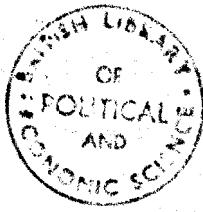


THE KPD AND THE NSDAP:  
A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POLITICAL EXTREMES

IN WEIMAR GERMANY, 1923-1933

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ABSTRACT

The German Communist Party's response to the rise of the Nazis was conditioned by its complicated political environment which included the influence of Soviet foreign policy requirements, the party's Marxist-Leninist outlook, its organizational structure and the democratic society of Weimar.

Relying on the Communist press and theoretical journals, documentary collections drawn from several German archives, as well as interview material, and Nazi, Communist opposition and Social Democratic sources, this study traces the development of the KPD's tactical orientation towards the Nazis for the period 1923-1933. In so doing it complements the existing literature both by its extension of the chronological scope of enquiry and by its attention to the tactical requirements of the relationship as viewed from the perspective of the KPD.

It concludes that for the whole of the period, KPD tactics were ambiguous and reflected the tensions between the various competing factors which shaped the party's policies.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
ABBREVIATIONS	4
INTRODUCTION	7
CHAPTER I	24
CHAPTER II	67
CHAPTER III	124
CHAPTER IV	166
CHAPTER V	223
CHAPTER VI	273
CONCLUSIONS	307
APPENDIX I	333
APPENDIX II	335
BIBLIOGRAPHY	341

## ABBREVIATIONS

## 1. Political Parties and Organizations

ADGB	Allgemeiner Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund
ASPD	Altsozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands
BVG	Berliner Verkehrs-Gesellschaft
CPSU CPSU(B)	Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolshevik)
DNVP	Deutsch-nationale Volkspartei
DVFP	Deutschvölkische Freiheitspartei
DVP	Deutsche Volkspartei
EKKI	Exekutivkomitee der Kommunistischen Internationale
EVMB	Einheitsverband der Metallarbeiter
Gestapo	Geheime Staatspolizei
HJ	Hitlerjugend
IAH	Internationale Arbeiterhilfe
KAPD	Kommunistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands
KgdF	Kampfbund gegen den Faschismus
KGRNS	Kampfgemeinschaft Revolutionärer Nationalsozialisten
KJD KJVD	Kommunistischer Jugendverband Deutschlands
KPD	Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands
KPO	Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (Opposition)
NSBO	Nationalsozialistische Betriebszellenorganisation
NSDAP	Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei
RFB	Roter Frontkämpfverbund

RGI	Rote Gewerkschafts-Internationale
RGO	Revolutionärer Gewerkschaftsopposition
SA	Sturm-Abteilung der NSDAP
SAJ	Sozialistische Arbeiter-Jugend
SAP	Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands
SS	Schutz-Staffel der NSDAP
USDP	Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands
ZK	Zentralkomitee

## 2. Sources

### (a) Archives

AA	Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes
APA	Akten der Politische Abteilung
BHA	Bundeshauptarchiv
BHSA	Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv
BRM	„Büro des Reichsminister
HSA Düss.	Hauptstaatsarchiv Düsseldorf
I.I.v.S.G.	Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis
Lgb	Lagebericht
NSSA	Niedersächsisches Staatsarchiv
KP	Kommunistische Personalien
M	„München
NNF	„Nürnberg/Furth
PA	Politische Akten
Pd	Polizeidirektion

Pp	<b>Polizeipräsidium</b>
RDP RP	<b>Regierung Düsseldorf-Polizei</b>
RMI	<b>Reichsminister des Innern</b>
R.ko.	<b>Reichskommissar für die Überwachung der Öffentlichen Ordnung</b>

**(b) Newspapers and Journals**

AF	<b>Antifaschistische Front</b>
AP	<b>Arbeiterpolitik</b>
BZG	<b>Beiträge zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung</b>
GdS	<b>Gegen den Strom</b>
I	<b>Die Internationale</b>
INGPK	<b>Internationale Gewerkschafts-Presskorrespondenz</b>
Inprekorr	<b>Internationale Presse-Korrespondenz</b>
KI	<b>Die Kommunistische Internationale</b>
RA	<b>Der Rote Aufbau</b>
RF	<b>Die Rote Fahne</b>
RGI	<b>Die Rote Gewerkschafts Internationale</b>
RSD	<b>RSD-Mitteilungsblatt der Russischen Sozial Demokratie</b>
SDPK	<b>Sozialdemokratische Partei-Korrespondenz</b>
SR	<b>Sozialistische Republik</b>
VB	<b>Völkischer Beobachter</b>

## INTRODUCTION

This study examines the relationship which developed between the German Communist Party (KPD) and the German National Socialist Workers' Party (NSDAP). The focus is on the KPD and the strategic and tactical perspectives which were evolved between 1923 and 1933 to govern the party's relations with the Nazis. The argument establishes that these relations were complicated; that they contained tensions as between the KPD's overall objectives and the exigencies of its life as a party under Weimar. The tension was expressed as tactical ambiguity and for the various reasons which are explored in the pages which follow, the KPD's response to the NSDAP contained elements of co-operation as well as competition. As it is developed below, this argument is sufficiently distinct in its emphasis, scope and conclusions to justify the separate treatment.

However modest its aims, no enquiry into Weimar politics and history can entirely free itself from the profound general problems of interpretation which the subject raises. The need to assign a more certain place to the 1933 disaster in German and Western history is still compelling. If only by implication, therefore, general questions concerning the reasons for the collapse of Weimar are bound to impinge upon a study of the relationship between the two parties which were the most visible and active antagonists of constitutional government. Even if the scope of enquiry could be

reduced to the barest account of tactical questions, the larger issues would remain. This would be so because, for the citizen of Weimar, the violent element in the relationship -- the frequent and bloody clashes in the streets -- expressed the central truth of the Republic's failure to provide a basis for order and security.

In another sense, too, the relationship touches on central problems. In a way the shared hostility to Weimar meant that Communists and Nazis could be seen as allies; yet it was an alliance which could never be complete and could never be fully acknowledged by either side. Despite themselves, the Communists were bound to the same rationalist tradition in politics which found its expression in the Weimar constitution. The KPD's oppositionist stance, therefore, proceeded from an entirely different conception than that of the Nazis. Nazi opposition was more fundamental; it expressed a dark, atavistic and complete rejection of rational discourse as the appropriate basis for political life. In 1933, the Communists found that more had been involved in Hitler's rise to power than the mere replacement of one form of "bourgeois" government by another. A whole universe of rational discourse had disappeared. Everyone, including the Communists, who had found a place in that universe shared in the general defeat. It was the special and ironic tragedy of the KPD that it more than most of Hitler's victims only dimly comprehended this simple truth. There was irony because, of all the Weimar parties, it was the KPD which was most firmly wedded

to its rationalist outlook; that is, to an outlook which uncompromisingly stressed the preponderant importance of a rational calculation of interest as the determinate of political behaviour. So unyielding were their categories, and so blindly applied, that the Communists were led to misunderstand the nature of the threats which faced them. There was madness in such stubbornness; the other side, so to speak, of Nazi madness and the intelligent, completely cynical, manipulation of an irrational political appeal.

If the general problems are tenacious, a direct approach to them must still be avoided in a study such as this. As far as is possible the questions which fall outside of a restricted range of considerations which bear directly on the relationship between the two parties are avoided. This means that important dimensions of Communist behaviour and tactics are, by necessity, not considered. Although in practice it was sometimes difficult to establish boundaries, it is obvious that not everything which needs to be said about the KPD can be contained within an examination of its response to the Nazis. In this connection, a special difficulty was raised by the Social Democrats. In order to make the KPD's priorities clear, considerable attention had always to be directed at questions which arose out of the KPD's relations with the SPD. Nevertheless, despite the unavoidable attention given to such important contextual considerations, this is not a comprehensive treatment of the KPD under Weimar; still less is it an account of Weimar's failure. If a little more light is thrown on one of the

more shadowy corners of Weimar's political history and something new is revealed of the KPD's attitudes and behaviour, then the argument will have met its purposes.

The very real problem of restricting the scale of the enterprise could have been met in other ways. The most efficient of these would have involved confining the research to some more narrowly defined period. The case for doing so seems strong. The Nazis, after all, only made their appearance as a serious factor in Weimar politics after their electoral breakthrough in September 1930 and so they could only have been a serious problem for the KPD during the last years. While this is largely true, much of the Communist approach to the Nazis was worked out much earlier. In fact, it is a central contention of this study that over the years there was much that was consistent in the Communist response to the Nazis. In the decisive period between 1930 and the end of 1932 it was the earlier experience with the Nazis which formed the foundation of the KPD's tactics. Unless the need to examine the whole record of the KPD's tactics is squarely faced, the important element of consistency will be lost.

Other economies would have been possible if some different perspective had been adopted than the one chosen here. During most of the period, for example, the KPD's connections with the Soviet Union and the Comintern meant that it was not free to decide its own policies. Thus, at least the main outlines of the KPD's response

to the Nazis should be traceable to Soviet attitudes towards Hitler. For this reason it might seem appropriate to ignore all intermediary considerations of the KPD's behaviour and concentrate instead on the development of Soviet policy. Although this enquiry, in part, has yielded to the logic of such an approach, it also rests on the assumption that too rigid an insistence on the central importance of the KPD's links with the Soviet Union as the central determining influence on tactics can distort the record. No matter how thorough Soviet control was, it should still be impossible to avoid consideration of the KPD's own needs under Weimar. This must be so if only because the question of the KPD's needs had an obvious bearing on its effectiveness as an instrument of Soviet policy. Whatever the source of its objectives, it was the KPD as a party which was constrained by the realities of Weimar which had to find ways to pursue those objectives. In the pages which follow, much is said about Soviet policy and about the connections between Soviet policy and the KPD's tactics; nevertheless, objectives are measured against behaviour and the problems which confronted the KPD as a Weimar political party.

The NSDAP offers another possible perspective and the development of Nazi tactics could have provided the focus for the research. There is at least one obvious advantage in such a strategy. Nazi goals were more straightforward than those of the KPD. No outside power intervened to influence the NSDAP's behaviour and so it could

reasonably be expected that the KPD would enter the Nazi calculations only as a more or less important rival for influence and power. Whatever advantages might be gained from the simpler frame of reference would, however, more than likely be offset by other and formidable problems of interpretation. Although objectives on the Nazi side were in a general sense easier to interpret than those of the KPD, it was still true that there was much less internal consistency. Unlike the KPD, the NSDAP never developed one clear line on any problem. There was no one Nazi programme and no one tactical orientation. Moreover, none of the problems raised by Soviet influence on the KPD's behaviour are avoided if the relationship is examined from the Nazi side. It therefore seems better to meet this problem directly by placing the emphasis on the KPD.

As a final justification for the research strategy adopted here, there is the question of sources. When it is exploited with care, there is one structural feature of Communist parties which can be of great assistance for an enquiry such as this. However it is interpreted, the Communist claim for an intimate connection between their political practice and their general political theory establishes a special status for the Communist press and the public statements of Communist leaders. In the Communist commentary on tactical questions it is possible to assume a closer connection between what is said and what is done and a more disciplined and complete consensus than would be true in the case of similar Nazi commentary. Even though there

could never be a perfect consensus, this feature of the KPD remained useful. When consensus broke down or when one tactical line gave way to another those facts were immediately obvious from the Communist commentary.

For these reasons the Communist press and theoretical journals were a rich source for this study. It was, nevertheless, a source with its own pitfalls and limitations. The language of the Communists, for example, always emphasized the revolutionary goals of the KPD; this was so even at times when there were few other indications that the party remained seriously committed to revolution. It is, however, easy to exaggerate this problem. Other immediate and less clearly "revolutionary" goals are seldom entirely obscured by the revolutionary language. Moreover, the press commentary could be checked against other Communist sources where there was less need to emphasize revolutionary themes. The KPD's internal circulars and directives provided one such corrective to the press and a large number of these were assembled from the scattered collections of Communist materials in the West German archives. In addition, police reports as well as Communist opposition, Social Democratic and Nazi materials were used to gain a more balanced impression of Communist tactics. On particular points concerning Soviet intentions in Germany published and unpublished documents drawn from the German Foreign Ministry Archives were consulted. There was also much that was helpful in the large memoir and secondary literature which in one

way or another had a bearing on the discussion. Beyond these sources, access to the internal KPD documentation would have been of obvious help. This is particularly true of one or two special problems. It must be assumed, for example, that somewhere in the SED's archives more information can be found on the so-called "Neumann Opposition". Without access to this material, some mystery must always surround Heinz Neumann's role during 1931 and 1932 and especially the part which he played in the KPD's response to the Nazis. Since there is no SED study of Neumann, perhaps even East German scholars have been deprived of the advantages of these documents.

Although the subject of this study has not been entirely ignored in English language scholarship, the few existing full length treatments are in German.<sup>1</sup> This work extends the existing scholarship in two ways. It represents the first attempt to treat the subject for the whole of the Weimar period. It also has more to say about the tactical dimensions of the relationship than any of the existing literature. Weingartner's book, which in its scope and conclusions, comes the closest to this study, has much to say about the genesis of the KPD's attitudes and policies but much less attention is given to the problems which the KPD experienced in reconciling its overall objectives with the attempt to protect its organization against the Nazis. Weingartner's line of investigation is the one which dominates in all the existing work.<sup>2</sup> The different emphasis is also reflected in the sources which have been used. This study makes greater use

of KPD materials which relate to tactical questions (notably party circulars) than has hitherto been the case.

On the question of the development of Nazi tactics, Schüddekopf comes the closest to a full discussion.<sup>3</sup> He offers a history of affinities between a variety of groups on the right -- including some among the Nazis -- and Marxist and Marxist-Leninist groups on the left. Although a systematic treatment of KPD-NSDAP relations falls outside the scope of his work, there is nonetheless much that is useful for this study. This is especially true of his examination of the attitudes of the various Nazi splinter groups towards the Soviet Union and the KPD.

In the more general literature on the KPD emphasis has been placed on the problem of locating the party within the context of the German left. The problems of the relationship between the SPD and the KPD, the nature and strength of the Communist following, the history of factional struggle and the links between the KPD and the Comintern have been at the centre of the research.<sup>4</sup> When the subject of the NSDAP is raised it is within the context of questions concerning the effectiveness of the KPD as part of the left opposition to the rise of Hitler. On the question of the KPD's attitudes towards the Nazis before 1930, these sources are virtually silent. Thus Hermann Weber in his monumental study of the KPD between 1924 and 1928 scarcely mentions the Nazis. In view of the weakness of the NSDAP during the years which Weber considers, the

omission is understandable. Nevertheless, the Communists did possess a position on the Nazis during these years, which it is important to examine, if only for the reason that such an examination reveals consistencies in the KPD's tactical orientation over the whole of the Weimar period.

Beyond these difficulties of perspective and sources there is another kind of difficulty inherent in a study such as this. There is the problem that built-in assumptions in the vocabulary of political discourse, the very language one must unavoidably use in discussing Communism and National Socialism, will to a certain extent prejudge the issues one wishes to examine. The KPD was obviously a party of the "left" or "extreme left" and the NSDAP was just as obviously a party of the "right" or "extreme right". To label them as such is harmless enough except when it is remembered that important expectations are entailed in the labels themselves. They suggest that the parties were mutually exclusive with respect to their followings and their objectives. They also suggest a strong mutual antagonism. There is a danger, therefore, that evidence which does not easily fit these preconceptions will not be given the attention it merits.

Typologies which stress factors other than ideological orientation and class composition are useful antidotes to the limitations of the standard left-right dichotomy of our political language. From one perspective the functions which parties perform

provide a basis for analysis and comparison. Parties in democratic societies can be seen as vehicles for the integration, articulation and representation of competing interests. They are also channels of political communication between governments and private citizens and they provide a means for the organization and management of conflict. They can be classified according to the extent to which, or the manner in which, they perform these functions.

One such classification which is particularly useful here, since it grew out of a study of political parties under Weimar, is that provided by Sigmund Neumann.<sup>5</sup> Neumann regards political parties as indispensable intermediate organizations in a democratic society. They are communities of private interests with the primary democratic function of reconciling those interests with the larger interests of the whole community. Beyond that, they are instruments of political modernization, since they make possible an ever wider participation in political life. Parties can be classified according to their ability to perform these functions of democratic integration and modernization. A broad two-fold classification is possible between parties of "democratic integration" and parties of "total integration". By "total integration", Neumann meant to distinguish parties like the KPD and the NSDAP which he claimed functioned not to relate the private citizen to existing political environments but rather to remove him from those environments altogether. Such parties aim at nothing less than the total integration (or reintegration) of

individual personalities. They directly relate their adherents to new purposes and a new style of life.

This characterization draws attention to the possibilities for more complicated interactions between the KPD and the NSDAP than is allowed by the left-right dichotomy. It emphasizes a shared opposition to democratic parties. It also suggests a common objective of capturing the support of those people in society who are without "interests". One would then expect to find parallels in the recruitment efforts of the Communists and Nazis and in the political preoccupations of their members. There is one immediately apparent problem raised by Neumann's typology. It is difficult to view the KPD as a perfectly satisfactory example of a party of "total integration". "Total integration" as a concept rests on the implicit assumption that a party is committed to a revolutionary new order. For most of the Weimar years the KPD did not pursue revolutionary objectives in the usual sense. It attempted to pattern itself on the CPSU. During these years, however, the CPSU was itself in a process of redefining its revolutionary objectives. New objectives emerged which had to do with modernization, not to be sure in Neumann's sense, but in the more primitive sense of modernizing a relatively backward economy. These were clear goals and clearly relevant not only for the Soviet Union but for other societies at the beginning of the process of economic reconstruction and modernization. They were less obviously relevant for advanced industrialized

countries such as Germany.

To the extent that the KPD and other Communist parties of Western Europe were not able to find independent goals, they might well be characterized as misplaced parties of "primitive modernization". They were misplaced because without objectives which were rooted in their own societies they could only play marginal political roles. At most they could be the sponsors of an irrelevant revolutionary idea but they were more likely to be, as a consequence of their irrelevance, the mere agents of an outside interest.

There is one further consideration. As parties of "total integration" both the KPD and the NSDAP aspired to organizational structures which differed radically from those of their democratic rivals. Both saw themselves as parties of the "new type". The structural emphasis was on unity of purpose, central leadership and the establishment of a "transmission belt" relationship with mass organizations which they controlled or within which they had decisive influence. As a matter of fact, neither party came very close to this model in the years before 1933. Both parties had to work within a democratic society. A democratic society offers certain kinds of choices which are not readily compatible with the total integration characterization; not the least of these in that people in a democratic society can come and go as they please. This simple fact undermined the organizational pretensions of both parties.

Both had to pay much more attention to the problems of gaining and holding their members than they did in reintegrating their personalities. They had to take into account the host of private reasons which led people to join their parties.

The concept of a party of "total integration" is not, of course, so different from that of "totalitarian" party. Totalitarian theory might serve just as well to draw attention to the similarities between the KPD and the NSDAP. Yet neither characterization is so obviously applicable to parties which are out of power. A "totalitarian" party whose behaviour, structure and aspirations are constrained by a democratic environment must remain totalitarian only in aspiration. In other words, within Neumann's scheme the KPD and the NSDAP, just because they operated within a democratic society, had to some extent to behave as parties of democratic integration and modernization. Both parties provided access to political life for people who otherwise found themselves excluded and provided some "democratic" counterweight to the established interests which would otherwise have dominated the politics of the Republic. It was precisely as "democratic" parties representing the interests of the dispossessed that the two parties challenged and threatened one another.

Whatever qualifications it may seem necessary to introduce with respect to Neumann's categories, the categories themselves together with the interesting questions which they raise were helpful in

guiding the research for this study. At the outset Neumann helped to draw attention to possible complexities in what might have otherwise seemed a straightforward relationship.

At every stage in the preparation of this manuscript I received much kind help and in particular from my advisor, Leonard Schapiro, who always found the time to offer his much needed support and patient advice. I should also like to thank Ossip Flechtheim, Hermann Weber, Karl Bracher and Joseph Nyomarkay for corresponding with me and offering much appreciated guidance. The directors and staff of the various archives and libraries where I gathered my sources graciously helped me locate the materials which I needed. I owe a particular debt of gratitude to Gerd Callesen of the Folkets Hus Bibliotek og Arkiv in Copenhagen who helped me locate many of the journals which I consulted. I would also like to thank Frank Stirk of the University of Manitoba who assisted me in arranging some of the interviews. It was my very good fortune to find Mrs. Christine Bundesen of the University of Manitoba to do the typing and to otherwise prepare the manuscript. No one could have asked for more capable and thoughtful help than she provided. Finally, I should like to thank my wife Inge for her forbearance and her encouragement.

## FOOTNOTES

1 For the best of the short treatments in English see, Alan Bullock, "The German Communists and the Rise of Hitler", in Marice Baumont, Fried and Vermeil, (eds.), The Third Reich, New York, 1955, p. 504 ff. It seems to me that Bullock overstates his case on two points. First, he argues that the Communists saw an advantage in a Hitler government and secondly that they actively worked to hasten the day when there could be a transfer of power to the Nazis. Bullock accepts that the motivation for the Communists lay in the expectation that new revolutionary prospects would result from Hitler's victory. He also suggests that there was a strong foreign policy motive behind the KPD's campaign against the SPD. This study accepts the last point and argues that the foreign policy motive was consistently present and provided the best single explanation for KPD attitudes both to the SPD and towards the Nazis. At no time in the years after 1923 is there good evidence that many among the Communists took the prospects for revolution in Germany seriously; certainly Stalin did not. See also, Stefan Possony, "The Comintern as an Instrument of Soviet Strategy", in M.M. Drachkovitch, (ed.), The Revolutionary Internationals 1864-1943, Stanford, 1966, pp. 203-222.

2 See, Thomas Weingartner, Stalin und der Aufstieg Hitlers: Die Deutschlandpolitik der Sowjetunion und der Kommunistischen Internationale 1929-1934, Berlin, 1970; Peer H. Lange, Stalinismus versus "Sozialfaschismus" und "Nationalfaschismus": Revolutionspolitische Ideologie und Praxis unter Stalin 1927-1935, Göppinger Akademische Beiträge No. 2, Göppingen, 1969; Karlheinz Niclauss, Die Sowjetunion und Hitlers Machtergreifung: Eine Studie über die deutsch-russischen Beziehungen der Jahre 1929-1935, Bonner Historische Forschungen, Vol. 29, Bonn, 1966; Georg von Rauch, "Stalin und der Machtergreifung Hitlers", in, Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte supplement to Das Parlament, (1964), p. 14 ff. Both Niclauss and von Rauch concentrate almost exclusively on the development of the Soviet Union's German policy. Lange's focus is not restricted to Germany and the KPD. He looks, in general, at the Comintern positions on Fascism and "Social Fascism". His principal concerns lie in the realm of Marxist-Leninist theory and its connection with Comintern policy. He, too, emphasizes the importance of Soviet foreign policy concerns for the tactics of the KPD and other Communist parties.

3 See, Otto-Ernst Schuddekopf, Linke Leute von Rechts: Die Nationalrevolutionären Minderheiten und der Kommunismus in der Weimarer Republik, Stuttgart, 1960; see also, Reinhard Kühnl,

Die nationalsozialistische Linke 1925-1930, Marburger Abhandlungen zur Politischen Wissenschaft, Vol. 6, Meisenheim am Glan, 1966; Max H. Kele, Nazis and Workers: National Socialist Appeals to German Labor, 1919-1933, University of North Carolina Press, 1972.

4 For general treatments of the KPD see, Hermann Weber, Die Wandlung des deutschen Kommunismus: Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimarer Republik, 2 Vols., Frankfurt am Main, 1969; Ossip K. Flechtheim, Die KPD in der Weimarer Republik, Frankfurt am Main, 1971, 1969; Siegfried Bahne, "Die Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands", in, Erich Matthias and Rudolf Morsey, Das Ende der Parteien 1933, Düsseldorf, 1960, p. 655ff.; Franz Borkenau, European Communism, London, 1953; Ruth Fischer, Stalin and German Communism: A Study in the Origins of the State Party, Harvard University Press, 1948. Of these Flechtheim's book is still the only general treatment of the whole of the Weimar period. Ruth Fischer's account, although interesting, is highly partisan and must be used with caution.

5 See, Sigmund Neumann, Die Parteien der Weimarer Republik, Stuttgart, 1965; originally published in 1932 under the title, Die politischen Parteien in Deutschland, Junker and Dünnhaupt, Berlin.

## CHAPTER I

## THE CONSTRAINTS ON CONFLICT

There would seem to have been little room for complications in the relationship between the Communists and the National Socialists during the Weimar years. One of the protagonists was outward looking and stressed its links with an international fraternity of like minded revolutionaries. The other was inward looking and dedicated to national renewal and nationalist self assertion. One championed the cause of the dispossessed against the established capitalist order. The other promised a new order where class purposes were overcome in a common allegiance to national and racial unity. The one operated with a rationalist tradition which perceived that men act according to a rational calculation of their interest. The other promised salvation through blind obedience and the denial of rationality.

It would be reasonable to infer from such opposite outlooks that the relationship between the two parties would have been one dimensional, that there would be room for nothing else than antagonism and unrelenting conflict. This, however, was not the case. The inherent element of conflict in the relationship was constrained by structural features of both parties which qualified the antagonism between them by placing it in a wider and more subtle context of interests and objectives which were not so clearly relevant to the

clash between their contending ideologies.

The structure of the KPD clearly illustrated this. At no time during the Weimar years was the party free, or entirely free, to decide its own policies. Its close ties with the Comintern and the Soviet Union were of crucial importance in determining its orientation in Weimar politics. As it turned out, the outside connection was the most important influence which operated to qualify the party's self image as a revolutionary party of the working class which was incidently, therefore, an important and active enemy of Fascism and National Socialism.

Given the internationalist pretensions of both the Soviet and the German parties and given also the authority and resources which the Bolshevik seizure of power gave the Soviets, it is not surprising that they should have been involved in the planning of the KPD's strategy and tactics. The KPD became "bolshevized" in the direct sense that for many purposes it could be regarded as an extension of the Soviet party, accurately reflecting the concerns and objectives of that party.<sup>1</sup> In other words, to understand what the KPD's purposes were, it is always necessary to understand at the same time the direction of Soviet policy towards Germany. It is essential to be aware of this elementary fact of life of the KPD, yet it would be misleading to state the matter so plainly and leave all the emphasis on a command submission relationship, for it was not such a simple case of dominant party and a helpmate subordinate. In a way the KPD needed its relationship with the Soviet Union for its own reasons.

It is one of the observations of this study that the Soviet and

Comintern leaders came early to the conclusion that their interests would not, at least for an indefinite future, be served by a revolutionary effort in Germany. The KPD consequently postponed whatever independent revolutionary ambitions it may have had. It does not, however, follow that they would not have had to do so in any case. It can easily be argued that the helpmate role was the only one available to the KPD. Certainly by 1923 few in the party hierarchy could hold out much hope for the German revolution.<sup>2</sup>

In a situation where the prospects for revolution were remote, it is difficult to see what further relevance the KPD would have had in Weimar politics without the second hand purposes it derived from the Soviet connection. It faced the problem always faced by Communist parties in non-revolutionary situations. If it sought a more relevant and independent role as part of a left opposition, it would have run the real risk of losing its identity and following in a process of becoming indistinguishable from its Social Democratic and trade union rivals. This would have been so even had the party enjoyed a larger share of working class support than it in fact did. For the revolutionary, the bitter truth was that the overwhelming majority, at least among the employed workers, was not interested in revolution. They proved that by their steadfast support for the SPD throughout the Weimar years. The same workers could conceivably have made their point by giving their allegiance to a Communist party which had surrendered to the "trade union consciousness" of its following.

For the KPD all such problems were avoided by accepting Soviet

leadership and the role which went with it of seeking to promote Soviet objectives in any and all ways which the Soviet leaders saw as appropriate and possible. The KPD's problems, however, did not end there. Having accepted the dominance of Soviet interests and especially of Soviet foreign policy interests, it remained to be seen to what extent the KPD could be a useful agency in the overall design of Soviet policy.

The Soviet Union had means other than its connections with the KPD for pursuing its foreign policy objectives in Germany. The most obvious of these were the usual diplomatic channels. It was a central objective of Soviet diplomacy to establish good relations with Germany. The KPD's problem, in part, became one of supporting and supplementing these efforts, and it was not immediately clear how the party could best do this. German governments could be forgiven for seeing a contradiction between Soviet protestations of friendship, on the one hand, and, on the other, Soviet backing for a party which had as its avowed purpose the overthrow of the German constitution. Indeed, this was a problem for Soviet diplomacy and it could never be adequately resolved by claiming that the Comintern and its member sections were separate from and independent of the Soviet government.<sup>3</sup>

To the extent that this argument failed to carry conviction, the KPD was an embarrassment for Soviet diplomacy. At the same time, however, the contradictions in Communist behaviour appear much less stark when the activities of the KPD are measured against the background of the Soviet approach to Germany and of Soviet assessments of the bearing of Weimar's domestic politics on Soviet interests.

Much falls into place as this is attempted. What appears most clearly is a continuing Soviet commitment to the preservation of the Germany which emerged in 1918. The Germany of 1918-1923 offered unique opportunities for the new revolutionary government in the Soviet Union. Weimar was weak and divided. It was also alienated from the Western Democracies by the humiliations of defeat and the terms of an unfavourable peace. While itself presenting few strategic and economic threats to the Soviet Union, it stood at the same time as an obstacle to the formation of anti-Soviet coalitions and in particular could be seen as a factor which worked against French and British preponderance on the continent.<sup>4</sup> On the positive side, it was also true that if Germany's isolation from the West could be maintained then fruitful possibilities were open for economic, diplomatic and military collaboration between Weimar and Soviet governments. The various accords and treaties signed between Germany and the Soviet Union and the economic and military collaboration which was established were consistently viewed by the Soviets as crowning achievements of their foreign policy. The efforts to maintain and expand these relations were just as consistently central preoccupations of Soviet foreign policy strategy.<sup>5</sup>

In light of these central concerns of the Soviet Union's foreign policy, it followed that Soviet governments would seek by any means open to them to restrict the influence of those forces within Germany which could upset the 1918-1923 status quo. It was the KPD which provided the Soviets with their principal means for influencing the balance of political forces in Germany. The KPD could be used

to combat the influence of the most dangerous enemy of the post war status quo -- Social Democracy. The SPD with its mass working class following, its entrenched position within the trade unions and its large electoral following, represented the most likely foundation for a strong German republic. The democratic-republican and pro-Western orientation of the SPD ensured that the strengthened Republic would almost certainly wreck the advantages which the Soviet Union hoped to gain from its German policy.

This foreign policy consideration provided the main reason for Soviet opposition to the SPD but it was not the only one. Social Democracy and especially German Social Democracy was an important critic of internal developments in the Soviet Union. Vorwärts, the chief organ of the SPD, brought its readers almost daily accounts of economic and civil rights conditions in the Soviet Union. It was Vorwärts which was most often singled out for attack in the Soviet, Comintern and KPD press for spreading "lies" about the Soviet Union and for lending moral support to the internal critics of Soviet policies.<sup>6</sup> In view of the near hysteria of some of these attacks, it is easy to believe that the Soviet authorities saw a dangerous enemy in the SPD press.<sup>7</sup>

More than any other single factor, opposition to Social Democracy tied together all the strands of Communist strategy and tactics. The KPD was assigned the role of undermining the SPD's hold on the industrial workers and beyond that of applying pressure, in any way open to it, against a Western orientation in German foreign policy. That role never changed between 1923 and 1933.

This fact was of the utmost importance for the development of the KPD's position towards National Socialism. It was always present to exert strong pressure against assigning first importance to the National Socialist issue.

Not that any one interpretation should be expected to make perfect sense. There were doubts among the Communists, unforeseen difficulties and mistakes which in practice made the apparently straightforward role less than straightforward in its execution. Then, too, there were other Soviet interests which needed to be served. As long as there was uncertainty and oppositional struggle within the Russian party then the KPD leadership had to choose sides, and opposing factions in Soviet debates were free to solicit the support of the foreign Communist leaderships. Thus factional strife was reflected in the Comintern member parties and all parties were required to join in attacks on the positions of defeated oppositionists. This factor could not, however, be of central importance in establishing the roles of Communist parties. For one thing, there is no evidence that support from outside was so important in Stalin's consolidation of power. Other factors, notably Stalin's growing control of the Russian party apparatus were decisive.<sup>8</sup>

In the case of the KPD, the most important of the outside parties, there were no significant delays in following the line set down by the dominant majority in the Russian party. Even had there been, it is difficult to see that it would have made much difference for the policies of the KPD. There was wide agreement among the

Soviet leaders on a range of issues confronting the KPD. These included the basic ones of the primacy of the Russian party within the Comintern and the importance of the SPD as an enemy of Soviet interests. One need not overtax one's resources of cynicism to note that oppositionists both in the Russian and the German parties found it easier to find their independence of mind on these matters after they were safely out of the main line party. Anyway, it is not necessary to discount a role for the KPD in the factional struggles of the Russian party before it is possible to make the case for the primacy of foreign policy considerations. It is a fact that the campaign against the SPD survived all the shifts of emphasis between the left and right lines of the Comintern. At all times in these ten years the SPD was identified in the statements of Communist leaders and in the pages of the Communist press as a dangerous enemy of the Soviet Union.

Besides the link with Soviet purposes in Germany, there were other aspects of the KPD's structure which served to obscure and complicate its policies both for the party itself and for the outside observer trying to make sense of it. The revolutionary language of the party was one source of such difficulties. Any goal for the Communists had to find its revolutionary rationale. No ultimate objective except revolution could be accommodated within the party's Marxist-Leninist categories of self justification. At every stage of the party's history, therefore, official statements and the Communist press depicted a movement on the march to revolution. Such self accountings obscured the immediate,

non-revolutionary purposes of the party.

The obscurity was unavoidable. Not only the niceties of Marxist-Leninist language were at stake. Any admission that the efforts of the Communists were not related to revolutionary objectives would undoubtedly have destroyed the party's morale along with its usefulness for any purposes at all. This consideration was relevant not just for the naive rank and file. Even the more sophisticated in the upper reaches of the Communist hierarchy had probably to convince themselves that there was no contradiction between Soviet interests and the revolutionary aspirations of the movement as a whole. Indeed, there was something almost disarming about the protestations of Soviet leaders when they were confronted with such suggestions. In 1926, for example, in reply to accusations from the "left" opposition that the Comintern was becoming an instrument of Soviet foreign policy and that revolution was no longer its goal, both Bukharin and Stalin answered, not by denying that there was a link between Soviet foreign policy and the "revolutionary" activities of the Comintern, but rather by insisting that Soviet foreign policy was itself revolutionary.<sup>9</sup> Stalin could,

"...not think that the interests of the Soviet Union require even for one second a betrayal of the working class on the part of our brother parties."<sup>10</sup>

There is no necessary cynicism in Stalin's statement. Since the prospects for revolution were at the moment dim in Europe, and since the one tangible result of the world revolution so far achieved was the establishment of Bolshevik power in Russia, then it could be seen to follow that loyal Communists everywhere could best discharge

their revolutionary responsibilities in defense of the Soviet Union and Soviet interests as defined by the Soviet leaders.

For the KPD, as it suffered setback after setback in its pursuit of revolutionary goals between 1918 and 1923, it became ever easier to accept such a "revolutionary" explanation of its purposes. At the same time, the Russian revolution commanded its own loyalties among the German Communists. This influenced not just the "bureaucratic" elements in the party. The Thälmanns, Ulbrichts and Neumanns, who modeled themselves on Stalin, were perhaps best suited to the uncritical centrally directed pursuit of Soviet interests. Others such as Clara Zetkin, with closer connections with the earlier humanist and Social Democratic roots of the German working class movement, also found it easy to accept Soviet dominance. These people, although they were critical of aspects of Communist policies, remained in the party and restrained their criticisms because of their loyalty to the Soviet Union as the first revolutionary workers' state.<sup>11</sup>

It was not, however, just willing acceptance of Soviet interests which made the tasks assigned the KPD acceptable as a revolutionary role. The SPD was the strongest Social Democratic party in the world. It held in its grip the bulk of the industrial workers - workers without whom the revolutionaries in the KPD could not realize their hopes. It made sense, then, to assign the highest priority to the campaign against the SPD. On both counts, from the point of view of the revolution and from the point of view of Soviet foreign policy interests, the SPD made a particularly congenial enemy for the

Communists.

There was one other structural feature of the KPD which complicated its policies. The party always found it difficult to find an effective means for translating its priorities into "concrete" action. An attack on the SPD, if it were to have any impact, had to be directed at the SPD's strongholds in the trade union structure. Yet, after 1923, the KPD could never manage this, for the simple reason that it never succeeded in building its own base in the factories which was sufficiently strong to challenge the free trade unions. For most of the Weimar years the KPD was primarily a party of the unemployed. Despite the continuing emphasis on the need to win influence in the unions and to expand the party's network of factory cells,<sup>12</sup> the organizational weight of the party continually shifted outside the factories. The KPD's "street" cells, as distinct from its factory cells, became central to its organization and to its continued survival. Certainly the Communists could compete with the SPD for the support of the unemployed and they tried that. This form of competition, though, could never seriously damage the SPD, which remained overwhelmingly a party of the employed workers. This basic structural limitation of the KPD seriously limited its usefulness as an instrument of Soviet foreign policy. The KPD could not be decisive. It could exert some pressure on the SPD and on other parties through its propaganda and agitational work. It could exert some influence in the Reich, Land and communal parliaments and assemblies and it could exert some influence more generally on public opinion through its electoral and other campaigns.

Besides limiting its effectiveness as an enemy of the SPD, there was another important consequence of this weakness. Especially after 1930, the party's organization made it vulnerable to the challenge of the National Socialists. Since such an important part of the KPD was on the streets, it was largely deprived of the protection of the factory and thus its ability to counter the terror attacks of the SA and the SS was seriously impaired. Moreover, from a recruitment standpoint it was the NSDAP or more particularly the SA which was more of a challenge to the KPD's efforts to win the support of the unemployed than was the SPD. For these reasons the Communists had, in the end, to pay more attention to the NSDAP than could easily be accommodated within its overall strategy. It is tempting to see a tragic appropriateness in the party's own "dialectical" approach to political problems for the characterization of these difficulties. There was a kind of dialectical tension between the KPD's strategy and the day to day requirements of its survival which defied the party's attempts to make sense of its own activities. Tactical necessities finally made a nonsense of the KPD's objectives in Weimar and wrecked its programmatical and organizational coherence.

What was needed, if there was to be any chance of resolving such a contradiction, was a new conception of Soviet interests in Germany and a corresponding new revolutionary rationale for the KPD which would have assigned first importance to the struggle against Hitler. There were those in the party and especially in the Communist opposition groups who argued for just such a change. Given the strength of the Nazis after 1930, the new policy would have had

to be along the lines of a broad alliance between the SPD, KPD and other parties willing to join against the National Socialists. There was, of course, the second possibility of some kind of revolutionary gesture on the eve of Hitler's takeover. Some determined independent revolutionary action might well have seemed preferable to the passive acceptance of a Nazi government no matter how foredoomed such an action might have been. Anyway, the Communist leadership did not accept either of these alternatives. Their priorities in Germany did not change until it was too late. There were sporadic attempts in 1932 to reevaluate the party's tactics towards National Socialism but the real changes came only after Hitler's seizure of power and were not, in fact, completely in place until the Seventh Comintern World Congress in 1935.

History has dealt harshly with these decisions. It might be conceded that as long as the NSDAP remained weak (and it was, after all, only a minor party for most of the decade) the Communist approach made a certain amount of sense. Before 1930 it was natural enough to regard the NSDAP as a party which posed few if any threats to the Communists. In fact it could be seen as a political factor which to some extent complemented the efforts of the Communists. In so far as it mattered at all, the NSDAP in its own way worked for the preservation of the Weimar status quo. It complicated the life of the Republic and it opposed good relations with the Western Democracies. Since the KPD and the NSDAP shared a common opposition to the democratic and pro-Western parties of Weimar, it was even possible to seek tactical accommodations. As will be shown in the

chapters which follow this indeed was a feature of their relationship both before and after 1930. There was, in other words, scope for ambivalence in the Communist response to National Socialism. From the moment of first contact between the parties this was apparent. The recognition of danger was there but so was the recognition of opportunity.

In the years after 1930 there should have been less ambivalence. The NSDAP was no longer weak. It had, in fact, emerged as a dominant force in German politics. It had upset the Weimar status quo decisively and in ways which threatened the continued existence of the KPD and just as clearly threatened Soviet interests in Germany. Nevertheless, together with the decision to insist on the secondary importance of the KPD's relations with the Nazis, the ambivalent uncertainties in KPD tactics were to remain too.

As incomprehensible as the consistency in the Communist approach to National Socialism at first sight appears to be, the various factors which worked against any re-evaluation are readily enough identified. One important influence was the party's experience with the National Socialists in 1923. Hitler's party enjoyed mass support in that year and as a mass party it was a factor in German politics which could not be ignored by the Communists. When the crisis passed, that is when the Republic seemed on the way out of its immediate economic and political difficulties, the Nazi following melted away. Thereafter, this simple fact remained to exert its influence on Communist expectations. Any evidence of internal difficulty, any setback for the NSDAP, no matter how minor, was seized upon as

signaling the beginning of the end for Nazism as a mass movement. At the same time, it was only too easy in retrospect for the Communists to exaggerate their own anti-"Fascist" campaign in 1923 as an important contributory factor in the decline of the Nazis and so they succeeded in persuading themselves that their anti-Fascist efforts after 1930 would lead to a similar result.

Had the exercise in self persuasion failed, it would still have been difficult for the KPD to redesign their strategy. There was, in the first place, an important time constraint. Just over two years separated the first major Nazi electoral breakthrough from Hitler's seizure of power. This was little enough time for Communists to rethink their basic policies. Communists have always claimed tactical flexibility as one of the principal organizational virtues of Democratic Centralism, but in practice they must always pay a high price for flexibility. In this case rival interpretations of the German situation, which placed more importance on opposition to Hitler, were already occupied by the enemies of the line. To admit error, to make in fact an about face, meant vindicating important critics and sacrificing important friends. This would have been especially embarrassing since the Fascist question was one of those which united both the left and right opposition to the KPD and to Stalin.<sup>13</sup>

The admission of error would have necessarily also involved redesigning Communist theoretical interpretations of National Socialism. The opposition and the party alike based their arguments and their defense of policy on the Marxist assumption of an intimate

"dialectical" relationship between theory and "praxis". The opposition critics took it for granted that the problems which the party encountered with the Nazis were traceable to its flawed general theoretical understanding of Weimar, Fascism and National Socialism. It was the false theory which mediated a false "praxis". They assumed also that the central problem to which Communist theory and "praxis" were directed was that of revolution.<sup>14</sup>

For the non-Marxist observer a problem is raised here which is always present in the study of Communist parties. At the simplest level, there is the question of whether theoretical formulations ought to be understood primarily as ex-post-facto rationalizations for decisions shaped by a variety of factors, only some of which have anything to do with a Marxist analysis of policy alternatives, or whether theoretical formulations are in themselves influential in determining the choices made. The difference between these two understandings of the role of theory may not actually be all that wide. Even theory as "rationalization" exerts some pressure on actions. Marxist-Leninist categories are plastic enough to allow most actions but perhaps not all. It would, for example, be difficult for Communists to make open electoral appeals to the capital owning classes. In other words, the theoretical formulations of Communists must always contain something of their actual perceptions and expectations.

For the case in question, it was no doubt true that important elements in the KPD and Comintern theories of Fascism were rationalizations for policies adopted with little concern for any

Marxist analysis. At the same time, the theoretical formulations probably influenced policy at least to the extent of obscuring important realities of the National Socialist phenomenon and so impeded any reconsideration of it.

The problem of determining an influence for theory is well illustrated in one of the central theoretical preoccupations of the opposition. The aspect of the KPD's understanding of Fascism, which was most strongly attacked by Marxist critics was the "Social Fascist" argument. The Communists developed the position that Social Democracy had become a species of Fascism - "Social Fascism". Indeed, for a time it was Social Fascism which was presented in Communist pronouncements as the most virulently dangerous kind of Fascism, or even as Fascism itself with no distinction allowed for species.<sup>15</sup> One must be allowed to ask, however, whether this formulation can even be addressed in theoretical terms. "Social Fascism" is surely one of the most barren of the theses to be found in the lexicon of discarded Marxist-Leninist arguments. It scarcely repays the few moments of "theoretical" effort necessary to explode it. So barren is it, that it transcends the limits of just plain bad theory, which informed and reflected an equally bad "praxis". It suggests the presence of an entirely different kind of dialectic than the one most commonly considered by the Marxist critics of the KPD. "Social Fascism" is one of the clearest examples of a "theory" improvised after the fact of "praxis"-theory concocted to make palatable a praxis which Communist leaders found convenient for a variety of reasons, few of which had much to do with their commitment to

socialism and to revolution. It is theory which trades at par with the theories of conspiracy which were used to justify the purge trials. The "Social Fascism" conception was so transparent, its roots in Marxist categories so unfirm, that, for many Communists, it failed even as a device for rationalizing the Communist antipathy to Social Democracy.

Yet Social Fascism, in a sense, found its importance as theory, that is, in so far as it provided the best evidence that the Communist understanding of Fascism contained conclusions which worked against a clearer understanding of the threat posed by the NSDAP. It was as if the Communists felt secure in using "Fascism" as a mere polemical label which they could apply indiscriminately and with impunity to any and all political movements and governments which they perceived as opposed to their objectives.

With respect to National Socialism as a variety of Fascism, it was not that the analysis was in itself so inadequate or unusual. In the details of its findings, it is remarkably in accord with the conclusions of both other Marxist and non-Marxist analyses. Communist discussions of National Socialism noted its impressive strengths as a mass movement. They understood the power of its propaganda, its appeal to youth, the threat posed by its paramilitary organizations and the strength of its organizational methods.<sup>16</sup> Some of the Communist studies, notably those which deal with the sources of Nazi electoral support, are among the best in the contemporary literature.<sup>17</sup> It must be concluded, therefore, that it was not so much the analysis itself which was at fault but rather the choices

which were made within it. It was the influence of some of the "optimistic" elements of the theory which were dangerously misleading and which were nearly always present alongside the clearer insights. It is possible to recognize an enemy and still be misled into thinking that he is, after all, not such a serious enemy, or that the threat which he poses is not nearly so serious as the threats posed by other enemies. In these respects it is possible to see once more the influence of the 1923 experience.

From 1923 onwards, the Communists frequently pointed out, in their discussions of Fascism and National Socialism, that "Germany was not Italy". That is to say that there were, according to the Communist view, "objective" factors present in German society which made a Fascist style government unlikely to emerge.<sup>18</sup> The 1923 experience had demonstrated that German capitalism was much more strongly developed than its Italian counterpart and had shown itself able to ensure its dominance, even in a crisis, without recourse to the Fascist style movements of the radicalized lower middle classes. It was also true that in Germany the working class was better organized than in Italy and possessed a more substantial and long standing revolutionary tradition. It was thus better able to oppose the rise of the Fascists.<sup>19</sup>

The power of these optimistic conclusions to mislead was reinforced by some of the general features of the Fascism theory. The authoritative general treatments of Fascism which were developed by the Communists during the inter-war period were all agreed that Fascism and National Socialism were entirely derivative phenomena.

They allowed Fascism no purposes of its own. It was seen as linked entirely to the capital owning classes or to sections of those classes.<sup>20</sup> In an era where capitalism found itself faced with crisis and especially with the crisis caused by the increasing radicalism of its working classes, it looked to Fascism as a desperate last attempt to preserve bourgeois class rule which could no longer be adequately defended behind a mask of parliamentary and democratic institutions. One of the serious problems with this conception from the Communist point of view was that it was not discriminating enough. By stressing the "objective" role of Fascist movements and governments the Communists could find a Fascist government everywhere where non-parliamentary methods were resorted to. Similarly they found Fascism in every political movement which opposed itself to the working class organizations which they controlled. The Stresemann government, the Brüning government, the Braun-Severing government in Prussia, the Papen and the Schleicher governments were all in their turn labelled "Fascist". Since it was the "objective" role of Fascism which needed to be stressed then it followed that not only organizations which manifestly shared important characteristics with National Socialism, such as the Stahlhelm and the various "völkisch" rivals of the NSDAP, could be regarded as "Fascist" but also the Reichsbanner organizations, the Zentrum and the SPD. Hence, the "theoretical" underpinning for "Social Fascism".<sup>21</sup>

It was at this point that Fascism as a concept lost whatever analytical utility it may have possessed and became worse than useless as a guide to action. For the KPD, perhaps the most serious

consequence of this was that its theoretical hostility to Fascism was never allowed to focus exclusively on the NSDAP. The campaign against Hitler had always to be only part of a struggle which included attacks on assorted "Fascist" governments, "Fascist" legislation, such as the emergency decrees of the Brüning and Papen governments and, of course, Social Fascism. Nor was the NSDAP's status as a Fascist party ever all that clear. For some of the time, even after 1930, it was not regarded as the most serious of the Fascist forces in Germany. In 1932, after a decade of struggling to establish the theoretical links between Fascism and National Socialism there was still no concensus in the Communist journals on this question.

In January 1932 the readers of Die Internationale were told that,

"...National Socialism and Fascism are not one and the same thing. Social Democracy is in Germany without doubt the most active factor of fascisization. This is so regardless of the fact that the National Socialist party, with its explosive expansion as a Fascist mass party and with its consequent status as the numerically strongest party, remains a serious enemy for us."<sup>22</sup>

Later in the year, another article, this time in Die Kommunistische Internationale criticized this view for being "confused", ("every word...demonstrates the greatest confusion") and went on to observe that National Socialism was,

"...naturally not the only embodiment of Fascism in Germany but certainly the National Socialists are outspoken Fascists."<sup>23</sup>

As might be expected, some confusion remained even after this effort of clarification.

These conceptual difficulties took their toll in the uncertainties and impaired morale of the Communist rank and file.

Yet in another sense the confusion was reassuring. What more could be feared from a National Socialist government than had already been experienced under the Fascist regimes of Brüning and Papen? How could it matter to the KPD or to the Soviet Union if the German bourgeoisie came to rely more on one variety of Fascism - National Socialism, and less on another variety - Social Fascism? As the debates on the nature of the National Socialist threat revealed, such ideas played their part in inhibiting any re-evaluation after 1930.

Other aspects of the Fascism theory were equally reassuring. The Communists were generally agreed that Fascism represented the interests of only sections of the capital owning classes but there was less agreement on exactly which sections were implicated. In the early years Fascism was understood as, "the Orgesch organization of big industry, the big banks and the big landowners"; as, "supported, led and nourished by industrial and agricultural capital"; as, "the fighting organization of finance and industrial capital"; and as, "the fighting organization of...industrial capital."<sup>24</sup> Between 1923 and 1933 the formulations were frequently even more general. Fascism was now the tool of "the most developed industries"; "the...political activization of the great masses of the petite bourgeoisie and of the proletariat for the protection of bourgeois class rule against the proletariat"; "the terroristic dictatorship of big capital...bankers, the big industrialists and the agrarians."<sup>25</sup> Finally, at the Seventh Comintern World Congress, one authoritative interpretation was agreed upon. Fascism had become, "the open and terroristic dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic and the most imperialistic

elements of finance capital."<sup>26</sup>

The fact that in all such formulations Fascism was understood as representing the interests of some capitalists but not of others was important because it allowed the view that Fascism was evidence for weakness in capitalist class rule. It meant that the capital owning classes were at cross purposes with themselves. Such "contradictions" moreover, were rooted in the same crisis which was leading to the decisive moment of revolutionary confrontation. In a sense, then, the revolutionary could believe that what was good for Fascism was good also for him. This was a self flattering idea. It placed the Communist parties at the centre stage of history. It presented the world with the choice of either Fascism or the proletarian revolution. It was also a distracting idea at important moments in the struggle against Hitler. It was doubly distracting because in the confrontation with Fascism the Communists believed themselves to be at an advantage. It was not just that Fascism reflected fatal weaknesses in capitalism. It also embodied a weakness, a contradiction, within itself.

