. Eric Nölting: "Die wirtschaftlichen Vorschläge der SPD," in O.K. Flechtheim, Dokumente zur parteipolitischen Entwicklung in Deutschland seit 1945, Berlin, Dokumenten-Verlag Dr. Herbert Wendler, 1963, Vol. III, pp. 48-51.

to persuade voters that it would represent the interests of the voters more faithfully than its competitors. Every opposition party attempts to discredit and replace the government party. The SPD, however, accused the CDU of attempting to weaken parliamentary democracy. It claimed that the CDU was not fit to govern in a political democracy, since it was trying to eliminate parliamentary democratic practices. In his introductory speech to the 1952 Dortmund Party Congress Schumacher accused the government of attempting to destroy parliamentary democracy:

The policy of the government is to try and eliminate the participation of the people....In practice the federal government is trying to destroy parliamentary democracy and to establish the authoritarian administrative state.<sup>29</sup>

Schumacher believed that the CDU had to be defeated in order to ensure that the political catastrophe of Weimar would not be repeated.

Instead of developing into a pragmatic, non-ideological, 'inclusive' political party, the SPD under Schumacher's leadership became tied to a set of Social Democratic policies about which there could be no compromise. Schumacher's influence on the party had the effect of postponing the development of the SPD into a modern pragmatic party, guided primarily by the goal of exercising political power at the federal level.

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<sup>29</sup>"Aktionsprogramm, 1952," in Mommsen, op. cit., p. 623.

The SPD's resounding defeat in the federal elections of 1953 and 1957<sup>30</sup> was in no small part due to the views of most Germans that the SPD was no more than a 'negative' opposition party, and that its unyielding, dogmatic stand on major political issues made it unfit to assume governmental responsibility in a political democracy. There were of course many other factors which contributed to the SPD's electoral defeat-- the personality of Adenauer as against that of Erich Ollenhauer,<sup>31</sup> the success of Erhard's soziale Marktwirtschaft in promoting economic recovery and the success of the CDU in persuading voters of the close association between Soviet communism and German Social Democracy.<sup>32</sup> But above all the German electorate rejected the SPD because it had given no indication during its tenure as major opposition party that it was able to offer constructive and effective political leadership.

The failure of the SPD to gain federal political office reflected the party's failure to adjust itself to the circumstances of post-war Germany. The increased

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<sup>30</sup>See Appendix B.

<sup>31</sup>Schumacher died in 1952. His rather colourless deputy, Erich Ollenhauer, succeeded him as Party Chairman.

<sup>32</sup>One of the CDU election placards reads: "Alle Wege des Marxismus führen nach Moskau." (All paths of Marxism lead to Moscow). See W. Hirsch-Weber and Klaus Schütz, Wähler und Gewählte: Eine Untersuchung der Bundestagswahlen 1953, Berlin, Verlag Vahlen GMBH, 1957, p. 85.

importance of the Roman Catholic voter resulting from the division of Germany meant that a political party, which aimed to win the support of a majority of the German electorate, would have to secure at least the neutrality and preferably the support of the Roman Catholic church. By refusing to renounce decisively its anti-clerical tradition, the SPD was rejected by many church goers, especially Roman Catholics. Konrad Schön, in his pamphlet on the relationship between Christians and the SPD, presents an argument stating that Christianity and Social Democracy are incompatible:

Social democracy...is burdened with a historical tradition which can only produce bitter effects in the memory and thinking of Christians. The SPD even today is not only proud of this tradition but sees in its historical self-consciousness its strength and greatness.

A truly neutral socialism on the model of the British Labour Party seems to be impossible in Germany today, if one thinks of the SPD as its representative. Only by a clear defeat of Marxism in its own ranks will the SPD become a party of the future, capable of attracting Christian voters. Repudiation of Marx...has not yet been achieved. The Christian voter knows where his chance lies -- under no circumstances with the SPD in its present form.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>Konrad Schön, Der Christ und die SPD, Münster, Verlag Theodor Schmitz, 1957, pp. 25-45.

Many Catholic intellectuals and priests<sup>34</sup> re-enforced the public's image of the SPD as an anti-Christian party by their<sup>35</sup> anti-socialist speeches during election campaigns. The Catholic clergy frequently referred to the famous statement of Pope Pius XI in the Quadragesimo anno that the "gap between a Socialist and Christian conception of society is unbridgable."

In the federal election of 1957 the CDU managed to gain an absolute majority of all the votes cast in spite of the system of "personalized proportional representation."<sup>36</sup> An analysis of the 1957 party preferences of major population groupings reveals that the SPD would not be able to replace the CDU as the major government party unless it could substantially improve its image amongst Roman Catholic and female voters.

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<sup>34</sup>Cf, for example, the speech by the Bishop of Münster, Dr. D.R. Michael Keller, "Kann ein Katholik SPD wählen?" In Schön, op. cit., pp. 49-56.

<sup>35</sup>For an account of the political activity of the Catholic church during the 1957 election campaign see U. Kitzinger, German Electoral Politics: A Study of the 1957 Campaign, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1960, pp. 233-236.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., pp. 17-37. Cf. J.K. Pollock, "The Electoral System of the Federal Republic of Germany," American Political Science Review, 1952, Vol. 46, pp. 1056-1068.

Table VI  
RELIGION AND SEX AS FACTORS IN VOTING BEHAVIOUR

<u>Party</u>	<u>Catholics</u>	<u>Protestants</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>
CDU	61%	36%	42%	52%
SPD	18	30	29	21
Other	4	14	11	8
No response	17	20	18	19
	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: A.J. Heidenheimer, The Governments of Germany, New York, Thomas Y. Cromwell, 1961, p. 77.

Table VI suggests that the differences between Catholics and Protestants were not sufficiently strong to prevent the predominantly Catholic CDU from gaining the support of a large percentage of protestant voters. The SPD failed to attract Catholic voters not because of intense ideological cleavages preventing Protestants and Catholics from supporting the same party, but because it refused to renounce explicitly socialist principles and policies which were abhorrent to Catholics. By categorically opposing the major policies of the CDU, Catholic voters were inevitably alienated.

Not only was the SPD's attempt to conciliate Catholic voters a miserable failure,<sup>37</sup> but its campaign to attract non-working class voters was also largely unsuccessful.

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<sup>37</sup>The SPD tried to appeal to Catholic voters by emphasizing that there were prominent Social Democrats such as Helene Wessel who were also Catholics. Nevertheless the SPD continued to attack the Catholic clergy's "theocratic pretensions." Cf. Kitzinger, op. cit., p. 135.

The SPD election programme of 1957 which claimed that the issues dividing the parties were of a non-ideological nature,<sup>38</sup> and which demanded for Germany "free economic development, free competition and private property in the interests of the common good,"<sup>39</sup> was intended to dispel the doubts which the German middle classes had with respect to the economic policies of the SPD. The Social Democratic position on economic policy was, however, unclear. In 1957 the election programme seemed to endorse a system of private enterprise and free competition, but at the same time the success of Erhard's soziale Marktwirtschaft was disputed.<sup>40</sup> In the election programme there was no mention of socialization, but in a resolution adopted at the 1956 Party Congress, the socialization of key industries (Grundstoffindustrien), banks and insurance companies was held to be more urgent than<sup>41</sup> ever before.