What was special about Fascism was that it was much more efficient in mobilizing mass support than was true for its bourgeois rivals. It found its support mainly among the various sections of the radicalized lower middle classes - the small business men, small farmers, professional people, civil servants and white collar workers. It was clear to the Communists that Fascism did not in fact represent the "objective" interests of these classes. It could hold them only through pretence, through "demagogic manoeuvres", through paying lip service to their class aspirations. A movement which pretended to

transcend class differences and which tried to unite opposing interests must in time disintegrate under the assault of its own contradictions. This was a consistent theme in the Communist literature and it is present in the earliest consideration of Fascism. Münzenberg's observations on the decline of the National Socialists after 1923 are characteristic both of the view and of some of the pitfalls in Marxist-Leninist dialectics.

"...Already from the first moment of its existence Fascism carried within itself the seed of its destruction. And that for the simple reason that it sought to combine within itself contradictory tendencies; it sought to combine half proletarian, petit bourgeois and junker elements in one and the same front. It was self evident that that wouldn't work. The most elementary laws of the dialectic contradicted the tendency to form a combination from all these sections of the population, fundamentally opposed to one another in purpose, principle, history and tradition."<sup>27</sup>

This conclusion survived the Nazi revival and was frequently repeated both in the theoretical literature and in the party's resolutions and official statements.<sup>28</sup>

The Communists could also intervene to deepen the contradiction and to turn it to their decisive advantage. This was the "subjective" factor in the situation. With correct tactics, resolutely pursued, it was open to the Communists to win away, or at least to neutralize these classes. Such considerations are important for understanding the tactics of the KPD. Far more emphasis was most of the time placed on agitational and propaganda work among the supporters and potential supporters of the Nazis than was placed on the tactics of direct confrontation. Here was a form of democratic competition. Whatever

the conclusions of the Communist analysis, this form of competition might have been dominant in any case. The constraints of a democratic environment required that both the KPD and the NSDAP had to take account of the fact that their constituencies overlapped. Just because of the overlap the way was open for each side to influence the propaganda efforts of the other. So it was that there was much that both parties shared in language and emphasis on a range of political issues.

It would, however, be wrong to see all such coincidences as a consequence solely of recruitment and electoral competition between the parties. For the KPD, there was always the factor of Soviet interests to be taken into account. KPD propaganda, especially with respect to foreign policy issues, must be interpreted in this light. On some issues, therefore, parallels between KPD and NSDAP propaganda can be interpreted as reflecting the fact that the NSDAP's and the Soviet Union's foreign policy objectives were in some degree complementary. Both the KPD and the NSDAP could be seen as exerting pressure on Weimar governments against a Western oriented foreign policy. After 1930 it could be expected that the increasing threat to the KPD posed by the Nazis would be weighed against this consideration. As long as the NSDAP did not actually assume power in Berlin, it was tempting to downplay both the threat to the KPD and the anti-Soviet aspects of the Nazi foreign policy position. For the reasons outlined above the Communists underestimated the ability of Hitler to form a government. In the meantime the low level, second priority campaign against the NSDAP allowed the Communists to

combine attempts to resist the further advance of the Nazis with the established effort to influence Weimar's foreign policy.

Even if Soviet calculations were upset by a Nazi seizure of power, the attitude of the Communists to a Hitler government could not have been anticipated in advance. What would matter much more than the Fascist character of such a government was the specific content of National Socialist foreign policy. The Soviet Union had had a long experience with Fascism. Mussolini's Fascism had not prevented the Soviet Union from regarding Italy as a useful counter-weight to France. The Soviets urged the Brüning government to seek closer relations with Italy as part of the diplomatic effort against France.<sup>29</sup> They had shown sympathy for the Italian side in French-Italian disputes<sup>30</sup> and they had sought good diplomatic and economic relations with Mussolini.<sup>31</sup> The Soviets had also supported "Fascist" Lithuania in its disputes with Poland.<sup>32</sup> These precedents suggested that the advent of a Hitler government would not end Soviet hopes for good relations with Germany.

The anti-Nazi dimension of KPD propaganda never had much chance of being effective. Outside of a broadly based anti-Nazi alliance the Communists could not hope to make much headway, whatever balance they managed to strike between the tactics of confrontation and those of persuasion. They were no better placed for competition with the NSDAP than they proved themselves to be with respect to the SPD and the trade unions. They managed to pose some threat to the Nazi following among the workers and the unemployed but this could not be so important. They largely failed to gain access to the Nazi

supporters among the lower middle classes and, as the Communists themselves recognized, the NSDAP had become a mass party with roots in all the classes of Weimar. The heterogeneous following and the flexible, eclectic, nature of the Nazi appeal made them all but invulnerable to the efforts of the Communists.

This was a main reason why relations between the two parties posed fewer problems for the NSDAP than they did for the KPD. The principal tactical problems facing the Nazis had to do with defining and consolidating their position on the right. In the early years that meant that much of their energy was absorbed in competition with the radical and "Völkisch parties. Later it meant competition with the established middle class parties. The phenomenal successes of the Nazis were largely at the expense of these parties.<sup>33</sup>

If the Communists were not the central obstacle to Nazi ambitions, it was still true that they could not be ignored entirely. Throughout the Weimar years the Nazis aspired to the status of a mass party. They promised a political order that transcended classes, that is, a party for all Germans including the workers and the unemployed. Consequently a considerable part of Nazi agitational and propaganda effort was always directed at the workers.<sup>34</sup> This could not help but bring them into competition with the KPD.

The Communists understood this aspect of National Socialism very well. They always allowed that part of the working class was susceptible to Nazi appeals and occasionally they went further and identified the NSDAP as a serious working class rival. They pointed to the Nazi working class vote (which if anything they over estimated)

and to the importance of working class elements in the NSDAP organization, especially in the SA.<sup>35</sup> They also interpreted the decline of the middle class parties as partly attributable to the ability of the NSDAP to attract the specifically proletarian supporters away from those parties.<sup>36</sup> In fact, it must be concluded that the Communist literature of the nineteen twenties and thirties placed more emphasis on the working class dimension of National Socialism than has been the case with most of the more recent research.<sup>37</sup>

The perception of the NSDAP as, in part, a working class party was for the Communists the greatest of all the contradictions which the NSDAP represented. It was also a contradiction which they never managed to explain. They allowed that the explanation might lie in the susceptibility of part of the working class, its most "backward" and "wavering" elements, to the nationalist appeals of the Nazis.<sup>38</sup> But for the most part working class support for the NSDAP made sense for them only as a function of National Socialism's false "social demogogy". They could never accept that National Socialism could appear at one and the same time as the last bulwark against "Marxism" and as the revolutionary saviour of the working class and the ruined petite bourgeoisie, that, in other words, it could to some extent be true to its own self image as a movement which stood above classes.<sup>39</sup>

The Communists, of course, were not alone in finding a problem here. The coexistence of greatly diverse interests within the NSDAP, together with its lack of a coherent programme and ideology, have created difficulties of interpretation for everyone. Yet part of the

explanation surely lay in the very different structure which distinguished the NSDAP from its Communist rival. To be sure, there were structural similarities and these were recognized by the Communists. They were right to notice that the Nazis deliberately copied some of their organizational ideas, the cell organization, the transmission belt relationship between the party and other mass organizations, the activism, the emphasis on agitation and propaganda and the importance of centralism and discipline.<sup>40</sup>

There were, however, also some important differences. One of these was the absence of a legitimating role for doctrine. In Communist terms there was no one National Socialism, no party line. For the KPD, rival approaches, even to tactical problems, to the extent that they were significant enough to demand doctrinal rationalization, could not coexist for long. They became tests of legitimate authority and consequently led to endless faction building and splits. The history of the KPD is a history of faction building -- a history of struggle against the "Right", the "Ultra Left", the "Reconcilers" (Versöhnern). These were doctrinal labels and a would-be Communist functionary needed considerable resources of doctrinal adroitness to survive. Where, however, were the Nazis factions and splinter groups? There were defections, but no one ever left the NSDAP and carried with him anything like a significant part of the Nazi membership. It is only necessary to compare the rag tag following of Otto Strasser, after he left the party in 1930, with the KPO, to see this.

One convincing explanation for these structural differences has

been provided by Joseph Nyomarkay.<sup>41</sup> Nyomarkay finds in the person of Adolf Hitler the functional equivalent of a coherent doctrine. It was Hitler's leadership which legitimated the NSDAP. Personal allegiance to Hitler was what mattered and not particular interpretations of Nazi principles. The doctrine was open ended, variously interpretable. What could not be questioned was the status of Der Führer. Der Führer pronounced on questions of doctrine only when he perceived a threat to his status as leader. Beyond this, tactical considerations were much more important to Hitler than questions of National Socialist principle. Doctrine and programme were important mainly for the part they played in attracting and holding the following. Yet even in these respects the activism, symbolism and hero worship of the movement were probably much more important for recruitment purposes.<sup>42</sup>

Especially after 1930, Hitler's own tactical and doctrinal preferences were clear enough. He stood on the right of the party and was inclined where necessary to sacrifice inconvenient "socialist" parts of the Nazi appeal in the interests of securing the support of the middle classes. He was nevertheless still able to tolerate and at times even favour those in the party who thought differently. Before 1933 there were always those who took the socialist pretensions of National Socialism seriously and who concentrated their efforts on winning the workers for the Nazi cause.<sup>43</sup>

The Communists missed the central importance of Hitler's leadership. They were inclined to see at the top of the Nazi hierarchy a delicately balanced, contradiction laden group of

leaders of approximately equal status with Hitler. It was one of the favourite exercises among some of the Communist writers to identify the various factions and potential splits in the NSDAP on the basis of the contending views of the participants. Hitler was never seen as standing above such disputes, as indeed he mostly did. The difficulties into which this approach could lead the Communists is well illustrated by their analysis of Otto Strasser's defection in 1930. It was Otto Strasser and his following which was at first identified as the most important and dangerous of the Nazi "factions".<sup>44</sup>

The programmatical and doctrinal flexibility of the NSDAP was only limited by the importance of anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitism was the nearest thing to a programmatical common denominator for the Nazis and as such it was a kind of programme in itself. Its very irrationality lent itself well to the purposes of Nazi propaganda. It allowed them to appeal simultaneously to lower and to middle class constituencies. Behind a sinister plot to expropriate the middle classes stood the power of "Jewish Marxism". Behind a capitalist order which was ruining the petite bourgeoisie and the workers stood the Jewish managers of international finance capital.

This feature of National Socialism, too, was only imperfectly understood by the Communists. They insisted for most of the time that Nazi anti-Semitism was a corrupt form of anti-capitalism. Thus in Nazi propaganda it represented one facet of the "social demagogery" which the Communists hoped to discredit. They only rarely approached the subject as one which was of importance for an understanding of the flexibility of the Nazi appeal and which was central also for an

understanding of the political outlook of most Nazis. <sup>45</sup>

Far from representing weakness and evidence for internal contradiction, the organizational and programmatical flexibility which these factors gave National Socialism were important sources of strength in its struggle to achieve the status of a mass party. In comparison with the KPD, the NSDAP enjoyed the additional advantage of being able to decide its own priorities free from the consideration of outside interests.

The organizational strengths of the NSDAP meant that it was comparatively easy always to keep the question of the Communists as a secondary tactical priority. It perceived threats and obstacles in its attempt to gain working class support but it was the SPD as the stronger of the two major working class parties which was more important in this respect. It was also the SPD as the main bulwark of the Republic which was more generally an obstacle to Nazi ambitions.

Nazi propaganda did not clearly distinguish between the SPD and the KPD. Both were thoroughly corrupt parties of Jewish Marxism which divided and weakened the German nation. Tactical distinctions could nevertheless still be made. The SPD was most often the specific target of anti-Marxist attacks. Nothing redeemed the party of "November traitors" in Nazi eyes. At least the Communists shared the Nazi contempt for the Republic and its parliamentary institutions and they shared also an opposition to the Entente powers. The Nazis in fact, frequently noticed these similarities. Recognition of the virtues of the Communists, as militant opponents of Weimar can be found in the NSDAP press and in the statements of some of the Nazi

leaders. Even Hitler recognized Communists as particularly valuable recruits for the NSDAP.<sup>46</sup> On the Nazi side, too, there was ambivalence and this was sometimes reflected in Nazi tactics.

When anti-Communism, as distinct from anti-Marxism, made its appearance in Nazi propaganda, it was frequently in response to more important concerns. For example, Hitler's decision to step up the campaign against the Communists after the November, 1932 Reichstag elections did not reflect any sudden discovery of a growing Communist threat to the Nazis. During the election campaign the Nazis had stressed economic issues and an anti-government line. They had virtually ignored the anti-Marxist elements of their appeal. They had also been involved in many strikes during the year, and on the eve of the election they had collaborated with the KPD in a strike of transport workers in Berlin. Hitler interpreted the losses suffered by the NSDAP at the polls as evidence for the need to shift emphasis in order to reassure the party's middle class supporters. One convenient way to do this was to pay attention to anti-Communist propaganda. The KPD entered the equation, in other words, largely in a symbolic sense.<sup>47</sup>

The "symbolic" dimension of Nazi anti-Communism found its parallel in KPD tactics. The KPD's anti-Fascist campaign was not only a reaction to the threat posed by the NSDAP to their organization and membership. They used their anti-Fascism as a weapon in their united-front struggles with the Social Democrats. They hoped to assert their leadership in the anti-Fascist struggle and to win support from among the trade union and SPD membership for their version

of the anti-Fascist campaign. This aspect of the KPD's anti-Fascism remained the dominant one long after the NSDAP had become the most serious threat to the party.

For many in the party, probably for the majority, the situation was considerably simpler than this. Most of the Communist rank and file knew perfectly well who the Fascists were and how serious was the threat which they posed. Judging from all the evidence for low morale (the high turn-over rate, the passivity, the breaches of party discipline), many were mystified by the priorities of their leaders. The tragedy of the ordinary member was that he, as much as anyone, had to pay a full price for the mistakes of the party, and yet such were the structure and purposes of the KPD, that his concerns never received much consideration in the complex of factors which governed KPD behaviour.

In 1923 when the issues of the relationship between the KPD and the NSDAP first asserted themselves as serious problems for the KPD, few could have predicted the tragic outcome for the party. Yet, in 1923 the outlines of the relationship were already in place. All the complicating factors were established or on their way to being established -- the subordinate relationship to the Soviet Union, the dilution of revolutionary purpose, the primacy of the SPD in the party's calculations, the structural weaknesses and finally the uncertainties in the analysis of National Socialism and the ambivalence with which the party viewed the development of a powerful German Fascism. In an important sense their catastrophe was fashioned then in the experience of that year.

### FOOTNOTES

- 1 All accounts of the party under Weimar stress this bolshevization process and are agreed that bolshevization meant the establishment of the closest ties with the Russian party and the emulation of its priorities, programme and structure. For the fullest account of bolshevization see, Hermann Weber, Die Wandlung des deutschen Kommunismus. Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimarer Republik, Vol. I, Frankfurt/Main, 1969. See also, Ossip Flechtheim, Die KPD in der Weimarer Republik, Frankfurt/Main, 1969. For a Marxist account which is critical of Weber see, Dieter Heilman and Bernd Rabehl, "Die Legende von 'Bolshevierung' der KPD", Part I, Sozialistische Politik, No. 9, (Dec. 1970), pp. 65-115 and Part II, No. 10, (Feb. 1971), pp. 1-37.
- 2 For a discussion of the KPD's fading prospects for revolution see Werner Angress, Stillborn Revolution. The Communist Bid for Power in Germany 1921-1923, Princeton, 1963.
- 3 There were many official protests from German governments to the Soviet Union concerning the activities of the KPD. For one early example see the exchange between the German Ambassador and Chicherin on 23 October 1923, BHA (Koblenz) R 431/2670, Auswärtiges Amt an Reichsministerium des Innern und Staatssekretär in der Reichskanzlei, (27 Nov. 1923).
- 4 The main enemies of Soviet interests as identified in the Communist press and in official statements were consistently England and France. Between 1920 and 1924 it was France, between 1925 and 1928 it was England and after 1928 the emphasis shifted once more to France. For a pace setting anti-French statement at that time see, Stalin, Inprekorr, No. 55, (1 July 1930), p. 1213 and p. 1217. During 1931 and 1932 the anti-French line was modified somewhat, reflecting the negotiations which led to the Franco-Soviet Non Aggression Pact of November 1932. The anti-French line was strongest in 1920, during the Soviet-Polish war, in 1923, during the occupation of the Ruhr and during 1930, when France imposed a virtual trade embargo on the Soviet Union. Cf: Harvey Leonard Dyck, Weimar Germany and Soviet Russia 1926-1933, London, 1966, p. 209.
- 5 See, Dyck, ibid. Dyck argues that, as a minimum objective, the Soviets sought to keep Germany out of any anti-Soviet constellation (pp. 16-17). See also, Karlheinz Niclauss, Die Sowjetunion und Hitlers Machtergreifung: Eine Studie über die deutsch-russischen Beziehungen der Jahre 1929 bis 1935, Bonner Historische Forschungen, Vol. 29, Bonn, 1966; Lionel Kochan,

Russia and the Weimar Republic, Cambridge, 1954; Gerald Freund, Unholy Alliance: Russian-German Relations from the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk to the Treaty of Berlin, London, 1957.

6 Berlin was the headquarters of the Russian Social Democratic opposition. Under the editorship of Theodor Dan and Raphael Abramovich, they published the RSD, Mitteilungsblatt der Russischen Sozialdemokratie between 1924 and 1932. This weekly paper had close contacts with the German Social Democratic press, especially with Vorwärts. The RSD monitored and commented, usually critically, on Soviet internal developments and on Soviet foreign policy. Since Social Democratic correspondents were specifically barred from the Soviet Union, the underground contacts of the RSD were important sources of information for Vorwärts and other SPD papers.

7 This is evident from Inprekorr which devoted a special section of most issues to combat the "lies" being spread about Soviet developments in the foreign press. A favourite and frequent target was Vorwärts. It was the Soviet press which set the standards in such matters. The savagery of its attacks surpassed anything to be found in the KPD daily Die Rote Fahne. See, Pravda (lead article), 2 Jan. 1927, in Inprekorr, No. 1, (4 Jan. 1927) and Pravda, 9 May 1928, in Inprekorr, No. 45, (11 May 1928). See also, RSD for a summary of such attacks for early in 1927, RSD, No. 25, (29 June 1927). Among other things Vorwärts is called a "stinking Menshevik paper".

8 See, Robert Daniels, The Conscience of the Revolution: Communist Opposition in Soviet Russia, New York, 1969, Chpt. 15, and Leonard Schapiro, The Communist Party of the Soviet Union, London, 1970, pp. 298-312 and 365-381.

9 In this case from the German "left" and "ultra left" (Korsch, R. Fischer, Maslow, Katz). See Bukharin and Stalin, KI, No. 3, (March, 1926), pp. 270 ff. and cf: Heinz Neumann, I, No. 8, (15 Aug. 1925), "Comrades Korsch etc. forget, that the 'State interests' of Soviet Russia are the interests of a class state and to be sure the one is absolutely identical to the other. It is the interests of one and the same class: the proletariat", (pp. 528-529).

10 Stalin, KI, ibid., p. 284.

11 The case of Clara Zetkin is particularly interesting in this respect. She had a long career. She had been a member of the SPD, USPD, the Spartakus Bund and the KPD. Her speeches

and writings consistently reveal her commitment to the humanist tradition of the German working class movement and her dedication to a socialist Germany. At the same time her writing reveals an uncritical allegiance to the Soviet Union. Although her allegiance was more to Bukharin than to Stalin, this remained true even after Bukharin's fall. See Weber, ibid, Vol. II, pp. 350-351, and Weber, "Zwischen kritischen und bürokratischen Kommunismus. Unbekannte Briefe von Clara Zetkin", Archiv für Sozialgeschichte, Verlag für Literatur und Zeitgeschehen, Hannover, Vol. XI, pp. 417-448. That Zetkin remained critical of important aspects of KPD policy even though she continued as a respected figure in the party is revealed in some of her private correspondence. See, BHA (Koblenz), Nachlass Maria Reese; cf: Franz Borkenau, World Communism, University of Michigan Press, 1962, p. 357 ff. Here Borkenau draws attention to the "mythical authority of the Russian revolution".

12 These are by far the most frequently expressed concerns in the party press, circulars and speeches on organizational questions.

13 The attacks on the critics of KPD tactics often made no attempt whatever to separate the "left" from the "right". See, for example, Ernst Thälmann, "Zu unserer Strategie und Taktik im Kampf gegen den Faschismus", I, No. 6, (June 1932), p. 282. Here criticism by Trotsky, the SPD, the SAP and the "Brandlerites" is treated as if it were expressed by a united opposition. See also, Willi Münzenberg, "Trotskis faschistischer Vorschlag einer Blockbildung der KPD mit der SPD", RA, No. 4, (15 Feb. 1932), pp. 147-160.

14 See, for example, Die Gruppe Arbeiterpolitik (eds.), Der Faschismus in Deutschland. Analysen der KPD-Opposition aus den Jahren 1928-1933, Frankfurt/Main, 1973. This is a collection of articles from the KPO organ Gegen den Strom. See also, Trotsky, Fascism: What It Is -- How to Fight It, Pioneer, 1944. Dieter Heilmann and Bernd Rubehl, op. cit. (see fn. 1 above), and for official Marxist-Leninist criticisms see, Dokumente und Materialen zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung, Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus, Vol. I, pp. 529-536; Horst Schumacher, "Der VII. Kongress der Kommunistischen Internationale zu den Aufgaben und Möglichkeiten der sozialdemokratischen Bewegung im Kampf gegen Faschismus und Krieg", Beiträge zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung (BZG), No. 1, (1979), pp. 42-54, esp. p. 44; Manfred Kitze, "Der Beitrag der kommunistischen Reichstagsfraktion zum Kampf der Partei gegen die drohende Faschistische Gefahr, für die Verteidigung und Auswertung der demokratischen und sozialen Rechte der werktätigen Volksmassen (1929-1933)",

Arbeiterbewegung und Parliamentarismus, No. 1, 1977, pp. 61-62.

15 "...Social Fascism does not at all need to develop into 'pure' Fascism but is Fascism in fact and provides capitalism with a special service in that it both develops the Fascist dictatorship on its own and helps its development by providing a special disguise of socialist phrases." Fogarasi, "Die Fragen des Faschismus und der Sozialfaschismus in der internationalen kommunistischen Presse", KI, No. 8, (26 Feb. 1930), p. 465. For the history of the Social Fascist doctrine see Siegfried Bahne, "Sozialfaschismus in Deutschland. "Zur Geschichte eines politischen Begriffs", International Review of History, Vol. X, Part 2, (1965), and Peer H. Lange, Stalinismus versus 'Sozialfaschismus' und 'Nationalfaschismus', Göppinger Akademische Beiträge, No. 2, Göppingen, 1969, p. 185 ff.

16 For the success of Nazi propaganda and agitational methods see, Hans Jaeger, "Die Propaganda des Nationalsozialismus", RA, No. 9, (1 May 1932), pp. 414-417; H. Eberlein, "Die Kampforganisation des deutschen Faschismus", KI, No. 37, (8 Oct. 1930), p. 2029; Kurt Sauerland, "Der Faschismus eine neue Gefahr?", RA, No. 4, (Aug. 1929), pp. 145-150, esp. p. 149. For the NSDAP's special appeal for youth see, Franz Fischer, "Das Eindringen des Faschismus in die Reihen der Jugend in Deutschland", KI, No. 38/39, (22 Oct. 1930), pp. 2069-2079. For the dangers posed by the Nazi paramilitary organizations see, Eberlein, KI, No. 37, ibid., pp. 2023-2030. For the effectiveness of Nazi organizational methods see, A. Losowsky, "Faschismus, Bolschewismus und Reformismus", RGI, No. 8(31), (August 1923), pp. 681-685.

17 See, Erkner, "NSDAP und die Klassen. (Erläutert am Berliner Beispiel)", I, No. 7, (July 1931), p. 323, and Hans Jaeger, "Wer wählte Hitler?", RA, No. 10, (October 1930), pp. 525-532.

18 See, A. Enderle, "Die faschistische Gefahr in Deutschland", RGI, No. 3(26), (March 1923), p. 216; S. Kantner, "Die wirtschaftlichen Wurzeln des deutschen Faschismus und seine Wegbereiter", RGI, No. 10/11(33/34), (Oct./Nov. 1923), p. 864; Willi Münzenberg, "Die Entwicklung des deutschen Faschismus", KI, No. 33-35, (1924), p. 114; A. Thalheimer, "Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie in der bürgerlichen Republik", KI, No. 27, (5 July 1927), p. 1311.

19 See, "Das italienische Beispiel und der deutsche Polizei-sozialismus", (unsigned), I, No. 8, (22 Oct. 1922), p. 210; A. Enderle, RGI, ibid., p. 216; Andreas Nin, "Der Faschismus und die Gewerkschaften", RGI, No. 7(30), (July 1923), pp. 609-614; Paul Böttcher, "Sozialimperialismus und

Sozialfaschismus in den Gewerkschaften", I, No. 16, (15 Aug. 1927), p. 493.

20 Not only the Communists but most Socialists shared this conception. There were, however, exceptions. August Thalheimer saw Fascism as an autonomous mass movement of the lower middle classes. See, Der Faschismus in Deutschland, (see fn. 14 above) and August Thalheimer, "Über den Faschismus" in W. Abendroth (ed.), Faschismus und Kapitalismus, Europäische Verlaganstalt, 1967. Cf: A. James Gregor, Interpretations of Fascism, General Learning Press, 1974, p. 159. Gregor suggests that this view was only established in 1930 (p. 159) but some of the earlier Communist accounts assign an autonomous role to Fascism. See, A. Jacobsen, "Der Faschismus", I, No. 10, (15 Nov. 1922), p. 303; S. Perewosnikow, "Die deutschen Faschisten auf der Suche nach Arbeitermassen", RGI, No. 6(77), (June, 1927), p. 364.

21 On the portrayal of the Zentrum as a "Fascist" party, see Willi Münzenberg, "Wer bleibt Sieger? Bolshevismus oder Nationalsozialismus?", RA, No. 8, (Aug. 1930), p. 410.

22 Werner Hirsch, "Faschismus und Hitlerpartei", I, No. 1, (Jan. 1932), p. 35.

23 Karoloski, "Zur Frage der faschistischen Diktatur in Deutschland", KI, No. 14, Berlin edition, (Nov. 1932), pp. 1062-1063.

24 In order of reference: Arthur Rosenberg, "Italien auf dem Wege zur bürgerlich-rechtssozialistischen Koalition", I, No. 11, (1 Aug. 1921), p. 428; Ardito Rosso, "Perspektiven und Lehren der revolutionären Krisis in Italien", KI, No. 18, (1921), p. 119; W., "Der III. Kongress des Faschisten (7-11 Nov. 1921)", KI, No. 19, (1923), p. 103; Guilo Aquila, "Der Faschismus an der Macht", KI, No. 24/25, (15 Mar. 1923), p. 68. This article was written in mid January, 1922. The main thesis reappeared in Guilo Aquila, Der Faschismus in Italien, (1923) and in Clara Zetkin, "Der Kampf gegen den Faschismus. Bericht auf dem Erweiterten Plenum des Exekutivekomittees der Kommunistischen Internationale", (20 June 1923) in Clara Zetkin, Ausgewählte Reden und Schriften, Vol. II, pp. 599-729, Berlin (East), 1960. Zetkin's analysis, which follows Aquila's earlier work even in most of its illustrative details, was the most authoritative Communist treatment of Fascism until the appearance of Palme Dutt's, Fascism and Social Revolution in 1934. Cf: John M. Cammett, "Communist

Theories of Fascism, 1920-1935", Science and Society, XXXI, 2, (1967), p. 150 ff. and Gregor, (see fn. 20 above), pp. 131-138.

25 In order of reference: Willi Münzenberg, "Die Entwicklung des deutschen Faschismus", KI, No. 33-35, (1924), p. 114; E. Kunick, "Zur Entwicklung des Faschismus in Deutschland", I, No. 8, (5 April 1927), p. 251; this was the official Comintern position in 1928, see Palme Dutt, Fascism and Social Revolution, International, 1934, p. 88 ff.

26 As cited in Theodor Pirker, ed., Utopie und Mythos der Weltrevolution, DTV, 1964, pp. 226-229. The proposition that Fascism is linked to finance capital is also the central argument of Dutt, ibid. However, in Dutt's treatment ambiguities remain. "Finance capital" is used interchangeably with "the big landowners, the big industrialists and the big financiers", (p. 79 ff.), and the "big capitalists", (p. 178).

27 Münzenberg, KI, 33-35 (1924), (see fn. 25 above). See also, W. Koenen, Inprekorr, No. 27, (22 March 1929), p. 599.

28 See, for example, Manuilski's statement before the Eleventh EKKI Plenum in 1931, in Thälmann, I, No. 41, (10 Dec. 1931), p. 1914.

29 See, AA B.R.M., Akten betr. Russland, Vol. 26, pp. 561876-561882; "Niederschrift über eine Besprechung mit dem Volkskommisar Litvinov", (3 Nov. 1930); AA B.R.M., Akten betr. Russland, Vol. 26, pp. 561917-561921, "Besprechung mit dem russischen Volkskommisar Litvinov", (8 Nov. 1930).

30 See, J. Doriot, "Der Gegensatz zwischen Frankreich und Italien und die KPF", Inprekorr, No. 149, (3 Dec. 1926) and G. Peri, "Der italienisch-französische Gegensatz", Inprekorr, No. 138, (11 Dec. 1928), p. 2741. Here comrades are reminded that "The French-Italian differences do not rest on the opposition of Democracy to Fascism or vice versa" and Peri went on to point out that in such struggles between imperialist powers it is the duty of the Communists to oppose their own bourgeoisie. The one sided effect of this should have been clear to everyone. The Italian Communist party had been totally suppressed by Mussolini. In case there was any doubt, Peri made clear in his article that it was French imperialism which was the more dangerous. See also, "Italien und Jugoslawien", Inprekorr, No. 52, (1 June 1928), pp. 939-940. For an early observation that Italian Fascism was opposed to France see, Guilo Aquila, KI, No. 24/25, (1923), (see fn. 24 above), pp. 80-81.

31 In 1933 the Soviet Union concluded a non-aggression treaty with Mussolini. There is some doubt as to whether this was a result mainly of an Italian or Soviet diplomatic initiative. Cf. Thomas Weingartner, Stalin und der Aufstieg Hitlers, Berlin, 1970, p. 238. The case for assuming that it was a Soviet initiative is strengthened in light of earlier Soviet efforts to establish good relations. See D. Dallin, "Faschismus und Bolshevismus", RSD, No. 28, (13 July 1926); "Wahlverwandschaft" (press report), RSD, No. 9, (27 Feb. 1930); and see above fn. 29.

32 See, "The Putsch in Lithuania", Pravda, (16 Sept. 1927), as cited in RSD, No. 38, (28 Sept. 1927); "Resolution des EKKI über den polnisch-litauischen Konflikt", Inprekorr, No. 13, (10 Feb. 1928), pp. 260-261; "Gegen die Besetzungs Litauens durch die polnischen Imperialismus. Aufruf des VI. Weltkongresses der Komintern", Inprekorr, No. 84, (14 Aug. 1928); M.W., "Die Zuspitzung des Konfliktes Zwischen Polen und Litauen", Inprekorr, No. 76, (31 July 1928), pp. 1358-1359.

33 For the sources of electoral strength of the NSDAP see, Karl Dietrich Bracher, Die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik, Eine Studie zum Problem des Machtverfalls in der Demokratie, Stuttgart and Düsseldorf, 1957, pp. 645-656; Richard N. Hunt, German Social Democracy 1918-1933, New Haven and London, 1964, p. 118. Alfred Milatz, "Das Ende der Partien im Spiegel der Wahlen 1930 bis 1933" in Erich Matthias and Rudolf Morsey, Das Ende der Parteien, Düsseldorf, 1960, pp. 743-793; Walter Tornin, "Die Volksvertretung der Weimarer Republik" in Max Schwarz, MDR. Biographisches Handbuch der deutschen Reichstage, Hannover, 1965, pp. 509-528 and p. 816; Max H. Kele, Nazis and Workers, University of North Carolina Press, 1972, pp. 160-167.

34 For discussion of Nazi appeals to workers see, Kele, ibid., and Richard Kühnl, Die Nationalsozialistische Linke 1925-1930, Meisenheim am Glan, 1966.

35 Virtually every Communist discussion of National Socialism from 1922 to 1933 conceded that the Nazis were able to gain some support from the working class. For Communist accounts which stress this aspect of National Socialism see especially, Hans Jaeger, RA, (see fn. 18 above), p. 532; Walter Ulbricht, "Tiefer in die Massen!", I, No. 9/10, (Sept./Oct. 1932), p. 398. See also, Leonid and A. Friedrich, "Der Mittelstand, Faschismus, Nationalbolschewismus und die Partei", I, No. 4, (15 Feb. 1923); A. Enderle, RGI, (see fn. 18 above), p. 212; Hermann Remmele, "Zur Beurteilung der Lage in Deutschland", KI, No. 12(21),

(7 Dec. 1926), p. 540; Lenzner, "Die Kommunalwahlen in Deutschland", KI, No. 45, (20 Nov. 1929), p. 1692. For the importance of the working class in the SA, see, Werner Hirsch, "Faschismus und Hitlerpartei", I, No. 1, (Jan. 1932), p. 40.

36 Jaeger, ibid., p. 533.

37 Cf. Kele, pp. 5-9 and p. 216. Kele provides the most thorough treatment of the working class element in National Socialism. He notes that most studies pay little attention to the working class support of the NSDAP. In accounting for this he traces part of the responsibility to the influence of Socialist and Communist analyses. This point needs revision.

38 A. Enderle, RGI, (fn. 18 above), p. 212.

39 The Communists experienced many of the same difficulties in their analysis of the Zentrum party, see "Die deutsche Zentrums-partei im Wahlkampf", (unsigned), Inprekorr, No. 42, (1 May 1928), p. 750. The Zentrum was the only major "middle class" party which proved able to hold its following against the Nazi advance. It actually increased its strength between the 1930 and July 1932 Reichstag elections. See, Alfred Milatz, op. cit., (fn. 33 above), p. 775. Like the NSDAP it also attracted a considerable working class vote.

40 See, Franz Fischer, KI, (fn. 16 above), p. 2074; Lenzer, KI, (fn. 35 above), p. 1692; Kurt Sauerland, "Der Faschismus eine neue Gefahr?", RA, No. 4, (Aug. 1929), p. 149.

41 Joseph Nyomarkay, Charisma and Factionalism in the Nazi Party, Minneapolis, 1967. See also, Leonard Schapiro, Totalitarianism, London, 1972, pp. 20-29; Jeremy Noakes, The Nazi Party in Lower Saxony 1921-1933, Oxford University Press, 1971, p. 2 and p. 16; H. Gerth, "The Nazi Party. Its Leadership and Composition", American Journal of Sociology, (1940), p. 517 ff.

42 Cf. Noakes, ibid., pp. 24-25 and p. 58.

43 Kele, op. cit., pp. 168-211.

44 "Der Kampf gegen den Nationalfaschismus in Deutschland", (lead), KI, No. 29/30, (13 Aug. 1930), p. 1597.

45 For important exceptions see especially articles by Hans Jaeger, "Die Lehren des Nationalsozialismus", RA, No. 8, (Aug. 1930), pp. 420-428; "Die Richtungskampf innerhalb der NSDAP", RA, No. 3, (March 1931), pp. 132-137. Cf. Wilhelm Swient, "Der Untergang des Mittelstandes", I, No. 17, (15 Sept. 1923),

p. 489. Swient's view is more typical in seeing anti-Semitism as a variety of anti-capitalism.

46 Hitler thought, at least in the early years, that it was important to recruit from the extreme left as well as from the right. See, Noakes, op. cit., p. 25.

47 Kele, op. cit., pp. 208-209.

## CHAPTER II

## 1923: THE FORMATIVE YEAR

For both parties 1923 was a year of dramatic contrast, a time of unique opportunity and great disappointment. For the KPD the year began with excellent prospects. The French and Belgian occupation of the Ruhr and the accompanying economic dislocation, inflation and industrial unrest, strengthened its position relative to its Social Democratic rival.<sup>1</sup> By late summer strikes in Berlin, which were launched by the Communists, led to the fall of the Cuno government. In October the KPD entered coalition governments with the SPD in Saxony and Thuringia. By this time the steady increase in the influence of the KPD and continuing industrial unrest pointed to the revival of revolutionary prospects in Germany. Yet the year ended in defeat.

Revolutionary activity culminated in the debacle of the Hamburg uprising at the end of October.<sup>2</sup> This was followed by the forced dissolution of the coalition governments. The KPD found itself officially outlawed and more isolated than ever before. What was to prove an unbridgable rift had opened between it and the other working class organizations. Its following began to melt away and its influence within the trade unions began to decline. Its dependence on the Comintern and the Russian party increased as its self confidence as a revolutionary party collapsed.

For the National Socialists, and the radical right generally, 1923 was also a promising year. The Nazis grew throughout the year and emerged as the strongest of the various völkisch movements.<sup>3</sup> Hitler had succeeded in asserting his leadership and was on the way to becoming an important figure on the national scene. Important links were established with the Wehrmacht, with the police and with the Bavarian government. But again, opportunity was followed by disastrous setbacks. There was the abortive Munich putsch attempt, then the banning of the NSDAP and Hitler's trial and imprisonment in Landberg.

In this atmosphere of crisis and rapidly changing political fortunes, the Communists first formulated the tactical perspectives which were to govern their relationship with the Nazis for the remainder of the decade. In the first place, they were quick to see the Nazis as a serious threat. Mussolini's success, and especially the failure of the Italian working class parties to offer effective resistance to the Fascists, had made the Communists alert to the dangers of Fascist style political movements. From the first, the Italian example became a kind of weather guage for danger. This was evident in the Communist analysis of the German völkisch and National Socialist parties. For it was not so much their actual political strength which most drew the attention of the Communists as it was their similarity to Italian Fascism. As Fascist parties it was their modernity and their potential relevance for the future which was worrying. Brandler recognized this early in 1923. In an address to the Seventh Reichskongress of the KJD, he noted that all the Weimar

parties,

"With the exception of the Communist party and recently the National Socialists and the deutsch-völkisch groups, stem from the pre-war social structure and are therefore in dissolution and disarray."<sup>4</sup>

What most distinguished National Socialism from the bourgeois parties and indeed even from other of the völkisch groups, was its aggressive activism and its ability to attract a mass following.

These qualities raised new and difficult problems for the Communists. Not only did they have to contend with the strong arm tactics of the Nazis,<sup>5</sup> but they also recognized them as competitors for the support of sections of the population which the Communists expected to win for themselves.

By 1923 the Communist analysis of German society, although it retained the bi-polar model of working class and bourgeoisie, contained a more subtle dimension. The Communists saw the importance of the post war economic crisis as a factor which was altering Germany's class structure. The social and economic barriers between the working class and the lower orders of the middle class were breaking down. Their language of analysis reflected the new situation. They attempted to broaden their understanding of class as an economically determined category, so as to distinguish clearly between the "Mittelstand" and the bourgeoisie; that is, between the ruined small shopkeepers, independent Handwerker and the self employed, on the one hand, and on the other, the capital owning classes. They attempted also to distinguish between the "old" and the "new" Mittelstand. The so-called new Mittelstand was made up of the near

proletarian Angestellten, (the white collar workers from both the private and the public sectors).<sup>6</sup> Long before the sociologists of Weimar, such as Theodor Geiger, made this kind of analysis a standard for German sociology, the Communists had already modified their own analysis to take into account the recent changes in the German social structure.<sup>7</sup> As early as 1919, Paul Frölich noted the disintegration and "proletarianization" of the Mittelstand groups.<sup>8</sup> He argued that classes which before the war identified with the bourgeoisie, were now radicalized and forced to use the same methods as the workers in defending themselves against management. The "contradictions" between mental and physical labour, between the "Kopf- und Handarbeiter" were breaking down and the sense of special status which separated these groups from the working class was being lost in an awareness of a common interest. It was important for the Communists to win the support of the Mittelstand or at least to "neutralize" it. According to their analysis it made up almost half of the population. It could either be an important ally under Communist leadership or a decisive weapon in the hands of the bourgeoisie.<sup>9</sup>

The National Socialists and the other "völkisch groups were recognized as important obstacles for the Communists in gaining access to the Mittelstand. According to the Communist argument, the Fascist parties had been cast in this role as a result of the mistakes and the betrayals of the Social Democrats. Social Democracy had lost the support both of the revolutionary workers and the radicalized Mittelstand groups. Through its compromise with capitalism it had

sold out the interests of these classes. The Mittelstand as a consequence was abandoning Social Democracy for the Fascist parties. This was a well established theme both in the Communist literature on Italian Fascism and in the discussions of the German situation. Thus, as early as 1921, Brandler accused the Social Democrats of the "greatest historical treason", both the SPD and the USPD had,

"brutally disillusioned and mocked all those uprooted, wavering petit bourgeois thinking worker, civil service and white collar groups as well as those middle class people who live in the deepest misery, in that they have made a caricature of socialism and thereby have driven these wavering groups into the camp of the counter revolution."<sup>10</sup>

Because of their influence on the Mittelstand, it was not sufficient simply to confront the Fascist parties with force. From the beginning, the Communists insisted on the necessity of combating Fascism politically by means of a broad propaganda and agitational campaign designed to convince the Mittelstand supporters of Fascism that their objective interests could only be served by the KPD.<sup>11</sup>

What was involved here was an application of the Communist "united front" approach to tactical problems and it is important to notice that the united front idea applied as much to the KPD's relations with the Nazis as it did to its relations with the Social Democrats. What is involved, at any given time, in the application of the united front concept is the identification of the principal political forces ranged against Communist objectives (whatever these might happen to be) and the definition of the limits and of the form of co-operation and competition with those groups which are seen in some senses to share

the interests of the Communists. It may be that the leadership of a group in question accepts Communist purposes either fully or partly. Where this is the case, a degree of direct collaboration, or "united front from above", may be appropriate. "United front from above", however, may not be, and usually is not in itself, an accurate guide to Communist priorities. Direct collaboration aimed at a limited objective such as a combined electoral or other assault on a shared enemy may have, from the point of view of the Communists, the primary objective of establishing their leadership over the enterprise and so undermining the collaborating party. In other words, "united front from above" is to be understood as a weapon to be used as much against the "ally" as the common enemy.

This is clearer in the second case of the application of the united front idea. It may be true that the shared sense of purpose necessary for the united front is not perceived either by the leadership or the supporters of the target group, but is nevertheless still present "objectively". Thus the industrial workers and the impoverished Mittelstand may be misled into an acceptance of the bourgeois political order and its values. They may even actively support these and just as actively oppose the Communists. It nevertheless remains true that their "objective" interests can only be served by the Communists. Where this is the case the appropriate tactic is "united front from below". What is specifically demanded with this tactic is capitulation. Individual members of the target groups are to be captured from the rival organization by convincing them to accept Communist leadership in pursuit of ends defined

exclusively by the Communists.

Despite the absence here of any suggestion of allied or co-operative effort between two parties, some selectivity remains in the choice of target groups. It was not a tactic which could be used indiscriminately. The SPD qualified for its attentions because it was supported by the industrial workers, the single most important group on whose behalf the Communists claimed to act. The Nazis and other Fascist groups did, because of the support they obtained from classes who also properly belonged to the Communists. On the other hand, the major middle class parties, just because of their following and membership, could not be recognized as suitable targets, except in so far as they had some substantial working or lower class support, as was the case with the Zentrum party. This is an interesting limitation of tactics which was dictated by the legitimating role of Communist ideology. It may well have been that the Communists saw the advantage, for certain purposes, of co-operation even with the most middle class and conservative groups in Germany. That awareness of shared purposes, however, necessarily fell outside of the scope of united front tactics.<sup>12</sup> Collaboration with such groups took on the character of "diplomatic" negotiation or even of conspiracy; but "conspiracy" only because of the Communist adherence to their revolutionary, Marxist-Leninist doctrine. Certain kinds of contacts were simply illegitimate in Marxist-Leninist terms. Hence, any revelation of KPD or Soviet contacts with such groups had to be acutely embarrassing.

In the case of the National Socialists there were few such

inhibitions. The radicalized, nationalistic, lower middle class supporters of National Socialism were seen as being directly open to Communist united front from below efforts. In the first place, the KPD's revolutionary (anti-Entente) foreign policy position was recognized as "a strong weapon in the ideological struggle against National Socialism",<sup>13</sup> and throughout 1923 anti-Entente propaganda formed the main content of these tactics. According to Bandler, the effect of the Fascist nationalist appeal was the main reason for a new emphasis on the "national question" not only in the German party but also in the Comintern as a whole. He claimed that Fascist propaganda had "forced" the party to reconsider its propaganda methods and to reform its hitherto "intransigent internationalism".<sup>14</sup>

The Nazis also entered the united front calculations in another way. From the beginning the Communists were impressed with their potential as a working class rival. The ability of the Nazis to attract support from labour was seen as something which distinguished them both from other German völkisch groups and from the Italian Fascists. In 1922 and 1923 the first warnings were sounded.<sup>15</sup> The Nazis were seen as "far more 'friendly' towards the workers than the Italian Fascists". Those parts of the National Socialist programme which were concerned with labour were interpreted as "posing the demands of the KPD".<sup>16</sup> The Communists noticed particularly the Nazi success among the unemployed and this was to be of even greater concern later when the Communists came to rely heavily on the unemployed.<sup>17</sup>

It was not simply the ability of the Nazis to bring workers into

their ranks which was worrying. There was, potentially at least, an even more serious problem. Beginning late in 1922, the Communists issued warnings which had to do with the Nazi and völkisch penetration of the factories and trade unions.<sup>18</sup> Among other things they noted a large influx of völkisch minded young workers who were entering the factories in order to spread nationalist propaganda. Nazi and völkisch workers also brought forward their lists in elections to the factory councils which, according to the Communists, represented an attempt to disrupt the organizations of the workers. Beyond this they acted, more generally, as "agents" of the bourgeoisie within the factories performing the functions of "Pinkertons" and strike breakers for management.

These concerns found expression in the resolutions of the RGI.<sup>19</sup> Communists everywhere were called upon to resist what was seen as a growing threat to the working class organizations. They were to fight against the building of Fascist trade unions, resist the penetration of factory councils by the Fascists, conduct an anti-Fascist propaganda campaign among workers and the unemployed, and construct united front proletarian self defense units to counter Fascist strong arm methods. A different emphasis was clearly present here from that which characterized the campaign of propaganda and persuasion directed at the Mittelstand. That is still there both in the resolutions and in Communist activities at the local level.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, what was underscored was the necessity for self defense and confrontation.

The two pronged tactical approach was reflected in the KPD's

first well elaborated statement of principle governing its relations with the Nazis. In response to the growing strength of the Nazis in southern and western Germany, the Zentrale held a special conference of district leaders from Southern Germany. The congress convened in Stuttgart on the 27th December 1922 and included as participants, representatives of the Zentrale (Maslow and Hölein) and members of the KPD Reichstag and Landtag delegations. The conference produced a document entitled "Guidelines for Combating National Socialism and Fascism".<sup>21</sup>

The emphasis of the "Guidelines" was divided approximately equally between reliance on confrontation and on the more subtle techniques of propaganda and agitation. The district leaders were required to deny the streets to the "Fascist bands" and to prevent and disrupt their meetings. At the same time,

"The National Socialist and Fascists were to be combated with the party's own ideals ...by means of political influence and organizational connections with those groups closest to them, especially the petite bourgeoisie and the middle and low ranking civil servants..."<sup>22</sup>

This tactical design was restated at a second conference held in Berlin in January 1923, and again at the Leipzig Parteitag on the 28th January 1923.<sup>23</sup>

At Leipzig, however, the fairly even balance between the two approaches to National Socialism began to break down. During the early months of 1923, the KPD made energetic efforts to exploit the Fascist issue as a key plank in its united front appeals to the trade unions and the Social Democrats. This was done on the basis of offers

to lead a campaign of confrontation against the National Socialists and other völkisch groups. The militant anti-Fascist line found expression in the resolutions of the Leipzig Parteitag and again in March at the Frankfurt Party Conference. At Frankfurt there was a call for the establishment of mass united front organizations based on all organizations of the working class to conduct the struggle against Fascism. These were the so-called Hundertschaften and Arbeiterkontrollausschüsse. They were to be based on the factories and were meant both to defend the organizations of the working class, and more aggressively, to disarm the Fascists, to disrupt their movements, to prevent the transport of their weapons, and to deny the streets to them.<sup>24</sup> At the same time an international committee was established, the Internationale Kommittee für die Bekämpfung der Kriegsgefahr und des Faschismus (Kampfbund). This had as its declared purpose the co-ordination of the struggle against Fascism internationally by supplying funds (and unofficially also arms) to "all proletarian organizations and revolutionary groups which are actively engaged in the struggle against Fascism".<sup>25</sup> The Kampfbund was organized as a structure of "action committees" in each of the countries where there was judged to be a serious Fascist threat. Political and financial direction was centred in Berlin. In Germany the active members were Hugo Eberlein, Ernst Meyer, Clara Zetkin and Hermann Remmle. It was to be Zetkin and Remmle who would take the leading roles in the anti-Fascist campaign in Germany.<sup>26</sup> The tactics of direct confrontation culminated with plans for a series of Communist led anti-Fascist demonstrations for Berlin and other major

centres to be held in July.<sup>27</sup>

As a united front tactic these efforts largely failed and they failed also as a means of countering the activities of the various radical right organizations. For one thing, the Hundertschaften appear to have been badly organized. There were complaints from Communist functionaries of lack of support and direction from the centre.<sup>28</sup> They were also badly understood. The Communists were concerned that many of their members failed to understand the "united front" nature of the Hundertschaften and saw them instead as revolutionary combat organizations. Such comrades were warned that until the united front functions of these organizations were fulfilled there could be no question of an armed confrontation with the Fascists or with the institutions of the Republic. Such an interpretation of the role of the Hundertschaften, in the meantime, prevented them from attracting the support of non-party workers.<sup>29</sup> This was the main limitation of the Hundertschaften. There was little active support from the trade unions and the SPD. Sometimes in order to suggest more support from the workers the KPD functionaries in the factories were reduced to forging the signatures of non-party trade unionists on the petitions demanding the building of Hundertschaften.<sup>30</sup>

The SPD was suspicious of the KPD's united front policy for a number of reasons. They saw in the Hundertschaften an attempt to involve them in revolutionary adventures. Like many in the KPD they did not believe that the tasks of these organizations were confined to the problem of defending the factories against Fascist attacks. They also suspected an attempt to subvert their following. The

Communists specifically avoided basing their organizational efforts on the Betriebsräte. Since these already had a "united front" character they might have been an acceptable base from which to organize any genuine co-operative defensive effort. They were, however, dominated by the Social Democrats. For this reason the Communists insisted on new organizations over which they had control.<sup>31</sup> The Hundertschaften were also an important cause of friction within the SPD. In March the KPD had made the construction of united front Hundertschaften a condition for supporting "left" Social Democratic governments in Saxony and Thuringia. Communist united front tactics were therefore more successful in these Länder than elsewhere. In Prussia, on the other hand, the Social Democratic Minister of the Interior, Severing, banned the Hundertschaften and arrested some of their members. Thus the issue of the Communist united front campaign was a source of difficulties within the SPD.<sup>32</sup> As a result of these concerns the SPD relied on its own anti-Fascist defense groups, the Republikanische Notwehr, the Republikanischer Selbstschutz and similar organizations. They specifically forbade their members to participate in the Communist led campaign. Even worse, it sometimes came to blows between the competing anti-Fascist groups.<sup>33</sup>

What most got in the way of a closer understanding between the Communists and the Social Democrats on the anti-Fascist issue was the other dimension of KPD united front policy. The SPD leaders resented the Communist argument that it was Social Democracy which was responsible for the rise of Fascism in Germany.<sup>34</sup> They resented even more the overtures which the Communists were making to the Fascists

themselves. Even as the KPD was promoting the Hundertschaften it was at the same time intensifying its united front efforts with the Fascists. This transcended what could reasonably be understood as the united front from below approach. The Communists seemed to be seeking direct collaboration with the Fascists and, moreover, at the expense of the Social Democrats.