The unclarity and ambiguity of the SPD's position on economic policy was hardly likely to appeal to middle class voters who probably felt that the socio-economic status they had achieved under the Adenauer Government might be threatened by the advent of a Social Democratic Government. The results

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<sup>38</sup>"Sicherheit für Alle. Wahlprogramm 1957," in Ossip K. Flechtheim, Dokumente zur Parteipolitischen Entwicklung in Deutschland seit 1945, Dokumenten Verlag Wendler, Berlin, 1963, Vol. 3. p. 147.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 149.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., pp. 149-150.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., pp. 146-147.

of 1957 opinion polls show that the SPD was able to gain substantial support only amongst working-class Germans.

Table VII

## PARTY PREFERENCES OF OCCUPATIONAL GROUPINGS

	<u>SPD</u>	<u>CDU</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>No preference</u>
Professionals,				
Businessmen	12%	55%	19%	14%
Employees, officials	24	45	11	20
Skilled workers	49	33	6	12
Semi-and unskilled workers	43	33	6	18
Farmers	10	55	24	11

Source: Heidenheimer, op. cit., p. 77.

Table VII suggests that the CDU was a Volkspartei, drawing support from all major occupational groups, including skilled and unskilled workers, a third of whom preferred the CDU to any other party. The SPD was favoured strongly only by workers, and its showing among farmers, professionals, and businessmen was particularly poor.

The SPD, by 1957, had made no significant advance from its electoral position of the Weimar period. Just as attempts to broaden the party's electoral appeal had failed to transform the SPD from an aspiring Volkspartei to a genuine Volkspartei in the Weimar period, in the same way had the SPD failed to attract a broad enough cross-section of the population to substantiate the claim made in the 1952 Aktionsprogramm that it had "turned from a working class



party into a people's party."<sup>42</sup> The failure of Weimar Social Democracy to achieve the status of a genuine Volkspartei was, however, due to circumstances beyond the control of SPD leaders. The intense ideological conflicts between different social strata had prevented the Social Democratic leadership from gaining the support of a majority of the electorate. In the early post-1945 period the CDU demonstrated that a pragmatic party could gain substantial support from middle-class and working-class voters, from both Catholics and Protestants. Within the framework of the Weimar political system the SPD had made every effort to transform itself into a Volkspartei and had shown itself ready to co-operate with non-socialist parties in order to share governmental responsibility. In the early post-1945 period the SPD failed to escape from its working-class orientation, not because of the intensity of societal ideological cleavages, but because it chose to follow the "Schumacher course,"<sup>43</sup> thus gaining the reputation of intransigently opposing all governmental policies irrespective of their electoral feasibility.

The electoral defeat of 1957 brought to the fore those in the party -- especially the younger Social Democrats -- who demanded a new fundamental programme of

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<sup>42</sup> "Aktionsprogramm von 1952," in Flechtheim, op. cit., p. 94.

<sup>43</sup> O.K. Flechtheim, Die Deutschen Parteien seit 1945: Quellen und Auszüge, Berlin, Carl Heymanns Verlag KG, 1957, p. 114.

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Social Democratic values and goals. The negative role the party had played in dogmatically and often belligerently opposing all governmental policies was seriously questioned by these 'reformists', who were finally successful in having all of their major demands incorporated into a new fundamental programme in 1959. The three successive electoral defeats lent credence to the view, widely accepted in Germany, that the SPD was doomed to play the role of a permanent, minority opposition party. Leaders within the party realized that the SPD's unfavourable public image could be changed only by convincing the voters that the SPD was not exclusively the party of the working class, that it was not opposed to the private enterprise system, that it was not an anti-clerical, and particularly an anti-Roman Catholic party, and that it was not fundamentally opposed to government efforts at furthering the economic and political integration of Western Europe.

It was in order to escape from its role as a permanent minority opposition party that the Godesberg Grundsatzprogramm (basic party programme)\* was overwhelmingly accepted by the delegates at the Extraordinary Party Congress in 1959.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Thomas Ellwein, Das Regierungssystem der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Köln, Westdeutscher Verlag, 1963, p. 105. See also Chalmers, op. cit., pp. 60-61.

\*A summary of the 1959 Grundsatzprogramm appears in Appendix C.

<sup>45</sup> Only sixteen out of the 340 delegates at the Party Congress voted against the adoption of the programme. See Chalmers, op. cit., p. 66.

The Godesberg Programme was the first SPD programme<sup>46</sup> that contained no theoretical analysis of society. It was the party's only post-war basic programme, and it dispensed completely with the traditional Marxist analysis of society. The name of Marx did not appear once in the new<sup>47</sup> programme.

Many leading Social Democrats, including Willi Eichler and Ulrich Lohmar,<sup>48</sup> had long expressed the view that Social Democracy should not concern itself with all-embracing social theories, but should rather examine modern social and economic problems in the light of modern developments. Lohmar, editor of the Neue Gesellschaft,<sup>49</sup> rejected the Marxist method of analysis, when writing in 1955:

We cannot however conceive of a socialist theory as a permanently binding and internally stable model. It must be the result of a continual comparison between an analysis of society and...values inherent in our work. This comparison will allow us...to determine the ways and means that lead to the realization of socialist goals. Science and theory are not in a position to be able to give answers to the problem concerning the values that society should seek.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>"Grundsatzprogramm" in Jahrbuch, 1958/1959, pp. 373-386.

<sup>47</sup>L.J. Edinger & Douglas A. Chalmers, "Overture or Swan Song: German Social Democracy Prepares for a New Decade," Antioch Review, 1960, Vol. 20. p. 164.

<sup>48</sup>Both Eichler and Lohmar were members of the committee which drafted the new programme. Eichler was also the leader of the committee. See Jahrbuch der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands, 1958/1959, p. 372.

<sup>49</sup>The Neue Gesellschaft is a semi-official theoretical journal of the SPD.

<sup>50</sup>Ulrich Lohmar, "Das Experiment muss weitergehen: Eine Antwort an die Freunde und Kritiker der 'Neuen Gesellschaft'," Neue Gesellschaft, Vol. 2, No. 6, 1955, p. 4.

The rejection of doctrinaire and deterministic social theory and the insistence on the need for continual research and investigation into the prevailing conditions of society seemed to indicate a new pragmatic approach to politics that was in sharp contrast to the course Schumacher had chosen for the party.

Party leaders thus avoided committing the SPD to a fundamental theory but at the same time were not satisfied with merely an Aktionsprogramm (programme of action).<sup>51</sup> Clearly a Grundsatzprogramm would attract great public attention and since the party's new programme was designed primarily with a view to reversing the SPD's unfavourable public image, SPD leaders wished to gain as much publicity as possible for the new style of the party.<sup>52</sup>

The authors of the new programme hoped to create an image of the SPD as a 'modern' non-ideological, pragmatic political party, not only on the basis of their programmatic announcements, but as much on the basis of an omission of traditional Social Democratic theories and goals. Absent in the 'new' programme was any mention of Marx, the class struggle or the destruction of the capitalist system. Gone were all prior demands for socialization.<sup>53</sup> Indeed Erhard's soziale Marktwirtschaft, which had been so vigorously attacked by the "Schumacher SPD" was in principle given Social Democratic

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<sup>51</sup> Chalmers, op. cit., p. 83.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>53</sup> Chalmers, & Edinger, op. cit., p. 164.

blessing:

Free consumer choice and freedom in choosing one's place of work are decisive foundations of Social Democratic economic policy. Free competition and free entrepreneurial initiative are important elements of Social Democratic economic policy. Totalitarian compulsory economics destroys freedom. Therefore the Social Democratic party supports [bejaht] the free market, wherever there is true competition.<sup>54</sup>

The programme carefully avoided the inclusion of all traditional Social Democratic demands thought to be electorally disadvantageous. On the positive side the programme emphasized that socialism is not a Religionsersatz, (substitute for religion), and recommended a 'partnership' between the SPD and the churches. Above all the programme emphasized the 'inclusiveness' of the party (it explicitly rejected the view that its main aim was to represent the interests of the working class). Reviewing the history of the SPD in its struggle to gain improvements in the social-economic conditions of the German working class, the programme claimed that the major demands of the working class had been met, and therefore implied that the class struggle between exploiters and exploited was no longer relevant:

It the socialist movement began as a natural... protest of wage earners against the capitalistic system....

He the proletarian who was at one time the mere exploited object of the ruling class, now takes his place as a citizen of the state with acknowledged equal rights and obligations....

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<sup>54</sup>"Grundsatzprogramm" in Jahrbuch 1958/1959, p.377.

The Social Democratic Party has transformed itself from a working-class party into a party of the people.<sup>55</sup>

The Godesberg Programme does not even recognize workers as a special group or category (such as exploited, the working class or the proletariat) in society. They are now no less and no more than citizens of the state, whose demands the SPD can no longer represent exclusively, since their major demands have all been met. The programme was above all the most serious attempt ever made by the SPD to make German Social Democracy acceptable to a majority of the German electorate. Rather than emphasizing differences between the SPD and its main rival (the CDU) the 'new' programme sought to convince the electorate that a change in government from CDU to SPD would not entail any basic far-reaching changes in the domestic and foreign policy of the Federal Republic. By accepting the 'new' programme the Party Congress took a course which was in direct opposition to the course Schumacher had planned out for the party. Instead of fundamentally and categorically opposing the government on all major issues, the SPD in effect accepted the major policies of the government. The free enterprise system was accepted in principle, the military defense of Germany was recognized as a necessity,<sup>56</sup> 'partnership' between SPD

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<sup>55</sup>"Grundsatzprogramm" in Jahrbuch, 1958/1959, pp. 385-386, my emphasis.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 376.

and churches was recommended and all demands for socialization of industry were dropped.<sup>57</sup>

In a statement concerning the "basic values of socialism," the programme included no values that could not have been included in the party programmes of any of the SPD's rivals:<sup>58</sup>

Freedom, justice and solidarity...are the basic values of the socialist will....

Democratic Socialism, which in Europe is rooted in Christian ethics, humanism and classical philosophy, has no intention of proclaiming final truths -- not through lack of appreciation for or indifference toward Weltanschauungen or religious truths, but because of respect for people's religious decisions, the nature of which should be determined by neither a political party nor the state.<sup>59</sup>

The programme's complete lack of any systematic theoretical interpretation of society and its acquiescence in policies which it had originally opposed strongly, but which it now supported for electoral reasons, suggested a new pragmatic and non-ideological outlook of the SPD. The Godesberg Programme symbolized the "collapse of traditional German Social Democracy."<sup>60</sup>

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., pp. 373-386.

<sup>58</sup>Cf. for example the "Hamburger Programm" of the CDU in Flechtheim, op. cit., Vol. 2, pp. 94-96.

<sup>59</sup>"Grundsatzprogramm" in Jahrbuch 1958/1959, pp. 373-374.

<sup>60</sup>Edinger and Chalmers, op. cit., p. 175.

By adoption of the new programme the SPD admitted that the "Schumacher course" had been a failure. Its intentions were now clearly to transform itself from an opposition into a government party. This could be achieved, reasoned SPD leaders, not by rigidly distinguishing itself from the CDU, but by in fact 'copying' it, by emphasizing that the policies of both parties were really quite similar, only that the SPD would be able to carry out these policies more efficiently and more justly. Thus the SPD hoped to attract particularly those voters who had voted for either the CDU or FDP (Free Democratic Party)<sup>61</sup> because they had been alienated from the SPD by the party's negative oppositionism.

Perhaps the most surprising thing about the Godesbergerprogramm was its acceptance by all but sixteen delegates at the Party Congress. The tradition of party discipline was certainly important in gaining the delegates' approval for the programme, but perhaps more important was the absence in modern Germany of any political party to the 'left' of the SPD.<sup>62</sup> During the Weimar period the SPD could

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<sup>61</sup>Since 1957 the FDP has been the only major 'small' party. See Braunthal, "The Free Democratic Party in West German Politics," Western Political Quarterly, Vol. XIII, June 1960, pp.332-348.

<sup>62</sup>The German Communist Party (KPD) was declared illegal in 1956 by the German Federal Constitutional Court. See Grosser, Die Bonner Demokratie, pp. 125-126.



not make an open move to the 'right' without losing radical supporters to the KPD. The attempt to maintain the unity of the party, which had been a major concern before 1945, was no longer such a serious problem. The radicals in the party could not very well retaliate by threatening to leave the party since they had nowhere to go.

Social Democratic endeavours to win voters from the CDU camp were particularly apparent in the SPD's attempts to overcome the hostility of the Roman Catholic church, and in the changes made in the party's foreign policy. By proclaiming in the Grundsatzprogramm that Social Democracy was no Ersatzreligion (substitute for religion) the SPD sought to allay Catholic fears of socialism. A SPD pamphlet, prepared by Willy Eichler and Waldemar von Knoeringen, attempted to demonstrate that a Catholic could vote for the SPD in "good conscience."<sup>63</sup> Meetings between Catholics and Social Democrats were arranged shortly before the 1961 election. Although these meetings were not entirely successful, from the Social Democratic point of view, they nevertheless had the effect of "calming to a certain extent" Catholic fears of a Social Democratic government.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup>Willy Eichler and Waldemar von Knoeringen, The Catholic and the SPD, Bonn, 1959.

<sup>64</sup>"Günther Gillessen, "Obstacles between Catholics and Social Democrats: The School Question in the Middle," Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, March 9, 1960, p. 2.