From the moment of first contact with the Nazis and the völkisch groups, there was present in Communist tactics what was to become a characteristic note of uncertainty and ambivalence. To be sure, the Fascists represented a threat but they also represented an opportunity. It was not just that the supporters of these groups might be won for the Communist cause. The Fascist organizations themselves might be exploited for Communist purposes. Such a possibility was present because there were elements in the stated policy positions of the Fascists, or at least of some of the Fascists, which clearly complemented Communist purposes and suggested their potential as possible allies. To some extent, the Nazis could be seen in this light. This was indicated in a confidential report of a special Russian Communist party commission, which had been set up in July to report on the implications of various European nationalist parties for Soviet and Comintern interests. The part of the report concerned with nationalist forces in Germany singled out the National Socialists for favourable comment,

"the healthy urge for a final break with the old regime...finds expression in that part of the National Socialist programme which speaks of the requisition of the banks and the large enterprises."<sup>35</sup>

It was, however, not so much the economic policies of the Fascists which interested the Communists. They were more interested in foreign policy attitudes. Some on the radical right argued for collaboration with the Soviet Union against the Entente. This was true of some of the smaller groups such as the Bund Oberland and it was true also of some of the Nazis. In 1923 the Communists tried to exploit these "National Bolshevik" tendencies.<sup>36</sup> This aspect of Communist tactics is especially linked with one event of the summer of 1923. This was the occasion of Karl Radek's "Schlageter" speech, which he delivered before the Comintern Executive on the 20th June.

No special significance attaches to the name Schlageter. Albert Leo Schlageter had been an obscure nationalist terrorist until he was executed by the French occupation authorities in the Ruhr for his part in an attempt to sabotage a railway line. He was a member of the paramilitary nationalist organization Freikorps Rossbach. He had fought against the Red Army in the Baltic and against the Poles in East Prussia. His execution made him an instant martyr for all the völkisch groups, including the National Socialists. He became, in fact, a central figure in Nazi propaganda for the remainder of the Weimar years.

Radek used the death of Schlageter as the theme of a speech which was meant as a direct appeal for an accommodation between the Communists and the German Fascists. He argued that the interests of the Fascists lay in an alliance with the Communists and the Russian people against "Entente capital",

"Against whom do the Deutschvölkische want to fight? Against Entente capital or the Russian people? With whom do they wish to ally themselves? With the Russian workers and peasants so together to shake off the yoke of Entente capital, or with Entente capital to enslave the German and Russian peoples?... We believe that the great majority of the nationalist minded masses belong not in the camp of Capital but in the camp of the workers. We want to find, and we shall find the path to those masses."<sup>37</sup>

The Schlageter speech had a strong impact on KPD tactics. To emphasize the united front approach to the Fascists some local organizations carried placards in the streets with the Swastika and the Red Star painted side by side.<sup>38</sup> In the Communist press, overtures were made to the Fascists to make common cause with the KPD in opposition to France. Heinz Neumann, for example, appealed in Die Rote Fahne to the National Socialists to oppose French efforts to establish contacts with Bavarian separatists.<sup>39</sup> The Communists also began to seek contacts with the various völkisch and National Socialist organizations. They sent speakers to the meetings of these groups and they organized meetings of their own.<sup>40</sup> Again, the basis of the approach was the appeal for common action in resisting the French. An idea of the tone of these meetings can be gained from an address given by Ruth Fischer on the 25th July to an audience of Nazi students,

"The German Reich, the German Kulturgemeinschaft, the unity of the nation can only be saved if you gentlemen on the deutschvölkisch side realize that you must fight together with the masses which are organized in the Communist party. You cry out against Jewish capital gentlemen? Who cries out against Jewish capital is already a class fighter even if he doesn't know it. You

are against Jewish capital and want to beat down the stock exchange jobbers. Right. Trample the Jewish capitalists under, hang them from the lamp posts,...However, gentlemen what is your stand on the big capitalists, on Stinnes... National liberation...gentlemen we will show you the positive way to the liberation struggle against French imperialism. This French imperialism is now the greatest danger in the world. France is the land of reaction. Only in alliance with Russia, gentlemen on the völkisch side can the German people throw out French capitalism from the Ruhr.<sup>41</sup>

Hermann Remmele was a frequent speaker at such meetings. In August, in Stuttgart and Göppingen, before audiences which were dominated by Communists and National Socialists, he explored the themes of resistance to France, anti-capitalism and anti-Semitism. With respect to anti-Semitism, Remmele, like Ruth Fischer, equated it with revolutionary anti-capitalism,

"It is easy to understand the reasons for anti-Semitism. One needs only visit the Stuttgart meat market to notice that the great majority of buyers are Jews who pay any price while the Stuttgart butcher goes away empty handed because he doesn't have enough money...You Fascists claim to be fighting Jewish high finance. Good. Do that. We are agreed. (Stormy applause from the Fascists)...But...if you really want to fight against the exploitation of the German people... then you must fight side by side with the workers against the capitalist system."<sup>42</sup>

In discussing the "national question" and the French occupation of the Ruhr, Remmele sought to link the struggle against France with the themes of social revolution and an alliance with the Soviet Union. He compared Germany to a colony of the Western powers and invited the National Socialists in the audience to take up arms against the occupation,

"...this struggle is no war of words, it will not be decided in Parliament, it can only be victoriously concluded with weapons in hand."<sup>43</sup>

On this point he drew a sharp distinction between the Communist and Soviet attitude towards French imperialism and that of the Social Democrats. Borrowing a term from the National Socialist vocabulary, he referred to the SPD as the "November Traitors". At one point, when some Social Democrats in the audience left in protest, Remmele observed,

"...in this meeting after the Social Democrats have withdrawn, there are not so many differences of opinion."<sup>44</sup>

When faced with this sort of thing, it is small wonder that the SPD reacted with suspicion to the united front suggestions of the Communists. The Social Democratic press was very critical of the Communist contacts with the Fascists and they specifically noticed the anti-Social Democratic content of speeches such as Remmele's.<sup>45</sup> The Social Democrats suspected that it was they, rather than the Fascists, who were the main targets of Communist hostility. This was a well justified suspicion. Co-operation with the Communists, for any purposes at all, always came up against the stumbling block of the KPD's hostility to Social Democracy. For the SPD, defense of the working class meant primarily the defense of the democratic institutions of the Republic. The KPD had a very different conception. As a revolutionary party, it did not see itself as a defender of Weimar. It was not Fascism, but the SPD, as the strongest working class party, which was the main barrier to the KPD's revolutionary ambitions.

What was changing was the content of those revolutionary ambitions. More and more the promotion of revolution was coming to be understood by the KPD leadership as the promotion of Soviet interests. This need not, of course, have meant any weakening in revolutionary resolve. The Soviets, too, were doctrinally committed to revolution in Germany. Moreover, the new Soviet power was faced with serious problems of economic and political instability. It felt itself isolated and threatened. Its influence with the member sections of the Comintern might have been seen as its one political asset in an otherwise hostile world and revolution, especially revolution in Germany, as its most likely means of ending its isolation. Yet, just because of Soviet weaknesses, involvement in revolutionary adventures was bound to involve important risks. Besides, there were other options open to the Soviet Union in its attempt to reduce its sense of threat and there were other ways, too, of exploiting its leadership within the Comintern. The longer the revolution took to materialize the more the balance tipped in favour of the other options.

Perhaps without fully realizing all the implications of the shift in intention and commitment, the Soviet leaders began to explore these alternatives. At the Tenth Party Congress Lenin opted for policies which postponed some of the Bolshevik revolutionary objectives in favour of a programme which stressed a prudent concern for political and economic security. In foreign affairs, too, non-revolutionary approaches to the world were increasingly emphasized. Trade negotiations were opened with the Baltic Republics, with Great Britain and with Germany. In 1922 the non-revolutionary aspects of Soviet

foreign policy were underscored with the Rapallo treaty.

The conservative approach to Germany which the Rapallo treaty represented competed strongly with the KPD's revolutionary efforts. What was indicated was that the Soviet Union's backing for the German revolution was uncertain and this had to exert an influence on KPD tactics. Without the moral and material support of the Soviet Union the prospects for successful revolutionary action were very much reduced. Rapallo was evidence that even a non-Soviet Germany provided the Soviet Union with opportunities for ending its isolation in Europe. Indeed, long before Rapallo there was ample evidence for the presence of this idea in Soviet calculations. The Soviets had consistently expressed sympathy for the German side concerning the terms of the Versailles Treaty.<sup>46</sup> They had attempted also to find a basis of co-operation with conservative, anti-Entente circles in the Wehrmacht and German industry. These efforts laid the foundation both for Rapallo and extensive economic and military collaboration between the two countries.

The pursuit of working relations with German conservatives, with those very classes which were identified by the KPD as the principal antagonists in their revolutionary struggles, provided the best evidence for the uncertain and half-hearted nature of the Soviet commitment to the German revolution. These contacts were established early through the efforts of Soviet representatives and agents, notably Karl Radek and Victor Kopp. Much is known about the negotiations which were undertaken at that time.<sup>47</sup> They took place, however, in an atmosphere of intrigue and conspiracy and therefore many of the

details concerning any agreements reached remain obscure. One source which provides some additional detail is contained in secret British government intelligence reports on the activities of "foreign revolutionary movements" for 1919-1922.<sup>48</sup> These reports conform well to other accounts and they express an unusual degree of confidence in the sources of their information. They emphasize the importance of the contacts as evidence for the growing Soviet preoccupation with its own security and economic problems.

Negotiations were first begun in Berlin in 1919 between Karl Radek and leading representatives of the conservative right, including Eugene Freiherr von Reibnitz, Rathenau and Harden.<sup>49</sup> A year later, these initial talks resulted in the formulation of concrete proposals for mutual support between the Soviet government and representatives of the German conservatives, including General Ludendorff.

On his return from Berlin to Moscow late in January 1919, Radek presented a report to the Soviet government on the possibility of co-operation with the Wehrmacht and German industry. An account of this report, "a full and precise account which has been received from a most reliable source", was communicated to British intelligence early in 1920. According to this, Radek recommended that the Soviet government work through established contacts in Germany to obtain the services of German scientists and technicians, to obtain German help for the reorganization of the Soviet transport system and to establish normal economic and diplomatic ties between the two countries. In return the Soviets would supply German industry with specified raw materials. This proposal was accepted by the Soviet government.<sup>50</sup>

There were also serious suggestions of direct military collaboration. The British documents contain several reports of negotiations between Karl Radek and Victor Kopp and a group of army officers who claimed to represent a "secret military league".<sup>51</sup> Although nothing came of these plans, the negotiations were reported as far reaching and they involved the participation of the highest levels in the Soviet government, including Lenin.<sup>52</sup> What was apparently discussed were plans for joint military operations against Poland and the provision of military equipment and munitions for the Red Army. According to British intelligence, these plans were shelved mainly as a result of difficulties raised by the German "reactionaries".<sup>53</sup> Despite this, the policy of seeking accommodations with the "reactionaries" continued and it continued also to cast in doubt Soviet support for the German revolution. The KPD was reported to be in desperate financial difficulties due to lack of financial help from the Russians.<sup>54</sup> At the same time, reports reaching Moscow were pessimistic about the prospects for successful revolutionary action. Kopp, for example, argued that the best policy for Moscow to adopt towards Germany was to continue to seek an understanding with the German nationalists along the lines of the accommodation already reached with the Turkish nationalists.<sup>55</sup>

Whatever enthusiasm for the revolution there may still have been at the beginning of 1921 was further eroded by the setbacks suffered by the KPD during that year. Revolution as an approach to the world was being eclipsed by the more conservative approach to the problems of advancing Soviet security and economic interests. In Germany and elsewhere -- in Turkey and China -- this continued to mean seeking

close relations with the anti-Western and anti-imperialist nationalists. From the Soviet point of view, there was far less risk in this course of action than would have been the case had the decision been taken to base Soviet policy entirely on support for the revolutionary activities of the weak and isolated Communist parties.

In the KPD the central importance of Soviet interests was recognized as a consideration which was separable from the KPD's revolutionary objectives. This was apparent in KPD policy statements,

"The overthrow of Soviet power is only possible at present through outside intervention and here is where there is a close connection between Soviet Russia's policies and the policies of foreign Communist parties. Their task is to prevent any kind of capitalist assault against Russia and to create a world situation which favours socialist construction of Soviet Russia."<sup>56</sup>

During 1923 the non-revolutionary orientation was still stronger. In January the German ambassador, Rantzau, in a telegram to the German Foreign Office, noted that the French operations in the Ruhr had made a "strong impression among the Soviet leaders" and that the Soviet government were sympathetic to Germany.<sup>57</sup> Rantzau's opinion was confirmed in the statements of Soviet leaders. In an open letter to the member sections of the Comintern, Bukharin justified support for the German government against France,

"Social revolution in Europe and throughout the world will take years, and only be completed in the course of decades. During this time, for some proletarian states it can be necessary to reach temporary understandings with oppressed bourgeois states -- with weak and threatened states -- against the stronger and threatening."<sup>58</sup>

At the same time Bukharin offered support for the German revolution by promising Russian intervention should Poland attack Germany after a successful German revolutionary effort. The competing trends in the Soviet assessment found expression in the stated objectives of the KPD. The German Communists were to conduct a war on "two fronts", against the French and against the internal enemy, "Stinnes, Thysen and Company".<sup>59</sup>

The argument that the KPD could simultaneously support the German opposition to the occupation while pursuing their own revolutionary struggle against the German bourgeoisie did not really carry much conviction. It was clear that the campaign against France had priority, regardless of the effect of such a priority on the KPD's revolutionary hopes. The elaborations on the war on two fronts theme made the priorities clear. In justifying the KPD's tactics, Radek, for example, argued,

"If we had said at the time of the French invasion of the Ruhr, that we wanted first to fight Cuno and then throw out the French, we would then, whether we wanted to or not, have become the allies of Poincare."<sup>60</sup>

This emphasis was also present in the assessments of the KPD. Frölich, in an explanation of the party's tactics, gave first place to the struggle against France.<sup>61</sup>

At the same time, the fact that this priority reflected Soviet strategic calculations, at least as much as revolutionary considerations, was strongly suggested in some of the statements of the Russian leaders. Bukharin, in a speech before the All Russian Congress of Press Workers, argued that the invasion of the Ruhr aided the

revolutionary struggles of the European working classes. This was so because the invasion delayed the process of stabilization and reconstruction of European capitalism. His arguments, however, also stressed the possible effects of the invasion on Soviet strategic interests. If the French succeeded in dividing and subjugating Germany, there would be an increased threat of aggression against the Soviet Union from France, Poland and France's "other vassal states". He argued that it would be "frivolous" for the Russians to "throw themselves into any adventure", and he concluded by noting the primacy of the need "to place the necessity of economic reconstruction and the desire for peace in the foreground".<sup>62</sup>

The Communists found a revolutionary justification for this emphasis. They argued that during the occupation the German bourgeoisie had played an "objectively" revolutionary role. Their opposition to French imperialism complemented the struggles of the German proletariat, since it distracted and weakened an important enemy of the revolution. Yet, at the same time, the strategic argument was also present. One of the most important ways in which the objectively revolutionary role of the German bourgeoisie had been demonstrated was through the strengthened "Ostorientierung" of German foreign policy.<sup>63</sup> The foreign policy aspects of the KPD's tactics at the time of the occupation were also underscored in subsequent commentary. Writing in 1927, Heinz Neumann observed that during the whole of the period between 1918 and 1923 Germany had acted as a factor which limited the effects of the anti-Soviet policies of the Entente governments. German foreign policy had

furthered Soviet interests and this situation had arisen as a result of the opposition of the German bourgeoisie to the Versailles Treaty,

"The boundless stupidity of the Versailles peace gave the state of the proletarian dictatorship the possibility to secure its power, to bring the civil war to a victorious end and to exploit the breathing space after the collapse of the first war of intervention for the peaceful construction of the socialist economy."<sup>64</sup>

Together with the foreign policy concern, another influence exerted pressure on the KPD's revolutionary orientation. There was evidence that the Russian leaders had little faith in the KPD's ability to conduct any kind of mass action. In August, Radek was reported to have sent Chicherin a secret assessment of the KPD. Radek cast doubt both on the ability of the party's leadership and on the quality of its organization. In his view the party was "completely unprepared for serious and decisive action".<sup>65</sup> Stalin, too, apparently shared these doubts. At the beginning of August, that is shortly before Radek's report, he expressed his misgivings,

"If power, so to speak, falls in Germany today and the Communists try to seize it they will fail...That is the best case. In the worst, however, they will be ripped to pieces and thrown back...It is my opinion that the Germans must be held back and not encouraged."<sup>66</sup>

Later, at the time of the October uprising in Hamburg, the German government noticed the same attitude among the Soviet leaders. On the 23rd October, the German Ambassador had a conversation with Litvinov during which he stated,

"...it was a dangerous game, if at a moment when the German people were engaged in a most difficult struggle for their existence,

Communist propaganda...should intensify inner conflicts and thereby weaken Germany's ability to resist France. In this way the sympathy of those circles who want to work loyally with the Soviet government will be forfeit."<sup>67</sup>

According to Rantzaу, Litvinov was sympathetic to these protests. On the 3rd November Chicherin met with the Ambassador to assure him that the Russian government had taken "energetic measures" to ensure a more sympathetic treatment of Germany in the Soviet press.<sup>68</sup>

The conservative nature of the Soviet approach to Germany and the acceptance of the German status quo which it implied did not appear to be reflected in KPD policies. At the end of 1923 the party's line had become more militant and more than ever dedicated to revolutionary goals. Its attitude, especially to the SPD and the trade unions had hardened and it showed no willingness to co-operate or participate at any level in the institutions of Weimar. This swing to the "left" was first announced at a conference of party workers on the 3rd November. Henceforth united front from below was to be the approach to the SPD and the unions. At the same time the Stresemann administration was characterized as representing the "Fascist triumph over the bankrupt November Republic". It was a government which could only be overcome through the creation of the "dictatorship of the proletariat".<sup>69</sup>

Early in 1924, at the Frankfurt Parteitag and again at the Fifth Comintern World Congress in June, the left positions were confirmed. By the time of the Fifth Congress the SPD had become nothing more than a "branch of Fascism" in a "life and death alliance with white reaction". The possibility of co-operation with the Social Democratic

leaders whether "left" or "right" was decisively rejected.<sup>70</sup> The tactical implications of these resolutions were spelled out for KPD functionaries in an internal party circular in December 1923.<sup>71</sup> In this document the party was informed that their central task had become the "complete liquidation" of the SPD. To this end united front from below tactics were to be employed. The SPD was to be disrupted and the influence of the trade union leaders destroyed by "actively supporting the demands of the proletariat and the impoverished petit bourgeois masses", over the heads of their leaders.

As this circular indicated, the left militancy meant nothing much more than an intensification of the existing attempt to weaken the SPD. That was not in itself a good indication of a firmer revolutionary resolve. Another interpretation was possible and it was one which was more in harmony with the Soviet Union's search for a basis of understanding with Germany.

The Communist commentary on the SPD had already established the idea that Social Democracy was an important enemy of Soviet foreign policy interests.<sup>72</sup> At the Fifth Congress this argument was given a new emphasis. Social Democracy was attacked for its betrayal of the working class and the revolution but it was also attacked, and in stronger terms, as an enemy of the Soviet Union. According to the resolutions of the Congress, Social Democracy harboured a "boundless hate against the Soviet Union". It was working for the "international isolation of the Soviet Union". The participation of Social Democratic parties in democratic governments was seen as "increasing the risks of a war of intervention".<sup>73</sup> On this last point, it is, of course,

highly unlikely that many in the Soviet leadership took seriously the risks of a "war of intervention" -- anyway, certainly not in 1924. Stalin, for one, admitted this on several occasions.<sup>74</sup> The endlessly repeated war danger argument should be understood mainly as a device for dramatizing the importance of Soviet interest for the work of the Communist parties. It provided a sense of crisis and of revolutionary urgency for policies which might otherwise have been less acceptable from the point of view of a revolutionary party. For some in the Russian party, such as Stalin, it perhaps served as a justification for the emphasis on the inward looking themes of national defense and economic construction. In the atmosphere of defeat and disappointment which followed the Hamburg uprising it gave the KPD a sense of purpose which protected its "revolutionary" morale and served to distinguish it from its working class rivals.

The competing tendencies in Communist policies towards the Social Democrats were also present in the approach which was adopted in the case of the various radical nationalist and Fascist groups. There too it was possible to infer both revolutionary and non-revolutionary objectives for Communist policies. It has already been argued that the early attempts to find an accommodation with the German nationalist groups was related to Soviet strategic calculations. Yet there were those among the Communists in Germany who saw in German nationalism an important revolutionary ally. At the same time that the Soviets were seeking an understanding with the Wehrmacht and German industry, there was an important independent attempt to forge a revolutionary alliance with the more militant of

the radical nationalist groups in northern Germany. This attempt was associated with the Hamburg party organization and especially with two of the Hamburg leaders, Heinrich Laufenberg and Fritz Wolfheim.

The argument which Laufenberg and Wolfheim developed between 1919 and 1920 rested on two assumptions. The first of these was that there must be a clear and immediate resolve to proceed with the revolution. This meant, for them, a "left" policy of no compromise with, or involvement in, the institutions of the Republic. There could be no participation in elections and no question of tactical co-operation with the Social Democrats and the trade unions. The second assumption was that in the situation after the war nationalism had become a revolutionary force. They called for resistance to the Entente powers on the basis of a "Volkskrieg". They argued that such a Volkskrieg would quickly lead to the collapse of the Republic. The revolutionaries would then assume the task of national defense and create at the same time the foundations of a Soviet Germany.<sup>75</sup> Success depended on the widest possible alliance of classes. Internal class struggle was, under the circumstances, counterrevolutionary, since it weakened the ability of Germany to resist the external enemy and thus the possibility of a successful Volkskrieg. The class alliance was possible since the war had largely destroyed the old class order. Little of class antagonism remained. Except for a few in Germany, who were in a position to exploit defeat for their own selfish gain, the war had transformed the German people into one vast proletariat who suffered equally under the exploitation of foreign

capital.<sup>76</sup> The Volkskrieg, the war of national liberation, and the revolution were identical.

The practical consequence of Laufenberg's and Wolfheim's arguments was the formulation of proposals for an alliance, a "revolutionary truce" between the Communists and the most militant of the nationalist groups, the Freikorps. Since the most powerful political forces in Germany were the Communists and the Freikorps, and since both were enemies of the foreign exploiters, did that not suggest, "seeking to avoid the fight between them and letting them fight together as allies against a common enemy?"<sup>77</sup>

The ideas and intrigues of the Hamburg Communists were quickly denounced by Lenin and other leading Bolsheviks. In his Left Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder, Lenin lashed out at the,

"crying absurdities of 'National Bolshevism' (Laufenberg et al.) which has gone to the length of advocating a bloc with the German bourgeoisie for a war against the Entente... to tie one's hands beforehand to tell the enemy, who is now better armed than we are, whether and when we shall fight him is being stupid not revolutionary."<sup>78</sup>

Despite the elaborate revolutionary rationale with which Lenin couched his arguments, a prudent concern for the survival of the new Soviet power, and caution, are the dominant themes. This was true also of Radek's anti-National Bolshevik article, "The Foreign Policy of German Communism and the Hamburg National Bolshevism".<sup>79</sup> The problem with the ideas of the Hamburg Communists was that they smacked too much of revolutionary adventurism. It was one thing to exploit the National Bolshevik tendencies of some right wing groups but quite another to surrender to them. It would, therefore, be

inappropriate to see in Radek's Schlageter speech a rebirth of National Bolshevism. It is significant that it was Radek who, in 1919 and 1920, was a principal critic of the Hamburg opposition. He and others repeatedly asserted that the tactics of 1923 had nothing to do with the defunct National Bolshevism.<sup>80</sup> There was to be no suggestion of a "revolutionary truce" and there were certainly no plans for genuine combat with the French. To be sure Radek's position required its revolutionary justifications and these did borrow something from the National Bolshevik ideas. Radek argued that the radicalized petit bourgeois masses, who were the raw material of Fascism, formed a natural "rear guard" for the German revolution. They complemented the "advance guard" role of the Communists by dividing and distracting the bourgeoisie with demands for national and social justice. The Communists had to win the support of these masses and turn their fury against the appropriate targets of Entente imperialism and German capitalism. The revolutionary significance of the petite bourgeoisie was revealed in its rejection of the Weimar system, Social Democracy and the imperialist Versailles order. Fascism was the expression of this deep rejection, or in Radek's words, "Fascism is the socialism of the impoverished petit bourgeois masses."<sup>81</sup>

One need not cast doubt on Radek's revolutionary sincerity to notice that, despite this argument, the Schlageter initiative is open to a very different interpretation. It conformed well to the main outlines of Soviet foreign policy concerns with respect to Germany. It could be seen to serve the limited objective of seeking to exploit

forces which were clearly anti-French in their orientation. Their very presence provided an additional pressure on the German government to stiffen its opposition to the French. This operated in a double sense, since the activities of radical nationalist groups aroused the suspicions of the French and from their perspective better relations with Germany were made more difficult. Radical nationalist, anti-French pressure was even more desirable, from the Communist point of view, after the collapse of the Cuno government. One of the main concerns of Stresemann as Chancellor and as Foreign Minister was to end the government backed campaign of passive resistance in the Ruhr and break the diplomatic impasse with France. This would seriously undermine the basis of collaboration between Germany and the Soviet Union.

In the discussions of Communist policies during 1923 and before, there was consistently present a linkage between revolutionary themes and the simpler ideas of resisting French influence in Europe and of forging links between the Soviet Union and Germany. This was true of Radek's statements before June 1923 and it was true of his subsequent elaborations on the Schlageter theme.<sup>82</sup> The Schlageter initiative, then, could be interpreted (and should be interpreted) as an attempt to preserve the Soviet advantage in Germany while at the same time providing the KPD with a means of defending itself against the predations of the Fascists. In both senses, there was nothing really new in the so-called "Schlageter Course". It did, to be sure, have a united front from above implication, but the dividing line between the search for direct collaboration and tactics designed to

influence only the following of another party was always, in any case, a fine one. This was only too apparent in the case of the KPD's relations with the SPD and it had been apparent all along in their relations with the National Socialists. Not so much separates the Schlageter speech from the earlier emphasis on the need for ideological work among the Mittelstand supporters of Fascism. Indeed, a year before the Schlageter speech, Radek published an article which anticipated some of its arguments. In the article he pointed out that the Communists had always to pay attention to the nationalist aspirations of the petitebourgeoisie. For according to Radek, "it was laughable to see in these masses only a support for reaction".<sup>83</sup>

This part of Radek's argument found wide acceptance even among the critics. Zetkin had been one of the first to point out the presence of a genuinely revolutionary aspiration in the Fascist ranks and she had stressed the need for united front from below work among them.<sup>84</sup> Bandler, although he distrusted its similarities with the older National Bolshevik positions of the Hamburg Communists nonetheless defended the effectiveness of Radek's approach.<sup>85</sup> Speaking before the Executive Committee of the Profintern in September he observed that the KPD's tactics had been designed,

"...to make the Fascist elements harmless so it will not be possible for the middle classes to exploit them for the counter revolution... We have sought to open a discussion with them in language they will understand...We have been able to penetrate their meetings and even discuss various questions with them...This has resulted in accelerating the process of disintegration in the Fascist organizations. In south Germany in Wurtemburg and even in Bavaria, the bastion of Fascism, this process of disintegration has

intensified. The Fascist leaders...are now saying to their followers that there is no possibility of marching on Berlin...'If the Communists succeed in crushing the present government, then we are well rid of it.' The former self confidence has vanished."<sup>86</sup>

Brandler and others exaggerated the effectiveness of these tactics.

The truth was that the direct united front approach to German Fascism in 1923 had very little positive impact. The limiting factor was the attitude of the Fascists. The National Socialists and "Völkische Beobachter" responded with even less enthusiasm to Communist offers of co-operation than did the Social Democrats. In July, the "Völkischer Beobachter" reprinted Radek's speech and rejected the suggestions of co-operation which it contained.<sup>87</sup> In August the Nazi membership was instructed not to visit Communist meetings.<sup>88</sup>

Radek was particularly disappointed by the response of the Nazis but in part he saw it as a reaction of fear and thus as evidence for the success of the tactic in winning influence among the Fascists.<sup>89</sup> There may well have been some truth in such an interpretation. Some Nazis had responded to the Communist initiatives, at least to the point of tolerating their presence in public meetings and responding to Communist invitations to supply speakers. This may well have alarmed Hitler, who could have seen the evidence for "National Bolshevik" tendencies within the Nazi ranks as a threat.<sup>90</sup> It was also true that the Nazis had their own version of Schlageter. They were interested in recruiting Communists for the NSDAP and the Nazi press occasionally carried recruitment appeals meant for the KPD membership. In exploiting the language and symbols of the Communists these efforts borrowed something from Radek's approach.<sup>91</sup>

The topics of the discussions in joint meetings provide some measure of the effect of the Schlageter tactic. Once more, what was obvious was that it was the Fascist side which imposed the limits on the degree of co-operation and understanding which was possible at this time. At one meeting sponsored by the Deutschvölkische Freiheitspartei twenty leading Communist functionaries were present by invitation. The speaker observed that there was little scope for co-operation with the Communists. This was so because of the dependence of the KPD on Moscow and Moscow meant the "rule of a crowd of Jews". The Völkische saw the Jews, "as the greatest enemy". The speaker, however, did go on to point out that despite the question of the Jews there was still some common ground. The Communists and the Völkische were ready to fight for the German people against France and they shared a common antipathy for capitalism. The time to exploit this common ground had not yet arrived since Germany was not ready to fight France.<sup>92</sup>

Both the limited sense of shared purposes and the obstacles in the way of co-operation also found expression in the National Socialist and right wing press. The same article in the Völkischer Beobachter, which had rejected the possibility of co-operation with the Communists, had noted that, "whoever reads Radek's speech has here and there the sensation that the Jew strikes notes which for years have been the chief demands of the National Socialist workers' movement". But it was the Jewish and international character of Communism which made it impossible for Nazis to see it as an ally.<sup>93</sup>

With hindsight it is easy to see the tragic dimension of the

failure of the Communists to comprehend fully the nature of the differences which separated them from the National Socialists and "Völkische. Above all, they insisted that anti-Semitism could be understood as anti-capitalism and therefore as a factor which made the Fascists a suitable target for the united front appeal. They were, of course, mistaken. Anti-Semitism was perhaps the most serious obstacle to such tactics. It could not be made so easily to yield to the Communist class analysis. The Communists tried hard to convince their Nazi audience that the racial question was irrelevant to their real (class) concerns. What went unnoticed, but was apparent in speeches such as Fischer's and Remmele's, was that too much was conceded (perhaps everything). Brandler was right on this point. As Fischer and Remmele borrowed some of the worst images from the anti-Semitic vocabulary, one had to wonder just who was influencing whom.

Doctrinal reservations also coloured the more positive responses to the Communist initiative. These came from the leading nationalist intellectual Moeller van den Bruck and from Graf Ernst zu Reventlow, a völkisch leader who was later to join the NSDAP. Reventlow replied to Radek in his own völkisch and anti-Semitic weekly, Der Reichswart and the article was later reprinted in Die Rote Fahne. Reventlow addressed himself to both Radek and Paul Frölich. The latter had promised in Die Rote Fahne that the Communists were prepared to co-operate with the völkisch organizations,

"Whoever is sincere in his intention of marching with us a part of the way (ein Stück Wegs) will find us willing."<sup>94</sup>

Taking up Frölich's "ein Stück Wegs" theme, Reventlow replied,

"Should Herr Radek and the Communist International for which he spoke, be ready for such co-operation let them follow words by deeds. We Völkische are not prejudiced and are willing to accept support from anyone. But we will not consider sacrificing the substance of our völkisch ideas or having them infringed upon."<sup>95</sup>

Moeller van den Bruck, too, saw the main limiting factor on co-operation in the doctrinal differences which separated the two sides. Two years earlier he had made a case for an anti-parliamentary, anti-liberal "axis" of Communists and radical nationalists.<sup>96</sup> Now when faced with the Communist overtures, he equivocated. He pointed to doctrinal differences and he also expressed doubts concerning the permanence of the Soviet Union's opposition to France,

"Germany must always be prepared for the restoration of a special political relationship between France and Russia...The French Republic will no more shy away from a tie with the Soviet state than it shied away from contact with Czarism."<sup>97</sup>

Despite the equivocations, there was enough that was encouraging for the Communists to react favourably and to use Reventlow and Moeller van den Bruck as central figures in their united front tactics. Articles by Moeller van den Bruck, Reventlow, Frölich and Radek appeared together in the Communist press and in a Communist published pamphlet, Schlageter eine Auseinandersetzung.<sup>98</sup> Radek referred favourably to Moeller van den Bruck's Gewissen<sup>99</sup> and Reventlow's article was reviewed sympathetically in Inprekorr.<sup>100</sup> On the radical right there continued to be some recognition of common ground with the Communists. Even the Nazi press went as far as to

acknowledge that the two sides shared the same enemies. In September the "Völkischer Beobachter, while reacting to rumoured plans of emergency measures to deal with the extremists of left and right, asked the question,

"Cui bono if Seeckt and Stresemann proceed against the Völkische and Communists? One is permitted to conclude that such measures come about on the order of Jews and Social Democrats."<sup>101</sup>

Besides the limited contacts in the press and the fraternization which took place in public meetings, there are hints of a more serious kind of co-operation involving the Communists and various nationalist and völkisch groups. In the memoir literature there are claims that collaboration took place in the Ruhr against the French and in Silesia against the Poles. Heinz Neumann, for example, supposedly reached some kind of understanding with nationalist Wehrmacht officers in the Ruhr.<sup>102</sup> In Hamburg the Communists were supposedly in direct contact with the völkisch, Schlageter Kreise.<sup>103</sup> There were also contacts and offers of collaboration with Oberland.<sup>104</sup> There was further evidence, this time for armed collaboration, in Communist agitational literature meant for the Völkische, the Wehrmacht and the police. This material reminded its audience of collaboration against the French and asked that such activities be borne in mind when considering what attitude to adopt towards the KPD and the Soviet Union. One such document noted that it would be far too dangerous to review the full history of the co-operation in a document that might fall into the wrong hands.<sup>105</sup>

There was also a suggestion of financial dealings between the

Communists, the Nazis and the Bund Oberland. One internal Bavarian government report of November 1923 noted that Scheubner-Richter had "enormous sums" at his disposal and had been using them in preparation for Hitler's putsch attempt. The source of these funds was a mystery but the report suggested the possibility of some of them originating in Moscow. It went on to argue that this was likely in view of the large number of former Communists and Russian emigres in the radical right circles.<sup>106</sup> It was, moreover, widely rumoured that Scheubner-Richter was in direct contact with Moscow. Freikorps commander Captain Ehrhardt claimed to have been able to contact the Soviet government via Scheubner-Richter.<sup>107</sup> Intrigues between the Bavarian radical nationalists and Russian agents were also mentioned in the British intelligence documents.<sup>108</sup>

There is good evidence for financial dealings between Communists and Oberland. This has to do with the case of the SPD member of the Bavarian Landtag, Graf. Graf had been editor of the KPD organ, Neue Zeit, before defecting to the SPD. While in this position he was reported to have accepted 350,000 Marks from Oberland with the knowledge and approval of the KPD Zentrale. The subsequent SPD Landtag delegation investigation into this matter upheld the charge and claimed "further connections between the KPD Zentrale and leading members of Oberland".<sup>109</sup> The Rote Fahne denied KPD complicity in the affair but its position was feeble since it attempted only to exploit the issue from the point of view that the SPD did not see fit to withdraw Graf's party membership when it became known that he had had dealings with Oberland. This case is interesting both in itself and

for the questions it raises. Oberland reportedly had also supplied funds to the National Socialists.<sup>110</sup> Moreover, Beppo Römer, who was named in both these cases and was the leader of Freikorps Oberland, went over to the Communists in 1932. At that time the Bavarian police claimed that, "Römer had long been a member of the KPD".<sup>111</sup>

Despite the conspiratorial flavour of some of its details, it is possible to conclude too much from the evidence for direct collaboration. Certainly it is not enough to sustain an argument for a far reaching conspiracy between the extreme right and the extreme left. Such conspiracy as there was must be put in perspective. As has been shown, there were good reasons to discount the seriousness of the Communist revolutionary intention in 1923. If this can be said, at least of most in Moscow and of most in the central leadership of the KPD, then what remains of a "conspiracy"? It is not so unusual for one government to offer support, even undercover support, for groups in another country which share its immediate and limited objectives. There could not have been much concern that men such as Hitler could actually form a government. What they, or at least their following, might, however, be expected to do was to increase pressure on the Cuno and Stresemann governments against better relations with France.

There are other objections to a conspiracy interpretation. Conspiracy requires two parties and when all is said, there was not much willingness on the right to co-operate with the Communists. This was especially true of the Nazis, who were only marginally responsive to the Communist overtures. This especially, had to be

important for the Communists. Although they included all the more militant right wing groups within their understanding of Fascism, they recognized the NSDAP and to a lesser extent the DVFP as the most important. United front efforts which could not penetrate to these parties had to be counted a failure. Given the status of Hitler and his clear rejection of co-operation, there was no chance of seriously influencing the NSDAP. The best that might be said was that Soviet and Nazi purposes, anyway on foreign policy issues, tended to push in the same direction.

It is also important to remember what an exceedingly complicated time this was in Germany. There was no coherence on the right and only a little more in the KPD. The growing acceptance of limited non-revolutionary objectives makes most sense as an explanation for much of the Communist tactical perspective. It ran like a red thread through the KPD's activities but it was a tangled thread. In 1923, the party was still far from realizing its Bolshevik organizational ideals. As Brandler pointed out at the end of 1923, the party was at a "turning point".<sup>112</sup> Thereafter, the Bolshevikization process proceeded apace. For the time, however, the KPD lacked the coherence to be a really effective helpmate for the Soviet Union and it would certainly be unfair to see it as such. For one thing there was a great deal of undisciplined revolutionary enthusiasm among the rank and file. This was apparent with many of the Hundertschaften and it was true also in the Ruhr. There were cases of activities which took place completely outside of the control of the leadership. Instances were reported, for example, of Communist co-operation with the French

occupation authorities and with the police against the Fascist groups. These activities were designed to gain access to weapons. They also attracted the vigorous disapproval of the party but the fact that they took place at all showed how disorganized and uncertain the party was.<sup>113</sup>

There was a final limitation on the relationship. The Fascism issue never dominated Communist tactical calculations. The party was most concerned about its relations with the Social Democrats as a threat to the revolution and Soviet interests, as a partner in the left SPD governments in Thuringia and Saxony, and as a target for its united front recruitment efforts. Indeed, Fascism was at least as important as an issue which bore on the KPD's relations with the SPD as it was in any other sense. In a way, Fascism was a distraction. To the extent that it could not somehow be controlled or "neutralized" as an independent consideration, in Communist tactics, it threatened the party's priorities. It would do so again after 1930.

In view of the secondary status and the limited results of the tactics of the so-called Schlageter Course, it is perhaps tempting to dismiss them entirely as a failed experiment or as a temporary aberration. That would be a mistake. The Schlageter Course contained too many of the established Communist perspectives both on Fascism and on the KPD's role in German politics. It therefore held important clues for the Communist tactics of the future. To a really quite remarkable degree the Schlageter Course reappeared in the last years of the Republic. Once more there would be a strong Fascist movement and once more the united front approaches would be tried.

More surprisingly, the tactics of 1923 can be detected below the surface of Communist activities between 1923 and the Nazi revival. What changed after the Munich putsch was not so much the Communist approach to German Fascism as it was the seriousness of the problems which Fascism raised.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Since there was no major electoral contest in 1923, the relative strengths of the KPD and the SPD cannot be known with precision. On the basis of the one Landtag election of 1923 and trade union elections, Rosenberg concludes that the KPD was the larger party in the summer of 1923. Arthur Rosenberg, Entstehung und Geschichte der Weimarer Republik, Frankfurt/Main, 1955, p. 406. The membership estimates vary widely for 1923-1924. See Siegfried Bahne, "Die Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands", in Erich Matthias and Rudolf Morsey, Das Ende der Parteien 1933, Düsseldorf, 1960, p. 655; Hermann Weber, Die Wandlung des deutschen Kommunismus. Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimarer Republik, Frankfurt/Main, 1969, Vol. II, p. 269 and p. 280; Ossip Flechtheim, Die KPD in der Weimarer Republik, Frankfurt/Main, 1969, pp. 173-174 and p. 347. If Weber's conservative estimate is used the party still showed a dramatic membership increase during 1920-1923. Electorally, the KPD did better in the Reichstag elections of May 4 1924 relative to the SPD than at any time between 1924 and the July 1932 elections. See Alfred Milatz, "Das Ende der Parteien im Spiegel der Wahlen", in Erich Matthias and Rudolf Morsey, Ibid. pp. 777-778.
- 2 For the uncertainties which surrounded the Hamburg uprising see, Werner Angress, Stillborn Revolution. The Communist Bid for Power in Germany 1921-1923, Princeton, 1963. Ossip Flechtheim, Ibid. and see also the extended bibliographical discussion by Weber in Flechtheim, Ibid. pp. 36-37, and E.H. Carr, A History of Soviet Russia, The Interregnum 1923-1924, London, 1960, Chpt. IX.
- 3 The situation on the radical right was very fluid at this time and it is not always possible to distinguish Hitler's party from its numerous völkisch and nationalist rivals. The Communists used the term "Fascism" to describe all these parties, although they recognized the NSDAP as the most important. It is, in fact, true that Hitler had become the strongest of the völkisch leaders and that his influence was beginning to be felt far beyond Bavaria. Ernst Nolte's claim that National Socialism was at this time limited to Bavaria is too strong in light of more recent research. See, Ernst Nolte, Three Faces of Fascism, New York, Chicago, San Francisco, 1965, p. 369. cf: Jeremy Noakes, The Nazi Party in Lower Saxony 1921-1933, Oxford University Press, 1971, pp. 9-40.
- 4 RF, (4 April, 1923).
- 5 During 1922 and 1923 the KPD press carried numerous articles warning of the terror activities of the National Socialists.

See, for example, "Die Provokationen der Nationalsozialisten", RF, No. 552, (13 Dec. 1922); "Die faszistischen Attentate in Halle", RF, No. 1, (3 Jan. 1923); "Die faschistische Gefahr in Süddeutschland", SR (Köln), No. 2, (3 Jan. 1923); "Eine Strassenschlacht in München", SR (Köln), No. 100, (28 Mar. 1923). The earliest such warning seems to be RF, No. 391, (26 Aug. 1921), where there is a reference to ~~so~~ (sic) demonstrations and their dangers for the working class.

6. Sometimes the Communists used the expression non-capital owning "Mittelschichten", to distinguish the "new Mittelstand". See Heinrich Brandler, "Die Tagung des Zentralausschusses der KPD", (9. August)", I, No. 16, (15 Aug. 1923), p. 452.
7. Theodor Geiger, Die soziale Schichtung des deutschen Volkes. Soziographischer Versuch auf statistischer Grundlage. Stuttgart, 1932 and cf: Ralf Dahrendorf, Society and Democracy in Germany, London, 1968, p. 90 ff.
8. Paul Frölich, "Wandlung in der Struktur der Arbeiterklasse", I, No. 15/16, (1 Nov. 1919), pp. 304-309. See also, Heinrich Brandler, "Die revolutionäre Lage in Deutschland", KI, No. 17, (1921), pp. 50-54; Heinrich Brandler, I, No. 16, (15 Aug. 1923), Ibid., (fn. 6 above), pp. 449-453; O.T., "Konsolidierung und und Zersetzung innerhalb des deutschen Faschismus", I, No. 19, (31 Dec. 1923). This article identifies the "so called modern Mittelstand of white collar employees" as a "suppressed class". Hermann Remmeli, "Um den proletarischen Machtkampf in Deutschland", KI, No. 31/32, (1924), p. 168.
9. See, "Das Verhältnis zu den proletarischen Mittelschichten", RF, No. 35, (7 July 1921); "Die Beamten, die Angestellten und der Kommunismus", RF, No. 459, (7 Oct. 1921); Hermann Remmeli, KI, No. 31/32, (1924), Ibid. (fn. 8 above); Leonid and A. Friedrich, "Der Mittelstand, Faschismus, Nationalbolshevismus und die Partei", I, No. 4, (15 Feb. 1923), p. 115; A. Thalheimer, "Noch einmal zu unsere Taktik im Ruhrkrieg", I, No. 18, (18 April 1923), p. 244.
10. Heinrich Brandler, KI, No. 17, (1921), Ibid. (fn. 8 above), pp. 51-52. Brandler repeated exactly these sentiments at the Leipzig Parteitag in January 1923, see, Brandler, RF, No. 23, (Beilage 1), (28 Jan. 1923). For a similar analysis of the role of the Italian Socialists cf: Guilo Aquila, "Der Faschismus an der Macht", KI, No. 24/25, (15 March 1923), pp. 62-86.
11. The emphasis on the importance of combating Fascism by political means rather than by confrontation remained for the rest of the decade. For early examples see, RF, No. 35, (7 July 1921),

Ibid. (fn. 9 above), and a report of the Exekutivbüro of the RGI, "Die Tätigkeit unter den Landproletariat", RGI, No. 8(31), (Aug. 1923). See also, Clara Zetkin, "Der Kampf gegen den Faschismus" in Ausgewählte Reden und Schriften, Vol. II, Berlin (East), 1960, p. 690.

12 Cf: Karl Radek, "Die internationale Lage, das Abflauen der kapitalistischen Offensive und die Aufgaben der kommunistischen Internationale", KI, No. 27, (15 Aug. 1923), p. 36, "Whoever says that Fascism is a form of the restoration of the old capitalism says that Curzon, Mussolini, Horthy and Zankov are Fascists. The night begins and all cats are grey...On those people who provide the support for Curzon, we can have no influence. We cannot make the City into our comrades in arms. If one asks whether we can win over the farmers who provide the support for Mussolini, and the workers who support him, it is clear: We can do it."

13 **□□**, "Der Kampf mit den Nationalsozialisten und andere Gegen-wartsaufgaben der Partei", I, No. 3, (1 Feb. 1923), p. 73. Early in May the Zentrale sent the slogan "Down with the government of national shame and treason against the people" to all KPD newspapers in Selesia, BHA (Koblenz), P 135/8477. And for an earlier example of the attempt to exploit nationalist sentiments see RF, No. 510, (6 Nov. 1921).

14 Heinrich Bandler, "An einem Wendepunkt", I, No. 15, (1 Aug. 1923), p. 424.

15 A. Jacobsen, "Der Faschismus", I, No. 10, (15 Nov. 1922, p. 304, "It is a warning signal that the National Socialist Hitler... has assembled thousands of workers under his flag", cf: BHA (Koblenz), R431/2681, (30 Dec. 1922). This notes strong support in working class areas "and not just from former Communists as is generally thought".

16 Leonid and A. Friedrich, I, No. 4, (15 Feb. 1923), Ibid. (fn. 9 above), pp. 116-117 and see above, pp. 50-51 and fn. 35, p. 64.

17 For Nazi influence among the unemployed at this time see, Max Hammer, "Die Faschisten, die Gewerkschaften und die Einheitsfront", RGI, No. 8(31), (Aug. 1923), p. 690. See also Resolution 10 of "Resolution über die Bekämpfung des Faschismus", in "Bericht über die 3. Session des Zentralrates der RGI", RGI, No. 7(30), (July 1923), p. 79.

18 See Rundschreiben No. 20 (End of 1922), STA Bremen, 11A, 12a, Vol. I, as cited in Eva Cornelia Schöck, Arbeitslosigkeit und Rationalisierung. Die Lage der Arbeiter und die kommunistische Gewerkschaftspolitik 1920-1928, Frankfurt, New York, 1977, p. 187,

fn. 27. See also, En., "Faschistische Gewerkschaften", RGI, No. 5/6(28/29), (May/June, 1923), pp. 517-518; Max Hammer, RGI, No. 8(31), (Aug. 1923), Ibid. (fn. 17 above). (Hammer drew attention to the first Fascist successes in factory council elections in three large Berlin factories); August Enderele, "Die faschistische Gefahr in Deutschland", RGI, No. 3(26), (March 1923), pp. 212-216; Andreas Nin, "Der Faschismus und die Gewerkschaften", RGI, No. 7(30), (July 1923), pp. 609-614. Concerning the attempt by Fascist groups to establish their own trade unions. See, RF, No. 87, (20 April 1923) and SR (Köln), No. 148, (28 June 1923). On the police agent, "Pinkerton" role of the Fascists in the factories see, Paul Böttcher, "Der Kampf gegen den Faschismus und neue Erfahrungen der Einheitsfronttaktik in Deutschland", Part I, Inprekorr, No. 107, (27 June 1923), pp. 919-920.

19 A. Losowsky, "Die international Konferenz in Frankfurt. Bericht an die Kommunistische Internationale und an die RGI", RGI, No. 4(27), (April 1923), pp. 463-464 and RGI, No. 7(30), (July 1923), Ibid. (fn. 18 above), pp. 78-79.

20 Hammer, for example, noted united front solidarity between Fascist and other workers in strike activity. Hammer, RGI, No. 8(31), (Aug. 1923), Op. cit. (fn. 17 above), p. 691.

21 For a report on this meeting and the text of the "Guidelines" see, BHSA-Abt. II, MA 101 245, Pzd. Nürenberg/Furth, (4 Jan. 1923) and AA-RDIP, R.Ko., No. 84, (24 Jan. 1923).