In the sphere of foreign policy the SPD made a concerted effort to convince the public that a Social Democratic electoral victory would not endanger the security of Germany. The "Schumacher course" had led the SPD to adopt a neutral foreign policy which involved a rejection of the Adenauer government's close dependence on the Western powers.<sup>65</sup> At the 1960 Party Congress the SPD clearly abandoned its earlier position of neutrality and recognized the necessity of a close alliance between West Germany and the Western powers:

In the conflict between East and West the Federal Republic is unalterably on the side of the West and is a trustworthy ally.<sup>66</sup>

The SPD also abandoned its opposition to the Federal Republic's participation in NATO. It even claimed that the NATO alliance was indispensable to Germany's defense:

The German Federal Republic needs the protection of NATO to which it contributes in loyal fulfilment of its obligation. The western alliance must not one-sidedly be weakened.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> The integration of West Germany into the Western defense system had been repudiated by the SPD on the basis that it would hinder the Social Democratic goal of German reunification. Cf. Henry L. Bretton, "The German Social Democratic Party and the International Situation," American Political Science Review, 1953, Vol. 47, p. 992.

<sup>66</sup> Resolution of the 1960 Hannover Party Congress, in Fritz Sanger, Soziale Demokratie: Bemerkungen zum Grundsatzprogramm der SPD, Hannover, Verlag, J.H.W. Dietz, 1960, p. 160.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 161.

The abandonment of the SPD's policy of neutrality implied that unification of Germany had also been abandoned as a main Social Democratic goal. Party leaders recommended that the SPD would have to concentrate its attention on this state and not on some state of the future.

....We are fighting not against the state, but for the state, and, in fact, not the state of the distant future, not the state only in a reunified Germany, but the state in this Federal Republic, which we want to govern.<sup>68</sup>

The change in the party's foreign policy was just another indication of the increasing pragmatism of the new SPD leaders. If CDU policies had shown themselves to be successful at past elections, the SPD now sought to 'copy' the CDU, hoping thereby to attract voters who felt that "it was time for a change," and that the SPD should be given a chance of exercising governmental responsibility in the interests of political democracy.

The new pragmatism of the post-1959 SPD was not limited only to programmatic changes. A major electoral advantage of the CDU until 1957 was the personality of Konrad Adenauer. Adenauer's popularity with voters was skilfully exploited by the CDU. The 1957 CDU electoral campaign was largely based on Adenauer's personality.

"Adenauer's portrait on the posters, his signature on the

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<sup>68</sup> Protokoll des Parteitages der SPD, 1959, a speech by Fritz Erler, cited in Chalmers, op. cit., p. 102.

letters [letters to voters], his name on all the pamphlets and election addresses," indicates how personalized electoral campaigns had become in the Federal Republic.<sup>69</sup> After the SPD's 1957 electoral defeat many Social Democrats demanded changes in the party leadership. Erich Ollenhauer, who succeeded Schumacher as party chairman in 1952, had been chosen for his administrative skills and his long service in the party organization. He had few qualities that were likely to appeal to voters, and as Kanzlerkandidat (candidate for Chancellor in the Federal Republic) he could hardly be expected to compete successfully with the Adenauer image. Traditionally the individual qualities of SPD leaders had never been emphasized, and there were some Social Democrats who rejected demands for a more popular or charismatic leader:

...in a party in which the majority decisions, taken on a democratic basis, are the highest law, it is in the last analysis a matter of no consequence who is the party chairman. We want no cult of personality in our party.<sup>70</sup>

This attitude did not however represent the views of the majority of leading Social Democrats, who were dissatisfied with the SPD's position as a seemingly permanent opposition party and insisted on selecting an SPD Kanzlerkandidat who would be able to challenge Adenauer as a vote-getter.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup>Kitzinger, op. cit., p. 119, pp. 112-122.

<sup>70</sup>See Der Sozialist (Hamburg), February 1958, cited in Chalmers, op. cit., p. 140.

<sup>71</sup>Chalmers, op. cit., p. 148.

The SPD's nomination of Willy Brandt for the chancellorship in 1960 was perhaps an even more dramatic manifestation of the new pragmatism of the SPD than the adoption of the 1959 Grundsatzprogramm. Brandt was chosen because he was thought to have the type of personality and background that would appeal to new voters. A popular image of Brandt as the young mayor of Berlin had already been created throughout Germany. The SPD sought to exploit Brandt's youth by contrasting him to the aged Adenauer:

The party chose the shooting star [Brandt] over the fixed one [Carlo Schmid] in order to exploit the existing wave of sympathy with the 44-year-old Berlin mayor, as well as take advantage of whatever doubts there might be about the 85-year-old chancellor. <sup>72</sup>

The pursuit of electoral victory as the primary party goal meant that the SPD not only changed the character of its leadership at the Parteispitzen ("party peaks") but at all levels of the party organization. <sup>73</sup>

The SPD's concern with electoral victory led to the party's acceptance of the need for leaders who could attract normally CDU voters; it also encouraged the party to make a more direct attempt at gaining middle-class support. In 1953 a national group of independent businessmen

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<sup>72</sup>Loc. cit..

<sup>73</sup>Kitzinger has shown that successful party campaigners are replacing party functionaries in all major SPD positions. Kitzinger, op. cit., pp. 60-79. Cf. Chalmers, op. cit., pp. 156-161.

(Arbeitsgemeinschaft selbständige Schaffenden) was formed at the instigation of the SPD executive.<sup>74</sup> In 1959 the party executive tried to encourage the activities of this middle-class organization and provided certain Leitsätze (guiding principles) which were intended to clarify the function of this group. The tasks of the Arbeitsgemeinschaft selbständige Schaffenden are:

- a. to spread the knowledge and influence of Social Democratic opinions among members of the middle classes in all spheres, in their technical associations, professional organizations, etc.;
- b. to discuss in their meetings the special economic and social problems which concern members of the middle classes;
- c. to strengthen the understanding of middle-class problems in the party and to increase the interest in those Social Democratic policies which concern the middle classes.<sup>75</sup>

The concern of the party leadership to present a new image of the SPD after 1959 led to the SPD's condemnation of the Socialist German Student Federation (SDS). The SDS, which was opposed to the SPD's new 'opportunism' criticized the party's acceptance of Adenauer's foreign policies and,

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<sup>74</sup>This was only one of many special purpose groups sponsored by the party executive. These advisory groups were supposed to "give attention to certain tasks in order to exercise a stronger influence within particular social groups." See Jahrbuch der SPD, 1956/1957, pp. 342-343.

<sup>75</sup>Jahrbuch der SPD, 1958/1959, p. 457. Cf. Chalmers, op. cit., p. 172.

harking back to the "Schumacher course," recommended a more flexible West German policy concerning East Germany. Since SPD leaders were trying to convince the public that Social Democratic foreign policy was identical to Christian Democratic foreign policy it explicitly rejected the proposals of the SDS and formally disavowed the organization in 1960.<sup>76</sup>

By 1960 the SPD was no longer "Schumacher's party," It had abandoned unpopular domestic and foreign policies, adopted a non-absolutist ideological position and chosen popular leaders. Since 1959 leading Social Democrats have made decisions almost entirely on the basis of their anticipated electoral consequences, and by 1960 the SPD had been transformed into a modern pragmatic party. The development of the SPD as a modern pragmatic party took place because leading Social Democrats were dissatisfied with the SPD's role as an apparently permanent opposition party. It was argued in Chapter I that modern pragmatic parties are unlikely to develop in societies which are characterized by intense inter-group ideological cleavages. The success of the CDU in attracting support from all major population groups\* seemed to indicate that ideological

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<sup>76</sup>A new student socialist organization the Sozialistische Hochschulbund (SHB) was sponsored by the SPD in 1960. See Chalmers, op. cit., p. 175.

\*See tables VI and VII.

cleavages between working-class and middle-class voters, Catholics and Protestants, were less intense in the Federal Republic than in pre-1933 Germany. The tendency toward a two-party system<sup>77</sup> in the Federal Republic also seemed to suggest a reduction in the intensity of ideological cleavages.

After the CDU's great electoral victory of 1957 leading Social Democrats realized that a SPD electoral victory would be possible only by 'copying' the CDU, by convincing the electorate that a change from a Christian Democratic to a Social Democratic government would involve no fundamental changes in the domestic or foreign policies of West Germany. The 1961 federal election was the first election in which Social Democratic candidates emphasized the similarities between the SPD and the CDU. It was the first federal election in which the SPD acted as a pragmatic political party; it was also the first post-war federal election which brought the SPD the support of more than one-third of the electorate. The election was interpreted

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<sup>77</sup> There has been a consistent decline in the electoral position of minor parties since 1949 and this is shown by the percentage of the total vote gained by the two major parties (SPD and CDU) combined, in federal elections:

	1949	1953	1957	1961	1965
<u>CDU/CSU &amp; SPD</u>	60%	74%	82%	82%	87%



by many observers as an important "breakthrough" for  
<sup>78</sup>  
 the SPD.

Table VIII

## A COMPARISON OF THE 1957 AND 1961 ELECTION RESULTS

<u>Party</u>	1957 Election			1961 Election		
	<u>Votes*</u>	<u>Per cent</u>	<u>Seats</u>	<u>Votes*</u>	<u>Per cent</u>	<u>Seats</u>
CDU	15.0	50.2	270	14.9	45.4	242
SPD	9.5	31.8	169	11.9	36.2	190
FDP	2.3	7.7	41	4.3	12.8	67
Other	3.1	10.3	17	1.8	5.6	-
	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	29.9	100.0	497	32.9	100.0	499
	—	—	—	—	—	—

\* in millions

Source: Barnes, op. cit., p. 906 and Mommsen, op. cit., p.797.

Table VIII reveals that the SPD improved its electoral position significantly in 1961 while its main rival, the CDU, was unable to retain its absolute majority and lost twenty-eight seats. Klaus Eberlin has also shown that support for the SPD had been increased at the direct expense of the CDU.

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<sup>78</sup>Samuel H. Barnes and others, "The German Party System and the 1961 Federal Election," American Political Science Review, 1962, Vol. 56, pp.905-906.

Table IX  
TRANSFERAL OF PARTY VOTE, 1957 TO 1961

	At the 1961 Federal election voted:		
	SPD	CDU	FDP
	Percentage		
Had voted at 1957 Federal election:			
SPD	77.5	3.0	7.0
CDU	9.5	87.0	40.0
FDP	3.0	0.5	33.0
Other parties	0.5	3.0	7.0
No answer	9.5	6.5	13.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Klaus D. Eberlin, "Die Wahlentscheidung vom 17. September 1961: Ihre Ursachen und Wirkung," Zeitschrift für Politik, 1962, Vol. 9, p. 255.

Table IX reveals that ten per cent of the voters who had chosen the CDU in the 1957 election transferred their support to the SPD while only three per cent of the voters who chose the SPD in 1957 transferred their support to the CDU.

Although the 1961 election results suggest that the new pragmatism of the SPD had paid off electorally, the results of a 1961 EMNID-Institute election survey indicate that the new style of the SPD was not very convincing to a large proportion of the German electorate.

Table X

## ATTITUDE OF THE PUBLIC TOWARD THE MAJOR PARTIES

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A representative national sample of West Germans was asked the following question. "Do you believe that the CDU and SPD have lately come closer to each other, or do you think that nothing has changed, or that the differences [between the parties] have increased?"

	<u>Oct. 1960</u> Per cent
CDU & SPD have drawn closer together	33
Nothing has changed	47
Differences have increased	10
No answer	10
	—
Total	100
	—

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Source: Eberlin, op. cit., p. 244.

Table X indicates that a large proportion of the German electorate had not been successfully persuaded that the SPD had 'changed'. It seems that many Germans were suspicious of the real intentions of the SPD leadership, and felt that older party members would hold up any really new developments or suspected that the many years of opposition to the government made the SPD untrustworthy.

Table XI  
GERMAN ATTITUDES TO THE 'NEW' SPD

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A representative national sample of West Germans was asked the following question. "With which opinion would you most readily agree?"

	<u>April 1961</u> per cent
The SPD has freed itself from the past and is on the way towards becoming a true <u>Volkspartei</u> . . .	24
The new spirit which has been created in the SPD is all very well but there will still be great conflicts with old party people before anything really new comes into being . . .	26
The SPD's new course is not to be trusted, the many years of opposition make the SPD untrustworthy; [the party] . . . pretends to want something new; once power has been achieved [the party] . . . will fall back into the old ways . . .	25
The SPD is untrustworthy ( <u>unheimlich</u> ); there are so many earlier communists within its ranks . . .	9
No replies . . .	16
Total	100

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Source: Eberlin, op. cit., p. 244.

The results of the EMNID-Institute survey of the 1961 election suggest that in 1961 many Germans were still dubious about the 'trustworthiness' of the 'new' SPD. Many Germans still had to be convinced that the SPD was on the road to becoming a genuine Volkspartei.

The failure of the SPD to 'persuade' a large part of the German electorate that it had 'changed' encouraged many of the party radicals -- especially older party members -- to demand a return to a more orthodox, Marxist programme and to a policy of 'opposing' rather than 'copying' the CDU. Most of the leading Social Democrats have however rejected all such demands and have continued to pursue the goal of electoral victory in preference to all other goals. The pragmatism of the SPD has gone so far that the party has even been criticized for offering policies which are indistinguishable from CDU policies, for not offering any "great political alternatives and for refraining from effective opposition."<sup>79</sup> Karl Dietrich Brucher has argued convincingly that the pragmatization of the major German parties has gone so far that they are approaching the "American-type platform party."<sup>80</sup>

Since both the CDU and the SPD are pragmatic parties competing for political power within the framework of a two-party system it seems likely that both parties will offer voters very similar programmes. The political future of the SPD will depend on its success in persuading voters that it is 'better' than the CDU.