22 BHSA-Abt. II, Ibid.

23 BHSA-Abt. II, MA 101 245, Pzd. Nürenberg/Furth, (10 Jan. 1923), for the Berlin meeting and for the resolutions of the Leipzig Parteitag, see, RF, No. 23, (1. Beilage), (28 Jan. 1923); RF, No. 24, (1. Beilage), (30 Jan. 1923); RF, No. 25, (1. Beilage), (31 Jan. 1923).

24 For the resolutions of the Frankfurt Party Conference see, RF, No. 68, (1. and 2. Beilage), (22 March 1923) and Inprekorr, No. 52, (23 March 1923); see also the strong anti-Fascist statements of the KPD Thuringian and Saxon Landtag delegations, RF, No. 23, (28 Jan. 1923); RF, No. 9, (12 Jan. 1923), cf: NSSA (Hanover), DES. 122a 76d, p. 182 for a report of a strike call of the Thuringian Landtag delegation in the case of a Fascist attempt against the Thuringian government. cf: Flechtheim, op. cit. (fn. 1 above), p. 177.

25 On the question of arms traffic for the Hundertschaften, see, HSA-Düss., R. Düss. PA 16924, (30 May 1925). For an earlier attempt to organize the struggle against Fascism internationally see, "Statut für Geldsammlung und Kassenverwaltung des internationalen Kampfond gegen den Faschismus", Inprekorr, No. 19, (26 Jan. 1923).

26 BHSA-Abt. II, MA 101 246, (4 April 1923).

27 For these plans see, AA RD IP- Rko. No. 195, (6 Aug. 1923). Although a week of demonstrations were planned (for 22-28 July), only one large demonstration was held in Berlin on 29 July. Cf: George Schwartz, Völker, höret die Zentrale. KPD bankrott, Berlin, 1933, p. 96 and Flechtheim, op. cit. (fn. 1 above), p. 177.

28 HSA-Düss., PA 16953, (3 April 1923) and NSSA (Hannover) Des. 122 XI 76g, (20 May 1923).

29 Paul Böttcher, "Der Kampf gegen den Faschismus und neue Erfahrungen der Einheitsfronttaktik in Deutschland", Part II, Inprekorr, No. 108, (29 June 1923), pp. 941-942.

30 NSSA (Hannover), op cit., (fn. 28 above).

31. Paul Böttcher, Inprekorr, No. 108, (29 June 1923), op. cit. (fn 29 above), p. 941.

32 Paul Böttcher, op. cit. (fn. 29 above), p. 942; Hermann Remmeli, "Um den proletarischen Machtkampf in Deutschland", KI, No. 31/32, (1924), p. 175.

33 Max Hammer, "Die proletarische Selbstschutzbewegung in Deutschland", RGI, No. 12(35), (Dec. 1923), pp. 956-961. According to Hammer the SPD Parteivorstand forbade its members to participate in the Hundertschaften in a confidential circular of 6 July 1923. For the allegations of violence see Böttcher (fn. 29 above).

34 See fn. 10 above.

35 For the text of this report see BHA (Koblenz), R 431/2670- R.ko. 13842/23.

36 The Communists frequently referred to the "National Bolshevik" (pro-Soviet) tendencies in Freikorps Oberland (later Bund Oberland and hereafter in this text Oberland). See, Hugo Eberlein, "Faschistische Kampfverbände in Deutschland", RF, No. 199, (9 Aug. 1923). This article claims that Oberland actively sought an alliance on the side of the Soviet Union and the "revolutionary working class". cf: "Die harmlosen Kommunisten", Vorwärts, (31 Oct. 1923), where the same observation is made. See also, O.T., "Konsolidierung und Zersetzung innerhalb des deutschen Faschismus", I, No. 19, (31 Dec. 1923). The anti-Entente orientation of the NSDAP was always noted at this time as was, by implication, the "Ostorientierung" of many Nazi supporters. The pro-Soviet sympathies of the radicalized petit bourgeois masses was

frequently noted and since the Communists recognized the NSDAP as the strongest party of this class presumably Nazi supporters were also seen as susceptible to the "Ostorientierung". See, A. Maslow, "Die taktischen Differenzen in der KPD.", KI, No. 31/32, (1924), pp. 185-189. Sometimes the recognition of National Bolshevik tendencies among the Nazis was made more explicit, and some leading Nazis were identified as favouring the "Ostorientierung". See, Paul Frölich, "Nationale Frage und Revolution", RF, No. 177, (3 Aug. 1923) and Hans Jaeger, "Die Richtungskämpfe innerhalb der NSDAP", RA, No. 3, (March 1931), p. 135. Some Nazis did in fact favour a pro-Soviet foreign policy. This group included Reventlow, and the Strasser brothers and also occasionally Goebbels, see, Roger Manvel and Heinrich Fraenkel, Dr. Goebbels. His Life and Death, New York, 1960, p. 58 and Helmut Heiber (ed.), Das Tagebuch von Joseph Goebbels 1925/26, Stuttgart, 1961, pp. 36-37, 46, 56-57.

37 Karl Radek, Inprekorr, No. 108, (27 June 1923), p. 932. For discussions of this speech and the "Schlageter Course" cf: Ernst Schüddekopf, Linke Leute von Rechts. Nationalbolschewismus in Deutschland von 1918 bis 1933, Stuttgart, 1960, pp. 147-164 and Flechtheim, op. cit. (fn. 1 above), pp. 178-179.

38 Flechtheim, op. cit. (fn. 1 above), p. 179.

39 Heinz Neumann, "Die bayerische Verräterbande", RF, No. 213, (21 Sept. 1923).

40 There are some indications that these activities took place earlier. Anyway, they had been suggested. See, Leonid and A. Friedrich, op. cit. (fn. 9 above), p. 118. This calls for the "direct" distribution of agitational material in Fascist meetings and regrets that the party so far (Feb. 1923) had confined itself too much to negative commentary on Fascism. See also, "Proletarische Einheitsfront mit Hakenkreuzlern", RF, No. 87, (20 April 1923). This is a denial of SPD and USPD accusations of KPD overtures to the Nazis.

41 As cited in Die KPD im eigenem Spiegel. Aus der Geschichte der KPD und der 3. Internationale. KAPD pamphlet, Berlin, 1926, pamphlet No. D1276/175 Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis, (I.I.vSG), (Amsterdam), pp. 74-76. Rosenberg was reportedly also at this meeting. In his speech he explained to the audience, "To be sure the KPD could bring forward a long list of those murdered, however the past should remain buried, it's useful now to declare the common things", (p. 76). cf: Flechtheim, op. cit. (fn. 1 above), p. 179.

42 Hakenkreuz oder Sowjetstern. Deutschlands Weg - Deutschlands Rettung. KPD pamphlet, Oct. 1923, (I.I.vSG), No. D430/25, p. 7. cf: RF, No. 183, (10 Aug. 1923). From the text of a

speech given in Stuttgart on the 2nd of August 1923.

43 Ibid., p. 9.

44 From the text of a speech given in Stuttgart on the 10th of August 1923. Ibid., p. 14.

45 See, "Nationalkommunismus", Vorwärts, (3 July 1923); "Von Radek bis Reventlow", Vorwärts, (2 Aug. 1923); "Radek-Reventlow", Vorwärts, (3 Aug. 1923); "Die völkisch-kommunistische Einheitsfront", Vorwärts, (5 Aug. 1923); "Vom Sowjethakensternkreuz", Vorwärts, (9 Aug. 1923); "Sowjetstern und Hakenkreuz", Vorwärts, (8 Sept. 1923). The hostile attention of the foreign Social Democratic press was also attracted, see, for example, "Sovjet-Stjaerne og Hagekors", Social Demokraten, (Copenhagen), (3 Aug. 1923).

46 See, for example, "Explorator", "Weltpolitische Umschau", I, No. 4, (April 1923), pp. 139-151. Here Germany rather than the Soviet Union is portrayed as the object of French imperialist designs. France is accused of seeking "dismemberment, exploitation and the complete physical and moral degradation of Germany", (p. 139); August Thalheimer, "Die Bilanz von Genua", I, No. 24, (4 June 1922), "Only Germany and the Soviet Union have an anti-French orientation"; "Aufrufe der KI-EKKI zum Jahrestag des Versaillen Friedensvertrages", Inprekorr, No. 118, (28 June 1922). The pro-German orientation of some of the Soviet leaders, notably Stalin, are well known. See, Stalin, "Gespräch mit dem deutschen Schriftsteller Emil Ludwig", RA, No. 11, (13 Dec. 1931), pp. 488-489, and W.G. Krivitsky, "I was Stalin's Agent", London, 1939, p. 19.

47 See, E.H. Carr, "Radek's 'political salon' in Berlin 1919", Soviet Studies, Vol. III, No. 4, (April 1952), pp. 411-430; Schuddekopf, op. cit. (fn. 37 above), pp. 121-133.

48 Monthly Review of Revolutionary Movements in Foreign Countries, (March 1920-Sept. 1921) CAB 24/100, CAB 24/107, CAB 24/108, CAB 24/111, CAB 24/112, CAB 24/118, CAB 24/120--CAB 24/123, CAB 24/127, CAB 24/128.

49 Carr, op. cit., p. 421.

50 C.P. 888, CAB 24/100, No. 17, (March 1920). Stinnes, the man who symbolized the German bourgeoisie for the KPD was involved in the commercial negotiations. C.P. 1942, CAB 24/112, No. 22, (Aug. 1920), C.P. 2766, CAB 24/121, No. 28, (Feb. 1921).

51 C.P. 888, CAB 24/100, No. 17, (March 1920), C.P. 1406, CAB 24/107, No. 19, (May 1920), C.P. 1587, CAB 24/108, No. 17 (June 1920).

52 C.P. 1406, CAB 24/107, No. 19, (May 1920).

53 C.P. 1406, CAB 24/107, No. 19, (May 1920).

54 C.P. 2615, CAB 24/118, No. 26, (Dec. 1920), C.P. 3257, CAB 24/127, No. 33, (July 1921), C.P. 1998, CAB 24/112, No. 23, (Sept. 1920).

55 C.P. 2766, CAB 24/121, No. 28, (Feb. 1921).

56 "Die Tagung des Zentralausschusses der KPD", RF, No. 531, (20 Nov. 1921).

57 AA, Büro des Reichsministers, Akten Betrf. Russland, Vol. 5, Telegram (Rantzau), (13 Jan. 1923).

58 Bukharin, "Die internationale Politik des proletarischen Staates", Inprekorr, No. 14, (19 Jan. 1923), pp. 99-100. This is an open letter to Souvarine and it is mentioned in Rantzau's telegram, (fn. 57 above).

59 W. Pieck, internal KPD circular for January 1923, in BHSA-Abt. II, MA 101 245, (10 Feb. 1923).

60 Karl Radek, RF, No. 145, (2. Beilage), (27 June 1923).

61 Paul Frölich, "Der Ruhrkrieg und die deutschen Kommunisten", Inprekorr, No. 29, (14 Feb. 1923), pp. 214-215. Although Frölich was true here to the two fronts idea, he treated the fight against France first and otherwise stressed it, "France is the strongest bulwark of military power in Europe...a bulwark of reaction...the most poisonous enemy of the Soviet Union".

62 N. Bukharin, "Die Ruhrbesetzung und Sowjetrussland", Inprekorr, No. 31, (16 Feb. 1923), pp. 229-230. cf: Rosenberg, (fn. 1 above), p. 396. Rosenberg observes here that although the Communists "did not formally support Cuno" they consistently approved of the government backed campaign of national resistance to France.

63  $\Delta$ , (Thalheimer?), "Einige taktische Fragen des Ruhrkriegs", I, No. 4, (15 Feb. 1923), p. 99; A. Thalheimer, "Noch einmal zu unsere Taktik im Ruhrkrieg", I, No. 18, (18 April 1923), pp. 242-247;  $\Delta$ , (Thalheimer?), "Zum zweiten und letzten Mal...! vor der Liquidation des Ruhrkrieges", I, No. 12, (15 June 1923), (leader). These articles were in reply to "left" criticisms that the revolutionary struggle had to be directed at the German bourgeoisie first. See, Sommer, "Der Ruhrkrieg und die Aufgaben des deutschen Proletariats", I, No. 7, (1 April 1923), "Der nächste Feind, das nächste Ziel", I, No. 11, (1 June 1923), pp. 338-343.

64 Heinz Neumann, "Deutschland und die kommende Krieg", KI, No. 27, (5 July 1927), pp. 1649-1650. cf: Bukharin, Inprekorr, No. 24, (1 March 1927), p. 491.

65 SDPK (1923-1928), Berlin, 1930, p. 92.

66 As cited in Weber, (fn. 1 above), Vol. I, p. 49 and cf: Angress, (fn. 2 above), p. 428. For Stalin's cautious attitude cf: Shapiro, The Communist Party of the Soviet Union, London 1970, pp. 358-359.

67 BHA (Koblenz), R 431/2671, Auswärtiges Amt an Reichsministerium des Innern und Staatssekretär in der Reichskanzlei, (27 Nov. 1923).

68 BHA, Ibid.

69 "Der Sieg des Faschismus über die Novemberrepublik und die Aufgaben der KPD.", Inprekorr, No. 172, (7 Nov. 1923), pp. 1457-1460; cf: Hermann Remmele, "Hat der Faschismus gesiegt?", I, No. 19, (31 Dec. 1923).

70 "Die Taktik der kommunistischen Internationale" (Beschlüsse des V. Weltkongresses), I, No. 19/20, (1 Oct. 1924), pp. 11-12). The argument that Social Democracy had become a variety of Fascism was current before the Fifth Congress. See, Hopfe Günter, "Sozialdemokratischer Faschismus", Inprekorr, No. 126, (30 July 1923), pp. 1103-1104. This article points out the "Fascist" tendencies within the Social Democratic youth movement. Böttcher spoke in June of the SPD as an "appendage" of Fascism, Inprekorr, No. 103, (21 June 1923), p. 899. The notion that Social Democracy was a "branch of Fascism" was established in Moscow at least as early as November. See, BHA (Koblenz), R431/2671, R.ko. an den Herrn Staatssekretär in der Reichskanzlei, (4 Feb. 1924).

71 For the text of this circular see, BHSA-Abt. II, R.ko. No. 199, (17 Dec. 1923).

72 The SPD was accused by the Communists of sabotaging the effort to organize famine relief for the Soviet Union in 1921-22, see, W. Koenen, "Sozialdemokraten hemmen die Hilfsaktion", Inprekorr, No. 31, (16 March 1922), pp. 395-396 and F. Dahlem, "Russland braucht Eure Hilfe", Inprekorr, No. 2, (27 Sept. 1921), pp. 13-14. More importantly, it was identified as the major obstacle to better relations between the Soviet Union and Germany. See, for example, E.H., "Paris, Rapallo und das Proletariat", I, No. 24, (4 June 1922). Here it was suggested that the Social Democratic leaders would "use all slanderous means to stab the Soviet delegation in the back." See also A. Thalheimer, "Das deutsch-russische Abkommen", Inprekorr,

No. 50, (20 April 1922), pp. 395-396; Eduard Alexander, "Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie--die Dirne des Entente-Imperialismus", Inprekorr, No. 52, (22 April 1922). Here the SPD is portrayed as the "open agent of Entente imperialism in Germany", (p. 416); G. Sinowyew, "Die Probleme der deutschen Revolution", Inprekorr, No. 163, (19 Oct. 1923). Zinoviev asserted that the SPD was the "active guard of the most uncompromising part of the imperialist bourgeoisie"; Karl Radek, "Die Bilanz des Hamburger Sozialisten-Kongresses", Inprekorr, No. 89, (28 May 1923), pp. 741-743. For similar attacks on other Social Democratic parties, see, Heinz Neumann, "Belgische Sozialdemokraten für die Ruhrbesetzung", Inprekorr, No. 13, (17 Jan. 1923) and Karl Radek, "Die Landsknechte des englischen Imperialismus", Inprekorr, No. 198, (12 Oct. 1922), p. 1325.

73 I, No. 19/20, (1924), op. cit., (fn. 70 above), p. 4.

74 "Genosse Stalin über die Kreigsgefahr und den sozialistischen Aufbau der Sowjetunion", Inprekorr, No. 25, (4 March 1927), p. 503.

75 See, Heinrich Laufenberg and Fritz Wolfheim, Revolutionärer Volkskrieg oder konterrevolutionärer Bürgerkrieg, Hamburg, (n.d.), (text is from 1 Nov. 1919), cf: Schüddekopf, (fn. 37 above), pp. 107-120 and for a bibliography of articles by Laufenberg and Wolfheim, pp. 535-36, 541.

76 Heinrich Laufenberg and Fritz Wolfheim, Ibid., p. 12.

77 K. Horner, "Taktische und organisatorische Streitfragen", Kommunistische Arbeiter Zeitung, No. 197, (19 Dec. 1919), as cited in Schüddekopf, op. cit. (fn. 37 above), p. 112. The Hamburg Communists did in fact seek direct contacts with the Freikorps see, C.P. 1587, CAB 24/108, (17 June 1920), (fn. 48 above) and cf: Peter von Heydebreck, Wir Wehr-Wölfe. Erinnerungen eines Freikorps Führers, Leipzig, 1931.

78 V.I. Lenin, Left Wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder. Selected works, Vol. II, Part II, Moscow, 1952, pp. 402-404.

79 Arnold Strutbahn, "Die auswärtige Politik des deutschen Kommunismus und der Hamburger National Bolschewismus", I, No. 17/18, (20 Dec. 1919), pp. 337-346. "Strutbahn" was a pseudonym for Karl Radek, see, pamphlet No. D1276/175, I.I.v S.G. (fn. 41 above). See also, Arthur Goldstein, Nation und Internationale. Eine kritische Auseinandersetzung mit dem Hamburger Kommunismus, Berlin, 1920, and Karl Radek and A. Thalheimer, "Kommunismus Nation und Krieg" in Gegen den Nationalbolschewismus, Berlin, 1920.

80 See, for example, Heinrich Brandler, "'In zwölfter Stunde'", Inprekorr, No. 93, (1 June 1923), pp. 781-782, "In the camp of the workers National Bolshevism is a danger, in the camp of the bourgeoisie, National Bolshevism is a force for the revolution." Karl Radek, KI, No. 27, (15 Aug. 1923), op. cit. (fn. 12 above); "Karl Radek, über Religion, Bündnis mit den Bauern und den Nationalbolshevismus", RF, No. 140, (21 June 1923).

81 Karl Radek, "Der internationale Faschismus und die kommunistische Internationale", Inprekorr, No. 115, (9 July 1923), pp. 1013-1014. See also, Radek, RF, No. 140, (21 June 1923), (fn. 80 above), "...the strong assertion of the nation in Germany is a revolutionary act, like the assertion of the nation in the colonies."

82 Karl Radek, "Drei Jahre nach Versailles", Inprekorr, No. 125, (1 July 1922); Karl Radek, "Die Bilanz des Hamburger Sozialisten-Kongresses", Inprekorr, No. 89, (28 May 1923), pp. 741-743; Karl Radek, "Die Voraussetzungen des Bündnisses mit Sowjetrussland"; Antworten und Fragen an den Grafen Reventlow", RF, No. 198, (28 Aug. 1923); cf: E.H. Carr, op. cit. (fn. 2 above), p. 157.

83 Karl Radek, "Die Krise in Deutschland", Inprekorr, No. 124, (30 June 1922).

84 There can be little doubt that Zetkin had serious misgivings about the Schlageter initiative. Speaking before the Comintern Executive after Radek's speech, she expressed herself as "deeply shocked" by his speech, Inprekorr, No. 108, (21 June 1923), p. 933. Later, in one of the united front meetings with the "Völkische", she spoke in an entirely different tone than Fischer or Remmele. She identified Fascism as, "an extraordinarily dangerous enemy of the working class...Its defeat is not only an absolute necessity in view of the historical existence of the proletariat as a class but is a matter of life and bread itself for each and every proletariat". AA Ref. D-IP-1, R.ko. No. 94, (17 July 1923). Nevertheless, she accepted the need to reach the "right thinking elements among the Fascists", Inprekorr, loc. cit.

85. Brandler was concerned both about the similarities with the National Bolshevik position and that such united front activities would have a bad effect on the party, "We also fear agitators will be compromised by the attempt to imitate the Fascists.", Brandler, "An einen Wendepunkt", I, No. 15, (1 Aug. 1923), p. 426. The doubts of Zetkin and Brandler may have been widely shared in the party. One internal government report made that observation. See, BHA (Koblenz), R431/2671, Der Reichswehrminister an den Herrn Reichsminister des Innern, (23 May 1924).

86 For the text of this speech see, BHA (Koblenz), R431/2670, pp. 182-186. This speech was originally carried in "Petersburger Prawda", (23 Sept. 1923).

87 "Völkischer Beobachter, (July 8/9), See also, VB, (8 Aug.) and VB, (15/16 Aug.).

88 VB, (14 Aug. 1923).

89 Karl Radek, "Kommunismus und die deutsche nationalistische Bewegung", RF, No. 188, (16 Aug. 1923) and No. 189, (17 Aug. 1923); cf: R. Albert, "Faschisten und Kommunisten", Inprekorr, No. 151, (26 Sept. 1923), pp. 1304-1305 and Albert Treint, "Wie besiegt man den Faschismus?", Inprekorr, No. 165, (25 Oct. 1923), pp. 1411-1412. These two articles are by French Communists and they may indicate that the French party had an especially difficult time understanding the Schlageter tactics.

90 Kele cites Ernst zu Reventlow to this effect. Max H. Kele, Nazis and Workers. National Socialist Appeals to German Labor, 1919-1933. University of North Carolina Press, 1972, p. 57. cf: Klemens von Klemperer, "Towards a Fourth Reich? The History of National Bolshevism in Germany", Review of Politics, No. 13, (April 1951), p. 199.

91 See Kele, Ibid., pp. 57-58.

92 NSSA (Hannover), Des 122a XI 76d, (24 Oct. 1923); cf: RF, No. 178, (4 Aug. 1923). This is a report of a joint meeting with völkisch supporters in Jena. On the völkisch side Dinter, a strong supporter of Hitler, spoke. He expressed the hope that, "despite profound obstacles it will come to common action against common enemies". The editors of Die Rote Fahne replied, "We do not believe in the sincerity of this declaration of Herr Dinter, although we could only be pleased if it were really so."

93 VB, (July 8/9 1923).

94 Karl Radek, Paul Frölich, Graf Ernst zu Reventlow and Moeller van den Bruck, Schlageter. Eine Auseinandersetzung, Berlin, Oct. 1923, p. 39.

95. Ibid., p. 36 and cf: Reventlow, "Ein Stück Wegs", Die Tat, Vol. XXIII, (1931-1932), p. 989ff.

96 Moeller van den Bruck, "Sind Kommunisten Deutsche?", Gewissen, Vol. III, No. 26, (27 June 1921) as quote in Fritz Stern, The Politics of Cultural Despair. A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology, University of California Press, 1961, p. 248.

97 In Schlageter, (fn. 94 above), p. 39.

98 See fn. 94 above.

99 Karl Radek, "Gewissen zur Antwort", RF, No. 156, (10 July 1923). Here Radek described "Gewissen" as "the only thinking organ of the German nationalist circles". See also, Karl Radek, RF, No. 140, (21 June 1923).

100 L.B., "Schlageter eine Auseinandersetzung", Inprekorr, No. 127, (1 Aug. 1923), p. 1114.

101 VB, (27 Sept. 1923).

102 Erich Müller, Deutsches Volkstum, No. 34, (1932), p. 21, cited in Schüddekopf, op. cit. (fn. 37 above), p. 297. See also Karl O. Paetel, Sozialrevolutionärer Nationalismus, Flarchheim, 1930, pp. 63-64 and Krivitsky, (fn. 46 above), p. 60.

103 Wolfgang Hermann, "Das Schicksal des deutschen Kommunismus", Die Tat, Vol. XXIII, No. 11, (Feb. 1932), p. 894 ff.

104 See above fn. 36.

105 HSA Düss., R. Düss., PA 16964, Report from Wehrkreiskommando VI (Munster, 20 Feb. 1924).

106 As cited in Walter Laqueuer, Russia and Germany. A Century of Conflict. London, 1965, p. 121.

107 Laqueuer, Ibid., p. 121.

108 C.P. 2978, CAB 24/123, No. 30, (April 1921), (see fn. 48 above).

109 BHSA-Abt. II, MA 101 244, Pd. Nurenberg/Furth, (11 Dec. 1922) and BHSA-Abt. II, MA 101 245, (23 Jan. 1923). Graf was mentioned in the British documents as one of those in Bavaria who was seeking contacts with "reactionary circles", C.P. 2978, CAB 24/123, No. 30, (April 1921).

110 BHA (Koblenz), R 431/2216, Reichssekretär in Reichskanzlei an Reichskanzler, (6 Dec. 1922).

111 BHSA-Abt. II, MA 101 239, Lgb. 200/II/32, Nurenberg/Furth, (3 Aug. 1932).

112 Bandler, I, No. 15, (1 Aug. 1923), (fn. 85 above).

113 BHSA-Abt. II, MA 101 245, Lgb., (17 Feb. 1923).

## CHAPTER III

VARIATIONS ON THE SCHLAGETER THEME:  
THE CONTINUITIES IN COMMUNIST POLICY 1924-1928

For both parties 1924 introduced what was to be a long period of reconsolidation and of struggle to regain the influence in Weimar politics which had been badly eroded by the end of 1923. For the Nazis, the years between 1924 and 1928 were the bleakest of their so-called "Kampfzeit". The immediate problem was to find a way to build a coherent, separate organization amidst the splinters of the various "völkisch and radical nationalist groups and to find a point of view which defined them as a unified party. These priorities led the Nazis into competition with the other radical right wing parties. The Communists impinged upon this central preoccupation in two ways. As had been the case earlier, the Nazis exploited their appeals to labour and the radical "socialist" aspects of their programme as part of their attempt to distinguish themselves from their "völkisch rivals.<sup>1</sup> This stance could not help but raise questions concerning their relations with the Communists. The socialist dimension of the Nazi appeal suggested rivalry with the Communists in the area of recruitment and, at the same time, it helped to keep alive the idea that some among the Nazis were susceptible to the united front efforts of the Communists.

On the other hand, the Nazis wished to stress their activism

and the fact that they alone among the völkisch and nationalist groups were willing and able to confront the system. One way of demonstrating Nazi militancy was through the organization of provocative public demonstrations, especially in the working class strongholds of the SPD and the KPD. These activities sometimes led to clashes with the working class parties and their affiliated defence organizations.<sup>2</sup> The tactical questions which the Communists raised for the Nazis were thus secondary and related to other concerns which were more crucial at this stage of National Socialism's development. On the Nazi side there was never any question, during these years, of assigning a higher priority to their relations with the Communists. The Nazis were, in any case, far too weak to challenge seriously the KPD or indeed any of the major Weimar parties.

The central preoccupations of the Communists were in a way similar. They too entered their Kampfzeit. At the Frankfurt Parteitag and at the Fifth Comintern World Congress, it was acknowledged that the German revolution had suffered a temporary setback. Less than a year later the Communists publicly postponed their revolution for an indefinite period. German Communism was between "two waves of revolution"<sup>3</sup> and it was acknowledged that,

"in some countries, as for example, Germany, no directly revolutionary situation for the moment exists".<sup>4</sup>

The revolutionary working class was on the defensive. For the Soviet Union and its KPD allies, this meant retrenchment, a time for the consolidation of the gains so far achieved, in the anticipation of happier days, when the inevitable sharpening of the contradictions

of bourgeois society would once more provide an opportunity for revolution.

The situation had been objectively favourable for revolution, but the opportunity had been missed. The party in 1923 had succumbed to "opportunism". It had not sufficiently distinguished itself, either programmatically or structurally, from the Social Democrats. It had conspicuously failed to break the SPD's hold on the trade unions. Errors and shortcomings would now be corrected. The struggle to wrest the workers from the SPD was to commence in earnest. All other issues were at best secondary and the question of the party's approach to National Socialism, which had been so important in 1923, now received much less attention.

That this should be so was not surprising in view of the precipitous decline of the NSDAP and the other "völkisch" parties. Early in 1924, the illegal NSDAP organizations joined with the DVFP to form an alliance to contest the May Reichstag elections. The resulting Völkisch Sozialer Block managed to win what was, under the shadow of the November setbacks, an impressive 6.6 percent of the vote and thirty-two Reichstag deputies. This electoral strength was, however, rapidly eroded. In the December elections, amidst growing tensions and rivalries, the Völkische lost over half their vote and returned only fourteen deputies.<sup>5</sup>

The Communist evaluations reflected these weaknesses. In 1924 their analysis of National Socialism took on something of the quality of an obituary. At first, in a curious turn of dialectical logic, one kind of Fascism, National Socialism, was seen as the

victim of another, the "Fascism" of the Stresemann government and the emergency military administration at the end of 1923.<sup>6</sup> It was now argued that Fascism had developed differently than had been anticipated. The party had been distracted by the mass character of the NSDAP and its similarities with Italian Fascism. What had been forgotten was the strength of German capitalism and its self confidence. Germany was not Italy. German capitalism could dispense with the services of the radical "drummers" of petit bourgeois Fascism. The assault on the working class could be led instead by the Generals of the Wehrmacht and the captains of German industry and with, of course, the loyal support of Social Democracy.<sup>7</sup> As this argument suggested, "Fascism", as a descriptive category in the Communist vocabulary, was losing whatever precision it may have possessed.

For the Communists the centre of gravity of German Fascism shifted decisively after 1923. They interpreted the ban on the NSDAP as the beginning of the end for Fascism as a mass movement. As one Communist observer, Münzenberg, pointed out,

"It is not true that one cannot destroy parties by outlawing them. A lot can be accomplished with bayonets. We believe that you can suppress even the old truths in that way, of course not for ever. But a thousand years is also enough."<sup>8</sup>

In Münzenberg's opinion the bayonets were not so much needed in the case of the NSDAP. To outlaw a party was to put it to a test of its "necessity". If it represented an unavoidable historical tendency, it would survive. The NSDAP could not meet such a test. General Seeckt had been able to "liquidate" a party which was already in the

process of liquidating itself. National Socialism had fallen prey to its own contradictions. It was proof of the dialectical impossibility of combining the radical demands of the petite bourgeoisie and the interests of the capitalist establishment in one movement.<sup>9</sup>

Between 1924 and 1928 such commentary as was reserved for the National Socialists and Völkische continued to stress their weaknesses. The failure to find an organizational and doctrinal basis for unity was identified as one principal reason for the decline of a mass based German Fascism,

"All these parties and organizations fight most vehemently with one another and there is the keenest competition in the area of recruitment. This is one of the subjective reasons why in Germany Fascism was bankrupted so quickly."<sup>10</sup>

The "bankruptcy" of the National Socialists and the Völkische exerted pressure for change on the general theory of Fascism. The Italian example began to seem less menacing, less significant as a guide to Communist tactics elsewhere in Europe. The perceived international character of Fascism had deeply influenced Communist tactics. In Germany, the assumed similarities between National Socialism and Italian Fascism largely accounted for the attention which the Communists paid to the Nazis in the years before 1923. Italy had been portrayed as occupying a position which was roughly equivalent to that of the Soviet Union. Although the parallel was weakened by the absence of a formal international organization and by numerous differences among the Fascist parties, Italy was seen as possessing an influence in the Fascist world which was similar to the Soviet Union's relationship with the Communist movement.<sup>11</sup>

To some extent the international conception had already been compromised by the Schlageter initiative. German Fascism had been singled out and treated separately, and as a force which could be made to serve Communist purposes. After 1924 the tendency to treat German Fascism as a separate phenomenon continued. By 1927 the weaknesses and the disorganization of the völkisch movement had led some Communist observers to the conclusion that the Italian example had lost all relevance for an understanding of German Fascism. Thalheimer, for example, argued that the disorganization of the German radical right suggested not Italy but rather the United States, "with its various patriotic, half-military organizations."<sup>12</sup> In Germany the demands of the radical petite bourgeoisie were no longer relevant. German Fascism was "firmly in the hands of a newly entrenched bourgeoisie".<sup>13</sup> At the same time, the SPD and the SPD dominated Reichsbanner were the closest approximations to the earlier Fascist mass movement and they served the same "objective" purpose of securing the bourgeois order.<sup>14</sup> The new situation on the right in Weimar politics meant that organizations such as the Stahlhelm, because of their closer connections with established middle class interests, were more important expressions of Fascism than was the NSDAP. By 1926 it was even possible for a review of dangerous right wing groups to ignore the Nazis altogether.<sup>15</sup>

The new evaluations were reflected in Communist tactical pronouncements. In May, 1924, Die Rote Fahne gave notice of a shift in emphasis,

"... the party has, in part, been pushing in the wrong direction. We fought only against the phantom of Fascism and overlooked that the völkisch movement was already deeply compromised, with its Hitler nonsense, its Bierkeller revolutionaries, its silly anti-Semitism, its nationalist hue and cry against France, which no one takes seriously anymore...The Krautjunker... and the threatened bourgeois, who follows the big capitalist land owners and the industrialists, have triumphed over Hitler...We must turn the whole front around against German national big capital and not against the petite bourgeoisie."<sup>16</sup>

In practice, however, the "front" did not so obviously turn.

The revised understanding of Fascism and the new situation in Germany did not lead to a complete break in the continuity of Communist tactics. It is important to notice that such changes as there were, were changes in emphasis only, and were traceable almost entirely to the weaknesses of the Fascist parties and not to any fundamental rethinking of tactical priorities. There were no new departures, no equivalents to the Stuttgart and Berlin conferences which had been influential in shaping tactics for 1923. All the elements of the old tactics remained, although in a subdued form appropriate to the new situation.

Understandably, there was less sense of urgency in the measures of self defense undertaken by the Communists. The Kampfbund remained inactive and there was no attempt made to construct organizations equivalent to the defunct Hundertschaften and Arbeiterkontolausschüsse. There was the Rotfrontkämpferbund (RFB), which was founded in 1924. The RFB, however, could not be regarded as the logical successor to the earlier anti-Fascist organizations. It was conceived primarily as a counter to the SPD dominated

Reichsbanner and the SPD and to this end the bulk of its agitational efforts were directed at these targets.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, the confrontational and self defense themes remained in anti-Fascist tactics and the RFB had as a second priority, the defense of the party's organization against the German right. Although on occasion the NSDAP and the völkisch groups entered the RFB's calculations, the main effort was now directed at the Stahlhelm.<sup>18</sup>

What differed in the activities of the RFB when compared to those of the Hundertschaften, was the more explicitly hostile stance which it adopted towards the SPD. Both the Hundertschaften and the RFB were ostensibly "united front" organs. Yet in the case of the RFB, few distinctions were allowed between the right wing groups and the SPD's organizations. The Reichsbanner was always numbered among the enemy and in an important sense the campaign against it, and the SPD generally, could be understood as part of the Communist "anti-Fascist" effort. Such an approach followed from the united front from below policy adopted at the Frankfurt Parteitag and it conformed also to the argument that Social Democracy was itself a "branch of Fascism".<sup>19</sup> Even when this particular formulation was not stressed, the SPD was still treated as a party which both tolerated and aided the Fascists. In particular, SPD influence within the police forces of Berlin and other major centres was used in an attempt to show that police efforts to control Communist demonstrations reflected the "Fascist" orientation of the SPD leaders.<sup>20</sup>

During these years the confrontational dimension of KPD tactics

was supplemented by a new emphasis on undercover work within various political organizations and government institutions. The targets of such "Zersetzung" activities included the SPD, the trade unions, the armed forces, the police, the civil service, as well as the NSDAP and other Fascist parties. Confidential party circulars revealed that the KPD attempted to establish a network of sympathizers within these organizations and to conduct pro-Soviet and pro-Communist propaganda among their membership.<sup>21</sup> This work was conducted by special cadres of the KPD Nachrichtdienst and was directed by Moscow through the Soviet trade delegation in Berlin.<sup>22</sup> Judging from surviving examples of "Zersetzung" agitational material, little had changed from 1923. In the Wehrmacht, police, Stahlhelm and the NSDAP, the emphasis was on National Bolshevik, anti-Republican and anti-Semitic themes. Occasionally, mention of such undercover tactics surfaced in the Communist press. During 1927, in a series of articles on Communist tactics in the factories, the Soviet trade union paper, Trud, reminded comrades in capitalist countries of the need to penetrate enemy factory institutions and to seize leading positions within them. This was to be accomplished no matter what political outlook was required to be feigned, "Amsterdam, Christian, National Socialist, etc.". The Communists were to keep their real affiliations secret and were to pose as the honest representatives of the enemy.<sup>23</sup> Internal KPD directives added to this, the need to persuade new recruits not to declare openly for the Communists but to remain within their own parties in order to perform intelligence gathering, recruitment and sabotage functions.<sup>24</sup>

The shift in emphasis also affected other aspects of the party's work. The Fascist issue declined in importance for the purposes of the KPD's united front appeals to the Social Democrats, but again, this element of the party's tactics did not entirely disappear. Continuity was, for example, apparent with respect to the threat of Fascist penetration of the factories. Although this theme received nothing like the attention that it had in 1923, the Communists continued to monitor (and to take seriously) all attempts by the Fascist organizations to recruit among the workers and on occasion they exploited the issue in their united front work among the Social Democrats.<sup>25</sup>

There were other continuities. Just as in 1923, the KPD did not restrict its understanding of united front tactics. With respect to the NSDAP and the "Völkische", something of the "Schlageter" approach remained. In the obituary commentary on the NSDAP there was the same confident expectation expressed that National Socialists were susceptible to Communist appeals, and as National Socialism declined, the Communists expected to gain recruits from among its former following.<sup>26</sup> The same united front theme could be inferred from the curious note of regret which was sometimes sounded in the Communist analysis of German Fascism. The newly consolidated bourgeois order and the new, so to speak, "conservative" Fascism, were contrasted with the more congenial petit bourgeois radicalism of the Nazis and the "Völkische",

"In 1923 the Fascists ate a Jew with every breakfast, today they are their truest allies...  
In 1923 the Fascists behaved as if they were

the mortal enemy of the Jewish government, today they sit in office themselves or are the most loyal lackeys of the governments."<sup>27</sup>

Despite the evidence for the survival of earlier attitudes, there seemed at first sight to be little basis for the continuation of any part of the Schlageter initiative. In January, 1924, in a declaration of the Russian Party's Politburo before a Central Committee Plenum, Radek's views were singled out for attack. He was accused of an "opportunistic overestimation of the differences of opinion within the Fascist ranks".<sup>28</sup> At the Frankfurt Parteitag and again at the Fifth Comintern World Conference the attack continued and centred, in the first place, on Radek's Schlageter speech. Speaking for the KPD at the Fifth Congress, Freimuth criticized the party's tactics,

"It is clear that Fascism and Communism oppose one another like fire and water and an alliance between them is an impossible thing. Today we see in the tendencies which were expressed in the Schlageter article and in the whole campaign, a deviation from the methods which we should have used in the fight against counterrevolution and that special form of counterrevolution, Fascism."<sup>29</sup>

The rejection of Schlageter, expressed as it was in such a high level and public forum, seemed complete. Yet care must be taken to determine exactly what was being questioned. Most of the underlying assumptions of the Schlageter initiative remained untouched by the proceedings of the Fifth Congress. There was, for example, the familiar emphasis on the importance of the "national question" both in general and for the German party in particular.<sup>30</sup> In the discussions and resolutions concerned with Fascism, much of the old

position remained. Indeed, in the same speech which condemned Radek and the Schlageter tactics, Freimuth emphasized the need for united front work with the Fascist following and potential following. Taking up positions which were subsequently endorsed in the resolutions of the Congress, he called for a continuation of the agitation and propaganda campaign among small farmers and the Mittelstand groups. He also emphasized the importance of the attempt to reach the Fascists themselves. There was to be a continuation of "public disputes with the Fascists".<sup>31</sup> At the same time Freimuth revealed that the party continued to recognize the essentially radical or "revolutionary" nature of part of the Fascist programme. The party was to,

"...carry on a vigorous propaganda...for the demands which the Fascists put forward in their own programme, thus placing the Fascists in the dilemma of being obliged to carry out their own programme."<sup>32</sup>

At most, what was being questioned concerned, once more, questions of emphasis rather than content. To be sure that could be important. For many in the party it must, for example, have been gratifying to see the anti-Semitic aspects of Communist united front appeals publically questioned, as indeed they were at the Frankfurt Parteitag.<sup>33</sup> Yet, upon closer examination, the issue of the exploitation of anti-Semitism in fact supported the argument for the essential continuity in the approach to German Fascism, for despite the apparent rejection of such tactics, anti-Semitism remained in the Communist propaganda arsenal.

It is not difficult to accept the limited nature of the changes

in Communist tactics when it is remembered that the Schlageter speech was, at least in part, exploited as a weapon of convenience in a more general attack on Radek and the right opposition in Germany.

Fascism, as an issue which confronted Communist parties, was receding in importance. It was therefore cheap and easy to reject publicly, this aspect of Communist policy which had been so closely associated with Radek. It was, however, a rather dangerous, double handled club, with which to beat the opposition. Radek, in his defense of his past record, had no difficulty in demonstrating the wide consensus which had surrounded the Schlageter initiative, a consensus which had included the new "left" leadership as well as the "right". In fact, as Radek shrewdly observed, two prominent members of the new leadership, Fischer and Remmele, were guilty of a "crude" application of the united front approach to the Fascists.<sup>34</sup>

Judging from the practice of Communist tactics, as distinct from the public discussions of past errors, part of that original consensus must have survived. Between 1923 and the last days of the Republic, tactics which were closely linked with the Schlageter initiative remained. This was apparent with respect to joint Communist-Fascist meetings. These had provided the main practical content of the Schlageter tactics in 1923. After 1923, Communists, National Socialists and Völkische continued to visit one another's political meetings. Certainly on the Communist side, more was involved here than the simple intention to harass and discredit the Fascist speakers; the speeches and even the heckling of the Communists made it clear that the former united front objectives

were still being pursued.<sup>35</sup> The united front character of the meetings was further indicated by the fact that both sides occasionally invited the other to provide participants and speakers.<sup>36</sup>

The Communists made the same attempt to exploit the language and prejudices of their National Socialist and völkisch audiences.

As in the past, this included appeals to anti-Semitic, anti-Entente and anti-capitalist sentiment. If it had been an intention of the Frankfurt Parteitag and the Fifth World Congress to divest the party's tactics of any suggestion of a "united front from above" approach to Fascism, such an intention made little apparent impact on Communist conduct at this level of day to day contact with the Fascists. Police intelligence reports frequently noted the co-operative and sometimes downright cordial atmosphere which prevailed in the meetings. The Communists made every effort to de-emphasize contentious issues. From both sides there were recruitment appeals and invitations to join in common action against shared enemies.

As was the case during 1923, there was some positive response from the Nazis,

"I will never lead an SA troop against the Communists...On the contrary I will appeal to them--join us, I will show you whom you must shoot."<sup>37</sup>

"...outside of the National Socialists the only ones, in my view, who have a half way healthy policy are the Communists."<sup>38</sup>

"In eight years the Soviet government has liberated its people from the Czarist swamps and placed them on the correct road...From this hour on the NSDAP will march shoulder to shoulder with its KPD brothers against the Social Democratic profiteers and the Western Pact..."<sup>39</sup>

"We belong together...stand with us so we can overthrow the present hated system."<sup>40</sup>

These sentiments sometimes led to such limited co-operation as combined street demonstrations and joint declarations. One meeting ended with a resolution calling for the dissolution of the Reichstag.<sup>41</sup>

The most serious obstacles to a more ambitious co-operation were raised by the Nazis. The original objections to the Communists remained firmly in place. From the Nazi point of view, it was the international and "Jewish" character of Communism which stood in the way of better relations.<sup>42</sup> In the meetings the Communists followed the earlier example of Fischer and Remmele; they tried to overcome this problem by arguing that anti-Semitism was a variety of anti-capitalism.<sup>43</sup> For their part, the Nazis also tried to overcome ideological differences. For Communist audiences, they emphasized the "socialist" and "revolutionary" character of their party, and they sought to convince Communists to free themselves from a corrupt and false understanding of revolution,

"Communists wake up! Don't allow yourselves to be abused as slaves of the Jews and the Jesuits."<sup>44</sup>

Although the Communists assigned less importance to these aspects of their united front work between 1924 and 1928, it was clear from the party's tactical guidelines that the underlying motive remained much the same as it had been earlier. The proletarian and petit bourgeois elements in the NSDAP and other right wing groups were to be "revolutionized" and either won for

the party or "neutralized". This was to be accomplished through a propaganda campaign conducted in the press, in special agitational literature designed for the Fascists and in the public meetings.<sup>45</sup>

Beyond this there were other less openly stated motives.

"Neutralizing" the Fascists meant in practice the attempt to limit conflict with them and to turn their hostile attentions to other targets. Thus in joint meetings with National Socialists and in agitational literature designed for Nazis, the Communists were always concerned to point out that it was the SPD and not the KPD which was the appropriate "Marxist" enemy in Nazi propaganda. This conformed well with other evidence for the presence of such concerns in the party's tactical calculations. According to reports in the Communist opposition press, the party and the RFB made strenuous efforts at this time to avoid open conflict with the National Socialists and "Volkische". One such report, which claimed to be based on the private papers of the RFB leader and former Communist youth leader, Willi Leow, alleged that in 1925 Leow forbade confrontation with the "Volkische". Acting on information supplied by a völkisch organization, Leow apparently intervened to expel members of the Communist youth organization who were involved in such incidents. Leow's correspondence revealed that his actions had nothing to do with the unlawful character of such activities and there were no similar disciplinary measures taken against Communists for fighting with the Reichsbanner or the SPD. In the case of conflicts with the Fascists, however, it was Leow's conviction that "nothing effective could be accomplished".<sup>46</sup> When

there was violence, it followed as a result of initiatives taken by the Fascists. Even in such cases of violent assault on the members of Communist organizations, there were complaints that the RFB held back, "did nothing" and tried to avoid conflict.<sup>47</sup>

It was not clear that the KPD gained much by placing the emphasis on a united front approach. Certainly it did not yield many successes during these years. The Communists did manage to establish contacts with individual Nazis. Examples of this were common enough to attract the attention of the police authorities<sup>48</sup> and to convince one notable spokesman on the völkisch side that the Schlageter era was not over. Writing in January 1926, Graf zu Reventlow optimistically observed,

"The völkische just as the Communists are the mortal enemies of capitalism and its representatives...The Communist struggle against this capitalist democracy is welcomed by the völkische...The idea that Communists, National Socialists and völkische can go 'ein Stück Wegs' together has not yet been given up."<sup>49</sup>

Despite such expressions of sympathy, the potential of the National Socialists and völkische as allies in either of the senses of Communist united front tactics, was strictly limited. There were no significant recruitment successes which the Communists could point to. Nor was there, given the barriers of prejudice and suspicion which separated the two sides, any serious suggestion of an open alliance. There was only a recognition that they had enemies in common and beyond this, it was possible to see a desire to keep all questions of their relations secondary to other tactical concerns. Nothing much more need be inferred from the "ein Stück

Wegs" idea. Nevertheless, even when given such a restricted interpretation, the idea was still interesting and it could have significant consequences. Most notably it exerted an influence on the parliamentary life of the Republic. Since both the Communists and the Nazis were permanently in opposition, the fact that they shared enemies could find an easy expression, unhampered by considerations of the differences which separated them.

The SPD and the Communist opposition parties frequently complained that an unofficial voting alliance existed between the KPD and NSDAP at all levels of government. For the Social Democrats, especially, this provided a main line of criticism of KPD policy both during these years and later.<sup>50</sup> They took it as sufficient evidence that the SPD continued to be defined as the main target of Communist hostility. Indeed, even in the absence of other indications, the KPD's voting behaviour, especially in the Reichstag could be expected to provide a good indication of Communist priorities. At this level of the party's activities the control of the central leadership was most easily and most clearly applied. Few difficulties were, therefore, placed in the way of the outside observer in inferring the basic priorities which underlay Communist behaviour.

When the KPD's Reichstag voting behaviour is examined, it can readily be seen that there was a strong foundation for the SPD's criticisms. On the basis of an analysis of one hundred and ninety-seven votes selected over the period 1924 through 1932, the following general relationships emerge.<sup>51</sup> In one hundred and

forty-five cases out of the one hundred and ninety-seven, or 73% of the time, the KPD and NSDAP voted on the same side. On the other hand, in one hundred and thirty-five cases, or 68% of the time, the SPD and the KPD were on opposite sides. Out of the one hundred and seven votes selected from the five year period, 1924-1928, the KPD and the NSDAP were on the same side for seventy-one of the votes, or 66% of the time. If the votes for 1926 are not taken into the reckoning, then the alignment between the two parties is as strong as the average for the whole period (74%). Although in every year except 1926 the KPD voted with the Nazis more frequently than with the SPD, the yearly variations clearly suggest that in the periods of "left" orientation (1924-1925 and 1928-1933) Nazis and Communists were closest together in the Reichstag. In 1924 and between the end of 1930 and the end of 1932, to know how the Nazis voted is to know that in more than nine cases out of ten the KPD was on the same side and that the SPD was on the opposite side.<sup>52</sup> When the votes of five parties are examined -- KPD, NSDAP, SPD, DNVP, Zentrum -- the following general relationships are indicated. Although there were significant yearly variations, the most frequent alignments were, the DNVP, NSDAP and KPD on one side and the SPD and Zentrum on the other. When the votes over the whole period were counted, there was more positive correlation between the KPD and the NSDAP than between any other two parties, from among the five parties which were considered. The strongest negative correlation was between the KPD and the SPD. Given the small size of the Nazi Reichstag delegations before 1930, this kind of

"objective" collaboration could not be so important. Like other aspects of the relationship between the two parties at this time, it was more important as an indication of continuity in the KPD's policies. Continuity was revealed by the fact that there was no change in voting alignments after the NSDAP became an important parliamentary party, except that the trend which was already established between 1924 and 1928 became even more obvious.

The Communist opposition to the SPD, which was so frequently revealed in the Reichstag, found expression in all aspects of the KPD's activities, in the party's public statements and in the Communist press. The campaign against the SPD passed through three stages of varying intensity between 1923 and 1928. Each stage paralleled, and to some extent was the subject of, the main factional struggles in the party.<sup>53</sup> The first phase extended from November 1923 until the Tenth KPD Parteitag in 1925. This was the period of the dominance of the "left" line of Ruth Fischer and Maslow. The Social Fascist thesis was developed and total war was declared on SPD dominance in the trade unions. The party pledged itself "never again to work in alliance with counter-revolutionary Social Democracy".<sup>54</sup> Even personal contact with individual Social Democrats was forbidden to the KPD's cadres.<sup>55</sup>

In 1925, as part of the campaign against the "ultra left", this position was modified and the possibility, under certain conditions, of co-operation with the SPD and trade union leaders was cautiously raised.<sup>56</sup> In the third stage, from the Seventh Tagung of the EKKI in December 1926 until the Sixth World Congress of the Comintern in

July 1928, there was a gradual return to the more outspokenly militant anti-SPD line.