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<sup>79</sup>Karl Dietrich Brucher, "Chancellor Democracy and the Party State," An unpublished paper delivered at the 1965 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, p. 11.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

The results of the EMNID-Institute survey suggest that more than half of the German electorate were pleased that the CDU's absolute majority in parliament had been broken by the 1961 election results.<sup>81</sup> This suggests that the party's main strategy for the future might be to emphasize the necessity of breaking the CDU's monopoly on governmental power in the interests of political democracy in the German Federal Republic.

In spite of the SPD's new pragmatism and its open attempt to gain substantial middle-class support, the party has not yet assumed the characteristics of a genuine Volkspartei, that is it has not managed to gain wide electoral support from all major groupings. The bulk of Catholic voters still prefer the CDU to the SPD. There are however certain indications suggesting that the traditional hostility between the SPD and the Catholic clergy is becoming less intense and that Catholics can be won over to the SPD. In the Federal election of 1965 the SPD substantially improved its electoral showing in many of the Catholic Länder at the expense of the CDU. In the Saar, the most predominantly Catholic Land in the Federal Republic (73.4 per cent Catholic population), the SPD increased its percentage of the total vote by 6.3 while the CDU lost 2.2 per cent of its vote.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup>Eberlin, op. cit., p. 253.

<sup>82</sup>"Wahlen Analyse," Der Spiegel, 29. September 1965, No. 40, p. 37. Cf. also E.K. Scheuch, "Wachsender Wohlstand hilft der SPD," Der Spiegel, 13. October 1965, No. 42, pp. 47-49.

Although it is not reasonable to make any predictions on the basis of the results of the most recent federal election, it does seem likely that the SPD will continue on its present pragmatic course and that it will assume the characteristics of a genuine Volkspartei in the foreseeable future.

## Chapter V

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The Social Democratic Party of Germany originated as a social-movement party. Originally its aims were to provide a better life for the German industrial proletariat. Political and social change rather than political power was the SPD's original goal. The SPD's absolutist ideology -- as expressed in the 1891 Erfurterprogramm -- emphasized the distinctiveness and aloofness of German Social Democracy from the prevailing political order; it was also almost entirely based on the Marxist interpretation of history. The SPD preached revolution but rejected Marxism as a prescriptive dogma; it practised reform. It was shown that the incompatibility of Social Democratic theory and practice reflected the co-existence of two fairly distinctive wings within the SPD -- Reformists and radicals. The reformists tended to accept the legitimacy of the political system and were content with gradual reforms which improved the living conditions of German workers. They tended to emphasize the importance of parliamentary legislation, the work of the trade unions, and generally the positive role German Social Democracy could play within the institutional framework of the state. The radicals on the other hand tended to argue that Marxist prescriptions were relevant to German social and political



conditions. They refused to accord legitimacy to the prevailing political system and sought to establish the "dictatorship of the proletariat."

As was shown in Chapter Two many of the reformists were dissatisfied with the political isolation of German Social Democracy, demanded a more positive parliamentary role for the SPD, criticized the practice of "pure opposition" and insisted that the absolutist party ideology be exchanged for a more moderate, 'relativist' ideology. The radicals on the other hand resisted all efforts at modifying Social Democratic ideology, remained unconvinced that Social Democratic goals were attainable through parliamentary activity and continued to rely on the social prognostications of Karl Marx.

The evolution of the SPD from movement-party to aspiring Volkspartei was directly related to the increasing influence wielded by reformists on the party leadership. The decision to enter into an electoral alliance with "bourgeois" parties in the 1912 election indicated the extent to which party leaders were prepared to subject considerations of party principle to the goal of expanding the influence of Social Democracy within the state. The Mannheim resolution of 1906 emphasized the extent of the trade unions' influence on the party leadership.<sup>1</sup> In spite

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<sup>1</sup>The trade-union movement acted as one of the most important reformist influences on the SPD.

of the strength of reformism in the SPD, party leaders rejected all demands for a 'revision' of Social Democratic theory in the pre-1914 period. By maintaining the party's absolutist ideology on the one hand and by engaging in reformist rather than radical activity on the other the SPD leadership hoped to avoid a disruption in party unity.

The relationship between reformists and radicals became increasingly strained after 1906 as the latter saw that there was virtually no correspondence between Social Democratic theory and practice. The reformists were scorned as opportunists who sought political power by abandoning SPD principles and by adopting strategies which were designed to appeal to non-working-class voters.

The political isolation of the SPD was the major factor which gave German Social Democracy its character as a movement-party. By seeking to extend the influence of Social Democracy in the state the reformists indicated that they were dissatisfied with the SPD's status as a movement-party.

By abandoning the Social Democratic principle of "pure opposition" Social Democratic leaders recognized that the interests of the SPD could be served by the state. Social Democratic support for the 1913 military tax bill suggested that the reformists had won their battle with the radicals; more important, it indicated that the majority of Social Democratic leaders were prepared to abandon the

SPD's traditional policy of intransigent opposition to the government and to the state. By 1913 the original goal of fundamentally changing the political and social order had been replaced by the goal of gaining political power within the existing state. The transition from movement-party to aspiring Volkspartei was marked by the desire of many Social Democrats to gain acceptance as first-class citizens of the state. By abandoning the policy of "pure opposition" the SPD leadership sought both to expand the parliamentary influence of Social Democracy and to gain 'respectability' for their party. The SPD supported the military tax bill of 1913 in order to demonstrate that it had a 'positive' role to play within the existing state and because the bill was popular not only with working-class voters but with a majority of the electorate. By supporting a widely popular measure the SPD hoped to escape from its exclusively working-class orientation and to attract the support of non-working class voters.

In the 1914-1933 period the SPD abandoned conclusively its traditional hostility to the state, and concentrated on the intermediate goal of broadening the social basis of the party in the interests of electoral victory. By supporting the German war effort and by accepting the Burgfrieden Social Democrats acknowledged

that their interests lay entrenched in the state, and emphasized the respectability of their party. The victory of the reformists over the radicals resulted in the formation of the USPD which professed strict adherence to the Erfurterprogramm and condemned the opportunism of the SPD. The negative role played by the SPD in the November Revolution indicated the extent to which the SPD had accepted the legitimacy of the Monarchical political system.

The behaviour of the SPD in early Weimar Germany lent credence to the view that the major aim of German Social Democracy was to exercise political power within the framework of the newly established Weimar Republic. The SPD hoped both to establish the safety of the new republic by suppressing all revolutionary activity in the early Weimar days, and to gain support from middle-class Germans by emphasizing its moderation and non-revolutionary temperament. By reducing the Workers' Councils to impotence -- by replacing them with economic, or factory councils -- the SPD sought to allay middle-class fears of a comprehensive scheme of socialization. Many prominent Social Democratic spokesmen openly questioned the desirability of socializing the means of production, and argued that Germany could not afford "costly experiments." It was argued that the reluctance of leading Social Democrats to establish a socialist republic was related to the SPD's attempt at gaining the confidence of middle-class voters. By collaborating with

non-socialist parties in coalition governments the SPD sought to demonstrate that it was ready to assume governmental responsibility. The SPD's adoption of the non-Marxist Görlitz Programme in 1921 was an obvious appeal to middle-class voters. By modifying its ideology, by rejecting demands for extensive socialization of industries and by collaborating with bourgeois parties in coalition governments the SPD tried to escape from the limitations of an exclusively working-class orientation. The major goal of Weimar Social Democracy was to gain the over-all responsibility for government. This goal could be achieved only by transforming the SPD into a genuine Volkspartei -- by gaining the support of most of the electorally significant groups in society.