The shifts in emphasis in the united front tactics adopted between 1923 and 1928 should not be allowed to obscure the underlying consistency of Communist policy. At no time did those shifts of emphasis involve questioning the view that it was Social Democracy which was the principal threat to Communist objectives in Germany. Certainly on the Soviet side the attack on the "left" in the KPD had little to do with any left attitude towards the SPD. What must be kept in mind is that "left" referred to two separable issues -- the general tactical approach of the KPD within German politics, on the one hand, and on the other, the attitudes of particular KPD leaders to the relationship which existed between the KPD and the Russian party. It was this last aspect of the "left" which was of greater importance from the Soviet point of view. What the Russians managed in 1925 was to split the left. The split involved the retention of much of the previous policy in Germany while at the same time removing those "leftists" who were suspicious of the dominance of Soviet interests in the formulation of the KPD's policies. It was the attitude towards Soviet domination which distinguished the unacceptable "leftists", Maslow and Fischer, from the acceptable "leftists" such as Thälmann, and not the more limited issues of Party policy. Both Fischer and Thälmann had been equally strong critics of Bandler. In the end, however, it was Thälmann who managed to be most convincing in his acceptance of Soviet leadership.

The central importance of the relationship to the Soviet Union was made abundantly clear in the course of the proceedings against Fischer and Maslow. It was emphasized in the series of meetings in Moscow between delegations from the KPD Zentrale and the Comintern Executive which took place after the Tenth Parteitag. It was stressed in the EKKI "open letter" which made the results of these meetings public and in the reports of the special Comintern Commission which was set up to report on the errors of the Fischer-Maslow leadership and again in the resolutions of the Seventh Tagung of the EKKI. <sup>57</sup>

In the reports of the special commission and in the Comintern resolutions, all distinctions between "left" and "right" broke down. Fischer and Maslow were accused of entertaining "right deviationist" positions. They were charged with promoting the same anti-Soviet line as the SPD. This was a revealing argument. The central importance of Soviet interests and Soviet leadership was shown to be an issue which could not easily be accommodated within the left-right dichotomy of factional struggle. The issue clearly transcended all such terms of reference.

As for the effect of the campaign against the left on KPD tactics, it was soon apparent that nothing much was to change. Understandably, distinctions between a united front from below approach to Social Democracy and one which allowed co-operation "under certain conditions" were vague and difficult to act upon for Communist functionaries. Rank and file Communists who later commented on the party's tactics during these years, claimed to notice little

difference at the grass roots level, either as a result of the shift to the left at the end of 1923, or during the swing away from the left in 1925-1926.<sup>58</sup> Most in the KPD understood the party exclusively by its work among the unemployed and in the factories. It was, therefore, not surprising that shifts in tactical emphasis would only become apparent for the party as a whole when there was a clear change in the pattern of the KPD's work at that level. The consistent factor between 1924 and 1928 was that the Communists worked within the established trade union and factory institutions. For the average party member decisive change only came when this ceased to be true. After 1928, as a new departure in the continuing attack on the SPD, the KPD attempted to split the working class organizations. Following the Fourth Congress of the RGI in the spring of 1928, the Communist opposition brought forward its own lists for factory council elections and the Revolutionäre Gewerkschaftsopposition (RGO) began to act as an alternative trade union organization.<sup>59</sup> In other words, for the first time, the form of competition with the SPD changed decisively and in ways which were immediately felt by the KPD membership.

Nevertheless, before 1928, opposition to the SPD majority was something which was clearly understood at all levels in the party. This perception remained unchanged no matter what the balance in united front tactics happened to be. A shared participation in the life of the main line working class institutions, as well as a shared commitment to the cause of improving conditions of labour, necessarily brought Communists and Social Democrats together in

strikes and other common enterprises. It was always difficult, in practice, to establish the boundary between the united front from below and the united front from above implications of these activities. Yet it must be remembered that both forms of the united front were weapons in the anti-SPD arsenal. For the Communist leadership, shared enterprises were almost always seen in the light of the opportunities they afforded for influencing SPD workers and for undermining the SPD leaders.

These points were well illustrated with respect to the most important example of the "new" united front course. In 1926 the KPD launched a united front referendum campaign for the expropriation of the German princely estates. According to the Communists, this campaign represented the clearest and most successful example of what united front tactics could be supposed in practice to mean. It was obvious from the Communist commentary on the referendum that an anti-SPD conception had been dominant throughout. The mass support which was mobilized in favour of expropriation was interpreted as representing a defeat for the SPD leadership. Against their will, and under the pressure of their Communist influenced members, they had been "forced" to support the Communist initiative and they had been thwarted in their attempts to organize their own independent campaign.<sup>60</sup>

If the practical approach to Social Democracy continued largely unchanged, so too did the principal underlying motives which supported that approach. Above all, the idea that Social Democracy was an important enemy of Soviet foreign policy interests remained

central to Communist calculations. In the Communist press and in public statements this point was illustrated time and again. All the old considerations were there. First there was the concern, clearly expressed on the Soviet side, that the Ostorientierung tendencies in German foreign policy needed to be encouraged. There was a recognition that former advantages were being eroded. Stresemann's foreign policy and the very real progress made towards an improvement in the relations between Germany and the Entente powers had undermined the whole basis of the Soviet Union's German policy. In the space of two years, there was the acceptance of the Dawes plan on reparation payments, the ratification of the Lacarno Treaty, the evacuation of the first of the three zones of military occupation in the Rhineland and Germany's admission into the League of Nations.

It was apparent to the Soviet leaders that the situation of 1923 had dramatically altered. In 1923 German foreign policy had worked against the danger of British and French dominance on the continent. Now Germany was finding its old, pre-war place among the Western imperialist powers.<sup>61</sup> Yet Germany was an imperialist power with a difference. Bukharin, for example, expressed optimism concerning the new relationships. In his view German foreign policy would continue to fluctuate between West and East. In Germany important elements of the bourgeoisie favoured close relations with the Soviet Union and these elements would remain influential. Bukharin could therefore argue that the changed situation,

"...absolutely does not mean that every tie with us will be cut off. The position of Germany differs from that of other imperialist states...Germany even today, though to an incomparably lesser degree than before, nevertheless represents that type of bourgeois state, which pursues a relatively conciliatory policy towards us."<sup>62</sup>

The SPD was the main enemy of such hopes. Every Communist pronouncement on German foreign policy identified the SPD as playing a major role in all the unfavourable developments in Soviet-German relations.<sup>63</sup> Through its dissemination of "anti-Soviet" hate and because of its support of a pro-Western orientation for Germany, the SPD continued to reveal itself as the "most active enemy of the Soviet Union" and as the "open agent of Entente imperialism". The Russians and their KPD allies were particularly sensitive to SPD (and Communist opposition) criticism of the Soviet Union's German policy. In 1926, it was the SPD and elements of the Communist opposition which led the campaign of "revelation", concerning the secret understandings between the Wehrmacht, German industry and the Soviet government.<sup>64</sup> Nothing could better illustrate Communist priorities than the fury of the reaction to these events and to the SPD's foreign policy position generally. When it came to the defense of the remaining benefits of the threatened Ostorientierung, the strongest terms in the Communist scatological armoury were scarcely sufficient. The SPD, "lackey toilet flusher of the bourgeoisie", was linked together with all the most uncompromising enemies of the Soviet Union from Ruth Fischer to Chamberlain.<sup>65</sup>

The attack against the SPD's influence on German foreign policy contrasted sharply with the Communist understanding of the National

Socialist and "volkisch role on this question. It was evident that there was the same easy acceptance of the essentially useful anti-Entente orientation of these parties as there had been in 1923. Although their parliamentary representation was weak, they were seen as exerting a positive influence on German foreign policy in the Reichstag and they were identified as part of the "opposition" which together with the KPD Reichstag representatives resisted the alignment with the Western powers.<sup>66</sup>

It was easy to overlook these judgements. The Nazis were weak and the SPD was by far the most serious rival for the KPD, no matter which Communist objectives were seen as the dominant ones. Nevertheless, the conclusion that the SPD was a principal enemy on foreign policy questions, while the Nazi attitude was helpful, assumed a significance out of all proportion to the importance of the Nazis at that time. It had enormous potential as an influential factor in the formation of the KPD's tactical priorities. It was a consideration which operated independently of the strength of the Nazis and indeed independently also of any threats which the Nazis might in other respects pose. In other words, there was a conservative influence here, which worked against changes in priorities. As long as the SPD continued to be regarded as the more serious foreign policy threat, there would be scope for the same ambivalence and the same low level priority which had so far characterized the KPD's response to the Nazis.

These considerations were likely to be all the more persuasive, in light of the fact that by 1928 the KPD had lost its ability to

respond independently to any perceived threat. The "bolshevization" process was by then complete. Indeed that process had pretty much run its course by 1925. Little of a critical or independent disposition remained after the expulsion of Brandler and Thalheimer and then the left and "ultra left". As Stalin's grip tightened on the Russian party, so it did on the KPD. If it had been necessary to judge on the basis of institutional arrangements only, the dependence of the KPD on the Soviet Union would have been obvious enough. Besides the authority of the Comintern resolutions and "open letters", there were a growing number of direct organizational links between the Russian and German parties. There was the special "German Commission" set up in 1926 with Stalin as its Chairman. In February 1928, supervision was further extended with the establishment of a Comintern Bureau for Western Europe with its headquarters in Berlin. The Russians also maintained their own chain of command in Germany which existed without reference to the KPD, and through which they exercised wide ranging financial and other control functions.<sup>67</sup>

It might seem then that the organizational requirements were finally in place for a really effective helpmate role for the KPD. Something near enough to complete peace reigned -- Democratic Centralism on an international scale. That seemed adequately confirmed in the KPD's public statements. After making a reasonable allowance for the technical deficiencies of international communications and taking into account the unavoidable confusions of a sometimes rapidly changing political situation, the KPD's policies

could be seen to move in perfect harmony with those of the Russian party. When the KPD had made up their minds so had the Russians. Yet it could, of course, never be as simple as that in practice. Bolshevization was possible for German Communism but not Bolshevism. The KPD had to pay too much attention, always, to problems which had nothing to do with its democratic centralist stance. The democratic environment of Weimar was the other side of the KPD's organizational coin.

With hindsight, it is possible to see the fateful conflict between these two influences. As a "bolshevized" party, the KPD was charged with a more or less clear responsibility which could be readily comprehended just because it was "bolshevized". It was, however, as a "democratic" party that the KPD had to meet that responsibility. It could not, for example, destroy the influence of the SPD in the unions and factories if it failed to persuade the workers to follow it. Nor could it easily assign a second priority to the struggle against the Nazis if it was just that struggle which was becoming all important from the simple point of view of protecting its following.

In the years after 1928 the KPD was to make important electoral gains relative to the SPD. Nevertheless, in an important sense the Communists had already lost their battle against the Social Democrats. Before 1928 those structural weaknesses which were later to wreck the party's morale and confuse its purposes were already apparent. Despite the consistent emphasis on the need to expand the Communist following in the factories, the KPD's share of

the employed workers declined. As early as 1924 the KPD began to rely heavily on the unemployed. By March 1925 in the district of Mittelrhine, no less than fifty percent of the membership was unemployed while in 1927 nearly a third of the total membership was unemployed.<sup>68</sup> To make matters worse, reliance on the unemployed raised serious organizational problems. The unemployed were hardly susceptible to political organization at all and certainly not to the rigid discipline which the Communists sought to impose. Out of desperation the unemployed were attracted to the party and its mass organizations by what seemed the Communist dedication to dramatic solutions for a dramatically bad situation. But the call to arms never came and there was little chance that these unhappy people would be content with the inscrutable and second-hand purposes of the party's leaders. Consequently, there was always a high turnover rate among cadres and members. During 1927 in the district of Berlin-Brandenburg, 2,373 joined the party while 3,577 left. In 1928 for the same district the figures were 6,086 in and 4,965 out.<sup>69</sup>

The weaknesses of the Communist organization stood in marked contrast to the stability of the SPD with its entrenched position in the trade unions. In fact, it must be said that the Communists were scarcely in a position to compete with the SPD at all. Less than one percent of the industrial work force were members of the Communist party and in the large factories there was virtually no Communist representation. In 1927, of the total Communist strength, only two and a half percent was based on factories with five thousand or more employees, while over thirty-six percent was based

on factories with fifty or fewer employees.<sup>70</sup> In the Ruhr, nearly one quarter of all workers belonged to a trade union but of these fewer than one in thirty was a Communist. The situation with respect to factory cells was no better. Despite the great importance attached to these, their numbers steadily declined.<sup>71</sup>

As a consequence of these weaknesses, the KPD was ill equipped to meet the new dangers which were to come after 1928. Faced with a struggle against the SPD which it was already losing, the party was called upon to try new forms of competition which could only intensify its internal difficulties. At the same time the growing strength of the NSDAP put unbearable strains on the party's priorities. The same factors which limited the effectiveness of the KPD in its competition with the Social Democrats worked also to draw it into closer contact with the Nazis and to leave it more vulnerable to the Nazi threat than was true for its SPD rival. The SPD had its factory organizations as a line of defense against the Nazis. The KPD was mainly on the streets.<sup>72</sup> The SPD had the majority of the employed workers. The KPD had to share the allegiance of the unemployed both with the SPD and with the Nazis.

Then there was the final and most serious handicap. "Bolshevization" had provided the KPD with the coherent purpose which it otherwise might have failed to find. Yet it was just this bolshevization, understood as the tie with Soviet interests, which was to do most to obscure the reality of the Nazi threat. There was irony here, for as it turned out, an adequate response to the Nazi threat was essential if the party was to continue in the

service of any purpose whatever. Had the bolshevization process been less complete, the party would have been in a better position to respond to the dangers and obstacles which confronted its rank and file.

## FOOTNOTES

- 1 On the importance of the socialist appeals of the Nazis in their competition with other "völkisch" groups see, Karl Dietrich Bracher, The German Dictatorship. The Origins, Structure and Consequences of National Socialism, Penguin University Books, 1973, p. 175; John Toland, Adolf Hitler, New York, 1976, p. 223; Max H. Kele, Nazis and Workers, National Socialist Appeals to German Labor, 1919-1933, University of North Carolina Press, 1972, p. 99; Jeremy Noakes, The Nazi Party in Lower Saxony 1921-1933, Oxford University Press, 1971, pp. 101-104. It was clear that it was not just the Nazi "left" but Hitler too who stressed the socialist aspects of the National Socialist appeal during these years. See, Bracher, loc. cit. and Toland, loc. cit.
- 2 Bracher, Ibid., p. 178. There were also clashes with right wing groups. See, AA RD R.ko., No. 117, (1 April 1926).
- 3 As announced at a KPD Central Committee meeting of January 11, 1925, RF, (13 Jan. 1925).
- 4 As cited in Hermann Weber, Die Wandlung des deutschen Kommunismus. Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimarer Republik, Vol. I, Frankfurt/Main, 1969, p. 108. This is from the "capitalist stabilization" theses, which were announced by the EKKI in April, 1925.
- 5 See Noakes, op. cit. (fn. 1 above), pp. 42-55; Kele, op. cit. (fn. 1 above), pp. 74-75.
- 6 O.T., "Konsolidierung und Zersetzung innerhalb des deutschen Faschismus", I, No. 19, (31 Dec. 1923), p. 555; Emil Hölein, "Die Lage in Deutschland", Inprekorr, No. 175, (14 Nov. 1923), p. 1478.
- 7 Heinz Neumann, "Die Hindenburg Ara", KI, No. 5, (May 1925), p. 519.
- 8 Willi Münzenberg, "Die Entwicklung des deutschen Faschismus", KI, No. 33-35, (1924), p. 120.
- 9 Münzenberg, Ibid., pp. 120-123.
- 10 Hermann Remmeli, "Der Faschismus in Deutschland", KI, No. 12(21), (7 Dec. 1926), p. 540.
- 11 The international dimension of the Fascist threat and the special influence of Italy were well developed themes in the

resolutions and public statements on Fascism. See, A. Losowsky, "Die International Konferenz in Frankfurt. Bericht an die kommunistische Internationale und an die RGI", RGI, No. 4(27), (April 1923), pp. 463-464; "Bericht über die 3. Session des Zentralrates der Roten Gewerkschaftsinternationale, 25 Juni-2 Juli 1923", RGI, No. 7(30), (July 1923), pp. 78-79; For the parallel between the Soviet Union and Italy see, "Der Kampf gegen den Faschismus", RGI, No. 7(30), (July 1923), pp. 39-40.

12 A. Thalheimer, "Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie in der bürgerlichen Republik", KI, No. 27, (5 July 1927), p. 1312.

13 Thalheimer, Ibid., p. 1311.

14 Thalheimer, Ibid., p. 1313; See also, "Thesen und Resolutionen angenommen auf dem V. Weltkongress der KI", Inprekorr, No. 119, (16 Sept. 1924), p. 1559; Heinz Neumann, "Der deutschen Reichsbanner Schwarz Rot Gold", Die neuste Form des Sozial-faschismus", Inprekorr, No. 130, (7 Oct. 1924), pp. 1724-1725; Hermann Remmeli, KI, No. 12(21), (see above fn. 10), p. 538; Ernst Thälmann, "Die politische Lage und die Aufgaben der Partei", (3. Sitzung der XI. Parteitag der KPD 2 März 1927), Inprekorr, No. 25, (4 March 1927), p. 513; "Social Democratic Shock Troops for Combating the Proletariat", Izvestia, (9 July 1924) as cited in RSD, No. 25, (22 July 1924), "It is interesting to note that coincidentally with the emergence of the Social Democratic Reichsbanner, the capitalists have withdrawn their support from the Fascist organizations and newspapers. The capitalists have perceived that the situation is too serious at the moment to rely on the Fascist bands. As is well known these...did not prove a success in the fight against the proletariat. They have therefore decided to entrust their affairs to the Social Democrats, who in the course of the last years have demonstrated their loyalty to the bourgeoisie."

15 See, Fritz Burg, "Die bewaffneten Kräfte der Bourgeoisie, die Arbeiterklasse und die kommunistische Partei", I, No. 112, (20 June 1926). For the importance of the Stahlhelm as a Fascist organization see also, E. Kunick, "Zur Entwicklung des Faschismus in Deutschland", I, No. 8, (5 April 1927), p. 253, and Heinz Neumann, "Die Kriegsgefahr und die Verteidigung der USSR", KI, No. 25, (21 June 1927), pp. 1205-1206.

16 RF, (6 May 1924).

17 See, Ernst Thälmann, "Partei und Rote-Frontkämpfer-Bewegung", I, (Sonderheft, 1925), pp. 53-56; Hermann Remmeli, "Methoden der Massenmobilisierung in Deutschland", KI, No. 1, (4 Jan. 1927), pp. 5-11. See also the review of Agitprop activities in, Bericht über die Verhandlungen des X. Parteitages der

Kommunistischen Partei Deutschlands, Berlin vom 12. bis 17.  
Juli 1925, Berlin 1926.

18 See, "Der Stahlhelmtag in Berlin", (unsigned), Inprekorr, No. 12, (7 Feb. 1928), p. 233; "Der Stahlhelmtag in Hamburg 8. Mai 1927 und 3. Juni 1928", (unsigned), Inprekorr, No. 54, (5 June 1928), p. 975 and see fn. 15 above.

19 Between 1925 and 1928 the argument that Social Democracy had become a "branch of Fascism" was not stressed. It was, however, never officially dropped. It was upheld by Zinoviev at the VII Tagung of the EKKI in December 1926, "At the Fifth Comintern World Congress we characterized the upper echelons of official Social Democracy as... 'the left wing of the bourgeoisie', and as a 'branch of Fascism'. We still maintain that this evaluation is essentially correct.", Zinoviev, "Die Stellung zur Sozialdemokratie", (VII. Tagung des Erweiterten EKKI, 19. Sitzung), Inprekorr, No. 160, (30 Dec. 1926), p. 2929. See also, "Die gegenwärtige Rolle der SPD", I, No. 12, (15 Dec. 1925), p. 21; Paul Böttcher, "Sozial-imperialismus und Sozialfaschismus in den Gewerkschaften. Der ADGB und die ASPD". In this article Böttcher saw the Altsozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (ASPD) as a "Social Fascist" and "Social Imperialist" party. According to Böttcher, the ASPD was a "...bridge between the Nationalfascism in the petit bourgeois camp and the Social Fascism and Social Imperialism within the reformist working class". The ASDP was founded by the nationalist and national Bolshevik August Winning and Ernst Niekisch in 1926. This group had some contacts with the Nazi left (Gregor Strasser). See, Reinhard Kühnl, Die nationalsozialistische Linke 1925-1930, Meisenheim am Glan, 1966, p. 53. It might seem, therefore, that Böttcher provided a more imaginative (and thoughtful) use of the term "Social Fascism" than was generally the case.

20 See, for example, "Der Aufruf des ZK der KPD gegen die London Provokation", Inprekorr, No. 52, (17 May 1927), p. 1111; Inprekorr, No. 54, (5 June 1928), (see fn. 18 above); Pravda, (10 May 1927), as cited in RSD, No. 19, (18 May 1927).

21 BHSA Abt.-II, MA 101 249, R.ko., No. 99, (17 Dec. 1923); HSA Düss., PA 16964, Kommunistische Bewegung Sammlungsberichte 1923-1925, Division Wehrkreiskommando VI, Munster, (20 Feb. 1924); BHA (Koblenz), R 431 2671, Der Reichswehrminister an den Herrn Reichsminister den Innern, (23 May 1924); BHA (Koblenz), PJM, P 135 8473, R.ko., No. 8048, (19 Sept. 1924); HSA Düss. Reg. Düss., PA 16910, KPD Rundschreiben, (23 Dec. 1924); BHSA Abt.-II, MA 101 248, R.ko., No. 111, (25 April 1925); HSA Düss., Kommunistische Bewegung Specialia, R.ko., No. 3772 26II, (28 June 1926); BHA (Koblenz), R 431 2673, R.ko., (3 May 1927).

22 This was revealed as a result of a police raid on a house in the vicinity of the Soviet trade delegation. BHA (Koblenz), R 431 2671, Der Reichswehrminister an den Herrn Reichsminister den Innern, (23 May 1924). This document conforms well to Krivitsky's account of such "Zersetzung" activities. See, W.G. Krivitsky, I Was Stalin's Agent, London, 1939, pp. 56-60.

23 Trud, (21, 22 and 23 July 1927), as cited in "Lockspitzeltum und Spionage in der Arbeiterbewegung", RSD, No. 30, (3. Aug. 1927).

24 See, "Der Verbandsarbeiter", KPD Rundschreiben from March 1927, as cited in Die Spitzel Zentrale: Kommunistische Kampfmethoden - Eine kleine Materialsammlung aus der Kommunistischen Jugendzentrale, Hauptvorstand, SAJ, Berlin, 1928.

25 "Aufruf des ZK der KPD vom 25. November 1926 zur internationalen Solidarität im Kampf gegen den Faschismus", RF, No. 265, (25 Nov. 1926).

26 See, for example, Malepartus, "Der Hitler-Prozess in München", Inprekorr, No. 38, (25 March 1924), pp. 432-434.

27 Hermann Remmele, KI, No. 12(21), (7 Dec. 1926), (see fn. 10 above), pp. 539-540.

28 Izvestia, (16 Jan. 1924); cf: BHA 431 2671, Telegram from Rantzaу to Büro des Reichspräsidenten der Reichskanzlei, Moscow, (17 Jan. 1924) where this report is cited.

29 "Der V. Weltkongress der Kommunistischen Internationale - 24. Sitzung, 2. Juli 1924", Inprekorr, No. 93, (24 July 1924), p. 1212.

30 Manuilski, Inprekorr, Ibid., (fn. 29 above), pp. 1182-1187; cf: "Die KPD die einzige Arbeiterpartei in Dawes-Deutschland. Thesen zur politischen Lage und den Aufgaben der KPD. Tagung des Zentral Ausschusses 10-11 Januar 1925", I, No. 12, (15 Dec. 1925), p. 26.

31 Freimuth, Inprekorr, op. cit., (fn. 29 above), p. 1202. For the continuing concern with the Mittelstand and small farmers, see, for example, "Die VII. Tagung der Erweiterten EKKI. Die kapitalistische Stabilisierung und die proletarische Revolution", Inprekorr, No. 147, (2 Dec. 1926), p. 2605.

32 Freimuth, ibid. For the resolutions which were adopted on the Fascism question see, "Thesen und Resolutionen angenommen auf dem V. Weltkongress der KI", Inprekorr, No. 119, (16 Sept. 1924), pp. 1581-1582.

33 "Der Frankfurter Parteitag der KPD", Inprekorr, No. 51, (2 May 1924), p. 605.

34 Radek claimed that the Schlageter speech had been approved in writing by the EKKI and he offered to submit a letter from Zinoviev as evidence. He went on to point out that Fischer, Maslow and Thälmann had all been implicated in the Schlageter initiative and that, "Fischer and Remmele have made speeches in Germany which reflected the same standpoint, only in a much cruder form.", Inprekorr, No. 93, (24 July 1924), p. 1197.

35 The united front atmosphere which prevailed in some of these meetings was frequently noted in police reports on the activities of the radical parties between 1923 and 1933. The account which follows is based on this material. It must be assumed that some, at least, of the reports have been coloured by the biasses of the individual police spies and informants. Bias is, however, a less troublesome consideration if enough reports are examined from several regions of the country. The following reports have been examined, BHSA Abt.-II, MA 101 235, Pd. Nürnberg/Furth, (N.F.), (17 April 1924); BHSA Abt.-II, MA 101 235, Pd. N.F., (2 Aug. 1924); BHSA Abt.-II, MA 101 235, Pd. N.F., (22 Aug. 1924); BHSA Abt.-II, 101 248, Pd. München (M.), (19 Dec. 1924); BHSA Abt.-II, 101 248, Pd. M., (2 Sept. 1924); BHSA Abt.-II, MA 100 415, Akten betreffend Bolszewismus-Kommunismus, Regierung der Pfalz, Kammer des Innern an das Staatsministerium des Innern, (30 Jan. 1926); AA RD-IP, R.ko., No. 114, (20 Nov. 1925); AA RD-IP, R.ko., No. 116, (26 Jan. 1926); AA RD-IP, R.ko., No. 123, (15 Oct. 1927); HSA Düss. Regierung Polizei (RP), 30653, Duisberg, (9 Jan. 1928); HSA Düss. RP, 30653, Duisberg, (29 Sept. 1928); HSA Düss. RP, 30653, Oberhausen, (30 Oct. 1928); HSA Düss. RP, 30653, Hamborn, (24 Oct. 1928); HSA Düss. RP, 30653, Duisberg, (12 Nov. 1928); HSA Düss. RP, 30653, Duisberg, (18 Jan. 1929); HSA Düss. RP, Duisberg, (25 April 1929); HSA Duss. RP, 30653(b), Wesel, (17 May 1929); HSA Düss. RP, 30653(b), Essen, (5 Sept. 1929); HSA Düss. RP, 30653(b), Essen, (10 Sept. 1929); HSA Düss. RP, 30642(a), Elberfeld-Barmen, (24 Sept. 1929); HSA Düss. RP, 30642(a), Elberfeld-Barmen, (3 Oct. 1929); HSA Düss. RP, 30653, Duisberg, (15 Feb. 1930); HSA Düss. RP, 30653, Duisberg, (31 March 1930); HSA Düss. RP, 30653(b), Essen, (11 June 1930); HSA Düss. RP, 30653(b), Essen, (4. Oct. 1930); HSA Düss. RP, 30653(d), Oberhausen, (27 Feb. 1931); BHA (Koblenz), R/58 321, (4 Nov. 1932); BHA (Koblenz), R/58 626, Pressestelle der R.ko., (27 Sept. 1930).

36 BHSA Abt.-II, MA 101 235, Pd. N.F., (22 Aug. 1924); HSA Düss. RP, 30653(b), Essen, (10 Sept. 1929); HSA Düss. RP, 30653, Duisberg, (15 Feb. 1930).

37 BHSA Abt.-II, MA 101 235, Pd. M., "Völkische Bewegung", (22 Aug. 1924).

38 AA RD-IP, R.ko., No. 114, (20 Sept. 1925).

39 AA RD-IP, R.ko., No. 114, (20 Nov. 1925), "Annäherung der Nationalsozialisten an die Kommunisten".

40 BHA (Koblenz), R/68 626, Pressestelle der R.ko., (27 Sept. 1930). Some of the Communist responses to their Nazi and "völkisch" audiences were also reminiscent of 1923, "Good we will co-operate, hang the Jews we will hang the other capitalists", BHSA Abt.-II, MA 101 235, Pd. N.F., (22 Aug. 1924); "I would not be here if I were not in favour of united action", BHA (Koblenz), R/58 626, Pressestelle der R.ko., (27 Sept. 1930).

41 BHSA Abt.-II, MA 100 415 Akten betreffend Bolshevismus-Kommunismus, Regierung der Pfalz, Kammer des Innern an das Staatsministerium des Innern, (30 Jan. 1926).

42 "If the Communists would get rid of their Jewish following and fight the Jews, I would be the first to co-operate with them" (Nazi speaker in a public meeting), BHSA Abt.-II, MA 101 235, Pd. N.F., (22 Aug. 1924); See also, AA RD-IP, R.ko., No. 114, (20 Nov. 1925) and AA RD-IP, R.ko., No. 123, (15 Oct. 1927).

43 Leaflets meant for the Nazis and "Völkische" stressed this. "Down with the suppression of the working people: down with foreign and German, Christian and Jewish exploiters", BHSA Abt.-II, MA 101 235, Pd. M., (2 Aug. 1924). Sometimes, however, the Communists did not so clearly link anti-Semitism to anti-capitalism but simply exploited it in their attempts to gain influence within the radical right parties and the Wehrmacht. See, for example, KPD Rundschreiben, "Die Lage in den bürgerlichen Wehrverbände und unsere Gegenarbeit", AA RD-IP, R.ko., No. 123, (15 Oct. 1927). Here party workers are instructed to stress that the National Socialists "are receiving money from the rich Jews"; See also, BHA (Koblenz), R 431 2671, "Der Reichswehrminister an den Herrn Reichsminister des Innern", (23 May 1924).

44 BHSA Abt.-II, MA 101-235, Pd. M., (22 Aug. 1924).

45 KPD Rundschreiben, "Die Lage der gegnerischen Organisationen und unsere Arbeit unter den Gegern", (25 May 1926), AA RD-IP, Pp. Berlin, (May 1926).

46 "Aus Willi Leows Archiv", Junge Kämpfer (KJO), (July 1930), as cited in, "Willi Leow als Büttel des Jugendamtes", GdS, No. 29, (19 July 1930).

47 "Es dämmert im RFB", Entschiedene Linke, No. 5, (April 1927).

48 "Very often points of contact between National Socialists and Communists have been established...especially among the unemployed", AA RD-IP, (op. cit., fn. 45 above).

49 Graf zu Reventlow, Deutschen Tageblatt, (13 Jan. 1926), as cited in AA RD-IP, R.ko., No. 116, (26 Jan. 1926).

50 Vorwärts frequently drew attention to the alignment between the KPD and the NSDAP in the Reichstag as did other SPD papers. Among the numerous examples see Vorwärts, (8 July 1927), for an account of a combined NSDAP and KPD vote against unemployment insurance legislation. The voting behaviour of the KPD in the Landtage and even in the communal assemblies was also frequently attacked for similar reasons. See for example, "Die Kommunisten als Helfer der Nazis", SDPK, No. 12, (Dec. 1930). This is a criticism of Communist voting behaviour in the Saxony Landtag. For criticisms of the KPD in communal assemblies see, Geesthachter Beobachter, No. 2, (19 Feb. 1932).

51 See below, Appendix I, pp. 333-334.

52 Direct, one to one relationships are not being claimed here. Although the KPD's overall priorities are, of course, reflected in its Reichstag voting behaviour, more information is required before one can be sure of all the reasons for any particular alignment in the Reichstag. The high and relatively consistent positive correlation between KPD and NSDAP voting is at least consistent with a shared and general oppositionist stance towards a wide range of issues which were facing Weimar governments. More questions arise in the case of some of the other relationships which are suggested in Appendix I. For example, the positive correlations between SPD and KPD voting in 1926 and 1927 must be traceable, in part, to the SPD. At the end of 1926 and during 1927 the SPD had a more clearly oppositionist orientation in the Reichstag than in any other year between 1924 and 1932. (See, Henry Ashby Turner, Jr., Stresemann and the Politics of the Weimar Republic, Princeton University Press, 1963, pp. 226-230 and see the strong negative correlation between the SPD and the Zentrum for 1927 in Appendix I). Moreover, the KPD and the SPD continued to be bitterly opposed especially on foreign policy issues. At times that bitterness was expressed by the Communists even when the SPD voted in favour of a proposal to which the KPD was deeply committed. In 1926, for example, the KPD attacked the SPD's support for the Berlin treaty as hypocritical and superfluous and they claimed it had only been given under the false pretences of the SPD's "peace policy". (See, E. Kunik, "Deutsche Politik", I, No. 10, (5 May 1926) p. 440). Even seemingly clearer cases of a new policy of toleration for the SPD in parliament need to be treated with caution. The limited support given to the SPD

in the Mecklenburg, Thuringian and Prussian Landtage was regarded, from the outset, as a course fraught with "opportunistic" dangers and it was quickly dropped. (See, Dengel in Bericht über die Verhandlungen des XI. Parteitages der KPD, Berlin, 1927, pp. 26 ff.

53 For the fullest account of the factional struggle in the KPD during these years see Weber, op. cit., (fn. 4 above).

54 Resolution of the KPD Central Committee, 20 July 1924. See, RF, (22, 24 and 25 July, 1924) and RF, (13 Jan. 1925). For the development of the Social Fascism thesis see, Sinowjew, "Der Oktoberrückzug und die Lage in der KPD", (speech before the EKKI, January 1924), Inprekorr, No. 37, (24 March 1924), pp. 423-430; Siegfried Bahne, "'Sozialfaschismus' in Deutschland. Zur Geschichte eines politischen Begriffs", International Review of Social History, Vol. X (1965), Part 2, pp. 211 ff. and see above pp. 40-41.

55 See, Losowski, Protokoll Erweiterten Exekutive, der Kommunistischen Internationale. Moskau 17. Februar bis 15. März 1926, Hamburg, Berlin, 1926, p. 465.

56 See, for example, Heinz Neumann, "Der neue Kurs der KPD", I, No. 9, (end of Sept. 1925), p. 527 and p. 531. Neumann called for a united front from "above and below" for the purposes of ending the KPD's isolation in the trade unions and of discrediting the SPD leadership. There was little suggestion, in this and similar formulations, for any genuine co-operation with the SPD, in the pursuit of commonly accepted goals.

57 For the text of the "open letter" see, RF, (1 Sept. 1925). See also, "Bericht der Kommission für die Angelegenheit Ruth Fischer-Maslow", Inprekorr, No. 157, (23 Dec. 1926); "VII. Tagung des EKKI, Resolution über den Ausschluss von Maslow, Ruth Fischer, Urbahns, Scholem und Schwan aus der KPD", Inprekorr, No. 16, (15 Feb. 1927), pp. 344-345. Cf: Geschichte des deutschen Arbeiterbewegung, Vol. 4, 1924 to January 1933, Berlin(East), 1966, p. 80.

58 See for example, Rolf Becker and Claus Bremer (eds.), Immer noch Kommunist: Erinnerungen von Paul Elflein, Hamburg, 1978, p. 59.

59 See Weber, (fn. 4 above), p. 223.

60 Hermann Remmele, "Methoden der Massenmobilisierung", KI, No. 1, (4 Jan. 1927), pp. 5-11; Th. Neubauer, "Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie und die Volksentscheidungsbewegung", Inprekorr, No. 24, (9 Feb. 1926); AA RD-IP, Pp. Berlin, (April 1926), "Resolution zur Politik und Taktik der KPD und der Komintern".

61 See, Heinz Neumann, "Deutschland und der kommende Krieg", KI, No. 27, (5 July 1927), pp. 1648-1655.

62 N.I. Bukharin, "Die internationale Lage und die innere Lage der Sowjetunion", Inprekorr, No. 11, (25 Jan. 1927), p. 203. Cf: Bukharin, "Die Fragen der internationalen Politik - XV. Reichskonferenz der KPSU", Inprekorr, No. 130, (1 Nov. 1926), pp. 2241-2244.

63 Among the many examples of the Communist hostility to the SPD's foreign policy orientation during these years see, Stoecker, "Die Verhandlungen zwischen Deutschland und der Sowjetunion", Inprekorr, No. 62, (23 April 1926); Thälmann, 3. Sitzung der XI. Parteitag der KPD, 2 March 1927, Inprekorr, No. 25, (4 March 1927), p. 513; "Über Krieg und Kriegsgefahr-Thesen beschlossen auf dem Plenum des EKKI am 29. Mai 1927", Inprekorr, No. 61, (10 June 1927), p. 1285; E. Kunick, "Deutsche Politik", I, No. 3, (1 Feb. 1926); Gerhart, "Der Geist von Locarno in Genf", I, No. 7, (1 April 1926), pp. 196-201; Bucharzew, "Die Kriegsgefahr und die Sozialdemokratie", Inprekorr, No. 62, (14 June 1927).

64 On December 16, Scheidemann (SPD) gave a speech before the Reichstag charging that the government was violating the provisions of the Versailles treaty through its secret arrangements with the Red Army. See, Henry Ashby Turner, op. cit., (fn. 52 above), p. 227. The left Communist opposition joined in the attack. See, Pravda, (5 Jan. 1927) as cited in Inprekorr, No. 5, (11 Jan. 1927), pp. 104-105. This is a condemnation of Schwarz for speeches he delivered in the Reichstag which were critical of the links between the Wehrmacht and the Red Army.

65 "Locarno, die Regierungskrise und unsere Partei" (lead), I, No. 12, (15 Dec. 1925) and cf: Pravda, ibid.

66 See, P.R. Dietrich, "Der alte Kurs der neuen Luther Regierung", Inprekorr, No. 23, (5 Feb. 1926); Arthur Rosenberg, "Die Sicherheitspakt und die Parteien in Deutschland", Inprekorr, No. 40, (3 Oct. 1925), pp. 1174-1175; "Völkische und kommunistische Misstrauensanträge im Reichstage abgelehnt", Inprekorr, No. 149, (1 Dec. 1926), Beilage. For a recent Communist account of the overriding importance of foreign policy questions for the KPD Reichstag delegation see, Hermann Jürgen, "Zur Tätigkeit der KPD im Reichstag von 1924 bis 1929", Arbeiterbewegung und Parlamentarismus, No. 1, (1977), pp. 53-59, esp. p. 55.

67 On the organizational links between the Comintern and the KPD see Hermann Weber, "Zu den Beziehungen zwischen der KPD und der Kommunistischen Internationale", Vierteljahrsschriften für

Zeitgeschichte, No. 21, (April 1968), p. 177 ff.; Krivitsky, op. cit., (fn. 22 above) and Weber, op. cit., (fn. 4 above), Vol. I, Chpt. 7.

68 For discussions of the KPD's reliance on the unemployed see, Eva Cornelia Schöck, Arbeitslosigkeit und Rationalisierung. Die Lage der Arbeiter und die kommunistische Gewerkschaftspolitik 1920-1928, Frankfurt-New York, 1977, Chpt. 3; Hans Dieter Heilmann and Bernd Rabehl, "Die Legende von der 'Bolschewisierung' der KPD", Part II, Sozialistische Politik, No. 10, (1971), pp. 22-37.

69 Weber, op. cit., (fn. 4 above), pp. 286-288.

70 See, K.W. Kaasch, "Die soziale Struktur der KPD", KI, No. 19, (8 May 1928), pp. 1050-1058.

71 Weber, op. cit., p. 264; Siegfried Bahne, "Die Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands" in Erich Matthias and Rudolf Morsey, Das Ende der Parteien 1933, Dusseldorf, 1960, pp. 660-661; Pjatnizki, Protokoll 10. Plenum des Exekutivkomitees der Kommunistischen Internationale, Moskau, 3. bis 19. July 1929, Berlin-Hamburg, (n.d.), p. 245 and p. 248.

72 For the importance of "street cells" to the KPD's organization see Kaasch, ibid., p. 1057 and Heilmann and Rabehl, op. cit. (fn. 68 above), pp. 424-437. In 1927 in Berlin these constituted 49.1% of all cells, in 1928, 71%.

## CHAPTER IV

## COMMUNIST TACTICS AND THE NAZI ADVANCE, 1928-1932:

## THE RESPONSE TO NEW THREATS

Although, at the time, it could scarcely be noticed against the background of their central preoccupations, 1928 marked a watershed in the development of the relationship between the KPD and the NSDAP. In the years after 1923, the Nazis, as a consequence of their weakness, had always been at the periphery of Communist concerns and they had scarcely entered the KPD's tactical calculations in a serious way. By 1928 the Nazis were still weak. Throughout 1927 they had stagnated. Growth in membership was at a virtual standstill<sup>1</sup> and in the Reichstag elections of May 1928 they managed to capture only twelve mandates and 2.6% of the vote, which was a considerably poorer showing even than that of December 1924.<sup>2</sup> After just two years, however, this situation had changed dramatically. The Nazis had achieved the status of a mass party. In the Reichstag, they had a larger representation than the Communists and with 107 deputies and 18.3% of the vote they were second only to the Social Democrats.<sup>3</sup>

The spectacular gains of 1930 had been foreshadowed in 1928 by the steady increase in Nazi activity which had followed the lifting of the speaking ban on Hitler, and it was apparent that

Nazi agitation was reaching a wider audience.<sup>4</sup> At the end of 1928 and throughout 1929 the worsening economic situation expanded the potential for Nazi gains and this was reflected in the steady advance in local and Land elections. They gained everywhere, sometimes by as much as three hundred percent (Berlin and Bochum).<sup>5</sup> In the elections to the Koburg city council, they increased their seats from four to thirteen, which gave them an absolute majority. In the May elections in Saxony, their vote was nearly four times what it had been in 1926 and twice what it had been in 1928. They also made impressive gains in Leipzig, Chemnitz and Mecklenburg-Schwerin. In the Thuringian elections, at the end of the year, they gained 11.3% of the vote and one of their candidates, Frick, entered the Land government as the Minister of the Interior.<sup>6</sup>

The shift in the Weimar political balance, which these results so clearly reflected, was to place a serious strain on the KPD's established priorities. That did not mean that there was any immediate recognition of new threats; no sudden alarm was sounded. Indeed, on the surface at least, the Communists responded with optimism to the situation which took shape after 1928. In the first place, they too benefited from the Weimar crisis of confidence. Between May 1928 and November 1932, their share of the vote in Reichstag elections grew steadily both in absolute terms and relative to their SPD rivals and by November 1932 the KPD, with 16.9% of the vote was only 3.5% behind the SPD.<sup>7</sup> The history of Weimar seemed to have come full circle. Once more the

extremes of left and right led the assault on the institutions of the Republic and once more the idea of revolution was in the air.

After a long absence the revolutionary theme reappeared in the Communist analysis of the German situation. At the Ninth EKKI Plenum in February 1928 and again at the Sixth Comintern World Congress, the position was advanced that the contradictions within the world capitalist system were intensifying and that "capitalist stabilization" was giving way to a new era of revolutionary activity.<sup>8</sup> The most powerful support for capitalism, in a new age of revolutionary crisis, was Social Democracy. It therefore followed that the main attentions of Communist parties everywhere had to be directed at the Social Democrats.<sup>9</sup> In its main outlines this idea was to govern Communist priorities for the remainder of the Weimar years. There was, of course, nothing new in the formulation. Exactly the same arguments had been exploited all along as the basis of Communist competition with the Socialist parties. From the perspective of their relations with the Social Democrats the Ninth Plenum and the Sixth World Congress simply underscored what had always been the ascendant "left" policies. To be sure, it was a dramatic underscoring which was to have profound consequences for the party.

For one thing, competition was to assume a new and more assertively militant form. At the Fourth Congress of the RGI in April 1928, the Communists declared war on the trade unions.

These were depicted as the most important of the institutions which supported capitalism and the largest obstacles to revolutionary ambitions. The power of the unions was to be broken through a concerted united front from below campaign.<sup>10</sup> As this resolve was translated into practice in the years after 1928, the Communists sought to split the working class organizations in the factories. They began to institutionalize their oppositionist status. They brought forward their own lists for the elections to factory councils and although they made an effort to retain representation in the main line unions, the emphasis shifted to their own opposition organizations. More than ever before, the centre of effort became the factory cell and the factory council. It was hoped that the factory cell would compensate for the general weakness of the Communist position within the unions. Moreover, a factory cell based structure would sharply distinguish the Communists from their trade union rivals. This was to be the culmination, in structural terms, of the "Bolshevization" process. Within the unions themselves, the Communists began to assign more importance to their own opposition organizations and increasingly these began to take on the character of rival unions.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, there was a new stress placed on the "Social Fascist" argument and the propaganda attack on Social Democracy assumed a more strident tone.

In Germany the united front from below campaign lost all sight of the distinctions between the SPD leadership and the

ordinary rank and file trade unionist. Party circulars and the KPD press made it clear that the struggle against "Social Fascism" was not to be understood in a restricted sense,

"The Social Fascists know that there can be no co-operation between us. There can only be a war of extermination..."<sup>12</sup>

At times the attack on the SPD plumbed the depths of hysteria.

Even the children of Social Democrats were to be victims in the war of extermination. The Communist school children's organization Rote Lanzen was, at one point, instructed to throw its little "Social Fascist" rivals out of the playgrounds.<sup>13</sup>

By comparison, National Socialism was seen as much less of an obstacle on the road to revolution. The Nazis, too, were depicted as a support for an increasingly crisis ridden and embattled bourgeois order, but in the Communist view it was Social Democracy which remained the main support of German capitalism. Nor could it be said with any confidence that the Communists always saw National Socialism as the most serious rival of Social Democracy for this role. As late as January 1932, Thälmann could argue that it was the Zentrum which most clearly represented the interests of the dominant sections of German finance capital and it was the Zentrum which had the closest ties with the main enemy -- Social Democracy.<sup>14</sup> The Stahlhelm, too, continued to be represented as a Fascist organization which in some ways was more important than the Nazis. Compared to the Stahlhelm the NSDAP was too contradiction laden and unreliable to be an effective part of the foundation for

German capitalism.<sup>15</sup> In fact, the rise of the Nazis was taken to be as much a symptom of the disintegration of the capitalist system as anything else. The note of alarm in the Communist analysis of Nazi electoral successes was usually tempered by considerations of what were perceived as the positive implications of the Nazi gains. The commentary on the 1929 communal elections provided a good example of this kind of ambivalence. Nazi gains and SPD losses were both interpreted positively,

"The success of the National Socialists no less than the setbacks of the Social Fascists, reflect the deep crisis of capitalist stabilization in Germany."<sup>17</sup>

The Nazi voter was depicted here as a radical and an anti-capitalist, who had not yet found his way to the Communists. There were dangers especially with respect to Nazi inroads among the workers and the unemployed and the party had to pay more attention than in the past to the problem of countering Nazi "National and social demogogy". Nevertheless, it was still true that,

"The political defeat of Social Fascism is without doubt the main result of the elections".

These themes remained after the Nazi electoral successes had taken on a more threatening character. The Landtag elections in Saxony in June 1930 resulted in an almost threefold increase in Nazi representation in the Landtag and yet the result was once more interpreted as a defeat for Social Democracy and as representing a symptom of capitalist decay.<sup>18</sup> Later in the year, in an

analysis of the results of the September 1930 elections, Pravda observed that the National Socialist gains meant that,

"New millions have awakened from their political winter's sleep".<sup>19</sup>

This theme was developed further in the Communist journals. In an analysis which was reminiscent of his 1923 "Schlageter" position, Radek argued that the Nazi electoral triumph demonstrated that the German bourgeoisie had "lost the confidence of the masses". It was true that the Nazis were meant to be a new support for capitalism but it was unlikely that they would be successful in that role. This was so because the National Socialist leadership and the masses which supported them were at cross purposes,

"... the masses which follow this party, do not follow it for the purpose of supporting trust capital, for then they would not have needed to abandon the German Nationalists, the Volkspartei and the Staatspartei. They follow the Fascist party because it promised deliverance from the German trusts and from world capitalism which sucks Germany dry through the Young plan".<sup>20</sup>

The optimism of some of the German Communists was even more explicit. While commenting on the Nazi gains Remmeli noted that,

"Of the fourteen million votes which were cast against the Young Plan only four and a half million were votes for Soviet Germany. Six and a half million are still temporarily with the Nazis...What has hitherto most stood in the way of the revolution was the passive masses who supported the bourgeois parties. However these have now been set in motion. To be sure, they have been caught up by the Nazis. Yet the fact that the most difficult obstacle has been overcome is what makes this election a turning point".<sup>21</sup>

As it turned out, Remmeli's optimism was ill founded. In

1930 no less than in 1923, it was wrong-headed to cast the Nazis in a revolutionary role. It was also true that factors other than a commitment to revolution continued to be present in the Communist analysis. Yet, armed with hindsight, it is too easy to dismiss the revolutionary element in such statements as Remmeli's. It is not necessary to discount altogether either his sincerity or his arguments, in order to draw attention to other more central realities in the Communist position. It was not impossible, after all, to argue that at least a part of the Nazi following was revolutionary in its outlook and in the sense that a Communist could understand. Nor was it entirely foolish to believe that the KPD could have competed successfully for the allegiance of these people. Whatever else may have lacked sincerity in their outlook, there could be little doubt that the Communists honestly believed that the Nazis were bound to fall apart as the contradictory elements in their appeal became apparent to their misled supporters. This belief followed logically, indeed, inescapably, from the Marxist viewpoint and just as in 1923, it was a belief which blunted the awareness of danger. This side of the optimism in the Communist analysis was thus also present in the reaction to the Nazi successes.<sup>22</sup>

When this is said, however, it is still necessary to look beyond the expression of revolutionary sentiment. As in the past, revolution as an objective was defined in such a way as to place much of the emphasis on the task of defending Soviet interests in

Germany. Every aspect of the KPD's work was, in one way or another, related to this central concern and not just in the most abstract sense of theoretical rationalization but also at the down to earth level of the day to day activities of the party. The most subordinate local cadre was given instruction on how he could best serve the interests of the Soviet Union. Everything from strike action to the smallest detail of factory work could be and was pointed in this direction.

At the Twelfth Parteitag in June 1929, Thälmann described a situation of increasing danger for the Soviet Union. In Europe, the constellation of forces ranged against Soviet interests and security was expanding and the danger of a war of intervention was becoming more threatening. The most important force which was supporting and directing this hostility was Social Democracy. Social Democracy had become the "most active campaigner" for the war policy which was aimed at the Soviet Union.<sup>23</sup> The determination to resist the perfidious anti-Soviet intentions of the SPD coloured all aspects of the KPD's tactics. In the factories and in trade union work the party's stated objectives clearly reflected a dominant concern for Soviet security. The "war danger" resolutions of the Sixth World Congress were specific on the matter of priorities. The Communists were to concentrate their efforts in those industries which were of most strategic importance - the transport, metal and chemical industries.<sup>24</sup> The tactical implications were spelled out in quite surprising detail. In a

report of the KPD Central Committee, in November 1929, it was noted that in trade union work in the transport industry, it was necessary to concentrate on the West-East lines of communication, especially the central railway interchanges for the Eastern frontier in Berlin-Brandenburg. It was also important to upgrade agitational efforts among women workers, since they were increasingly vital to the munitions and other war related industries. Similarly, a strong Communist presence in the largest factories was essential because it was these which formed the basis of strategically important manufacturing. The struggle against the SPD was directly relevant to these tasks since it was one of the principal aims of the SPD to preserve the German transport, communications and heavy industrial base for service in French and British anti-Soviet designs.<sup>25</sup> In another report it was claimed that Germany had undertaken the "international obligation" (with the connivance of the SPD) to allow allied troops to cross Germany to reach the Soviet frontiers. Hence, the need to sabotage these plans by achieving Communist control over the transport system.<sup>26</sup>

The war danger theme in these directives could largely be discounted without doing damage to the central intent which underlay them. If it was doubtful that anyone in Moscow took the dangers of a war of intervention seriously, it was nonetheless true that there were grounds for pessimism concerning changes in Germany's foreign policy orientation. What was at risk from the

Soviet point of view was not a war of intervention but an irretrievable loss of the Soviet Union's advantages in Germany. From the point of view of the "Ostorientierung" the years of the SPD dominated government under Hermann Müller were the most dismal in Weimar's history. Before the summer of 1928 Germany's improving relations with the West had coexisted with close and valuable connections with the Soviet Union. With the advent of the Müller government, however, that balance began to shift decisively. Trade and customs negotiations, which were under way between the two governments, lost tempo and then lapsed altogether in June 1929. There was also a flurry of German Western oriented diplomatic activity. The Hague Protokol was signed, then the Kellog-Briand Pact and then the Young Plan. The reparations arrangements were further softened with the Young Plan and the evacuation of troops from the Rhine continued -- all this in the space of a few months.<sup>27</sup>

The strongly anti-Social Democratic resolutions of the Ninth Plenum and the Sixth World Congress were prepared before the formation of the Müller government. Nevertheless, foreign policy considerations obviously still made themselves felt. In Germany, the baneful influence of the SPD on German foreign policy was not something which the Communists suddenly discovered; it had been a central determinate of the KPD's tactics all along. Early in 1928, the foreign policy consideration was evident in the Communist analysis of the approaching Reichstag elections. The

"anti-Soviet hate" and the pro-Western orientation of the Social Democrats were presented as central reasons for directing the KPD's electoral campaign efforts against the SPD.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, the election results made it clear, that whatever the exact shape of the new coalition, the SPD would have a larger voice. The SPD's share of the vote increased nearly to thirty percent and their delegation in the Reichstag expanded to one hundred and fifty-three from one hundred and thirty-one; this was the best result for the party in all seven Reichstag elections between 1924 and 1933.<sup>29</sup>

It was undoubtedly true that the struggle against the right in the Russian party and in the Comintern also helped to shape the left orientation of the Sixth World Congress but for the member sections of the Comintern it was the foreign policy content of the resolutions and the defense of the Soviet Union theme which had the larger relevance for party tactics.<sup>30</sup> For the KPD this did not mean that the war danger thesis and the active interventionist role of the SPD necessarily needed to be interpreted literally. A less dramatic idea was present alongside the war danger arguments in the Communist commentary of the SPD's foreign policy orientation. As in the past, it was the SPD which continued to be identified as the main influence which worked against close Soviet-German relations. The task of weakening the SPD thus continued to make sense within a straightforward framework of Soviet policy calculations. If the attack against the SPD could be managed in

such a way as to increase the KPD's presence within important sectors of the German economy then so much the better. Should the effort to salvage something of the "Ostorientierung" fail altogether, then a strong Communist presence in vital sectors of German industry could perhaps be exploited to weaken the strategic impact of any French-German combination. Anyway, the stress on the war danger argument provided an agreeably dramatic and "revolutionary" rationale for the tasks of the KPD.

The Nazis entered the Soviet foreign policy equation in a more complicated way. After the September 1930 elections the Soviets began to examine the NSDAP's foreign policy. Izvestia in a lead article on the foreign policy implications of the elections noted the danger of worsening relations with Germany, should the National Socialists enter a German government.<sup>31</sup> Yet, other considerations had to be set against the perception of threat. The Communists noticed the confusion in the Nazi foreign policy position. There were some in the Nazi ranks who continued to favour the Ostorientierung and, in any case, it did not make sense that Hitler could simultaneously pursue an anti-French and an anti-Soviet policy. A choice would necessarily have to be made and judging from the Nazi electoral campaign, which had stressed the anti-Western themes of rejection of the Young Plan and Versailles, it appeared as if the anti-Western orientation was the more important for the NSDAP. It was certainly this aspect of Nazi nationalist propaganda which caught the attention of the

Communists.<sup>32</sup>

What the Communists took to be the inherent weaknesses of National Socialism also had a bearing on their understanding of the foreign policy implications of the Nazi advance. The reasoning which led Thälmann to the conclusion that the Zentrum was a more important support for German capitalism than was the NSDAP also operated in the realm of foreign policy. The Zentrum, according to Thälmann, had the more important connections with outside interests. It was thus able to implement the pro-Western policies of fulfilment more "smoothly" than the German Nationalists and National Socialists. It was also, and for the same reason, a more effective promoter of the anti-Bolshevik line in German foreign policy,

"Beside the Second International as an agent for the preparation of a war against the Soviet Union, one can also speak...of a Catholic international which has set itself the same task".<sup>33</sup>

By contrast, the Nazis served to alienate Germany from the West. As Karl Radek saw it, the capitalist powers, and France in particular, feared the nationalism of the Nazis and in his view France would "vote against" the inclusion of Hitler in any coalition government by recalling short term credits.<sup>34</sup>

Radek's argument can be seen to have conformed well to the priorities of the Soviet and Comintern leaders. Until well into 1932, the Communists downplayed the possible dangers in the Nazi foreign policy position. Until that time they continued to regard the Nazis mainly as a force which operated to the benefit

of the Soviet Union's German policy. The best evidence for this interpretation was provided by the programme declaration which was adopted by the KPD in the summer of 1930 for the purpose of fighting the September elections.<sup>35</sup> The programme of "National and Social Liberation", as the title suggested, was an attempt to compete directly with Nazi election and propaganda slogans.

At the time, the programme was attacked by the Communist opposition for its "National Bolshevik" arguments and to be sure, it did borrow something from Laufenberg and Wolfheim.<sup>36</sup> The "Volksrevolution" slogan which was closely associated with the programme, if it suggested anything at all, recalled the idea of the "Volkskrieg". There was the same emphasis on the idea of the German "Volk", rather than the German workers or the international proletariat. There was also the same insistence that it was only under the leadership of the Communists that Germany could achieve its National emancipation. If, however, the criticism that the programme was "National Bolshevik" was meant only to suggest that it was a misguided formula for revolution, then it fell wide of the mark. It was not the ideas of the Hamburg Communists which were finding a fresh expression but rather those of Karl Radek's Schlageter speech and it is interesting, in this regard, to notice that Radek likely played a part in drafting the programme.<sup>37</sup>

Like the Schlageter initiative the revolutionary language disguised other non-revolutionary purposes. Even within the provisions of the programme itself the defense of Soviet interests

theme was well developed as was the argument that Social Democracy was an agent of "French and Polish imperialism". Anyway, any possible revolutionary intent was at odds with the position, held by the Communists at this time, that Germany was not yet ready for revolution.<sup>38</sup> On the other hand, it is likely that part of the intention was to "neutralize" the Nazis through direct competition with their nationalist propaganda. It is nevertheless still difficult to see this as the main purpose. The unexpectedly large gains of the Nazis should have suggested that the tactic had misfired, since an atmosphere of increasing mass nationalist hysteria apparently worked mainly to the advantage of Hitler. Yet, instead of dropping or modifying their own nationalist propaganda the KPD actually placed more stress on it after the elections.<sup>39</sup> What was strongly suggested was that the nationalist stance of the KPD was not meant simply as a tactic to redirect the Nazi supporters to the KPD. It also reflected the view that the mood of militant nationalism, while it needed to be controlled, was nevertheless useful within the context of Soviet foreign policy requirements.

Against this interpretation, it might be thought that the anti-Communist dimensions of the National Socialist programme would have been a sufficient barrier against the temptation to cast the Nazis in this essentially positive role. Yet there was every indication that the Soviets, at least, were not overly troubled by such considerations. They repeatedly stressed to the German

authorities that the fate of the KPD had no special significance for the course of Soviet-German relations and they pointed to the examples of Turkey and Italy where Communist parties had been suppressed by governments which continued to enjoy good relations with the Soviet Union.<sup>40</sup> That the "Fascism" issue had little, if any, bearing on Soviet foreign policy appreciations was well illustrated in the course of a conversation between Curtius and Litvinov in November 1930.<sup>41</sup> In explaining the foundations of Soviet foreign policy, Litvinov pointed out that in the Soviet view, "Everything depends on isolating France and its dependencies". As part of the struggle against French hegemony in Europe, the Soviet Union sought to establish its policies on the foundation of "friendship with Germany and Turkey" and good relations with Italy and England. On the question of good relations with Italy, he drew attention to recent Italian attempts to move closer to France, despite the "deep and inevitable" differences between the two countries. Fascist Italy was a natural ally in any struggle to limit French power. For this reason Litvinov argued that Germany should seek inclusion in an Italian grouping whenever such an opportunity presented itself.

It would seem, then, that the Nazi advance had little effect on the outlook of the Communist leaders. Their priorities remained consistent and clear. What was less clear was whether the KPD could carry them out. Even without the rising power of the Nazis, the new tactics which were imposed upon the party in

1928 were bound to do damage to its organization. The burden on functionaries became unbearable. As the oppositionist stance of the KPD hardened in the factories, the SPD dominated unions responded by withdrawing union rights. Deprived of protection, many Communist functionaries were made vulnerable to management reprisals and as unemployment rose, Communists were the first to lose their jobs. There was understandable reluctance among the employed rank and file to risk jobs and union rights by becoming active in Communist factory organizations. Consequently the street cells became attractive alternative organizations even for employed members and this put an additional strain on the party's already weak representation in the factories.<sup>42</sup>

Under these circumstances the structural weaknesses which had been apparent before 1928 were exaggerated. Reliance on the unemployed and membership fluctuation reached disasterous proportions. In January 1930, the party's membership stood at 133,000. In the course of the year there were 143,000 new recruits, yet at the end of the year there were only 180,000 members. In 1931 the situation was worse. During that year 210,000 joined the party but at the beginning of 1932 the total membership was no higher than in 1930.<sup>43</sup> As bad as this was, the affiliated "mass" organizations fared even worse. The KJD had a one hundred percent turnover rate in 1929 while that for the RGO was only slightly lower.<sup>44</sup> At the same time the proportion of the unemployed in the party and its mass organizations relentlessly increased. At the

end of 1931, approximately eighty-five percent of the membership were unemployed while at the end of 1932 only eleven percent of the party's members were factory workers.<sup>45</sup>

Had there been more stability in the party, it would still have been very much in doubt whether it could have discharged its growing number of responsibilities. The Communist army was simply stretched too thinly across too many fronts. There were continual calls for stepped up action against management, against assorted government authorities, against the Communist opposition groups, against the SPD and the trade unions, against the Zentrum and the Stahlhelm and finally against the Nazis. Energies were further dissipated through the attempt to devote more attention to the development of the various mass organizations. There was the growing emphasis on the RGO and the attempt to build new anti-Fascist organizations. There could be little wonder when some among the KPD leaders openly questioned the party's ability to manage all this. There were complaints that functionaries were overburdened. At the Sixth World Congress, for example, "Munzenberg noted that "some comrades" were concerned that the party's mass organizations could only develop at the expense of the party itself and that there were too few functionaries to go around.<sup>46</sup>

Such doubts were well justified. Structural weaknesses took a large toll of the party's morale. A mood of complete depression became apparent at the grass roots level. Meetings of party workers revealed a situation which was completely at odds with the

revolutionary optimism of the KPD press. In one such meeting in 1932 the main speaker, Isidor Piontek, a party secretary, painted a dismal picture of the KPD's progress. He spoke first about the great challenges facing the party. This was a time of increasing threat to the Soviet Union. Japan was preparing to attack Soviet territories in the East. In Europe the balance of power was shifting against the Soviet Union. Germany was being drawn ever more closely into the anti-Soviet camp. Still, with all these problems and dangers, the KPD's activities remained hopelessly inadequate. The whole Communist organization was "a great dung heap of internal decay". It presented a "giant facade" of activity but inside it was "hollow". He complained that despite the huge apparatus of the RGO, it had "talked a lot but done nothing". It had failed to gain any significant foothold in the factories. As for strike activity, "most comrades were too lazy and cowardly to go to work, to say nothing of striking". The party press was scarcely read. The local factory papers were of the poorest quality and none of the workers whether Communist or non-Communist bothered with them. Party finances were in a shambles because of the backlog of unpaid fees.<sup>47</sup> Reports of other such meetings, mentioned that there was often an atmosphere of "deep passivity". Sometimes the audience broke up before the meeting was to close, often there was no applause for speakers and at times there was jeering.<sup>48</sup>

Poor morale, passivity and the lack of continuity among local

cadres led to the breakdown of party discipline. There were complaints, from the highest levels, of party functionaries failing to implement official directives. For the KPD one of the most important of these directives was to keep the issue of relations with the Nazis secondary to their main concerns. The party was not to exaggerate the new threats posed by the rising strength of the Nazis. This proved the most difficult of all the burdens placed upon the KPD. The strain was apparent from the fact that among the rank and file there were many who showed themselves to be susceptible to the rival SPD understanding of what constituted correct tactics on the Nazi question.

In contrast to the Communists, the SPD developed the position that any constellation of political power in Germany was preferable to a government dominated by Hitler. Hindenburg, Papen and Schleicher deserved support, as the "lesser evil", if the clear alternative to providing that support, was to make it more likely that the Nazis would come to power. There were repeated warnings in the Communist press and in party circulars against the dangers of the "lesser evil swindle". There was "confusion among some comrades" on this point and a tendency to accept the "false distinction between Fascism and liberal Social Democracy."<sup>49</sup> The most important single instance of rank and file resistance to the authorized priorities of the party, occurred during the Presidential elections of 1932. The drop in support for Thälmann from 5,000,000 votes on the first ballot to 3,700,000 on the second, was attributed to the growing

passivity of the party and their failure to combat sufficiently the popularity of the lesser evil slogan. Against the SPD position the KPD had argued that it was Social Fascism and not National Socialism that represented the more serious threat. Social Fascism was the "most active part of Fascism", the struggle against Fascism was therefore inseparable from the struggle against the SPD,

"The SPD and the Zentrum have tried to popularize the idea of the 'lesser evil' and have confused the masses and even some of our comrades were made irresolute by the slogan and in this way Hindenburg won. The SPD say Fascism has been stopped. That is false. Hitler couldn't govern any differently from the way Brüning does today... The methods of the SPD represent pure Fascism. The Nazis too cannot govern without the help of the SPD."<sup>50</sup>

There was also another dimension to the disciplinary problem. The Social Democrats and the Communist opposition groups, when faced with the growing Nazi threat, argued for the end of self-destructive conflict on the left and for the formation of a broadly based anti-Nazi alliance. Such united front initiatives were seen as threatening enough to call forth a large volume of propaganda material directed at the "left" manoeuvres of the SPD. The "manoeuvres", so the Communists argued, were designed "to confuse the workers...with speeches about a 'united front against Fascism'".<sup>51</sup> The KPD was warned against this danger from the pinnacle of the Communist hierarchy. In an "open letter" of October 1931, Stalin linked the struggle against the united front from above suggestions, with the campaign against Trotsky and other oppositionist elements of both the left and the right. Stalin made it clear that the struggle

against Trotsky and against both the "left" and the "right" in Social Democracy were inseparable. The main task was to discredit all "left" manoeuvres since they obscured the central realities of Social Democracy in the minds of its supporters. The Social Democrats and the Communist opposition groups were in no sense to be understood as allies but rather as the main targets of Communist hostility.<sup>52</sup> Yet, Stalin's warnings, no matter how tirelessly they were repeated in the KPD press and party circulars, could not alter the realities of the party's day to day life. The truth was that by the time of the open letter it was not the Social Democrats but rather the Nazis who had become the most serious problem which the Communists faced. All the dangers of 1923 had reappeared.

Beginning in 1928 the Nazis stepped up their terror attacks on both the major working class parties<sup>53</sup> and for the first time since 1923 questions of self defense became urgent. To counter Nazi strong arm tactics, the Communists relied on two organizations - the RFB and the Kampfbund gegen den Faschismus (KgdF).<sup>54</sup> Neither of these was well suited to meet the growing Nazi menace. Many of the problems which had limited the effectiveness of the old Hundertschaften had resurfaced together with serious new difficulties.

The internal circulars of both organizations revealed a chaotic situation. No clear division of labour had been established. Some in the new KgdF saw it as a successor and rival to the RFB, and others saw it as a kind of "red SA".<sup>55</sup> Functionaries complained of

overloading and of staffing difficulties. The attempt to develop the new organization was draining functionaries from the RFB and in some places this was leading to the dissolution of the RFB.<sup>56</sup> Against this confusion, the party attempted to distinguish the self defense and combat role of the RFB from the "mass action" united front objectives of the KgdF.<sup>57</sup> Given the shortage of personnel, this division of labour meant little in practice. In most cases the organizations were staffed by the same overworked people and despite the supposed "united front" character of the KgdF, there was little non-Communist participation and thus to a large extent its membership overlapped with the RFB. Under these circumstances, it was not surprising that most members were entirely in the dark about what they were supposed to be doing. Was the principal task self defense or was it anti-Fascist united front work with the members of rival parties?

The confusion was compounded further by the complete lack of clarity with respect to the targets of anti-Fascist activities. It was not just the Nazis but also the Social Fascists, the Communist opposition, the Stahlhelm and the Zentrum which were represented as dangerous enemies, against whom it was necessary to defend the party.<sup>58</sup> At the same time, the members of these parties were all identified as suitable recruits for the "anti-Fascist" organizations. The KgdF was told that,

"In the Hitler party there are numerous dedicated revolutionary elements who struggle against the Fascist course of Hitler and his consorts and think along anti-capitalist lines".

It followed that one could be a member of the NSDAP and still be acceptable to the KgdF.<sup>59</sup>

By the end of 1931, the internal circulars and directives painted a picture of an army in full retreat. There was a growing fear of the SA and the SS and against this the party could only offer assurances that the Nazis were about to disintegrate under the impact of their own contradictions. The Communists argued that it had taken the party ten years to bring the SPD to the edge of defeat. What had taken ten years of struggle against a well established and powerful enemy could be accomplished with the NSDAP in a matter of months.<sup>60</sup> Such promises, however, could not carry much conviction. It was clear that the Nazis had the more effective methods and the clearer sense of purpose. That fact was conceded in the KgdF directives, members were urged to adopt the methods of the SA in such matters as agitational work and fund raising.<sup>61</sup> It was the Communists, not the Nazis who were in disarray. A general atmosphere of "passivity" and "defeatism" prevailed everywhere. Apathy was indicated by the large backlog of unpaid fees and by the fact that less than half the local groups read or disseminated the official anti-Fascist pamphlets, "Fanfare" and "Alarm". The problem of membership fluctuation was acute and in some places the KgdF had melted away.<sup>62</sup> There was also poor co-ordination between the main organization and its affiliated youth and women's groups.<sup>63</sup>

If, as a result of these difficulties, the RFB and the KgdF

were less than adequate in their self defense roles, it was as "united front" organizations that their greatest limitation was exposed. It was not just that they failed to gain significant numbers of non-Communist recruits; that much was obvious from the various anti-Fascist demonstrations, public meetings and propaganda campaigns which they attempted to organize. Most of the time these activities only succeeded in arousing the party faithful.<sup>64</sup> What was, however, more important, was the limitation built into the terms of reference of the whole Communist anti-Fascist effort. These allowed even less room for co-operation with other anti-Fascist forces than had been true in the case of the old Hundertschaften. Some groups, such as the KPO, were denied entry to Communist sponsored anti-Fascist meetings. There was grim irony here, for although former comrades were barred, Nazis were welcome.<sup>65</sup> As for the SPD, as long as discipline held, the Social Fascist theme effectively excluded the possibility of co-operation.

Discipline did hold and even in the darkest days on the eve of Hitler's seizure of power, there was no co-operation between the self defense forces of the two parties. The SPD dominated Reichsbanner and the Iron Front specifically forbade participation by their members in any of the Communist led anti-Fascist actions.<sup>66</sup> On the positive side there was only the unofficial co-operation which sometimes occurred in the streets. There were, for example, reports of detachments of the rival anti-Fascist groups taking the precaution of remaining closely together on the streets so as to

discourage the attentions of the Nazis.<sup>67</sup>

Such incidents, although not so important in themselves, nevertheless accurately reflected the mood of many Communists. As the pressure of the Nazis mounted, it was natural to seek comfort where it could be found. In fact, the rank and file were preoccupied with the problem of defending themselves and with the desire to strike back. These concerns frequently brought local functionaries into conflict with the central leadership. There was a tendency towards undisciplined and spontaneous action which the party never fully succeeded in controlling.

"Isolated acts of terror" (as the Communists called them), were always condemned. This was so despite the fact that the party, at the end of 1929, had seemingly encouraged undisciplined violence with the adoption of the slogan, "Beat up the Fascists wherever you meet them".<sup>68</sup> Understandably, this was widely understood as an invitation to attack the Nazis. Nevertheless, it was apparent from the beginning that there was no consensus concerning the application of the slogan. In the first place, the Nazis were never meant to be the only targets. Bearing in mind the broad definition of "Fascism" with which the Communists operated, it was perhaps not so surprising to see alongside, "Schlagt die Faschisten wo ihr sie trefft" also such refinements as, "Schlagt die Sozialfaschisten..." and "Schlagt die Versöhner...".<sup>69</sup>

It was also true that there were important qualifications placed on the slogan. As the Nazi tide rose there was less and

less room for violence in the official statements of the party's leaders. At the Eleventh EKKI Plenum in the Spring of 1931, Thälmann was openly critical of the "Schlagt die Faschisten..." slogan. In his view it had been applied in a "very rigid and abstract way" and it was, in any case, only appropriate where Fascism had not yet become a mass movement. In the new situation, the struggle against Fascism had to stress "ideological work"; the tactics of confrontation were always to be combined with those of persuasion.<sup>70</sup> Later in the year, the party went further and officially condemned "...senseless, isolated action and isolated armed attacks...". These, it was pointed out, served only to hold the workers back from "real" class struggle and gave the bourgeoisie a "cheap excuse" for their murderous anti-Communist hatred.<sup>71</sup>

Even before the Eleventh Plenum, in fact almost from the time of its introduction, it was possible to see the party's attempt to distance itself from the slogan. Many saw it as an influence which seriously compromised the effectiveness of the KPD's on-going united front from below efforts with the Nazi supporters. Communist speakers in Nazi public meetings were especially handicapped. When asked by members of their audiences where they stood on the question of the slogan, the wrong answer could lead to an ugly scene. In June 1930, in the course of one such meeting, Ulbricht revealed that this difficulty had been considered shortly after the adoption of the slogan and had led to the decision to de-emphasize

it.<sup>72</sup>

The rejection of violence, or at least the decision to avoid violence as far as was possible, made a lot of sense in light both of the party's capabilities and its priorities. Given the steadfast rejection of any form of genuine anti-Fascist alliance, "ideological struggle" offered the only hope for meeting the Nazi challenge. The Communists were right to point out that it was not just the strong arm tactics of the Nazis which needed to be considered but also the Nazi influence among large numbers of people who might be persuaded to support the Communists. Anyway, more was involved than considerations of how best to defeat the Nazis; the Communists had to protect themselves from the challenge to their own following.

As the KPD's dependence on the unemployed grew, so too did its awareness of the Nazi challenge for the allegiance of this group. Indeed, even before the Nazi advance got under way, this was seen as a potentially serious problem. During 1927 the Nazis launched a campaign to expand their following among the workers and the unemployed.<sup>73</sup> Judging from their internal party circulars, the Communists were already concerned at this time both by the direct threat to their own membership and by the distortions which Nazi activities were capable of inducing in the party's work,

"The National Socialists were especially active in industrial areas. Above all they tried to win support among the unemployed...Since there are also many unemployed among our comrades,

these are daily belaboured with National Socialist agitation. That leads to an overestimation of National Socialism among our comrades and in turn leads to the downgrading of much more important work..."<sup>74</sup>

After 1928 the threat to the Communist hold on the unemployed increased. The SA, especially proved successful in attracting large numbers of unemployed. Between January 1931 and January 1932 the SA's membership tripled from one hundred thousand to three hundred thousand and by various estimates, from sixty to seventy percent of the SA following was from the unemployed.<sup>75</sup> The Nazis also established special "cells" for work among their unemployed supporters and they published propaganda literature meant especially for this group.<sup>76</sup> At the same time, it was clear that considerable numbers of recruits for the SA were coming from the Communists. There were claims that in some industrial cities up to seventy percent of local SA detachments were made up of former Communists.<sup>77</sup> Despite its determination to concentrate its efforts on the struggle against the SPD, the KPD simply could not ignore a problem of such magnitude. As a mass party the NSDAP might have been able to afford a defeat in the competition for the unemployed but the KPD could not. Without the continuing support of large numbers of these people the KPD would simply have ceased to exist as a major force in Weimar politics.

Consequently, the tendency to "downgrade" the more important work among the membership of the working class organizations in favour of competition with the Nazis continued. Indeed, by 1930

something close to a de-facto reversal of priorities could be detected in Communist united front efforts. In agitational literature designed for the unemployed and in official statements concerning united front tactics, the Nazis and especially the SA were identified as important targets of the party's recruitment and propaganda campaign. The Communists also directed more propaganda at the Mittelstand and at the farmers, sections of the population considered to be especially susceptible to Nazi appeals. As part of this effort the KPD announced a "Farmer Aid Programme" in 1931 at the Berlin District Parteitag. Communists were to organize the farmers against forced mortgage closures and low prices for agricultural products.<sup>78</sup> The affiliated mass organizations, such as the KgdF, were instructed to establish a presence in the countryside and to pay special attention to the problems of recruiting farmers.<sup>79</sup>

With respect to the employed workers, too, the Communists became increasingly sensitive to the activities of the Nazis. At first sight this is surprising, since the Nazis never assigned first priority to their work in the factories and their influence there was never very important. Still, there was always some Nazi presence and it was indicative of the KPD's own weakness that it had to take seriously any additional challenge to an already marginal position. The Communists recognized that the Nazi advance was taking place across a broad social front, which included the employed industrial workers. After 1928, as the Nazis developed

and expanded their own affiliated working class organizations, there was a possibility that they would succeed in establishing a presence in the factories which was larger than that of the KPD.

There had long been pressure within the NSDAP to establish a National Socialist trade union organization and in 1928 that pressure resulted in the formation of a new Nazi affiliate, the Nationalsozialistische Betriebszellen-Organisation (NSBO).<sup>80</sup> With the founding of the NSBO, the Nazi presence in the factories expanded at an alarming rate. In January 1931, there were about three thousand members of the NSBO; by the end of the year this had become thirty-nine thousand and at the end of 1932, nearly three hundred thousand.<sup>81</sup> When full allowance is made for the fact that many among these were white collar personnel, the membership figures still reflected important gains relative to the Communists and on the eve of Hitler's seizure of power it is likely that the working class representation of the NSBO equaled or exceeded that of the RGO.<sup>82</sup> Nor was it just the absolute size of the NSBO which was worrying; its organizational structure was an additional cause for concern. The Communists were facing a rival in the factory who was self-consciously using Communist methods. There was the same concentration on the factory cell as the centre of agitation and recruitment and there was the same "transmission belt" relationship between central authority and local functionaries. Moreover, the Nazis appealed to many of the same radical fringe elements as the RGO.<sup>83</sup>

At the district level in the industrial areas, the Communists carefully monitored the increase in the number of NSBO cells and they called for a stepped up agitational campaign to counter them. There was a note of urgency. RGO operatives and Communist shop stewards were exhorted to fight against the "passivity" of Communist factory cells in the face of the growing Nazi presence. They were told to upgrade the "modest beginnings" of criticism of the Nazis in the Communist factory papers. <sup>84</sup>

The effort to meet the Nazi challenge on the basis of "ideological struggle" rested, as before, on the assumption that the Nazi following and membership were "objectively" open to Communist recruitment efforts. The Communists argued that there were those among the Nazis who completely misunderstood the real nature of the NSDAP's goals. Some saw the main objectives of their party as having to do with a radical re-ordering of economic relations, as the basis for national liberation and a new Germany. These were obviously susceptible to Communist united front efforts and they could reasonably be expected to change allegiance, given a strenuous enough effort on the part of the Communists.

Thus the KPD endeavoured to make its own members understand the basic contradictions in National Socialism. There were repeated urgings that comrades ought to accept their commonality of interest with the "simple" and "honest" Nazi worker or unemployed worker. As one Communist circular from May 1932 put it,

"It is self explanatory that, in the struggle against the National Socialists, one must

differentiate between leaders and masses and by organizing action campaigns, whether they be strikes in the factory or actions on behalf of the unemployed, tactics must be implemented for dislodging the Nazi proletarian followers from their leaders.<sup>85</sup>

Despite the emphasis here on influence through example and "action" the most notable practical consequence of the increasing emphasis on united front efforts with the Nazi following was the greater attention paid to the development of agitational work among the Nazi rank and file. Judging from surviving examples of the KPD's directives which governed this work, the intention was to integrate the major Nazi propaganda themes with the KPD's own programme of "National and Social Liberation" and the "Volksrevolution" slogan. As one party directive explained,

"The mass struggle against Fascism must be advanced under the flag of our freedom programme with the slogans of national and social liberation. This permits the exploitation of all the basic issues of German politics."<sup>86</sup>

Communist functionaries were instructed to point out that the exploitation of the National issue against the Nazis involved emphasizing that the NSDAP, far from standing for German national liberation, was actually a Young Plan fulfilment party, which was fully committed to the Weimar system. In fact, all parties, with the exception of the KPD were to be regarded as fulfilment and "coalition" parties. The Nazis, despite their radical sounding "national and social demogogy", were interested only in obtaining ministerial appointments in coalition governments.<sup>87</sup>

The same kind of argument was to be advanced against the Nazi social and economic programme. The "socialist" sounding phrases were to be exposed as the mask behind which the Nazis pursued their pro-capitalist purposes. In this connection the Communists also continued to exploit Nazi anti-Semitic prejudice and in a more public and direct way than ever before. The anti-Semitic theme found its way into everything from the party's circulars and factory papers to the speeches of Communist deputies in the Reichstag.<sup>88</sup> For the purpose of their work among the Nazi rank and file, functionaries were told to stress that Hitler was receiving money from the rich Jews.<sup>89</sup> As in the past, the intention was to convince the Nazi supporter of the close connections between his party and capitalist interests. When it came to basic (class) questions Nazi anti-Semitism could not be taken seriously. Jewish factory owners, for example, could count on the Nazis to play a strike breaking role.<sup>90</sup> In public meetings Communist speakers made the same points, only sometimes in a more brutal way. In one of these meetings a Communist spokesman, Florin, criticized the Nazis for the narrowness of their anti-Semitism. Whereas they only attacked the "Black Jews" (one must suppose this to mean people who were Jewish by birth and culture), the Communists attacked also the "white Jews", that is, people who were Jewish in practice and by conviction -- all capitalists.<sup>91</sup>

The same argument could be found in the Communist press, with the difference that on occasion the "anti-capitalist" message

was altogether lost in the highly unpleasant, mocking tone of the commentary. One such article criticized Frick, the Nazi Minister of the Interior in Thuringia, for his part in supporting government aid to religious establishments. Given the blanket nature of such support, Frick had found himself, as a Nazi and supposed anti-Semite, caught in the "contradiction" of approving support for Jewish institutions. Rote Fahne had this to say about the supposed gratitude of the Jewish community,

"As we understand, a conference of Thuringian Rabbis has taken place, which out of gratitude, has elected Frick as an honourary member of the Jewish community. The reception ceremony takes place some time in the next few weeks. The circumcision knife, to be used on this occasion, is decorated on the handle with a Swastika and the Star of David."<sup>92</sup>

Anti-Semitism did not provide the only example of Nazi influence on Communist propaganda. The attempt to break down the barriers which separated the Nazi following from the KPD involved the Communists in the deployment of such Nazi images and concepts as, "interest slavery" (Zinsknechtschaft) and "workers of brain and fist" (Stirn und Faust).<sup>93</sup> Although the KPD continually promoted its claims as the only anti-Fascist party in Germany and the only alternative to Hitler, this kind of propaganda, together with the overriding importance which it continued to assign to the struggle against "Social Fascism", suggested something entirely different. Despite assurances to the contrary, there was an implicit admission in Communist tactics that only the Nazis were

capable of exploiting the increasingly radical mood of the country.

More than a little helplessness was evident here -- the final surrender of the party's own self confident revolutionary antecedents. In striving to "neutralize" the Nazi threat, the Communists apparently saw that nothing more was required of them than the mere scramble to capture the resentments and the confusions of the day.

The helplessness was especially evident in another aspect of the KPD's approach to the Nazis. The attempt to shorten the ideological distance between the two parties was not just related to recruitment considerations. As in the past, the Communists sought to deflect Nazi hostility to more appropriate targets. Thus in speeches for Nazi audiences and in the special pamphlet literature which the Communists designed for use among the Nazis, there was a stress on a commonality of interest, especially with respect to common enemies and there was frequently a pleading concern to reduce conflict. One RGO pamphlet from December 1930 captured these sentiments well,

"Daily the press issues more or less lying reports concerning bloody clashes between "Nazis" and "Communists". First one side and then the other is declared 'guilty' and with sweat on their faces the hireling writers of the trusts and the Brüning government seek to sow discord among the working people. We don't want these fights. We want much more the development of what the servants of the exploiters of the people fear more than the plague: the united front of all the working people (Werktätigen)\*. Therefore we turn to you. We know that you are a National Socialist. We know also that the infamous, hate-filled press and other influences of the last years have sown mistrust between us. However, we know equally well that all of us, as workers

have common interests. Together we find ourselves in need. Together we bear the lash of the attack on pay, salaries and relief support and of rising prices and social reaction. Together we groan under the Young whip and we want to break the chains of slavery. The manipulators of this slavery have been concerned to convince you and those who think like you, that Marxism is responsible for our misery. In reality, Social Democracy betrayed Marxism decades ago and has sunk to the level of a prostitute of international finance capital. Therefore, we are convinced that it is not recriminations but sincere discussion, concerning our political ideas, that is necessary in the struggle against international finance capital and its agents. We will and must succeed as workers in forming a united front against international finance capital and its agents, against capitalism and tribute slavery\*, for upon that depends our fate and the decisive victory of the national and social liberation struggle."94

(The terms which are followed by an asterisk represent concessions to Nazi vocabulary.)

The united front theme also lent itself to more aggressive applications. The Communists reacted with hope to any evidence of discontent within the Nazi ranks and they were especially gratified by the defection of elements which could be seen as Socialist and anti-Western in their outlook. They took such events as the defection of Otto Strasser and the SA revolt in Berlin in 1931 as a vindication of their whole approach to National Socialism.<sup>95</sup> They sought to deepen the discontent and to attract the Nazi malcontents to the KPD. In pursuit of this goal the Communists relied primarily on a propaganda campaign which was built around Nazis who had come over to the KPD and one of these, a Wehrmacht officer by the name of Richard Scheringer, became a symbol for

the whole tactical line. Oberleutnant Richard Scheringer had been arrested for his part in Nazi recruitment and propaganda activities in the army. While in prison, he discovered himself to be a Communist and he defected to the KPD in March 1931. Kippenberg, on behalf of the KPD delegation, announced the defection before the Reichstag on the 19th March.<sup>96</sup> Thereafter, in a barrage of pamphlet literature, Scheringer became the Communist hero and example for all the disaffected and revolutionary elements in the Nazi ranks. The content of this material, and the so-called "Scheringer course" generally, once more underscored the continuing relevance of the ideas which had previously found their expression in the Schlageter initiative. National Bolshevik arguments were again stressed -- the need for an alliance with the Soviet Union and the role of the KPD as a party which fought for national liberation.<sup>97</sup>

Despite the clear overtures to the Nazi dissidents, there was not much in the "Scheringer tactics" which suggested that the Communists were interested in a straightforward alliance with any of the Nazi splinter groups which emerged after 1930. The attitude to these was mixed. On the one hand, they provided whatever evidence there was for the presence of the self-destructive contradictions which the Communists claimed (and hoped) were present in National Socialism. There was, therefore, a temptation to encourage their activities. On the other hand, the Nazi opposition offered an alternative to the main line party. Since

the Communists were trying to present themselves as the only alternative for the dissidents, they could not help but see the Nazi opposition as an obstacle to their recruitment plans.

There was an obvious similarity here with the Communist attitude towards the left wing opposition parties. In the party's circulars and in the Communist press there were repeated warnings against the tendency to see the left socialist, Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei (SAP) as a bridge between the KPD and the Social Democratic membership. The Communists argued that parties such as the SAP and the KPO were even more dangerous than the SPD because of their "sophisticated" arguments (such as, "sophisticated" suggestions for a genuine united front against the Nazis) and the fact that they deflected potential recruits away from the KPD.<sup>98</sup> Exactly the same points were made with respect to Strasser's Kampfgemeinschaft Revolutionärer Nationalsozialisten (KGRNS). The KGRNS, too, used "sophisticated" arguments and acted, not as a bridge, but as a dam against the united front struggle.<sup>99</sup>

As might be expected, however, there were difficulties in distinguishing between the two senses of Communist united front tactics. There was, for example, some contact between the KGRNS and the KPD:<sup>100</sup> Space was made available in the Communist journals for right-wing opponents of Hitler.<sup>101</sup> The Communists also helped to produce and to distribute at least one of the Nazi opposition papers, the "Sturmbanner, Sprachrohr der revolutionären SA".<sup>102</sup> More importantly, involvement with the SA opposition led

the Communists to try to construct "Scheringer" detachments of a "Red SA" and plans for this were underway by early January 1933.<sup>103</sup>

With some of these more covert operations it was difficult to decide where united front work ended and so-called "Zersetzung" work began. Enough of a documentary record survives to establish that the KPD, as part of its defensive reaction to the rise of the Nazis, intensified its undercover operations against the NSDAP after 1928. As in the past, such operations involved disguising Communist agents as members of the enemy organization. According to one secret report of the KPD Nachrichtdienst, which was seized by the police in 1932, agents were to work to promote factional struggle and to gather information about the enemy, especially concerning his own undercover work.<sup>104</sup>

The extent of the KPD's success in these matters cannot be known but it is clear that there was some penetration of the SA. It is, of course, not difficult to believe that some of those Communists who went over to the SA were agents. Certainly many contemporary observers thought so, and there is good evidence of SA men being involved in such activities as the distribution of Communist agitational material. Apparently there were cases of this even after the Nazis came to power.<sup>105</sup> There is good documentary evidence in the more sensational cases, where Communists achieved high ranking positions of trust within the SA. One case involved a well known Bavarian SA leader, Stegemann. In

1931, severe factional struggle in Stegemann's organization was traced to the activities of one of Stegemann's senior advisers and organizers, a Dr. Hoehne, who was subsequently exposed as a Communist agent.<sup>106</sup> Unfortunately for the Communists, undercover operations cut both ways. This was one of the obvious dangers of the united front tactic. A danger which was especially marked in the case of the KgdF and the RFB. Their work with the Nazis left them open to penetration by Nazi agents and there was ample evidence for this in the secret "black lists" of the KPD's own

Nachrichtdienst.<sup>107</sup>

The variety and the apparent flexibility of the tactics which the Communists generated to meet the growing Nazi threat and the obvious importance which was attached to them by many Communists, did not alter the fact that the KPD continued to regard its anti-Nazi efforts as secondary to its main purposes. This has always to be borne in mind when assessing the effectiveness of these tactics. They were never allowed to follow their logical course. That is, they never fully reflected the fact that the struggle against the Nazis had become a matter of life or death for the KPD. To the extent that this elementary fact penetrated the consciousness of the party it did so mainly at the level of the rank and file. There were fewer obstacles to awareness there because when all was said it was the ordinary member who had to carry the burden of the party's tactics. There was, to be sure, some recognition of the terrible strain which the KPD's priorities were imposing and on

several occasions the struggle against the Nazis was officially upgraded.<sup>108</sup> At no time, however, did this lead to a reversal of priorities. The attack on the Nazis could only be a more or less important part of a more general struggle against "Fascism". This always included, as a top priority, the problem of defeating Social Democracy as the main support of the bourgeois order and the main enemy of the Soviet Union.

It was of course, not sufficient only to assign more importance to the anti-Nazi effort, without an unequivocal reversal of priorities. Despite the call for a war on two fronts against the SPD and the NSDAP, the party simply did not have the resources which would have allowed it successfully to divide its attentions in that way.<sup>109</sup> The impression which was left was one of a party caught between its own instincts and an essentially alien purpose -- of a leadership, with seemingly endless patience, explaining over and over again why its embattled following could not save itself. The problem was amply illustrated by the tension between, on the one hand, the widespread influence of the SPD's "lesser evil" formula and the propensity to "isolated acts of terror", and on the other hand, the leadership's insistence on a two front "ideological struggle".

The emphasis on "ideological struggle", at least as it was interpreted at the time, made it clear that the KPD's effort to balance its defensive requirements with its refusal to alter its basic priorities, had led it full circle in its relationship with

National Socialism. Just as in 1923 it was possible to see at the heart of Communist tactics the desire to control, rather than to oppose, the sentiments which were feeding the Nazis. At no time was there much of a suggestion that the elements of hysterical nationalism and racism in the Nazi appeal, were somehow illegitimate within the terms of reference of Marxist revolutionaries, and therefore worth resisting just for that reason. The Communists insisted on criticizing Nazi ideas from the standpoint that they were misguided expressions of basically healthy and useful sentiments which only Communism could properly comprehend and direct. Thus it was that "ideological struggle" did not at any time mean what it might reasonably be expected to have meant. It too much compromised whatever opportunity there may have been to confront the Nazi appeal with an alternative, and so it could not, in the end, pose much of a threat to the Nazis. Rather, it only helped to draw the Communists into an essentially unhealthy relationship which emphasized not only the danger but also the illusory opportunity which the Nazis represented.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 See, Jeremy Noakes, The Nazi Party in Lower Saxony, 1921-1933, Oxford University Press, 1971, pp. 104-105.
- 2 See, Alfred Milatz, "Das Ende der Parteien im Spiegel der Wahlen", in Erich Matthias and Rudolf Morsey, Das Ende der Parteien 1933, Düsseldorf, 1960, p. 782.
- 3 Milatz, Ibid., pp. 777-778 and p. 782.
- 4 See, Karl Dietrich Bracher, The German Dictatorship: The Origins, Structure and Consequences of National Socialism, Penguin University Books, 1973, p. 172 and pp. 180-181.
- 5 See, Lenzer, "Die Kommunalwahlen in Deutschland", KI, No. 45, (20 Nov. 1929), p. 1692.
- 6 Bracher, op. cit., p. 213.
- 7 Milatz, op. cit., pp. 777-778.
- 8 See, Protokoll des 6. Weltkongresses der Kommunistischen Internationale (Juli-September 1928), Hamburg, 1929, p. 13 ff.
- 9 See, for example, Protokoll, ibid., p. 45 ff. and "Die Beschlüsse des neunten Plenums der Exekutive", I, No. 6, (15 March 1928), pp. 162-163.
- 10 See, Hermann Weber, Die Wandlung des deutschen Kommunismus: Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimarer Republik, Frankfurt am Main, 1969, Vol. 1, p. 223 ff.
- 11 The tendency to see the RGO as an alternative trade union organization was apparent at the Fifth Congress of the RGI, where it was announced that separate Communist unions were desirable under "certain conditions". The first "red unions" made their appearance at the end of 1930. See, Thomas Weingartner, Stalin und der Aufstieg Hitlers: Die Deutschlandpolitik der Sowjetunion und der Kommunistischen Internationale, Berlin, 1970, pp. 28-30; Ossip K. Flechtheim, Die KPD in der Weimarer Republik, Frankfurt am Main, 1969, pp. 271-273.
- 12 KPD Rundschreiben, Berlin, (14 July 1932), SA Bremen, IV.13K, as cited in Weber, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 241.
- 13 Ruhr Echo, (23 Oct. 1929), as cited in GdS, No. 46, (16 Nov. 1929), p. 11. In contrast to other parties, there seems to have

been unusual enthusiasm for the Social Fascist theses in the KPD: "With the exception of the organs of the KPD...the Communist press has not dealt with the problems of Social Fascism...In England...the majority of the old Central Committee...were entirely unable to understand the Social Fascist development of the Labour Party and the trade unions." Forgarasi, "Die Fragen des Faschismus und der Sozialfaschismus in der internationalen kommunistischen Presse", KI, No. 8, (26 Feb. 1930), p. 464.

- 14 Ernst Thälmann, "Das Zentrum, die führende Partei der deutschen Bourgeoisie", I, No. 1, (Jan. 1932), pp. 6-26; cf. Willi Münzenberg, "Wer bleibt Sieger? Bolschewismus oder Nationalsozialismus?", RA, No. 8, (Aug. 1930), p. 410.
- 15 Heinz Neumann, for example, made the claim that the Stahlhelm was the most dangerous of the "National Fascist" parties in Germany. See, Peer H. Lange, Stalinismus versus "Sozialfaschismus" und "Nationalfaschismus", Göppingen, 1969, p. 248 and see, Rote Stern, No. 5, (May 1931). Here the Stahlhelm is characterized as a Fascist organization which was "more stable" than the NSDAP and which needed to be opposed with as much energy as the Nazis; and cf. Hans Jaeger, "Die Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei: VII Der Stahlhelm", Inprekorr, No. 48, (10 June 1932), pp. 1533-1534.
- 16 Lenzer, op. cit., (fn. 5 above), p. 1694.
- 17 Lenzer, op. cit., (fn. 5 above), p. 1687. See also the report on the Saxon elections in Pravda, as cited in RSD, No. 20, (23 May 1929).
- 18 See, H. Jacobs, "Das Ergebnis der sächsischen Landtagswahlen", Inprekorr, No. 53, (24 June 1930) and "Lehren der Sachsenwahl", RF, (24 June 1930).
- 19 Pravda, (18 Sept. 1930), as cited in GdS, No. 39, (27 Sept. 1930), p. 577; see also, "Das Ergebnis der Reichstagswahlen in Deutschland", Inprekorr, No. 78, (16 Sept. 1930), pp. 1939-1940; Fritz Heckert, "Die deutschen Reichstagswahlen und die Aufgaben der KPD", Inprekorr, No. 79, (19 Sept. 1930), pp. 1953-1954; RF, (15 Sept. 1930).
- 20 Karl Radek, "Der Ausgang der deutschen Wahlen", RA, No. 10, (Oct. 1930), p. 525.
- 21 Remmeli in a speech before a KPD assembly in Berlin Neuköln, (19 Sept. 1930), as cited in GdS, No. 39, (27 Sept. 1930).

22 Thälmann argued that the propensity towards disintegration in the NSDAP meant that "...the 14th of September was Hitler's best day, no better only worse will follow", Ernst Thälmann, "Die Lage in Deutschland und die Aufgaben der Kommunistischen Partei Deutschlands, (XI. Plenum des EKKI)", Inprekorr, No. 52, (5 June 1931), pp. 1210-1212. This theme was featured in numerous articles in the Communist press. See, for example, RF, (15 Sept. 1930), "The so called electoral victory of the Nazis is the beginning of their end..."

23 Thälmann, in Bericht über die Verhandlungen des 12. Parteitages der KPD, Berlin, 1929, p. 72; cf. "Das XI. Plenum des EKKI, Thesen und Beschlüsse", Inprekorr, No. 38, (24 April 1931), "The strongest party of the Second International the SPD, the accomplice of the German military clique, who imposed the robber peace of Brest-Litovsk...is the same party that is now the most active organizer of the international imperialist, anti-Soviet front with the reactionary militaristic France of Poincare, Tardieu and Briand. Breitscheid, Wels and Hilferding are the instruments of Russian Menshevik scoundrels and interventionists in preparing the ground for intervention." (p. 954).

24 Cf. "The Sixth Congress of the Communist International", in Jane Degas, (ed.), The Communist International, 1919-1943: Documents, Oxford University Press, 1960, Vol. II, 1923-1928, pp. 447-448. See also, A. Stoll, "Für die revolutionäre Einstellung im Kampf gegen den imperialistischen Krieg", RGI, No. 13/14, (July 1932), pp. 817-827; O. Herclet, "Wir müssen den Kampf gegen die Kriegsgefahr verstärken", RGI, No. 13/14, (July 1932); Ernst Wollweber, "Die Antikriegsarbeit der RGO", IGPK, No. 52, (10 July 1931).

25 KPD Rundschreiben, "Der Kampf gegen den imperialistischen Krieg", HSA Düss. RDP, 30642(a), R.ko., 2854, (29 Nov. 1929); see also, "Schulungsmaterial des 12 EKKI Plenum und die Reichsparteikonferenz", HSA Düss. RDP, 30671, (Sept. 1932), "...for the defense of the Soviet Union, the conquest of the large factories, the armament factories, the chemical works, the railways is indispensable"; W. Kaasch, "Die Reichs-Organisations-Konferenz der KPD", Inprekorr, No. 33, (30 March 1928), p. 619.

26 KPD Rundschreiben, Ruhrgebiet, (28 April 1932), HSA Düss. RDP, 30657(g), Pp Duisberg, (9 May 1932).

27 Not only was the SPD government preoccupied with its relations with the West, it also sought to distance Germany from the "Rapallo" policies. The SPD continued to exert pressure

on the Foreign Office against the Ostorientierung after it left the government. See, Harvey Leonard Dyck, Weimar Germany and Soviet Russia 1926-1933, London, 1966, pp. 152-156; Weingartner, op. cit., (fn. 11 above), pp. 21-22. The Communist commentary on the development of German foreign policy made it clear that the Soviets regarded the advent of the Müller government, with its "boundless commitment to the Westorientierung", as a grave threat to their German policy. See, W. Koenen, "Deutschlands aussenpolitische Isolierung", Inprekorr, No. 94, (31 Aug. 1928), pp. 1747-1748; Pravda (lead), (12 July 1928), "Die Aussenpolitik der deutschen Link-regierung", as cited in Inprekorr, No. 67, (17 July 1928), pp. 1214-1215.

28 See, for example, W. Stoeker, "Die Bilanz des neudeutschen Imperialismus vor den Wahlen", Inprekorr, No. 39, (20 April 1928), pp. 698-699; P.R. Dietrich, "Die politische Lage in Deutschland", Inprekorr, No. 33, (30 March 1928), pp. 611-612; W. Koenen, "Der Wahlkampf in Deutschland und die Sozialdemokratie", Inprekorr, No. 46, (15 May 1928), pp. 811-812.

29 Milatz, op. cit., (fn. 2 above), p. 777.

30 Weingartner argues that the foreign policy consideration only made its appearance as a major factor in 1929/1930 and that within the "left course" of 1928 the foreign policy role of the SPD was "fully subordinate" to the continuing campaign against the "right" in the Russian party and the Comintern. In support of this, Weingartner points to the fact that the left positions were formulated before the Müller government took office and that it was only after the defeat of the right that the foreign policy motive came forward more strongly (pp. 24-25). Although the attempt to establish a heirarchy of motives must remain a doubtful enterprise, Weingartner's argument misses the continuity in the Communist position on the foreign policy role of the SPD. Beyond that, there is a risk of exaggerating the campaign against the "right"; certainly, the KPD "right" had no influence whatever at the Sixth Congress. Its fate had been decided in the course of secret negotiations between the EKKI and the German delegation to the Ninth Plenum in February. See Weber, op. cit., (fn. 10 above), Vol. I, p. 191.