It was argued in Chapter Three that the SPD failed to achieve its objective for reasons that were largely beyond its control. The failure to attract a substantial section of the middle-class vote and the existence of the German Communist Party, which competed with the SPD for working-class votes, obliged Social Democratic leaders to appeal more directly to German workers. The return to an absolutist ideology -- as expressed in the Heidelberg Programme of 1925 -- was a consequence of the polarization of political life in Weimar Germany. Since the SPD had no certain prospects of gaining middle-class support by moderating its stand on

political and economic questions it had to concern itself with the difficult task of maintaining the loyalty of working-class supporters. The re-unification of the SPD and USPD in 1922 also had the effect of reintroducing into the SPD a strong radical wing which opposed all efforts by leading Social Democrats to broaden the electoral appeal of the party.

The SPD failed to transform itself into a genuine Volkspartei and into a majority government party mainly because middle-class voters refused to come to the support of a party which was known to derive most of its support from the proletariat. The class-consciousness of middle-class voters precluded any Weimar political party from gaining the support of all major social groups. The egalitarian ethic of German Social Democracy could not be expected to appeal to voters who prided themselves above all on their prestige as non-working class members of society. The SPD failed to secure its objectives in Weimar Germany because it could find no basis on which to attract both working-class and middle-class voters. Ideological cleavages were too great to allow one political party to represent the interests of all major social groups.

In the early post-1945 period the SPD emerged as a categorical opposition party. Under Schumacher's leadership the SPD categorically opposed the policies of all competing parties. The SPD's categorical opposition to all "bourgeois"

parties was based on Schumacher's belief that the SPD had made a serious error by co-operating with non-socialist parties in Weimar Germany, and that only by intransigently opposing the "anti-democratic" parties could the SPD win the confidence of the electorate. After the SPD's electoral defeat of 1945 the SPD did not abandon the "Schumacher course" but rather intensified its policy of categorical opposition to the new government parties. A comparison of the position taken by the CDU (the major government party) and the SPD revealed that the latter opposed all the major domestic and foreign policies advocated by the former.

The CDU, under Adenauer's leadership, pursued the goal of European political and economic integration, committed Germany to the "Western" alliance, and, under Ludwig Erhard's guidance, re-established the economy on the basis of a free enterprise system. Schumacher's SPD on the other hand opposed both the movement towards European political integration, and government policies that made West Germany dependent on the "West" for economic and military support. 'Neutrality,' Schumacher argued, was the foreign policy which would be adopted by a government that had the interests of the whole of Germany at heart. Rearmament, which was recommended by the Adenauer government, was also strongly condemned by the SPD. Erhard's soziale Marktwirtschaft (social market economy) was strongly opposed by SPD leaders who advocated the socialization of key industries, and a more equitable distribution of wealth.

The electoral defeats of 1953 and 1957 caused many leading Social Democrats to openly question the merits of the "Schumacher course." The fear that the SPD was destined to play the role of permanent minority opposition party led party leaders to call for a general re-appraisal of the party's position in the Federal Republic.

The adoption of the Godesbergerprogramm in 1959 marked the transition of the SPD from categorical opposition party to modern pragmatic party. By adopting a 'relativist' ideological position the SPD hoped to escape from its public image as the party of the German working class. Social Democratic leaders were able to dispense with the SPD's absolutist ideology because they did not have to compete against left-wing parties for working-class votes. The success of the CDU in attracting a large proportion of working-class voters suggested that by 'copying' the CDU the SPD might gain more support not only from middle-class but also from working-class voters. By 1960 the majority of leading Social Democrats regarded electoral victory as the primary goal of the SPD. This meant that the party had to effectively abandon the "Schumacher course" and change its unfavourable public image. The selection of Willy Brandt as the SPD's Kanzlerkandidat in 1960 epitomized the new pragmatism of the SPD; it suggested that the SPD was prepared to subject all ideological considerations to the goal of electoral victory.



Although the SPD managed to make a 'breakthrough'<sup>2</sup> in the federal election of 1961, it nevertheless failed to replace the CDU as major government party. This encouraged the radicals in the party to call for a more orthodox socialist programme and to demand a repudiation of the 'opportunistic' Godesbergerprogramm. The results of the EMNID-Institute election survey revealed that a high proportion of the German electorate refused to believe that the SPD had 'changed' significantly since 1959. This also encouraged the radicals to argue that political power could never be attained by 'copying' the bourgeois parties. They argued that only by educating the masses to socialism and by waiting for the 'inevitable' economic collapse of the capitalistic economy could the SPD come to power.

The great majority of leading Social Democrats ignored the arguments of the radical minority and continued to try and persuade middle-class voters that a change from a Christian Democratic to a Social Democratic government would entail no major changes in German domestic and foreign policy. They were able to do so because they did not have to compete for working-class votes with extreme left-wing parties. The lack of intense ideological cleavages, the absence of extremist political parties and the emerging two-party system enabled the SPD to concentrate all its energies

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<sup>2</sup>It broke through the "one third barrier" by which the SPD had been unable to gain more than one third of the votes cast in national elections since 1919.

on replacing the major government party by appealing for support to middle-class voters.

Anthony Downs has argued that a political party which is drastically defeated at the polls will attempt to change in order to resemble that party which was electorally successful:

Political parties tend to maintain ideological positions that are consistent over time unless they suffer drastic defeats, in which case they change their ideologies to resemble that of the party which defeated them.<sup>3</sup>

The post-war political behavior of the SPD certainly seems to bear out Downs' hypothesis. Since 1959 the SPD has attempted to gain political power by copying the CDU. But Downs' hypothesis is not borne out by the experience of the SPD in the latter part of the Weimar period. The SPD did not change its ideology in order to make it resemble the ideology of the NSDAP after the 'drastic' electoral defeat of July 1932.<sup>4</sup> Where the inter-party ideological cleavages are very intense, or so fundamental that they concern the very nature of the political regime, defeated parties will not necessarily modify their ideological positions.

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<sup>3</sup>Anthony Downs, An Economic Theory of Democracy, New York, Harper and Row, 1957, p. 300.

<sup>4</sup>In the 1930 election the SPD had gained 24.5 per cent of the vote compared to the NSDAP's 18.3 per cent. In the election of July 1932 the SPD polled only 21.6 per cent of the total vote compared to the NSDAP's 37.4 per cent.