31 "The international significance of the German elections", Izvestia, (18 Sept. 1930), cf. Karlheinz Niclauss, Die Sowjetunion und Hitlers Machtergreifung: Eine Studie über die deutsch-russischen Beziehungen der Jahre 1929 bis 1935, Bonner Historische Forschungen, Vol. 29, Bonn, 1966, p. 77 and see also, Argus, "Hitler rüstet zum Krieg gegen die UdSSR", RA, No. 11, (Nov. 1930), pp. 615-621.

32 Cf. Karl Radek, "Die Bilanz der Reichstagswahlen", Inprekorr, No. 81, (26 Sept. 1930); Weingartner, op. cit., fn. 11 above, pp. 46-48.

33 Thälmann, op. cit., (fn. 14 above), p. 21.

34 Karl Radek, "Die Lage in Deutschland und die deutsche Sozialfaschismus", RA, No. 1, (Jan. 1931).

35 RF, (24 Aug. 1930).

36 "Noch einmal der spiessbürgerliche Nationalismus der KPD Führung", GdS, No. 37, (13 Sept. 1930), pp. 553-554; "Die Exekutive und die KPD", GdS, No. 39, (27 Sept. 1930), p. 577.

37 For Stalin's probable intervention in the drafting of the programme see, Schüddekopf, Linke Leute von rechts: Die nationalrevolutionären Minderheiten und der Kommunismus in der Weimarer Republik, Stuttgart, 1960, p. 289; for Radek's possible influence see, Lange, op. cit., (fn. 15 above), pp. 269-270.

38 See, for example, Ernst Thälmann, "Einige Fehler in unserer theoretischen und praktischen Arbeit und der Weg zu ihrer Überwindung", Inprekorr, No. 11, (1 Dec. 1931), p. 2565, "...We find ourselves in that stage of revolutionary upheaval in which the direct power struggle of the revolution itself is not yet on the agenda, but the preconditions for a revolutionary crisis in Germany are maturing at an accelerating pace." Cf. Pravda, (24 May 1931), in Inprekorr, No. 50, (29 May 1931). Here the prospects for revolution are related to the war danger theme. The stress is placed on the need to transform the coming imperialist war into a revolutionary war. In the meantime it was "an important central task for all Communist sections" to work for "a breathing space" for the Soviet Union in order that the tasks of socialist transformation and socialist construction could be completed. ; cf. "Die Lage in Deutschland und die Aufgaben der KPD", KI, (lead), No. 25/26, (7 July 1931), p. 1150. Here it is noted that the party will not be in a position for revolutionary struggle until it overcomes its reliance on the unemployed.

39 Thus Thälmann speaking before the Eleventh EKKI Plenum observed, "This programme of national and social liberation of the German Volk, which was not just adopted for the purpose of preparing the party for the Reichstag elections, constitutes, as before, the axis of our entire policy.", Inprekorr, No. 52, (15 June 1931), p. 1209; cf. Weingartner, op. cit., (fn. 11 above), p. 46.

40 See, Niclauss, op. cit., (fn. 31 above), p. 80; Lange, op. cit., (fn. 15 above), p. 271; Gustav Hiliger and Alfred G. Meyer, The Incompatible Allies: A Memoir-History of German-Soviet Relations 1918-1941, New York, 1953, p. 252.

41 AA, Buro des Reichsministers, Akten betr. Russland, Vol. 26, pp. 561876-561882, "Niederschrift über eine Besprechung mit dem russischen Volkskommisar Litvinov, (3. Nov. 1931)"; AA, BdR, Akten betr. Russland, Vol. 26, pp. 561917-561921, "Besprechung mit dem russischen Volkskommisar Litvinov (8. Nov. 1931)".

42 See, for example, W. Kaasch, "Die Reichs-Organisation-Konferenz der KPD", Inprekorr, No. 33, (30 March 1928), pp. 619-621; E. Auer, "Die Arbeit der Partei und RGO in der reformistischen und anderen reaktionären Gewerkschaften", I, No. 7, (July 1931), p. 304.

43 See, Weber, op. cit., (fn. 10 above), Vol. I, pp. 280-294; Siegfried Bahne, "Die Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands", in Erich Matthias and Rudolf Morsey, Das Ende der Parteien, 1933, Düsseldorf, 1960, pp. 660-661.

44 Weber, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 287.

45 Bahne, op. cit., p. 661; Weber, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 284.

46 Münzenberg, (Tätigkeitsbericht des EKKI), Inprekorr, No. 71, (24 July 1928), pp. 1293-1294.

47 HSA Düss. RDP, 30671, (15 March 1932).

48 See, BA (Koblenz), R 58 390, (24 Dec. 1931); HSA Düss. RDP, 30671, (21 March 1932) and (7 May 1932).

49 See, Ernst Thälmann, op. cit., (fn. 38 above), p. 2562.

50 KPD Rundschreiben, HSA Düss. RDP, 30671, Pp. Essen, (21 March 1932); see also, KPD Rundschreiben, HSA Düss. RDP, 30642(c), Pp. Duisberg-Hamborn, (18 April 1932); BHA (Koblenz), R 58 390, "Referenten Material zur Diskussion in allen Einheiten der Partei: Zur Vorbereitung der UB Parteitage und des Bezirks-Parteitages, April 1932".

51 "Beschlüsse der neunzehnten Bezirksparteitagung, Berlin-Brandenburg, Dezember 1932", in BHA (Koblenz), R 58 390.

52 For the text of the letter see, "Letter to the Editors of Proletarskaya Revolyutsia" in J. Stalin, Problems of Leninism, Moscow, 1947, pp. 378-389.

53 The Nazis apparently made the decision to "go over to the offensive" and to step up their attacks against the SPD and the KPD early in 1928. See the report of a confidential meeting of HJ, SA and SS leaders in Cologne in HSA Düss. RDP, Pp. Essen, (17 May 1928). Cf. NSSA (Hannover) Des. 122 a. XI, Massnahme zum Schutz der Republik, Vol. 82, "Zusammenstossen politische Gegner", (18 Dec. 1930)" and BHSA-Abt. II, MA 100 426, Akten betr. Nationalsozialismus 1932, "Übersicht über die in Bayern in der Zeit vom 1. Jan. bis 31. Dez. verüten politischen Gewalttaten". These two reports indicate that it was the SPD which was the most frequent target of Nazi hostility.

54 Although the RFB was outlawed after the May Day riots of 1929, it continued to function illegally. The KgdF was founded in August 1930.

55 See, "Alarm" (Organ of the KgdF), No. 16, (Jan. 1932), HSA Düss. PA, Pp. Düss., (28 Jan. 1932).

56 RFB Rundschreiben, (8 Dec. 1930), HSA Düss. RD APA, Pp. Düss., (5 Jan. 1931).

57 See, the statutes of the KgdF, BHSA-Abt. II MA 100 417, (24 Oct. 1930).

58 KgdF Rundschreiben, No. 7, (1 April 1931), BHSA-Abt. II MA 100 417, RMI, (15 April 1931); RFB Rundschreiben, (8 Dec. 1930), HSA Düss. APA, Pp. Düss., (5 Jan. 1931); RFB Rundschreiben, (8 Dec. 1928), HSA Düss. RDP, 30657(a).

59 KgdF Rundschreiben, No. 14, (5 Dec. 1931), HSA Düss. RD APA, Pp. Düss.,

60 KgdF Rundschreiben, No. 14, ibid.; cf. HSA Düss. RDP, 30671, Pp. Essen, (7 May 1932), secret KgdF Rundschreiben on low morale and full retreat before a stronger Nazi enemy.

61 Reichsleitung KgdF Rundschreiben, (30 March 1932), HSA Düss. RDP, (April 1932); See also report of a general meeting of the KPD functionaries in Essen in March 1932, HSA Düss. RDP, 30671, Pp. Essen, (21 March 1932), "...the party continues to work in the same idiotic way. Everywhere you see groups of SA and SS who make themselves conspicuous through their self confidence and belief in victory. And where is the Kampfbund?...the RFB hides in its mouseholes..." (KPD speaker).

62 Alarm, No. 16, op. cit., (fn. 55 above).

63 Alarm, No. 16, ibid.

64 See, GdS, No. 19, (Sept. 1932), p. 224; GdS, No. 20, (20 Sept. 1932), p. 238.

65 GdS, No. 36, (6 Sept. 1930).

66 See, Kurt Klotzbach, Gegen den National Sozialismus: Widerstand und Verfolgung in Dortmund, 1930-1945, Hannover, 1969, p. 63.

67 See, Christopher Zimmermann, "Die Arbeiterjugend und Arbeiterkinderorganisationen in Dortmund bis 1933", Schriftenreihe des Archivs der Arbeiterbewegung, Dortmund, No. 2, 1978, p. 50.

68 Heinz Neumann, "Schlagt die Faschisten wo ihr sie trefft!" RF, (9 Nov. 1929). Bandler in 1923 was apparently the original author of the slogan; see Ruth Fischer, Stalin and German Communism, Harvard University Press, 1948, p. 287.

69 Ulbricht reminded the readers of Rote Fahne that the slogan was to be applied against both "Social" and "National" Fascists, RF, (28 May 1930); see also, "Schlagt die Sozial-faschistischen Kinder wo ihr sie trefft!", GdS, No. 46, (16 Nov. 1929), p. 11 and "Schlagt die Versöhnler wo ihr sie trefft!", GdS, No. 41, (12 Oct. 1929).

70 Thälmann, "Die Lage in Deutschland und die Aufgaben der Kommunistischen Partei Deutschlands", (XI. Plenum des EKKI), Inprekorr, No. 52, (5 June 1931), p. 1208. Thälmann had pointed out the need to stress "ideological struggle" earlier at the Berlin Parteitag in 1929; see, RF, (27 May 1930).

71 RF, (13 Nov. 1931); see also, "Die KPD gegen den individuellen Terror, für den revolutionären Massenkampf!", Inprekorr, No. 109, (17 Nov. 1931), p. 2474. It was clear, however, that spontaneous action continued and was a source of disciplinary problems. See, Alarm, No. 16, (fn. 55 above).

72 In response to the inevitable question from a Nazi heckler, Ulbricht replied that the KPD Politburo had decided that the slogan was "inexpedient for the present intensified stage of the struggle", RF, (28 June 1930); cf. GdS, No. 23, (7 June 1930).

73 See, Max H. Kele, Nazis and Workers: National Socialist Appeals to German Labor, 1919-1933, University of North Carolina Press, 1972, pp. 122-126.

74 KPD Rundschreiben, "Die Arbeit unter unseren Gegner seit der IV. Reichskonferenz", BHA (Koblenz), R 431 2673, R.ko., "Bericht an der Nachrichtenstellen der Länder", (22 April 1927).

75 Kele, op. cit., p. 183.

76 This included a special newspaper "Der Erwerbslose". See, Kele, ibid., p. 154.

77 HSA Düss. RDP, 30653(d), Pp. Essen, (30 Sept. 1931); BHSA-Abt. II, MA 101 238, Pp.M., (12 July 1931); NSSA (Hannover), Hann. Des 310 I B2, NSDAP Gau Hannover, Prop. Abtl. an Reichsleitung der NSDAP, (15 Feb. 1932) and see also, Hitler's claim that two thirds of the SA were former Communists, BHA (Koblenz), R 431 2683, Prussian Ministerpräsident-Reichskanzler, (4 March 1932).

78 See, for example, KPD Rundschreiben, HSA Düss. RDP, 30642(b), Pp. Essen, (4 March 1932).

79 See, Alarm, No. 14, HSA Düss. RD APA, 17186, Pp. Düss., (5 Dec. 1931) and Alarm, No. 16, op. cit., (fn. 55 above).

80 For example, see NSSA (Hannover) Hann Des 310 NSDAP, Gau Hannover, (30 May 1925), "The Ortsgruppe Braunschweig considers the founding of a National Socialist trade union of pressing importance and requests the national leadership in Munich to take the necessary steps immediately". See also, Hans-Gerd Schumann, Nationalsozialismus und Gewerkschaftsbewegung: Die Vernichtung der deutschen Gewerkschaften UND der Aufbau der "Deutschen Arbeitsfront", Frankfurt am Main, 1958, pp. 34-35; Kele, op. cit., (fn. 73 above), pp. 148-151.

81 Schumann, ibid., p. 167.

82 See, BHSA-Abt. II, MA 101 239, Pd.M., (20 Oct. 1932); according to this report the NSBO had 200,000 members and 9,000 cells in October 1932; cf. Kele, op. cit., (fn. 73 above), p. 170. By comparison the RGO and the "red unions" together numbered approximately 255,000 in January 1933; allowance must, however, be made for the fact that most of the members of the so-called "red unions" were also members of the RGO. If these are subtracted, then the total Communist trade union representation was approximately 160,000; see, Bahne, op. cit., (fn. 43 above), pp. 664-665. On the other hand, a large percentage of the NSBO membership was in the Angestellte and Handwerker categories; see Schumann, op. cit., p. 39.

83 For the Communist recognition of this kind of direct competition with the Nazis see, Walter Ulbricht, "Der revolutionäre Aufschwung und die Taktik der Einheitsfront", I, No. 10, (oct. 1931), pp. 436-437.

84 See, for example, KPD Rundschreiben, Bl. Ruhrgebiet, (April 1931), HSA Düss. RDP, 30657(e); KPD Rundschreiben, HSA Düss. RDP, 30642(b), (12 Aug. 1931); KPD Rundschreiben, "Arbeitsplan für November 1930", HSA Düss. RDP, 30657(d).

85 KPD Rundschreiben, (11 May 1932), BHA (Koblenz), R 58 485; see also, KPD Rundschreiben, (6 March 1931), BHA (Koblenz), R 58 390; KPD Rundschreiben, Bl. Rg. Abt. Org., Essen, (26 Nov. 1931), HSA Düss., RDP, 30657(f).

86 KPD Rundschreiben, "Arbeitsplan für Februar 1931", HSA Düss. RDP, 30657(d); cf. KJVD Rundschreiben, Agitprop, (22 Dec. 1932), BHA (Koblenz), R 58 672, "Much more attention must be paid to the popularization of the manifesto against Versailles. Such questions as Danzig, Upper Silesia, East Prussia, Tirol, Alsace Lorraine and Saarbrücken are the starting points for the mobilization of the young workers in the struggle against the imperialist subjugation of the nation."

87 See, for example, KPD Rundschreiben, Essen, (4 Nov. 1930), HSA Düss. RDP, 30642(b); cf. RF, (20 Dec. 1929).

88 See, for example Maria Reese, Verhandlungen des Reichstags, Stenographische Berichte, V. Wahlperiod, 1930, Vol. 444, p. 157; in this speech Reese accused the Nazis of insincerity in their anti-Semitism. According to Reese, Hitler "had breakfast with the rich Jews" and only disliked poor Bolshevik Jews.

89 One directive was accompanied by a pamphlet which listed the "friends of Hitler", among these were "the Jewish Jacob Michael interest and Middendorf of the Jewish Rothchild Bank trust", BHA (Koblenz), R 58 626, (8. Dec. 1930).

90 "Heini's Reich", Rotgardist (organ of the RFB), (Aug. 1932), HSA Düss. RDP, 30671. This is a particularly grim little anti-Semitic piece which alleged that a Jewish factory owner had organized a Fascist group among his workers. Cf. KPD Rundschreiben, Rg. Agitprop, HSA Düss. RDP, 30657(e), "For the unlucky ones who have been persuaded by Nazi demogogy there remains the last glimmer of hope, the Jew. These parasites, these blood suckers, they will surely be expropriated by the Nazis. We cannot allow the duped even this".

91 HSA Düss. RDP, Pp. Essen, (1 Aug. 1930).

92 O.P. (Oscar Plenge?), "Wird Frick Jude?", RF, (8 July 1930); cf. this verse from Rote Fahne, "Die Jobber, Juden und Jungdogesellen -- Verhandeln mit Junker und Industriellen", RF, (27 Aug. 1930). See also, "Nazis als Helfer des jüdischen Kapitals", RF, (26 April 1932); "Nazis für jüdisches Kapital", RF, (7 Sept. 1932); "Nazis betteln beim jüdischen Kapital", RF, (7 Jan. 1933); "Die jüdische Bourgeoisie verbrüder sich mit Hitler", Rote Stern, No. 10, (19 May 1933).

93 See, GdS, No. 3, (31 Jan. 1931) for a criticism of the KPD's use of Nazi slogans. See also, the KPD's use of the Nazi slogan "Brot und Freiheit", in RA, No. 9, (Sept. 1930), p. 519.

94 BHA (Koblenz), R 58 626, Pp. Bochum, (8 Dec. 1930). For a similar appeal, see Heinz Neumann's speech before a Nazi assembly in October 1930, GdS, No. 45, (8 Nov. 1930). According to this report, Neumann greeted his Nazi audiences as "Young Socialists" with whom the Communists wished to avoid "fraternal struggle". For a different version of the meeting, which does not mention these highlights see, RF, (29 Oct. 1930); Neumann appeared at several large Nazi assemblies where he delivered the same message; see, "Verbrüderung zwishcen KPD und Nazis", SDPK, No. 12, (Dec. 1931), p. 751.

95 The Communist press followed with great interest the evidence for factional struggle within the NSDAP. The argument of numerous articles was always the same. Defections were interpreted as resulting from the growing contradiction between the Nazi leaders and their misled lower class following. See articles on this theme in Rote Fahne from 29 June, 1930, and 4, 6, 13 and 18 July, 1930. See also articles by Hans Jaeger, in Der Rote Aufbau, "Die Richtungskämpfe innerhalb der NSDAP", RA, No. 3, (March 1931), pp. 132-137; "Hitler-Stennes", RA, No. 6, (May 1931), pp. 303-306; "Hitler-Goebbels-Strasser-Stennes-Ehrhardt", RA, No. 19, (15 Nov. 1931). Kele is misleading when he suggests that the Nazi defections went largely unnoticed by the Communists. See, Kele, op. cit., (fn. 73 above), p. 160.

96 See, Schüddekopf, op. cit., (fn. 37 above), p. 287 ff.

97 See, "Die Offensive", BHA (Koblenz), R 58 626, (8 April 1931) and "Rote Angriff", BHA (Koblenz), R 58 486, (31 Aug. 1932). These are agitational papers meant for distribution among the Nazi workers and functionaries.

98 See, KPD Rundschreiben, Berlin, HSA Düss. RDP, 30657(g), Pp. Essen, (4 March 1932).

99 See, KPD Rundschreiben, HSA Düss. RDP, 30642(b), Pp. Bochum, (7 Nov. 1930). See also, "Der Kampf gegen den National-faschismus in Deutschland", (lead), KI, No. 29/30, (13 Aug. 1930), p. 1597.

100 BHSA Abt. II, MA 101 237, Pd. NF., (18 Dec. 1930); BHSA Abt. II, MA 101 239, Pp. M., (20 Oct. 1932). Cf. Schüddekopf, op. cit., (fn. 37 above) for a discussion of the sympathetic attitudes in the Nazi opposition towards the KgdF. See also, a letter from Stennes to Papen which alludes to contacts between the Stennes opposition and "leaders of the so-called left camp"; Stennes to Reichskanzler, (16 Sept. 1932), BHA (Koblenz), R 431 2684.

101 See, K. Paetel (Gruppe Sozialrevolutionärer Nationalisten - GSRN), "Volkskampf gegen Faschismus", RA, No. 2, (Feb. 1931), pp. 81-83, "the Gruppe Sozialrevolutionärer Nationalisten has made it their obligation to collaborate in the RGO and in the Kampfbund gegen den Faschismus and to work closely with the KPD...".

102 See, BHSA-Abt. II, MA 101 239, Pd. NF., (31 Oct. 1932), where this claim is made. The report includes a copy of the "Sturmbanner...".

103 BHA (Koblenz), R 58 626, "Bericht über die Sitzung der Nazibearbeiter in Bereich des UB 5", (18 Jan. 1933).

104 BHSA-Abt. II, MA 101 239, Pd. N., (31 May 1932).

105 NSSA (Hannover), Hann Des 310 I c4, Gau Süd Hannover Braunschweig, (8 May 1934). This is a Nazi report concerning Communist attempts to organize an anti-Fascist demonstration, "We have observed that SA people are sympathetic to those preparations and express themselves in the KPD sense. As we have already noted in previous reports there are many Communists in the SA...". Cf: IGKP, No. 34, (29 July 1933); No. 35, (7 Aug. 1933).

106 BHSA-Abt. II, MA 102 153, Halbsmonatsberichte der Regierungspräsident, 1931, (1. Jan.-31. Mai); Reports No. 375, No. 431 and No. 501 have information on the "Stegemann affair".

107 See, HSA Düss. RDP, 30656(g), Rp. Düss., (July 1932); HSA Düss. RDP, 30642(b), Pp. Essen, (30 Oct. 1931); HSA Düss. RDP, 30642(b), Pp. Duisberg, (16 June 1931).

108 Besides the error of "overestimating" the importance of the struggle against National Socialism, a new error of "underestimation" was introduced at the end of 1931. At that time, the party called for an intensification of the "ideological struggle" against the Nazis and this call was to be repeated in the Communist press until Hitler came to power. This was not, however, to be at the expense of the party's efforts against the SPD which continued to be seen as central. See, Ernst Thälmann, "Einige Fehler in unserer theoretischen und praktischen Arbeit und der Weg zu ihrer Überwindung", Inprekorr, No. 113, (1 Dec. 1931), p. 2564.

109 For the call for a "two front struggle" see, Thälmann, ibid., p. 2564.

## CHAPTER V

## COMMUNIST TACTICS, 1928-1932:

## THE RESPONSE TO NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Optimism and pessimism competed strongly in the Communist response to the Nazi advance. Certainly it was pessimism which dominated among the rank and file. Although the changed balance of political power had forced modifications in the party's position, at least to the extent that the anti-Fascist tactics which were already in place were given more emphasis, the mood was still one of despondent "passivity". The breaches of discipline and the high turn-over rates showed only too clearly that the anti-Nazi effort was inadequate in the eyes of many Communists. Against this pessimism, however, had to be set the continuing optimism of the leadership's forecasts. The Nazis would disintegrate. The radical attitudes of Nazi supporters would eventually rebound to the benefit of the KPD. A resurgent Fascism was a symptom of capitalist weakness and decay -- and in the background another side of optimism; the increasing mood of outraged nationalism would exacerbate Germany's relations with the West and so help to keep the door open for the Ostorientierung. There was a contradiction here, or perhaps something worse. "Contradiction" too much suggested a necessary choice which once taken would lead the party out of all its

difficulties. No such choice existed, at least not for the KPD. Stalin alone could act to bring the party's priorities into some more meaningful relationship with the tactical requirements of its survival. In the meantime, a lack of urgency characterized the response to the Nazis.

The lack of urgency was a result of a confusion of purpose which extended in other directions. It was not just that the defensive reaction was less than the situation demanded; it was also inconsistent. In the end there could be no effective separation of purposes and tactics. The primacy of the battle with Social Democracy necessarily impinged upon all aspects of the KPD's tactics and threatened to make a nonsense of the suggestion that the Communists were fighting a war on two fronts. Since the KPD lacked the resources for effective struggle against even one of its major rivals, it was understandable that it would be tempted to seek accommodations with one or the other of them. If Social Democracy was to be the main enemy, then it followed that accommodations would have to be found with the Nazis. "Accommodation" might involve nothing more than the attempt to avoid or limit competition and this was always an important part of the Communist approach to the Nazis. It might, however, also involve more active arrangements of collaboration or, in Communist language, "united front from above". The Communists had experimented with the united front from above approach to National Socialism in 1923 and they did so again after 1928. The difference was that after 1928 the extent of the

collaboration was greater and the consequences were more serious.

In 1923 the Communists had been lucky. As it turned out they could allow themselves their experiments. Fascism as a mass movement had been short lived and it quickly melted away (with little or no help from the confused and tentative anti-Fascist efforts of the KPD). Now the Nazi gains were more menacing and more strongly based and collaboration was correspondingly a more serious and ill-advised matter.

Collaboration, of course, can mean many things. In some of its senses it was a factor which was consistently present in the history of the relationship between the two parties. There was the shared hostility to republican and democratic values and the coincidence in outlook on important foreign policy questions; these factors exerted their impact on the parliamentary life of the Republic. More generally, there was the continuing contribution which so much of Communist and Nazi activity made towards undermining the German public's confidence in the existing order. All this added up to what a Communist would call "objective" collaboration; but what also needs to be examined is "collaboration" understood in a more prosaic sense of getting together to advance a common enterprise or to plan mischief against others.

The structural weaknesses of the KPD exacerbated the problems which were posed by the Nazis but the same weaknesses increased the opportunities for collaboration. The importance of the unemployed, for both parties necessarily brought them together in recruitment

competition but there was still room for co-operation. There were reports of Communists and Nazis achieving a "community of interest" in the construction of committees of the unemployed and in such other matters as the drafting of grievance petitions.<sup>1</sup> This kind of activity was in itself not very remarkable, except when it is remembered that large barriers stood in the way, even of such innocent enterprises, when it was a question of co-operation with the SPD or with the Socialist and Communist splinter groups. In fact, many examples of united front from above work with the Nazis would have been entirely overlooked if it had not been for the indignation which they inspired among the KPD's working class rivals.

The factories provided a more important setting for this kind of co-operation. The minority and oppositionist status of the RGO organizations drew the Communists into close contact with other minority groups including the Nazis. Once more there was an element of competition in the situation as the Communists fought for the allegiance of disgruntled and radical members within the main line working class institutions. Just because of their minority status, however, the opposition groups were tempted to seek accommodations with one another. This sometimes had an impact on the elections to factory councils. Communists, for example, occasionally voted with the NSBO, company union and Stahlhelm delegates against the lists of the trade unions.<sup>2</sup>

Strike action also provided examples of collaboration. It did so when it was organized in an "united front from above" sense which

involved the Nazi and Communist factory organizations in close co-operation. In fact, the spectacle of Communists and Nazis jointly planning and leading strikes, in opposition to the trade union leadership, provided a rare glimpse of what united front from above could be supposed in practice to mean. Until 1930, the poor representation of both sides in the factories limited the opportunity for co-operation of this kind. After 1930, the deteriorating economic situation and the succession of deflationary emergency decrees of the Brüning and Papen governments worked to the advantage of the Communists. The KPD had a powerful weapon to use against the trade unions in its attempt to rally the workers behind the RGO. The Communists could hope to make political capital out of the SPD's "lesser evil" approach to Brüning and Papen, since they could reasonably claim that this policy meant that the SPD shared the responsibility for the austerity measures. In the atmosphere of crisis the Communists were in a strong position to circumvent the official trade union channels. Assemblies of workers called by the RGO, in defiance both of management and the unions, sometimes resulted in the necessary support for unofficial strikes. An important limitation on the RGO's ability to pursue such a course was its chronic shortage of manpower and especially of active picketers. This problem made co-operation with the NSBO attractive since the Nazis could call upon the SA to provide especially active and effective picketers.

Beginning in 1930, an increasingly militant Nazi attitude to

industrial unrest expanded the opportunity for co-operation with the Communists. The militancy was apparent in the Nazi press. In June 1930, for example, the National Sozialist attacked Brüning's deflationary policies as a "social reactionary offensive" and promised that National Socialism would oppose wage reductions, "with all legal means and if necessary with a general strike".<sup>3</sup> The press campaign was matched by a growing involvement in strike action. Between March 1931 and March 1932 the NSBO supported four major strikes and by the end of 1932 they were involved in no less than twenty-six strikes. In order to make NSBO participation more effective the Nazis also established a national strike fund.<sup>4</sup> Participation sometimes involved following the lead of the majority trade unions. In other cases, however, where the NSBO representation was particularly strong, the NSBO took more initiative in organizing strikes. The Nazis were especially strong in sections of the mining and metal working industries and among the Berlin transport workers.<sup>5</sup> There were cases of co-operation between Communists and Nazis in all three of these sectors and also on the fringes of industry, in small factories, where both the RGO and the NSBO were relatively better represented.<sup>6</sup>

In the mining industry the NSBO and the RGO established at least one joint strike committee.<sup>7</sup> In the Berlin Metal Workers' strike in the autumn of 1930, the NSBO supported the minority RGO's call for a strike which was in defiance of the majority trade union decision. NSBO and SA men (the latter in full uniform) then joined their

Communist colleagues on the picket lines.<sup>8</sup> This example of joint strike activity took place against a background of occasional co-operation in the metal working industry. Vorwärts complained of the willingness of the RGO and the "red trade union" (the Einheitsverband der Metallarbeiter - EVMB) to "do business with the Nazis".<sup>9</sup>

Evidence from the EVMB's own resolutions and circulars supported the allegations. In the first place the RGI resolutions which founded the EVMB specifically mentioned that the organization was open to all workers including Nazis and members of the NSBO.<sup>10</sup> It was also EVMB policy to resist the firing of Nazi workers,

"The KPD does not support the dismissal of Nazis because through clarification and education Nazi workers can be won over for the revolutionary front."<sup>11</sup>

As for the Nazi attitude, the EVMB material makes clear that the NSBO was prepared at times to accept the leadership of the Communists against the majority unions and it demonstrated that willingness by voting for the Communist lists in factory elections.<sup>12</sup> Given such a history of tactical accommodation, it is not surprising that the Communists and Nazis sometimes took the more adventurous course of open co-operation in strikes, both in the metal working industry and elsewhere. The best known and most important example of co-operation took place on the eve of the November 1932 Reichstag elections.

Acting together the RGO and the NSBO managed to bring the Berlin transport system to a standstill for five days, from the third to the eighth of November.<sup>13</sup> This strike offered both parties a unique

opportunity to play leading roles. Both the NSBO and the RGO were especially well represented among the transport workers. Moreover, the attitude of these workers was militant and at odds with the trade union leadership.

The deepening crisis of unemployment had affected Berlin particularly badly. One of the consequences of this was that the transport system (Berliner Verkehrs-Gesellschaft - BVG) was under-utilized and seriously in deficit. To relieve the pressure the BVG management announced a wage reduction for all workers for the month of November. The BVG Betriebsrat, which had an RGO majority, rejected these proposals and threatened to strike. On the first and second of November the RGO, with the support of NSBO representatives, called assemblies of the workers to vote on strike action. The votes produced a clear majority in favour of a strike but not the necessary three-quarters majority required by union statute.

Following the votes the trade union leadership announced that, in the absence of the required majority, there would be no strike. At the same time, the Betriebsrat convened a meeting and an RGO-NSBO majority proclaimed a strike in defiance of the union. Faced with illegal industrial action, the BVG authorities tried to bring in an emergency work force. It was in this context of the BVG's strike-breaking decision that the most interesting questions of Communist-Nazi collaboration arose.

A strike committee was formed which was dominated by the RGO and the NSBO.<sup>14</sup> A combined committee, of course, suggested a

particularly close collaboration. Police reports of local meetings of strikes left the impression of a spirit of co-operation which extended from the central committee to the picket lines.<sup>15</sup> Picketing relied heavily on the SA and there were suggestions at the time that the Communists could not have launched the strike at all without the support provided by the SA.<sup>16</sup> The Communist reports on the strike supported the impression of an intimate co-operation. Walter Ulbricht offered the fullest account from the Communist side and his version of events pointed to a close co-ordination between the central strike leadership and the various local strike committees.<sup>17</sup> Directives and information sheets were prepared twice daily to form the basis of discussion and planning in the local meetings. Since Ulbricht stressed that the directives followed from the unanimous decisions of the combined strike leadership, it is safe to conclude that there was a high degree of co-operation between the two parties at all levels.

Co-operation was directed in the first place simply at the problems of sustaining morale and providing pickets; but that was not all. Another purpose was to resist the deployment of the BVG's scab emergency force. According to Ulbricht, this involved violence and he catalogued a wide variety of violent acts,

"...strike breaking cars were overturned, pelted with stones, rails were ripped up, trees felled, obstacles placed on the rails, switches and lines made unusable..."<sup>18</sup>

He went on to discuss in detail how such things were organized.

Each member of the central strike leadership (hence also the Nazi representatives) was made responsible for a group of tram stations and co-ordinated the activities of local committees with the directives of the leadership.<sup>19</sup> As well as claiming that there was agreement at the top, the report stressed the vicious nature of the opposition to the strike and the co-operation "in word and deed of NSDAP workers and functionaries". The only reasonable inference is that the strike involved the two parties in a co-ordinated and violent attack on the BVG and its strike breakers. It may well have been true, as Ulbricht pointed out, that the RGO rejected a Nazi plan to attack installations with explosives, but even without explosives the strike was sufficiently violent. The KPD and the Nazis together accounted for over one hundred indictable offenses.<sup>20</sup>

Besides providing insight into the details of the conduct of the strike, Ulbricht's account offered a good overall summary of the KPD's tactical priorities with respect to strike action and with respect to the question of co-operation with the Nazis. The strike was seen as providing the best available example of the party's united front tactics. Indeed, it was presented both to the KPD and to the Comintern as a model for future Communist involvement in strike action.<sup>21</sup> Beyond this, the familiar warnings about the need to concentrate on winning more support within the trade unions were repeated as was the summons to assign the first importance to breaking the SPD and ADGB hold on the workers. The main reason for the ultimate collapse of the strike was attributed to the Social

Democratic and trade union "bureaucracy". The Communist reports pointed to the fact that some Social Democrats had broken ranks and joined the strike and this was used as evidence for the success of the party's united front tactics.

The same line was adopted with respect to the Nazis. A clear distinction was drawn between the NSDAP-NSBO leadership and the simple Nazi workers and functionaries who had followed the Communist lead. In the case of the BVG strike, however, this claim did not bear examination. There was no breach of party discipline on the Nazi side and no justification for regarding the Nazi decision to participate in the strike as a purely local one. The NSDAP leadership was involved at least to the extent of approving the action. On the third of November Munich announced the decision of the Gauleitung Gross Berlin to participate in the strike and pledged the support of the whole party,

"We National Socialists recognize the demand of the BVG workers. We will not tolerate a state of affairs where under the Papen government the living standards of the German worker are forced down below the level of a Chinese coolie. We are therefore not only with the justified BVG strike but we stand fighting and leading at the front. Attention! No National Socialist will undertake strike breaking work."<sup>22</sup>

This did not mean that there was complete certainty on the Nazi side. The party's efforts to gain the backing of industry and to expand its base of support among middle class voters had resulted in a marked ambivalence to strikes. In fact the whole question of the NSDAP's attitude to industrial questions put a great deal of strain

on Nazi programmatical and tactical eclecticism. An earlier decision of National Socialists in Saxony (most notably Otto Strasser) to back a strike of metal workers in Dresden had been acutely embarrassing for Hitler. Under pressure from Saxon industrialists, Hitler had been forced to intervene personally with a signed resolution of the party leaders which dissociated the party from the strike.<sup>23</sup> This action was an important factor in Otto Strasser's decision to leave the NSDAP.<sup>24</sup>

Notwithstanding these difficulties Hitler was ready, two years later, to condone the party's participation in a major strike; nor is it necessary to search very far for an explanation. Support from the workers and the unemployed was especially important for the NSDAP in Berlin. It was therefore important to respond to the grievances of these groups or risk the collapse of the party's organization in the capital. That risk was perhaps unacceptable on the eve of a general election.<sup>25</sup> As for the effect of the decision on the party's connections with industry and on its middle class supporters, it is likely that by 1932 Hitler was sure enough of their allegiance that he could expect them to accept the decision as a necessary tactical concession with little bearing on the overall Nazi view of industrial relations.<sup>26</sup>

That the decision was nonetheless productive of controversy among the Nazi leaders, there can be no doubt. Concern was expressed among those who favoured the strike that there were some

at the centre in Munich who were working against it.<sup>27</sup> It is also likely that the continuing ambivalence on industrial questions did cost the party votes among its middle class supporters. Yet, in a sense, the election vindicated the decision to join the strike, since in Berlin the NSDAP suffered only half of the loss in its share of the vote that it experienced overall.<sup>28</sup>

Despite the doubts the NSDAP did stand by its decision. In fact, in the last two days of the strike the Nazis showed a greater determination to continue and even to expand it than did the Communists. In his report Ulbricht claimed that behind the scenes the Nazis worked as hard as the Social Democrats to sabotage the strike. All the evidence, however, including that supplied by Ulbricht is against such an interpretation. As Ulbricht pointed out, the Communist members of the committee tried to bring about "a united and disciplined end to the strike" on the seventh of November.<sup>29</sup> The NSBO members rejected this and for the first time the committee split. There were earlier indications that it was the Communists and not the Nazis who were the first to lose interest. On the fifth, the committee issued an appeal for support to the workers of Berlin. It was the NSBO which responded most wholeheartedly to this. Under NSBO prodding the dustment joined on the fifth. Also on the seventh, NSBO gas, water and electricity workers tried to organize a sympathy strike. To their surprise the NSBO factions in these industries received no support from their RGO colleagues.<sup>30</sup>

The Communist explanation for the lack of support was weak and completely at variance with an interpretation of the KPD's role which in all other aspects stressed the militancy of the Communist strikers. Ulbricht argued that the concessions on questions of pay and working hours which were offered by the utility companies were sufficient from the party's point of view; and were all the more acceptable since they had been won as a consequence of management's fear of the strike.<sup>31</sup> For this reason the RGO did not support an expansion of the strike. Why, it must be asked, issue an appeal for support while at the same time adopting a conciliatory stance? The answer had to be that at some time between the fifth and the seventh the KPD had decided to break off the strike.

There were several factors which likely contributed to this decision. There was the suggestion that the strike was having a deleterious effect on party discipline and morale.<sup>32</sup> Then there was the question of the drain on the KPD's strike fund at a time when the party also had to bear the expenses of an election campaign. These somewhat technical considerations aside, there was probably a more fundamental reason. Quite simply, the strike had become too dangerous. The Communists had sown the wind but were not prepared to reap the whirlwind of a first class confrontation with the Papen government. There can be little doubt that a confrontation was in the offing. There were emergency discussions between Reichswehrminister, von Schleicher, Papen and General von Fritsch, the commander of the Berlin garrison. All the indications were that the

government was considering martial law for Berlin. The Communists knew of these developments. Ulbricht dropped a hint to that effect; he mentioned the need for the party to strengthen its hold on the factories in preparation to resist, "the threatening, unforeseen, illegal measures of the Papen dictatorship".<sup>33</sup>

The strike was certainly not designed to provoke a crisis. At the end of 1932 the KPD was as far from ready for "revolutionary" action as at any time since 1923. Ulbricht conceded as much in the section of his report which dealt with the weaknesses and shortcomings of the strike action. These had to do with familiar task of making greater efforts to demonstrate Communist strength in vital communications and armaments related industries while at the same time weakening the SPD's presence there. Other of the Communist post-mortems on the BVG strike made it equally clear that it had been planned for limited purposes which had to do with the defense of the Soviet Union theme and not with revolution.<sup>34</sup>

The extensive co-operation between the Communists and the Nazis was an important part of the BVG strike but it did not, in itself, point to any fundamental shift in the Communist approach to the Nazis. In the first place, the strike was only the most important example in an already well developed trend. As in other cases of co-operation in the factories, it could be interpreted, on both sides, as a simple tactic of convenience which revealed nothing more of any larger purposes. The tactic of convenience had become available as a result of a coincidence of several factors. First

among these, was the KPD's weakness in the factories. Its minority status outside the main line unions led it to look for support where it could be found. Beyond this consideration, co-operation with the Nazis could be made to seem consistent with the party's united front policy; although it still had to stand out as a somewhat eccentric application of that policy.

There were, however, other cases of co-operation which, although certainly equally opportunistic, did not at the same time fit the united front framework as it could be reasonably understood. There is evidence that at times Communists and Nazis worked together to terrorize the members of third parties and to disrupt their activities. In view of the covert nature of this aspect of the relations between the two parties all the details cannot be uncovered. Nonetheless, there is enough evidence of various kinds so that it can be reconstructed in its main outlines.

To begin with, there are a large number of allegations of co-operation between the Communists and Nazis in the contemporary memoir literature. Such evidence cannot, of course, stand on its own, but it is nonetheless interesting that the suggestions of co-operation were so numerous and that they originated from a variety of sources. Moreover, it is possible to check some of the claims against other sources -- documentary evidence, press reports and the memories of some of the likely participants in any co-operation.

The memoir literature contains numerous but nearly always obscure references to co-operation. In 1929, Goebbels, for example,

stated publicly that Nazis would "not shrink from joining forces with Marxism at times".<sup>35</sup> Again, sometime after 1933 he is reported to have said,

"There was once a time, before coming to power, when we co-operated with the Communists. And I must say...in several ways we were working for the same things."<sup>36</sup>

Similar suggestions of an unspecified collaboration were also frequently made by outsiders. Von Papen referred to collaboration between the Nazis and Communists as did Dr. Otto Meissner.<sup>37</sup> Sometimes the allegations point to substantial evidence. One letter to the industrialist Arnold Rechberg offered documents, which supposedly came from a former Soviet secret agent, in support of a claim that there were extensive contacts between Soviet agents and right wing groups including the Nazis.<sup>38</sup> The allegations also found their way into the press. An article in the Berlin paper, Kreuz Zeitung from November 1932 claimed that "the Hitler movement is in reality tied by an invisible thread to the International".<sup>39</sup> Articles appeared from time to time in the Social Democratic press which made similar charges.<sup>40</sup>

From the Communist side, too, vague suggestions were occasionally heard. In an interview with the Danish newspaper, Ekstrabladet in November 1932, a Communist member of the Prussian Landtag was reported to have referred to "occasional co-operation between Communists and National Socialists" and to have said that,

"Communists and National Socialists have certain common interests which they attend to when circumstances permit, although they usually oppose one another like fire and water."<sup>41</sup>

Margarete Buber-Neumann was more specific,

"When ordered to do so by the leadership, the simple rank and file SA and RFB would turn from fighting one another to co-operation."<sup>42</sup>

The most detailed account from the Communist side was provided by Jan Valtin in his autobiography, Out of the Night.<sup>43</sup> Valtin (Krebs) maintained that as a Comintern agent he participated, "during 1931 alone...in dozens of terroristic enterprises in concert with Nazi elements."<sup>44</sup> According to his account, these operations followed as a result of direct instructions from Soviet and Comintern leaders. The instructions came in mid-January 1931 in a memorandum from Georgi Dimitrov to the KPD leaders. The memorandum supposedly called for,

"united action of the Communist party and the Hitler movement to accelerate the disintegration of the crumbling democratic bloc which governs Germany".<sup>45</sup>

Valtin provided considerable detail concerning the nature of these "enterprises". He claimed that together with an SA organizer by the name of Walter Tidow he arranged the disruption of a transport workers union conference held in Bremen in the spring of 1931. In this case he approached Tidow with the request that the Nazis join with the Communists to disrupt the conference. They agreed, "as they always did in such cases" and together they produced a plan of action.<sup>46</sup> This took the form of packing the meetings with Communists and Nazis who then co-operated to intimidate and shout down the speakers and to start fights and disturbances. In another incident

the Nazis took the initiative and again Valtin and Tidow supposedly reached an agreement to disrupt a meeting.<sup>47</sup>

It is not necessary to accept everything in Valtin's story to notice that the details are remarkably consistent with other accounts.<sup>48</sup>

In the KPD papers Gegen den Strom and Arbeiterpolitik there were frequent complaints that the RFB used strong arm tactics to break up

KPO meetings.<sup>49</sup> Some of the reports notice the presence of SA men in plain clothes who worked closely with the RFB. The details of the disruptive tactics are identical to those which Valtin describes.

Motives were suggested which fitted the circumstances well. Attacks on the Communist opposition and on the Social Democrats were understandably not popular activities among many Communists.<sup>50</sup>

Co-operation with the SA offered one means of fleshing out over-extended RFB attack groups with willing participants.

To some extent the KPO accounts can be checked against the documentary record. For one thing, the general style of the reported operations fits what is otherwise known about the activities of the SA. Police reports mention that SA men dressed in plain clothes in order more easily to penetrate and disrupt the meetings of opponents.<sup>51</sup>

Some of the details also conform well with other sources. The press reports, for example, notice that the Communists and Nazis respected one another's campaign materials. At times, they also appeared to co-operate to defend one another's placards and posters and to destroy those of mutual opponents. The same reports claimed that agreements had been concluded on these matters between the Communists and local

Nazi functionaries.<sup>52</sup>

Nazi records confirm the existence of such agreements. One internal memorandum of the Hannover party organization makes a casual reference to the "informal understandings" with the Communists to respect one another's campaign posters and placards.<sup>53</sup> It is not difficult to believe that the same understandings could have included arrangements to destroy the placards of mutual enemies. Indeed, the same Nazi document alludes to a more extensive co-operation with the Communists. The memorandum is a reply to formal complaints from an SA leader concerning the conduct of a minor party official, Jahns, who was an Ortsgruppenleiter - OGL in Salzgitter. Although the original report which outlined the specific complaints against Jahns no longer exists, it is reasonable to infer from the surviving memorandum that some of the charges had to do with the Salzgitter group's relations with the Communists.<sup>54</sup> In the memorandum one of the charges against Jahns was considered, "possible if one considers that an informal agreement exists between the NSDAP and the KPD..." (that is, with respect to the matter of placards and posters). Moreover, in light of the activities of Jahns, the memorandum went on to cast doubt on the sincerity of the Salzgitter group's anti-Communist activities.<sup>55</sup>

Besides supporting the contention that there was co-operation of some kind, this document suggests that, on the Nazi side, local leaders had a strong influence on the form which the collaboration took. On the other hand, it would appear that such local initiatives

were both widely known and tolerated at higher levels. Something more of the Nazi attitude to collaboration with the Communists can be inferred from this document. While an important accommodation with the Communists was treated with off-handed cynicism, in the same report, a minor overture to a right wing group was presented in a much more serious light. Among the other charges brought against Jahns, he was accused of extending a written invitation to the local Stahlhelm to participate in a Nazi sponsored "Deutschabend". This gesture was evidently a cause for considerable concern among the more senior party organizers. Anyway, the invitation was blocked through the intervention of higher authority and the whole affair was held to be sufficiently serious as to give rise to "skepticism" concerning Jahns's loyalty to National Socialism.

The impression which is left by this report is that the Nazis continued to regard other parties as far more important obstacles to their ambitions than was the KPD.<sup>56</sup> Thus as far as the Nazis were concerned, it was not necessary to search very far for the motives which led them to seek accommodations with the Communists. What shines through the Nazi tactical approach to the KPD is a characteristic opportunism and cynicism. For what it was worth to them, the Nazis were interested in encouraging the KPD's hostility to the Social Democrats and other left wing parties. That much was clear from the Nazi press.<sup>57</sup> There would be time enough to deal with the Communists after the more important questions on the road to power were out of the way.<sup>58</sup>

Interviews with former members of the SA and the HJ suggested that such attitudes were widespread among the Nazi rank and file.<sup>59</sup> Although all those who were interviewed in connection with this study confessed that they had disliked or had had contempt for the Communists, only one thought that the KPD had been the most serious of National Socialism's rivals and only one of the former SA thought that it was an important part of the SA's function to protect Nazi meetings from the Communists -- in the words of one of those who was interviewed, "that was what we always said but it really wasn't true, we had them on the defensive". On the question of collaboration with the Communists, one man remembered attending an SPD meeting in plain clothes and there had been some fighting during the main address but to his knowledge there had been no co-operation between his SA troop and the Communists. Another said that he had heard rumours of such things and that he would not have been surprised if they were true. No one dismissed the suggestion of co-operation out of hand.

Further questioning on the possible motives for any collaboration yielded uncertain and sometimes naive responses. All, including Strasser, understood that whatever real desire there was for co-operation had to be confined to the Communists and resulted from a kind of reluctant recognition of Nazi superiority. As Strasser put it,

"After the Russians--the Communists with all their different revolts got nowhere, and were more or less forgotten by Moscow. You know,

they thought Russia would come into Germany and take over, and when this did not happen, they resented the attitude of Moscow very much, 'They really have betrayed us'. And it was with this feeling of being betrayed that they turned to the Nazis--'And now let us try this; they are fighters, they certainly will need us'..."<sup>60</sup>

Strasser confirmed that there was tactical co-operation but the impression left from the interview was that he did not regard it as a serious matter. On the Communist side, co-operation, according to Strasser, was limited by the consciousness of the "superiority" of the Nazis, "they became alert to our superiority--our spiritual superiority of the nationalist was always there."<sup>61</sup> On the Nazi side, the picture which emerges is of a tactic of opportunity directed by local leaders, generally accepted in the party, but to which no one, not even those directly involved, attached much importance.

It is impossible to draw such conclusions with respect to Communist participation in co-operative enterprises. It is not necessary to assume one-hundred percent adherence to party directives, to notice that in practice the KPD took its claims to tactical and organizational coherence more seriously than did the NSDAP. In the absence of approval from higher authority it is difficult to imagine a local Communist functionary arranging such things without earning some kind of reprimand. Tactical questions always assumed much more importance as matters of principle for the Communists than they did for the Nazis. It followed, that any

reprimand concerning co-operation with the Nazis could, with justice, be interpreted as following from a general review of the party's tactical priorities and not from a mere disciplinary action against erring local functionaries.

Such warnings can in fact be found in two of the KPD's internal circulars for 1932. The circulars in question contain strictures against working closely with the Nazis.<sup>62</sup> They were addressed to the question of the correct handling of the anti-Fascist struggle and while they dwelt on the necessity of concentrating the party's attentions on the Social Fascists, they went on to point out that this could not involve joint action with the Nazis against the SPD and the Reichsbanner but that the opposite course of action was acceptable. This was a distinction which had to "be made clear for the whole party".<sup>63</sup> The fact that the party found it necessary to warn its membership in this way was of course in itself an indication that there had been some sort of co-operation with the Nazis (if perhaps unauthorized).

Two interpretations are possible. Either co-operation represented a breach of discipline or the party changed tack on this question. If there were lapses of discipline, they ran counter to the main disciplinary concerns of the party. The over-riding problem, which is always noted in the circulars, had to do with the tendency of comrades to down-play the importance of the struggle against Social Fascism and to yield to the influence of the SPD's "lesser evil" argument. Then there is the problem of timing. Why would

the party wait more than two years before sounding the alarm on this question? The KPO drew attention to joint SA-RFB attacks on its meetings in 1929. Yet no circulars, which warned against co-operation with the Nazis, came to light for the years 1929-1932. If there were breaches of discipline on this question then they seem to have attracted attention only at certain times.

A more compelling conclusion is that the circulars reflected a shift in tactical emphasis. Even the language of the directives pointed in that direction. If it can be accepted that there was a change in tactical emphasis after 1928, as suggested in the memoir literature and the press accounts, then any subsequent re-thinking would have been relatively sudden, compressed into a few months in late 1931 or early in 1932. Local cadres could be expected to be taken by surprise and the warnings concerning collaboration with the Nazis supported such an inference. Such expressions as "must be made clear to the whole party" or "is still not clear to some comrades" were typical ways of reminding party members of important changes in established practices. The stereotypical quality of Communist language is reflected in Communist behaviour and this is a fact which hints at something more in the KPD's approach to National Socialism. Communists, more than most, do not lightly admit to past errors. Either one understands historical necessities or one does not. When forced by circumstances to modify behaviour and to admit error, the Communists were apt to find the process painful. Any shift on the Nazi question must have affected the

political careers of some at the top who were available for sacrifice to the new line. This could be expected from parallel situations in the past. The campaigns against the right and the left and the "Versöhnler" had all found their important victims.

In this case, it was clear that the victim was Heinz Neumann. A campaign against Neumann was launched early in 1932, and was foreshadowed by the party's decree against "isolated acts of terror" late in 1931;<sup>64</sup> it continued through the early months of 1932 and culminated at the Twelfth EKKI Plenum in August when Neumann was expelled from the EKKI Secretariat and from the KPD Politburo. In other words, in June and July when the circulars indicating a possible change in tactical emphasis were issued, the attack against Neumann was at its height.