The SPD was able to adopt the Godesbergerprogramm in 1959 because all major competing political parties accepted the legitimacy of the prevailing political system, because economic prosperity of all social groups had reduced the intensity of inter group ideological cleavages,<sup>5</sup> because a consistent tendency toward a two-party system had manifested itself, and because ideological cleavages between different social groups were less intense than they had ever been at any previous period in modern German history.

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<sup>5</sup>David Potter has argued convincingly that increasing abundance is likely to reduce the intensity of ideological cleavages between social groups. David M. Potter, People of Plenty, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1954, passim.

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## APPENDIX A

## THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC VOTE IN REICHSTAG ELECTIONS, 1877-1933

<u>Election</u>	<u>Percentage of total vote</u>	<u>Seats</u>
1877	9.1	12
1878	7.5	9
1881	6.1	12
1884	9.7	24
1887	7.1	11
1890	19.7	35
1893	23.3	44
1898	27.2	56
1903	31.7	81
1907	29.0	43
1912	34.8	110
1919	37.9	163
1920	21.6	102
1924 (May)	20.5	100
1924 (Dec.)	26.0	131
1928	29.8	153
1930	24.5	143
1932 (July)	21.6	133
1932 (Nov.)	20.4	121
1933	18.3	120

Source: Mommsen, op. cit., pp. 790-796.

## APPENDIX B

THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC VOTE IN POST 1945  
FEDERAL ELECTIONS

<u>Election</u>	<u>Percentage of total vote</u>	<u>Seats</u>
1949	29.2	131
1953	28.8	151
1957	31.8	169
1961	36.2	190

Source: Mommsen, op. cit., p.797 and Barnes, op. cit., p. 906

## APPENDIX C

## EXCERPTS FROM THE CODESBERG PROGRAMME

Socialists aim to establish a society in which every individual can develop his personality and, as a responsible member of the community, take part in the political, economic and cultural life of mankind.

Freedom and justice are interdependent, since the dignity of man rests on his claim to individual responsibility just as much as on his acknowledgement of the right of others to develop their personality and, as equal partners, help shape society.

Freedom, justice and solidarity, which are everyone's obligation towards his neighbours and spring from our common humanity, are the fundamental values of Socialism.

Democratic Socialism, which in Europe is rooted in Christian ethics, humanism and classical philosophy, does not proclaim ultimate truths -- not because of any lack of understanding for or indifference to philosophical or religious truths, but out of respect for the individual's choice in these matters of conscience in which neither the state nor any political party should be allowed to interfere.

The Social Democratic Party is the party of freedom of thought. It is a community of men holding different beliefs and ideas. Their agreement is based on the moral principles and political aims they have in common. The Social Democratic Party strives for a way of life in accordance with these principles. Socialism is a constant task -- to fight for freedom and justice, to preserve them and to live up to them.

... We are fighting for democracy. Democracy must become the universal form of state organization and way of life because it is founded on respect for the dignity of man and his individual responsibility.

We resist every dictatorship, every form of totalitarian or authoritarian rule because they violate human dignity, destroy man's freedom and rule of law. Socialism can be realized only through democracy and democracy can only be fulfilled through Socialism.

Communists have no right to invoke Socialist traditions. In fact, they have falsified Socialist ideas. Socialists are struggling for the realization of freedom and



justice while Communists exploit the conflicts in society to establish the dictatorship of their party....

The Social Democratic Party affirms its adherence to democracy. In a democracy the power of the state is derived from the people and the government is always responsible to Parliament whose confidence it must possess. In a democracy the rights of the minority as well as the rights of the majority must be respected; government and opposition have different tasks of equal importance; both share in the responsibility for the state.

The Social Democratic Party aims to win the support of the majority of the people by competing under equal conditions with other democratic parties in order to build a society and a state that accord with the essential demands of democratic Socialism....

...The Social Democratic Party affirms the need to defend the free democratic society. It is in favour of national defence.

National defence must be adapted to the political and geographical position of Germany and therefore stay within the limits imposed by the necessity of creating the conditions for an easing of international tensions, for effectively controlled disarmament and for the reunification of Germany. Protection of the civilian population is an essential part of a country's defence....

...Free choice of consumer goods and services, free choice of working place, freedom for employers to exercise their initiative as well as free competition are essential conditions of a Social Democratic economic policy. The autonomy of trade unions and employers' associations in collective bargaining is an important feature of a free society. Totalitarian control of the economy destroys freedom. The Social Democratic Party therefore favours a free market wherever free competition really exists. Where a market is dominated by individuals or groups, however, all manner of steps must be taken to protect freedom in the economic sphere. As much competition as possible -- as much planning as necessary....

Private ownership of the means of production can claim protection by society as long as it does not hinder the establishment of social justice.

Efficient small and medium sized enterprises are to be strengthened to enable them to prevail in competition with large-scale enterprises.

Competition by public enterprise is an important means of preventing private enterprise from dominating the market. Public enterprise should safeguard the interests of the community as a whole. It becomes a necessity where, for natural or technical reasons, economic functions vital to the community cannot be carried out in a rational way except by excluding competition.

Enterprises which are built upon a voluntary collective basis and whose purpose it is to satisfy demand rather than earn private profits help to regulate prices and serve the interests of the consumer. They perform a valuable function in a democratic society and should be supported....

The principles of Social Democratic economic policy apply also to agriculture. The structure of agriculture, however, and its dependence on uncontrollable forces of nature call for special measures.

The farmer is entitled to own his land. Efficient family holdings should be protected by modern laws on land tenure and leases....

Only mutual tolerance which respects the dignity of all men regardless of differences in belief and conviction, offers a sound basis for political and human co-operation in society.

Socialism is no substitute for religion. The Social Democratic Party respects churches and religious societies. It affirms their public and legal status, their special mission and their autonomy.

It is always ready to co-operate with the churches on the basis of a free partnership. It welcomes the fact that men are moved by their religious faith to acknowledge their social obligation and their responsibilities towards society.

Freedom of thought, of religion and of conscience, and freedom to preach the gospel must be protected. Any abuse of this freedom for partisan or anti-democratic ends cannot be tolerated....

Democratic Socialism has always stood for international co-operation and solidarity. At a time when all interests and relationships are internationally linked, no nation can any longer solve its political, economic, social and cultural problems by itself. The Social Democratic Party is guided by the realization that the cultural, economic, legal and military tasks of German politics must be solved in close co-operation with other peoples....

...The emancipation of the workers helped to enlarge the freedom of all men. From a party of the working class the Social Democratic Party has become a party of the people. It is determined to put the forces unleashed by the industrial revolution and the advance of technology in all spheres of life to the service of freedom and justice for all. The social forces which built the capitalist world cannot tackle this task. Their historical record is one of impressive technical and economic advance, but also of destructive wars, mass unemployment, inflation which robbed people of their savings, and economic insecurity. The old forces are unable to oppose the brutal Communist challenge with a better programme for a new society, in which individual and political freedom is enhanced, and economic security and social justice guaranteed.

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Source: J.S. Schapiro, Movement of Social Dissent in Modern Europe, Princeton, New Jersey, D. Van Nostrand, 1962, pp. 176-181.