On the basis of the existing evidence, the Neumann case is difficult to interpret. Notwithstanding this, however, it still provided the best available indication, after the fact, of Communist priorities between 1930 and the end of 1931. Although some rather shadowy considerations may have entered the equation, such as the personal animosity which was known to exist between Thälmann and Neumann, it was certain from all the party's commentary on the case that the central issue had to do with alleged errors in the KPD's approach to the Nazis.<sup>65</sup> So much is clear, but there certainty ends.

For one thing, it cannot be determined with precision from the Communist sources just where Neumann's errors were judged to lie.

He was accused of being the main influence in leading the party both to "underestimate" and to "overestimate" the significance of the National Socialist phenomenon. The blame for alleged excesses associated with the "Schlagt die Fascisten...!" slogan was laid at his door; his role in the introduction and application of the slogan was apparently an example of his propensity to underestimate the Nazis. "Acts of isolated terror" had distracted the Communists from vital united front work with the Nazis. The slogan had rested on false assumptions concerning the fragility and lack of depth of National Socialism as a mass movement.<sup>66</sup> This charge cannot, however, be taken seriously. Support for the slogan had been widespread and when it proved to be an embarrassment to the KPD's united front efforts, Neumann had been in the forefront of the campaign to extend united front work with the Nazis. He had, for example, attended and addressed Nazi assemblies and in the warmest united front language.<sup>67</sup>

Other evidence was adduced in support of the "underestimation" argument. In one post-mortem which was offered long after Hitler had come to power, Neumann was accused of underestimating the significance of Nazi electoral gains. The estimate which had been offered by Thälmann after the September 1930 elections, that the Nazi victory represented Hitler's "best day", was falsely attributed to Neumann.<sup>68</sup> Nothing serves better than this slip to illustrate the fact that both Neumann and Thälmann shared in the so-called error of underestimating Hitler and that they did so with the full

knowledge and support of the Comintern and of Stalin. One need only recall the sanguine assessments of the election which appeared at the time in the Soviet and Comintern press.

The same aroma of contrived evidence surrounded the other charge of "overestimating" Hitler. Neumann was accused of overestimating the significance of the Nazis as a symptom of capitalist decay and of divisiveness within the German bourgeoisie. This error was associated with a false application of the "Volksrevolution" slogan.<sup>69</sup> Neumann was accused of misunderstanding the nature of National Socialism to the extent of seeing in it a necessary development of German capitalism which could be exploited for revolutionary ends. He placed an exaggerated emphasis on the need to rechannel and capture the nationalist sentiments of the petit bourgeois following of the Nazis. In so doing he distracted the party from its essential objective of breaking the SPD's hold on the industrial workers. Both the realization of the KPD's revolutionary ambitions and a successful outcome in the struggle against Fascism depended on the defeat of Social Democracy.

This charge was reminiscent of that brought against Radek at the Fifth Comintern Congress. Radek, too, had overestimated the significance of a Fascist mass movement and the potential benefits which it offered the Communists.<sup>70</sup> Just as in 1924 the charge carried little conviction. Radek had had no difficulty in demonstrating the concensus which lay behind the Schlageter initiative. In 1924 it had been Radek, in 1932 it was Neumann who was sacrificed.

to historical necessities. In other words, it was quite impossible to assign any particular responsibility to Neumann for any excesses the KPD's attempt to exploit nationalist feeling in Germany. To be sure Neumann had played an important part in the drafting of the programme of "National and Social Liberation"; but he had done so only under the guidance of the EKKI and Stalin.<sup>71</sup> Then too, Thälmann had been just as consistent as Neumann in emphasizing the importance of the Volksrevolution slogan and of nationalist propaganda in general for the KPD's tactics.<sup>72</sup>

What Neumann's close association with these tactics most illustrated was not his errors but rather the position of trust which he enjoyed in the Comintern and with Stalin. There is ample evidence that in 1930 and 1931 it was Neumann and not Thälmann who was closest to the Soviet leaders. It was Neumann who had been entrusted with high level Comintern assignments and it was Neumann who alone among the KPD leaders had sufficient command of the Russian language to move easily among the Soviet leaders.<sup>73</sup>

Aside from these general considerations, Neumann's status was best revealed in 1931 through the part he played in the KPD's decision to support the referendum for the dissolution of the Prussian Landtag. This action was initiated by the Stahlhelm at the end of 1930 and was supported by the Nazis. Authorization for the first stage of the referendum process (Volksbegehren) was obtained in February 1931 and the Volksbegehren obtained enough votes so that a referendum (Volksentscheid) was called for the

ninth of August. During the Volksbegehren stage and up to the eve of the referendum itself the KPD was critical of the Stahlhelm and Nazi campaign.<sup>74</sup> Then in a few days in July the party suddenly reversed itself. On the 21st of July the KPD Landtag delegation issued an ultimatum to the SPD dominated coalition government. Among the four conditions of the ultimatum was the impossible demand for the immediated cancellation of the ban on the RFB. To no one's surprise, least of all to the KPD's, the demands were summarily dismissed by the SPD Minister of the Interior, Severing. On the 22nd the Communists announced their decision to support the referendum and to transform it into a "red referendum".<sup>75</sup> The agent responsible for the about-face was Neumann. Against opposition in the KPD Politburo which probably included Thälmann, Neumann announced the decision of the EKKI to back the Stahlhelm and Nazi initiative; that decided the matter.<sup>76</sup>

The KPD's part in the referendum affair is revealing of a number of things. In the first place it left no room for doubt that the party had lost all ability to manage its own affairs. The crucial decisions had been taken for it in Moscow. Secondly, it was Neumann who played the dominant role on the KPD side in the implementation of Moscow's policy. Finally, the decision to participate in the referendum left no doubts concerning the priorities of the Communists. The attack on the SPD was to be pursued up to the point of a public declaration of support for an action launched by the Fascists. The conduct of the campaign was

equally revealing. Despite the argument that Communist participation had altered the character of the referendum, it was patently obvious that the "red referendum" argument was hollow. The Communists never seized the initiative during the campaign. Nor did they, as they claimed, succeed in "exposing" the hypocrisy of the Nazis and the Stahlhelm and thus winning influence among the misled Fascist following.<sup>77</sup> The opposite was true; all indications pointed to the confusion and disillusionment which the decision caused among the Communist rank and file.<sup>78</sup> Moreover, there was evidence that the Communists, far from using the referendum as part of some new ideological initiative against the Nazis, actually sought to limit competition with them as part of an attempt to ensure the success of the referendum.<sup>79</sup>

Motives were also clear enough. Against a background of the long standing antipathy to "Social Fascism" as the "main support" for German capitalism, it was possible to detect specific and immediate reasons for the decision. Social Democracy was not only a support for capitalism in a general sense, the SPD dominated coalition in Prussia also provided indispensable support for the Brüning government. Before the referendum, Brüning and Curtius went to Paris to negotiate new credits with the French government. The dangers of a closer tie between Germany and France had been the subject of worried speculation in the Soviet and KPD press. The Communists saw the possibility of a "political capitulation" before France. In this situation, as in the past, it was Social

Democracy and the pro-French and anti-Soviet pressure which it was able to exert on German foreign policy which was the main problem. As the Rote Fahne later put it, the SPD was the "gunpowder for German-Soviet relations".<sup>80</sup>

Weingartner's argument that these considerations led the Soviet leaders to speculate favourably on the effects of Nazi and nationalist pressure on the Brüning government is persuasive.<sup>81</sup>

As Weingartner points out, such an interpretation was indicated in

the Soviet and Comintern press both before and after the referendum.<sup>82</sup>

Support for the referendum through the agency of the KPD offered the Soviet Union a possible and arguably the only possible means of affecting the outcome and the impact of the negotiations with France. In other words, the same kinds of considerations were likely present as had led to the decision to emphasize nationalist propaganda during the summer of 1930. There were indications of the limited, foreign policy purposes of the decision, even in the internal party circulars which tried to justify the referendum to the Communist membership,

"We wanted to sharpen the crisis of confidence in the Brüning government. International finance capital, in the first place the French bourgeoisie, demand political guarantees from Brüning, law and order, so as to be able to implement the exploitation of a half-colonial Germany. Brüning can implement his policies only with the help of Prussia. A blow against Prussia is a blow against Brüning. Our task is to accelerate the deepening crisis."<sup>83</sup>

It was, of course, true that such an explanation could not stand

on its own, at least for Communist consumption. Although a limited foreign policy objective can be inferred from the Communist press and from such circulars as the one cited above, the main emphasis was placed on the "revolutionary" significance of the referendum.<sup>84</sup> A blow struck against Social Democracy, -- against Social Fascism -- was a blow struck for the revolution. Anything which weakened the SPD brought the day closer when the KPD would be ready to launch a successful attack on German capitalism. As was always the case, a revolutionary rationale, no matter how contrived it could be seen to be, had to be found to justify Communist tactics. When this is borne in mind there need be no special difficulties in the way of understanding underlying motives. In 1931, however, there were some mysteries attendant on the revolutionary explanation for Communist activities which did raise problems of interpretation.

Part of the charge against Neumann was that he had associated the party with the false and "fatalist" notion that the revolution was only possible after a Nazi victory.<sup>85</sup> The Nazi role, according to this argument, was seen by Neumann as objectively revolutionary. The Nazis were the "rearguard", the Communists the advance guard of the revolution. The Nazis would complete the job of smashing the Weimar system and in the process awaken the industrial workers to the awareness that it was only the KPD which could defend them against the Nazis. The SPD, at long last, would lose its control of the workers. A Nazi victory would thus represent only a stage in an on-going revolutionary struggle which would culminate in a Soviet

Germany.

There can be little doubt that these ideas were widespread in the party. They were, at any rate, well enough represented that the KPD found it necessary during the 1932 Presidential elections to argue against them,

"Many workers discussed (and this was especially noticeable before the second ballot) the idea that we should vote for Hitler in order to help him into the government. In this way the anti-worker policies of the Nazis will be clearly expressed. The proletariat will rise in battle for the dictatorship of the proletariat in face of brutal open Fascism. The SPD used this...false estimation of Fascism against us... while in a falsified report on an EKKI meeting they wanted to attribute this tactic to us."<sup>86</sup>

Although it would appear from this circular that such ideas were opposed by the party in the spring of 1932, their earlier status is less clear. There is evidence that during 1931 many at the top of the Communist hierarchy accepted them (or used them). Margarete Buber-Neumann claimed that in 1931 Stalin in a conversation with Neumann remarked,

"Can you not see Neumann that if the National Socialists come to power in Germany, they will be so completely occupied with the West that we will be able to get on with building Socialism in peace?"<sup>87</sup>

If this was indeed Stalin's view of the meaning of a possible Nazi victory and the significance of the Nazi threat, then it must be expected that an available revolutionary rationale which could be made to serve it would be present, not only at the "fringes" of the party, but also at the centre. It should not, therefore, seem

surprising that Neumann, as a close confidant of Stalin, should have developed a position which stressed the revolutionary advantages of a Hitler victory. Maria Reese claimed that it was Neumann and not Thälmann who was dominant in the KPD Politburo at the time and that a majority of the Central Committee and of the KPD Reichstag delegation shared his "fatalist" but optimistic assumptions. Indeed, Thälmann, too can be seen to have subscribed to the "fatalist" position. In a speech in the Berlin Sportspalast in June 1931, Thälmann spoke of the foreign policy options which were open to the German bourgeoisie.<sup>89</sup> The German government could continue on its existing course, remain loyal to the Young Plan policies of fulfilment and seek more credits from America and France. This, according to Thälmann, would involve nothing less than the complete domination of Germany by international finance capital. Internally it meant more dependence on the SPD and the "continued exclusion of the Nazis and the German Nationalists from the open sharing of power".<sup>90</sup> A second option involved the "abandonment of the Stresemann policies". In this case, "the nationalist parties would openly or covertly be bound to the bourgeois government."<sup>91</sup> Having arrived at this conclusion, Thälmann went on to point out that the second option would have serious negative implications for the Nazis. As long as the Nazis were in opposition they had the opportunity to engage in "demagogic nationalist manoeuvres". Sharing power would deprive them of this advantage and they would be quickly "bankrupted".<sup>92</sup> It was just this "bankruptcy" thesis which

Thälmann later attacked as a false notion which existed at the "periphery of the party" and which was at the heart of Neumann's "underestimation" of the Nazis.<sup>93</sup>

There is also documentary evidence in the Foreign Ministry Archives which can be seen to indicate that the same views were represented in the Comintern and in the Russian party. The materials in question are intelligence reports relating to a high level review of Soviet and Comintern policy in Germany which supposedly took place in the autumn of 1931.<sup>94</sup> Among the documents there is an abridgement of a lengthy report by the Soviet Consul General in Hamburg, Krumin. Apparently the report represented the findings of a special commission which had been set up by the Comintern to report on the prospects for successful revolutionary action in Germany. It included the following reference to the Nazis,

"...The money of the economic leaders and heavy industrial concerns flows in a broad flood into the pockets of Hitler's Sturmabteilung. This circumstance gives the Comintern an important trump in hand, since the Comintern, which for tactical reasons has supported nationalism, will be placed in a position, in its financial preparations for revolution, of being able to make certain economies. Because there are great sources of money in the country itself for the preparation of the German revolution, through Hitler."<sup>95</sup>

Krumin went on to observe that this situation was changing. The funds for the Nazis were drying up and that meant that the Comintern would have to bear more of the financial burden of preparing for the revolution.

The authenticity of any one such document must, of course, remain in doubt. It is, however, interesting that in this case unusual confidence was expressed in the source of the information. There is a note in the margin in Brüning's handwriting, "Please, strictly confidential do not reveal source". It might also be important that Thälmann seemed to echo Krumm when he assured the Eleventh Plenum, (on the basis of reliable information), that the sources of funds for the Nazis were drying up and that the Stahlhelm was gaining ground against the Nazis in competition for the financial backing of industry.<sup>96</sup>

It must be emphasized that it did not really matter just who in the Comintern or in the KPD accepted arguments such as Neumann's as a genuine formula for revolution. From the perspective of the KPD's tactics what was important was that the formula both allowed and reflected a certain attitude to the Nazis. That attitude meant assigning a second priority to the struggle against Hitler and it made tactical accommodations with the Nazis possible. Moreover, it was always clear that Stalin, as the dominant influence on Comintern policy was not prepared to encourage revolution. For him limited foreign policy considerations had always to be at the centre of Soviet involvement in Germany. Similarly, it cannot be shown on the basis of any of the available evidence that Stalin or anyone of importance on the Communist side was prepared actively to work for a Nazi victory. Rather what is indicated is that, from the Communist point of view, worse outcomes of the German crisis were

possible than the formation of a Nazi government -- for example, a return to an SPD dominated coalition. Within this framework the assessment of Hitler appears to have been positive on two counts.

First of all, until the presidential elections of 1932, the possibility of a Nazi government was considered unlikely. Secondly, it was thought that any Nazi government would be more of a problem for France than for the Soviet Union.

It may have been that Neumann was in fact convinced by his own arguments and that he found himself at odds with Stalin on the question of revolution. There were those, such as Clara Zetkin who saw in him a person with "dangerous adventurist inclinations".<sup>97</sup>

Perhaps, after all, Neumann contemplated some desperate revolutionary venture. Ruth Fischer's characterization is much less convincing. According to her, Neumann fought an heroic rear guard action against Stalin's efforts to make the KPD into the willing tool of Soviet foreign policy designs and it was precisely as a result of his "sullen opposition" to Stalin's approach to the Nazis that Neumann was removed.<sup>98</sup>

Most everything is against Fischer's account. It is not at all in accord with Neumann's past record -- his known close connection with Stalin, (which Fischer acknowledges), his role in the development of the united front campaign with the Nazis, the part he played in the referendum decision and especially his close ties with the "fatalist" formula for seizing power after a Nazi success. It is just too tempting to wield Ockham's razor in this case.

There is an available and sufficient explanation which makes the question of Neumann's own assessments of revolutionary possibilities irrelevant. He was simply the man on the KPD side who was most closely associated with positions which Stalin thought needed to be modified. The sacrifice of Neumann was a way of distancing the Comintern from past practice.<sup>99</sup> This was a well tried method which had claimed many victims before Neumann. Thus it was more than likely that Neumann's fate was tied to the doubts which arose as Stalin was forced to consider more closely both the likelihood and the foreign policy implications of a Nazi siezure of power.

## FOOTNOTES

1 "Wo die Kommunisten herrschen", Erwerbslosen Tribune: Informationsorgan für Erwerbslose (SPD), (1 Feb. 1930); see also, "Opportunistische Einheitsfronttaktik", GdS, No. 41, (12 Oct. 1929); "Bruderschaft zwischen Kommunisten und Nazis", SDPK, No. 8/9, (Aug./Sept. 1930), p. 537. This is a report of joint Communist-Nazi led demonstrations of the unemployed.

2 See, GdS, No. 27, (6 July 1929), p. 6; GdS, No. 9, (25 April 1931), p. 96.

3 National Sozialist, (7 June 1930), as cited in Reinhard Kühnl, Die nationalsozialistische Linke 1925-1930, Meisenheim am Glan, 1966, p. 75. Other Nazi papers frequently supported strike action; these included the NSBO organ Arbeitertum, Nationalsozialistische Briefe, Sächsische Beobachter and Angriff.

4 See, Max H. Kele, Nazis and Workers: National Socialist Appeals to Labor, 1919-1933, University of North Carolina Press, 1972, pp. 199-200. See also, Arbeitertum, No. 16, (1932), for an overview of NSBO strike activity.

5 See, GdS, No. 24, (19 Nov. 1932) for Nazi strength among Berlin transport workers. See also, Kele, ibid, pp. 195-196; "Einige Lehren des Berliner Verkehrsarbeiterstreits", Inprekorr, No. 105, (16 Dec. 1932).

6 See, for example, KPD Rundschreiben, "Schulungsmaterial des 12. EKKI Plenum, Dezember 1932", HSA Düss. RDP, 30671, (KPD 1931-1932); for a report of a strike in a small shoe manufacturing plant where the RGO cell gained the co-operation of a larger NSBO group in launching a strike.

7 See, GdS, No. 22, (22 Oct. 1932), p. 261.

8 "Der Berliner Metallarbeiterstreik", GdS, No. 43, (25 Oct. 1930); RGO Rundschreiben, "Referenzenmaterial zum Kampf gegen Faschismus, Februar, 1931", BHA (Koblenz), R/58 626; see also, "Teilstreiks in der Berliner Metallindustrie", Die Tat, (9 Sept. 1932) and SDPK, No. 11, (Nov. 1932), p. 718.

9 Vorwärts, No. 277, (16 Dec. 1930).

10 See, IGPK, No. 43, (3 June 1931).

11 EVMB Rundschreiben, "Wie stehen wir zu Entlassungen von Nazis?",

(1 June 1931), BHA (Koblenz), R/58 467.

12 EVMB Rundschreiben, No. 183, (4 Feb. 1931), BHA (Koblenz), R/58 467.

13 For general accounts of this strike, cf: Ossip K. Flechtheim, Die KPD in der Weimarer Republik, Frankfurt am Main, 1969, p. 285; Otto-Ernst Schüddekopf, Linke Leute von Rechts: Die Nationalrevolutionären Minderheiten und der Kommunismus in der Weimarer Republik, Stuttgart, 1960, pp. 377-378; Hans Otto Meissner and Harry Wilde, Die Machtergreifung: Ein Bericht Über die Technik des nationalsozialistischen Staatsstreichs, Stuttgart, 1958, Chpt. I. The idea of co-operation between Communists and Nazis in the BVG was not new. There were contacts and attempts to organize joint strike activity as early as September 1930. See, BHA (Koblenz), R/58 626, Rko., (27 Sept. 1930).

14 There is no consensus in the secondary literature on the details of the conduct of this strike. This is especially true on the question of the extent of collaboration between the Nazis and the Communists. Weingartner, following Schüddekopf, argues that, "to a certain extent the KPD tried to dissociate itself from the NSDAP". Flechtheim and Hans Otto Meissner argue that there was close collaboration. According to Flechtheim the Nazis and Communists, "fought shoulder to shoulder against the employers and the trade union bureaucracy". Flechtheim's characterization is closer to the one which can be inferred both from the Communist accounts and police reports. See, Thomas Weingartner, Stalin und der Aufstieg Hitlers: Die Deutschlandpolitik der Sowjetunion und der Kommunistischen Internationale, 1929-1934, p. 153; Schüddekopf, ibid., p. 377; Flechtheim, ibid., p. 285; Hans Otto Meissner and Harry Wilde, ibid., esp. p. 14.

15 See, BHA (Koblenz), R/58 321, (1 Nov. 1932); BHA (Koblenz), R/58 321, (5 Dec. 1932); BHA (Koblenz), R/58 321, (31 Oct. 1932); BHA (Koblenz), R/58 321, (2 Nov. 1932). According to the police reports the committee was made up of eight RGO, four NSBO and three unspecified additional members. On the Communist side the key member was Ulbricht and on the Nazi side Engel. Cf: Walter Ulbricht, KPD Pamphlet, "Bedeutung und Lehren des Berliner Verkehrsarbeiter-Streiks", in BHA (Koblenz), R/58 371 and Karolski, "Einige Lehren des Berliner Verkehrsarbeiterstreiks", KI, No. 19, (31 Dec. 1932), p. 1389.

16 See, GdS, No. 1, (14 Jan. 1933), p. 10.

17 See Walter Ulbricht, ibid. This pamphlet is reprinted in Walter Ulbricht, Zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung, Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus, 7th ed., Vol. I, 1961, pp. 606-623. There are very significant differences between this version and the original. Entire sections are missing including the important, "Die Verbreiterung der Streikfront"; "Appel der Streikleitung zum Proteststreik in den anderen Betrieben gegen faschistischen Polizeiterror!". In addition, the sections, "NSDAP and NSBO als streikbrecherische Stützen der Papen-Diktatur" and, "Verbindung der legalen mit der sonstigen Arbeit" are very much abbreviated. The reprint reduced the pamphlet from nine thousand to just over six thousand words. The omissions have the effect of understating the involvement of the Nazis. For other Communist accounts, see, Inprekorr, No. 105, (15 Dec. 1932), pp. 3378-3382, (fn. 5 above); Karolski, (fn. 15 above), pp. 1381-1392; Hans Becher, "Zum Streik der Verkehrsarbeiter in Berlin", RGI, No. 1/2, (Jan. 1933), pp. 20-21; B. Steinemann, "Der grosse Berliner Verkehrsstreik", Inprekorr, No. 94, (11 Nov. 1932), pp. 3019-3020.

18 Walter Ulbricht, op. cit. Cf: Hans Otto Meissner and Harry Wilde, op. cit., (fn. 13 above), pp. 15-16; Hans Becher, op. cit., (fn. 17 above), p. 16.

19 Walter Ulbricht, ibid.

20 BHA (Koblenz), R/58 321, Ministerium des Innern, (4 Dec. 1932). On the question of Nazi plans to bomb BVG installations, see also, a police report on a meeting of KPD functionaries in Berlin, BHA (Koblenz), R/58 390, (19 Nov. 1932).

21 See, Karolski, op. cit., (fn. 15 above), pp. 1383-1384; "Am Vorabend der Eroberung der Mehrheit der Arbeiterklasse", RGI, No. 1/2, (Jan. 1933), p. 6; Hans Becher, op. cit., (fn. 17 above), p. 13; Thälmann characterized the strike as, "the strongest and most positive revolutionary achievement of our party thus far", as cited in Karolski, ibid., p. 1389.

22 NASA (Hannover), Hann. Des. 310 I B15, Reichspropaganda Leitung, München, (3 Nov. 1932); cf: Meissner, Hans Otto Meissner and Harry Wilde, op. cit., (fn. 13 above), p. 13.

23 See, Alan Bullock, Hitler, A Study in Tyranny, Bantam Books, New York, 1961, pp. 123-124.

24 See, Kühnl, op. cit., (fn. 3 above), p. 243 ff.; Kele, op. cit., (fn. 4 above), pp. 156-160.

25 This was the explanation which Goebbels stressed, Joseph Goebbels, Vom Kaiserhof zur Reichskanzlei: Eine historische Darstellung in Tagebuchblättern vom 1. Januar 1932 bis zum 1. Mai 1933, Munich, 1940, p. 192.

26 Cf: Kühnl, op. cit., (fn. 3 above), p. 78, n. 35.

27 See, NSSA (Hannover), Hann. Des. 310 I B15, "Zum Berliner Verkehrsstreik".

28 This point was frequently noted by the Communists, as illustrative of contradictions which would lead to the collapse of National Socialism. See, for example, "Die KPD in Angriff", (lead), KI, No. 17/18, (15 Dec. 1932), p. 1213.

29 Walter Ulbricht, op. cit., (fn. 15 above).

30 Hans Otto Meissner and Harry Wilde, op. cit., (fn. 13 above), pp. 18-19.

31 Walter Ulbricht, op. cit., (fn. 15 above).

32 See, "Die Nationalsozialisten und die Gewerkschaften", GdS, No. 26, (17 Dec. 1932), p. 303; see also, KJVD Rundschreiben, "Resolutionen der KJVD Bezirk Wasserkante (28 Nov. 1932)", BHA (Koblenz), R/58 688-2 and Walter Ulbricht, op. cit., for references to the "panic" among some comrades to call off the strike.

33 Walter Ulbricht, op. cit.; see also, Hans Becher, op. cit., (fn. 17 above), p. 16; Inprekorr, No. 105, (16 Dec. 1932), (fn. 5 above), p. 3378, and cf: Hans Otto Meissner and Harry Wilde, op. cit., (fn. 13 above), p. 18.

34 Thus in one assessment of the strike provided by the KPD Central Committee, the party was reminded that its primary task was to work against the danger of a war of intervention against the Soviet Union and that this included the special mission to "conquer the armaments factories, ports and railways--in this respect the BVG strike is of great significance", KPD Rundschreiben, "Schulungsmaterial, ZK der KPD", (Dec. 1932).

35 Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger, (19 Nov. 1929), as cited in Stefan Possony, "The Comintern as an instrument of Soviet Strategy", in Drachkovitch, M.M. (ed.), The Revolutionary Internationals, 1864-1943, Hoover Institute, Stanford, 1966, p. 245, n. 34.

36 Friedrich Christian Prinz zu Schaumburg-Lippe, Dr. Goebbels: Ein Porträt des Propagandaministers, Wiesbaden, 1963, p. 122.

37 See, Felix von Papen, Ein von Papen spricht, Nejmegen, 1938, p. 164, and Hans Otto Meissner and Harry Wilde, op. cit., (fn. 13 above), p. 14.

38 BHA (Koblenz), Nachlass Rechberg, Allgemeiner politischer Schriftwechsel, No. 103, XXI, Karl Kindermann to Rechberg, (7 May 1931); see also, Rechberg to M.W.F. Treub, (1931); Adolf Victor von Koerler to Rechtberg, (19 Jan. 1931).

39 See, RF, (20 Nov. 1932), for an attack on this article.

40 One of the most interesting of the SPD reports is of a meeting of the EKKI Presidium which supposedly took place at the end of January 1932. At this meeting Manuilsky was alleged to have argued that the Comintern, in the interests of Soviet policy, wanted the fall of the Brüning government and a Hitler victory. See, Blinkfuer, (SPD Hamburg Berlin), No. 2, (March 1932) and No. 11, (Oct. 1932); see also, "Bruderschaft zwischen Kommunisten und Nazis", SDPK, No. 8/9, (Aug./Sept. 1930), pp. 536-537. This claims that a secret GPU report noted that National Socialist propaganda supported Communist objectives in Germany; "Die Einheitsfront", Geestbacher Beobachter, No. 2, (19 Feb. 1932).

41 As cited in, AA RD, Akten betr. Sozialismus, Kommunismus, Bolshevismus, Vol. 3, (1 Jan. 1927-1 Dec. 1933), AA Berlin, (15 Nov. 1932).

42 Margarete Buber-Neumann, Von Potsdam nach Moskau: Stationen eines Irrewegs, Stuttgart, 1957, p. 287; see also, Ruth Fischer, Stalin and German Communism: A Study in the Origins of the State Party, Harvard University Press, 1948, pp. 655-656; Walter Zeutschel, Im Dienst der kommunistischen terror Organisation, Berlin, 1931. Zeutschel makes the claim that there was a traffic in arms between Nazi and Communist agents, (p. 71).

43 Jan Valtin (Richard Krebs), Out of the Night, New York, 1941.

44 Valtin, ibid, p. 252.

45 Valtin, ibid, p. 252.

46 Valtin, ibid, p. 253.

47 Valtin, ibid, pp. 253-254.

48 On the question of the accuracy of Valtin's details, I checked the year book of the ADGB and various trade union calendars for

1931 and found no mention of a "conference" of transport workers in the "spring" of 1931. It is not, however, clear from Valtin's account just what kind of meeting he is referring to. It may have been a minor and local assembly which would not have been mentioned in these sources.

49 See, Hamburg auf den Barrikaden", AP, No. 7, (2 March 1929); "Politischen Banditismus", AP, No. 9, (16 March 1929); "Ideologische Klärung oder faschistische Schlägermethoden", GdS, No. 12, (23 March 1929); "Um die Gesundung des RFB", GdS, No. 14, (6 April 1929); "Versammlungssprengungen", AP, No. 15A, (1 May 1929); "Banditenmethoden der Parteibürokaratie", GdS, No. 18, (4 May 1929); "Wer hat den Faschisten geholfen?", AP, No. 18, (18 May 1929); "Wer hilft den Faschisten?", GdS, No. 21, (25 May 1929); "Unser Kampf gegen den Faschismus", GdS, No. 44, (2 Nov. 1929), p. 15; "Schrittmacher der Konterrevolution", GdS, No. 29, (19 July 1930), p. 465; "Banditen Methoden", GdS, No. 31, (2 Aug. 1930), p. 488; "Stossbrigaden gegen Arbeiterversammlungen", GdS, No. 32, (9 Aug. 1930), p. 501; GdS, No. 18, (29 Aug. 1931), pp. 211-212. From the SPD side see, "Abrechnung mit kommunistischem Arbeiterverrat", SDPK, No. 10, (Oct. 1931).

50 GdS, No. 18, (29 Aug. 1931), pp. 211-212.

51 See, HSA Düss., RDP 30653(c), Pp. Düss.-RP, (16 May 198).

52 "Wer hat den Faschisten geholfen?", AP, No. 18, (18 May 1929); "Wer hilft den Faschisten?", GdS, No. 21, (25 May 1929).

53 NSSA (Hannover), Hann Des 310 I A 120, NSDAP Kreisleitung Goslar an die Gauleitung NSDAP Geschäftsführung Hannover-Goslar, (31 Dec. 1932).

54 The memorandum sets out its reply to the complaints against Jahns in point form. The charges in the original were assigned numbers. Thus: "Points 6 and 7 are possible if one considers that an informal agreement exists between the NSDAP and the KPD; to wit, we do not destroy their placards if they do not destroy ours."

55 "...so much for the Salzgitter peoples' struggle against Communism", ibid.

56 At the time there were numerous statements on the Nazi side to this effect. See, for example, HSA Düss. RDP, 30653(d), Pp. Essen, (30 Sept. 1931). This notes the prevailing view among the Nazis in Essen that the KPD rather than the Zentrum should be the second party in Essen; "In the fight against

the SPD betrayers we will ally ourselves even with the devil", VB, as cited in GdS, No. 44, (2 Nov. 1929); see also, below, Appendix II, pp. 313-314.

57 See the anti-SPD appeal to the KPD in the "Völkischer Beobachter, (see fn. 56 above); see also, AP, No. 63, (15 March 1931) for a report of Nazi attempts to inflame the KPD against the Reichsbanner.

58 Even though the Nazis sought to exploit the differences on the left, there can be little doubt that they preserved a completely cynical attitude to the Communists, "These poor Kozis simpletons who take the Social Democrats for Fascists, will soon discover what a Fascist is! They will grasp that when they are standing together with the Sozis before the State Court of Justice-- our State Court of Justice.", (speech by Frick, (9 Dec. 1930), as reported in AP, No. 289, (12 Dec. 1930). Cf: "Die dummen Auguste in der KPD", National Sozialist, No. 20, (18 May 1929), "That is really the end of all jokes", (comment on the KPD's Social Fascism theory).

59 See Appendix II below, p. 335 ff.

60 See below, Appendix II, p. 337.

61 See below, Appendix II, p. 336.

62 RGO Rundschreiben, (25 June 1932), "Antifaschistische Aktion-Bezirkskomitee der RGO Orgleitung, Essen, (25 June 1932), BHA (Koblenz), R/58 485; KPD Rundschreiben, ZK, Bl. Ruhrgebiet, (July 1932), HSA Düss. RDP, 30657(g), Pp. Essen-RP Düss., (14 July 1932).

63 HSA Düss. RDP, (30657(g), ibid.

64 See above p. 193.

65 On the personal animosity between Thälmann and Neumann see a letter from Clara Zetkin to Maria Reese, Nachlass Maria Reese, BHA (Koblenz) 379-4, Zetkin-Reese, (4 June 1932); cf: Blinkfuer, No. 3, (1 April 1932). Here it is noted that Neumann considered Thälmann to be an "idiot". Zetkin also cast doubts on Thälmann's abilities; see, Zetkin, loc. cit.

66 See, "Das XII. Plenum des EKKI und die KPD", I, 9/10, (Sept./ Oct. 1932), pp. 386-387; "Schlusswort des Genossen Thälmann", (XII. Plenum des EKKI), KI, 17/18, (15 Dec. 1932), pp. 1316-1343; Manuilski, "Das Ende der kapitalistischen Stabilisierung", (XII. Plenum des EKKI), Inprekorr, No. 8, (18 Jan. 1933), p. 257;

see also, KPD Rundschreiben, "Politischebeschlüsse der neunzehnten Bezirksparteitagung-Berlin Brandenburg", (Nov. 1932), BHA (Koblenz), R/58 390.

67 See above, Chapter IV, fn. 94. Thälmann conceded that Neumann agreed with the majority that the slogan had become "inexpedient" and was opposed only to the decision officially to condemn it. See, Thälmann, "Schlusswort...", ibid., p. 1334.

68 Wilhelm Pieck, "Warum konnte der Faschismus in Deutschland siegen?", KI, No. 7, (5 April 1935), p. 544; "Thälmann made the same error earlier, see, Thälmann, "Schlusswort...", ibid., p. 1332, but cf: Ernst Thälmann, "Die Lage in Deutschland und die Aufgaben der kommunistischen Partei Deutschlands", (XI. Plenum des EKKI), Inprekorr, No. 52, (5 June 1931), pp. 1211-1212 and see above, Chapter IV, fn. 22. Either Thälmann was admitting that he was a simple cipher for Neumann at the time of the Eleventh Plenum or his memory of the truth had failed him.

69 See, I, No. 9/10, (Sept./Oct. 1932), (fn. 66 above), p. 387; Karolski, KI, No. 19, (31 Dec. 1932), (fn. 15 above), pp. 1381-1382.

70 See above, p. 134.

71 For Neumann's role in the drafting of the programme see, Schüddekopf, op. cit., (fn. 13 above), p. 289; see also above, p. 180.

72 See for example, Ernst Thälmann, "Die Aufgaben der KPD im Kampfe gegen den National- und Sozialfaschismus", Inprekorr, No. 7, (27 Jan. 1931), p. 193, "...Today the Volksrevolution slogan is a central, comprehensive propaganda slogan, the main strategic objective to which we direct the masses in our liberation programme...the Volksrevolution as the strategic central slogan carries with it the obligation to set about mobilizing the working middle classes (werkätigen Mittelschichten) into the revolutionary front". See also, Ernst Thälmann, "Die Lage in Deutschland und die Aufgaben der Kommunistischen Partei Deutschlands", (XI. Plenum des EKKI), Inprekorr, No. 52, (5 June 1931), p. 1217.

73 All accounts of Neumann stress his close connections with Stalin, and the key role which he played in the "Bolshevization" of the KPD. See, Schüddekopf, op. cit., (fn. 13 above), p. 484, fn. 11; Margarete Buber-Neumann, op. cit., (fn. 42 above), p. 168 ff.; Ruth Fischer, op. cit., (fn. 42 above), p. 446, fn. 9; Hermann Weber, Die Wandlung des deutschen Kommunismus: Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimarer

Republik, Frankfurt am Main, 1969, Vol. II, pp. 233-235.

74 See, RF, (17 Feb. 1931); RF, (8 April 1931); RF, (10 April 1931); KPD Rundschreiben, Bl. Ruhrgebiet, (April 1931), HSA Düss., RDP, 30657(e).

75 For an account of these events see, "Die Beteiligung der KPD am Volksentscheid", SDPK, No. 9, (Sept. 1931), pp. 595-601. See, also, Albert Norden, "Der Volksentscheid in Preussen", Inprekorr, No. 77, (7 Aug. 1931), pp. 1721-1722; "Warum für den roten Volksentscheid?", Willi Münzenberg, Inprekorr, No. 77, (7 Aug. 1931), p. 1723; "Der Ausgang des Volksentscheids in Preussen", Inprekorr, No. 85, (1 Sept. 1931), pp. 1778-1779; "Das ZK. der KPD über die Lehren des Volksentscheids", Inprekorr, No. 85, (1 Sept. 1931), pp. 1903-1904; RF, (1 Sept. 1931).

76 For Neumann's role cf: Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung (Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus-ZK SED), Vol. 4, 1966, p. 300 ff.; Flechtheim Ossip K. Flechtheim, op. cit., (fn. 13 above), pp. 277-278; Weingartner, op. cit., (fn. 14 above), pp. 86-87; SDPK, No. 9, (fn. 75 above), p. 595; cf: Babette Gross, "Willi Münzenberg; Eine politische Biographie", Stuttgart, 1967, pp. 227-230.

77 See, "Einige Lehren des Volksentscheids", RF, (30 Aug. 1931); "Das ZK der KPD über die Lehren des Volksentscheids", Inprekorr, No. 85, (1 Sept. 1931), pp. 1903-1904.

78 Inprekorr, No. 85, (1 Sept. 1931), ibid., p. 1904, "In part, Communist functionaries and members yielded before the wave of Social Democratic slander...in part, not everything was done in the reformist unions and in the factories to mobilize the workers for the Communist line. That was revealed in the voting for the referendum which fell below the result for the Reichstag elections".

79 In the SPD press there were reports of "non-aggression" agreements reached between KPD and NSDAP functionaries and of confidential KPD circulars directing party functionaries to avoid conflict with the Nazis. See, SDPK, (fn. 75 above), p. 599; There was also evidence that many of the KPD rank and file understood their involvement in the referendum as a co-operative enterprise with the Nazis; see, "Aus den Organisationen", GdS, No. 16, (1 Aug. 1931), p. 188, "...against our complaints KPD members say that it is completely correct to go 'ein Stück wegs' with the Fascists".

80 RF, (27 Aug. 1931), as cited in Weingartner, op. cit., (fn. 14 above), p. 91.

81 Weingartner, ibid., pp. 91-94.

82 Cf: Inprekorr, No. 77, (7 Aug. 1931), (Fn. 75 above), p. 1722, "As a result of the KPD's assumption of the leadership, the referendum took on a new foreign and internal policy appearance. Because the threat that, with a successful referendum French imperialism would deny Germany credits, naturally increased the difficulties of the German bourgeoisie. It is as clear as daylight...that if Braun falls, Brüning will follow him as the Amen follows a prayer." See also, Inprekorr, No. 77, (7 Aug. 1931), ibid., p. 1778.

83 KPD Rundschreiben, Bl. Ruhrgebiet Agitprop., (Aug. 1931), HSA Düss. RDP, 30657(f).

84 This is evident in the Rundschreiben cited above (fn. 83), where the foreign policy considerations are mentioned after a discussion of the revolutionary significance of the referendum action.

85 See, KPD Rundschreiben, "Politischebeschlüsse der neunzehnten Bezirksparteitagung-Berlin Brandenburg", (Nov. 1932), Section VII, BHA (Koblenz), R/58 390; cf: Weingartner, op. cit., (Fn. 14 above), pp. 106-111.

86 KPD Rundschreiben, "Kursusdisposition für den politischen Schulungstag", (March 1932), HSA Düss. RDP, 30671; cf: Thälmann, KI, No. 17/18, (15 Dec. 1932), (Fn. 66 above), p. 1316. On the question of a falsified EKKI report see above, fn. 40.

87 Margarete Buber-Neumann, op. cit., (fn. 42 above), p. 284; see also, W.G. Krivitsky, I was Stalin's Agent, London, 1939, p. 22.

88 Maria Reese, Nachlass Maria Reese, BHA (Koblenz), 379-4, "im Reichstag".

89 See, Ernst Thälmann, Katastrophe oder Sozialismus?, Zentralkomittee der KPD, Berlin, n.d. (1931), I.I.v.S.G., D433 170.

90 Thälmann, ibid., p. 12.

91 Thälmann, ibid., p. 12.

92 Thälmann, ibid., p. 13.

93 Thälmann, KI, No. 17/18, (15 Dec. 1932), op. cit., (fn. 66 above), p. 1316.

94 AA Büro des Reichsministern Akten betr. Russland, Vol. 27, pp. 562233-562247 and Vol. 28, pp. 56420-562511. See also, Josef Korbel, Poland between East and West: Soviet and German Diplomacy towards Poland 1919-1933, Princeton University Press, 1963, pp. 269-270 and Stefan T. Possony, op. cit., (fn. 35 above), pp. 216-217. Both sources cite these documents.

95 See, ibid., Vol. 27, pp. 562233-562247, (20 Oct. 1931).

96 See, Thälmann, Inprekorr, No. 52, (5 June 1931), (fn. 68 above), p. 1204 and p. 1211.

97 Zetkin to Maria Reese, (see fn. 65 above).

98 Fischer, op. cit., (fn. 42 above), p. 446. Weingartner, too, stresses that Neumann found himself in opposition to the Comintern line at the end of 1931 and that he tried to hold his ground. See, Weingartner, op. cit., pp. 106-111.

99 For arguments in support of the "scapegoat" interpretation offered here see, Flechtheim, op. cit., p. 283 and Jane Deras, The Communist International 1919-1943: Documents, Vol. III, Oxford University Press, 1965, Vol. III, p. 213.

## CHAPTER VI

## FLUCTUATIONS IN COMMUNIST TACTICS DURING 1932:

## DOUBTS IN THE ELEVENTH HOUR

As Nazi strength increased, the optimistic assumptions in the Communist analysis were severely tested. The "contradictions" in National Socialism refused to take hold. The Presidential and Landtag elections in the spring of 1932 showed that Hitler's ability to attract new masses of voters was unimpaired.<sup>1</sup> It must be said that the Communists were overly fascinated with "contradictions". Whatever the truth of their arguments, the Nazis still somehow eluded all Marxist schemes of reason. In a way, what the Communists took to be the self-destructive tensions in National Socialism were the sources of its strength. What besides the contradictions accounted for the success of Hitler's mass party? The Nazis had asserted their power against all class interests and it was clear for all to see that they had become an independent factor in German politics. Blinded as they were by their own categories, it appeared as if the Communists were influenced by these realities and it seemed for a short time (all too short a time) that they were finally ready to realign their tactical priorities.

There were signs that a far reaching change was being considered. The attack against Neumann suggested that the Nazis were to be seen in a new and more serious light. There were the warnings in the

party circulars against tactical accommodation with the Nazis and in local party meetings of Communist functionaries new instructions were issued to cease "acts of isolated terror" against SPD colleagues.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, more attention was directed at the problem of resisting Nazi terror. This was so despite the ban on "isolated acts of terror" and the continuing emphasis on "ideological struggle" as the main weapon in the Communist arsenal. During the first half of the year Communist commentary on tactical questions seemed to sanction a more aggressive response to Nazi terror. There was, for example, the suggestion that confrontation with the SA was an important means of mobilizing the workers behind the KPD.<sup>3</sup>

For those in the SPD and the Communist opposition, who hoped to construct a broad anti-Nazi alliance, there were even more encouraging indications of change. For a time the Social Fascist thesis was downplayed in the KPD's statements and in the Communist press.<sup>4</sup> In his May Day speech Thälmann had ignored Social Fascism altogether and had concentrated his attack on "bloody Hitler Fascism".<sup>5</sup> If Hitler had indeed become the main enemy, the way seemed open to the anti-Fascist alliance. Such hopes had arisen in April. During the Presidential elections the KPD campaign had focused with familiar bitterness on the SPD but then the emphasis shifted. On the eve of the Prussian Landtag elections the KPD announced its willingness, to co-operate,

"...with any organization of the working class which is really prepared to fight against cuts in salaries and relief payments..."<sup>6</sup>

No matter that the appeal was addressed to local SPD and trade union functionaries and not to the Social Democratic leadership, this was the closest thing to a genuine united front suggestion that had appeared on the Communist side since 1928.

In May there was more evidence for the shift in emphasis. The KPD delegation in the Baden Landtag had sponsored a motion for the dissolution of the SPD dominated "Iron Front" and the Nazi paramilitary organizations.<sup>7</sup> The Baden comrades could be excused for believing that their decision to include the SPD organization within their proposal fell well within the party's tactical guidelines. Social Democracy was, after all, the principal enemy and the most dangerous of the Fascist parties. It followed that any action meant to weaken the SPD would be acceptable to the party as a whole. This line of reasoning must have appeared all the more persuasive in light of a similar motion which had just recently been introduced by the Communists in the Hamburg Bürgerschaft and which had been restricted to the demand for the dissolution of the SA. Given the party's established priorities, both proposals made sense. If there was a difference, then the Baden motion had the virtue of even-handedness in its hostility to both of the KPD's Fascist enemies.

Notwithstanding these considerations, the party's leading

theoretical journal, Die Internationale, condemned the Baden motion as, "a serious error and a blow against the red united front".<sup>8</sup> The two motions were not equivalent. Despite the fact that the Hamburg Bürgerschaft had rejected the Communist proposal, it was argued that its popularity had nonetheless given the KPD an advantage in its united front work with the Social Democratic workers. By contrast, the Baden Communists had provided the party with a bad example of the "mechanical" application of the Social Fascist thesis. They had "mechanically equated the Reichsbanner with the Nazi murder organizations".<sup>9</sup> It was also clear that the criticism was not meant to be restricted to the errors of the Baden Landtag delegation,

"The Baden motion is only new evidence for the fact that the changes in our agitation and propaganda which were demanded by the Central Committee Plenum, have not yet been implemented."<sup>10</sup>

The direct language of this reprimand provided good evidence for the confusion of purpose in the KPD. It could not, after all, have been so obvious to anyone in the party that the tactical emphasis had shifted as far as the article suggested. There was an attempt to establish a new balance in the approach to the Social Democrats and the Nazis but this was not meant to leave the way open for the opportunistic error of a genuine united front arrangement with the SPD. In June, Thälmann tried to clarify this point. In a major statement on the party's anti-Nazi tactics, he argued that there had been no re-ordering of priorities.<sup>11</sup> If the campaign against the Nazis had in certain important respects been neglected and

misunderstood, it was nevertheless still wrong to lay the blame for this on past decisions to concentrate on the problem of breaking the SPD.<sup>12</sup> He attacked the idea that the Nazis had replaced the Social Democrats as the main support for German capitalism. Such a formulation could be used to justify a complete re-orientation of united front policy, but Thälmann insisted that this was not to be,

"We must express unequivocally that the party does not contemplate such a change..."<sup>13</sup>

The war on two fronts argument was reasserted. Whereas others may have seen the decisions of the KPD's February Plenum as pointing the way to a new policy of seeking tactical accommodations with the SPD, Thälmann's interpretation was different. On that occasion the party had reaffirmed the "central strategic objective" of breaking the SPD's hold on the industrial workers and not the slightest concession was to be made to "fraudulent manoeuvres for an anti-Fascist united front. The struggle against Social Democracy and against "Hitler Fascism" were to remain inseparably linked.<sup>14</sup>

There was thus next to no basis here for any continuing hope that the campaign against Neumann and the other indications of change pointed the way to a genuine and broadly based anti-Nazi alliance. Thälmann left open only one small possibility that such a course might be considered in the future. He suggested that negotiations with SPD and trade union leaders were possible if certain conditions were met first. The conditions, however, were unlikely to materialize. The KPD had to ensure that its efforts to mobilize the

industrial workers had made sufficient progress so that any united front move on the Communist side would command decisive grass roots support, and thus force the hand of the Social Democratic leadership. At the same time, the "concrete" conditions under which the KPD could launch such an initiative had to be such that the spontaneous united front from below movement among the workers would not be compromised.<sup>15</sup>

Those who hoped for more from the Communists misunderstood the nature of the doubts which were being reflected in the KPD's tactics and policy pronouncements. There was no soul searching rooted in a growing awareness that National Socialism did, after all, threaten the existence of the party or that the presence of a powerful Nazi movement effectively ruled out all hope for the proletarian revolution. What was more to the point was that Nazi successes had forced a closer examination of basic Nazi foreign policy positions. Although there were some uncertainties, the Communists had on the whole been persuaded that the Nazis were a force in Weimar politics which worked against closer German-French relations.<sup>16</sup> There was considerable scope for such optimism. Judging from the Nazi press and from commentary by leading Nazis on foreign policy questions, it was easy enough to conclude that opposition to France was central to the Nazi outlook.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the view that hostility to France would necessarily involve the maintenance of good relations with the Soviet Union was also represented by such leading figures as Reventlow and

Goebbels. Writing in Der Nationale Sozialist in 1930, Goebbels underscored this dimension of Nazi thinking,

"...today the European constellation of power is so structured that for the foreseeable future an Eastern oriented foreign policy is the only one which can be considered. We have to choose between our sick neighbours in the West, and the creative, exuberant health in the East...Russia's need is our need and vice versa. Therefore we feel bound to Russia as the bearer of the same fate. Russia's freedom will be our freedom and vice versa. Therefore we stand at Russia's side as equal partners in the struggle for this freedom."<sup>18</sup>

Against such evidence that the optimism in their analysis was justified, the Communists had to set other, disturbing, indications of hostility towards the Soviet Union. For example, after the successes of September 1930, Hitler could be seen as working for closer relations with the West, or at least with England.<sup>19</sup>

After the Nazi electoral gains in the spring of 1932, the Communists had to face the possibility of a Hitler government or at least of powerful new Nazi influence on the course of German policy and it became more important to discover the likely direction of Nazi foreign policy. In the spring of 1932 these concerns were reflected in the Communist analysis of the German situation. In one article by the KPD's foreign policy expert, Theodor Neubauer, Hitler's Mein Kampf and Rosenberg's Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts were analyzed in the hope of discovering a basis for Nazi foreign policy.<sup>20</sup> Neubauer was especially concerned to establish the Nazi attitudes towards France,

"What policy do the National Socialists follow with respect to French imperialism? The answer

to this question is at the same time the touchstone for National Socialist foreign policy generally."<sup>21</sup>

Neubauer reached the conclusion that opposition to French hegemony in Europe was central to the Nazi conception and to Hitler's plans for a greater German Reich in the East. So much was clear from Hitler's and Rosenberg's writings. Yet according to Neubauer, that central conception was being lost as the Nazis came closer to power and attempted to make themselves acceptable for inclusion in a coalition government. Following an analysis of Nazi diplomatic efforts which appeared in the Manchester Guardian, Neubauer noted a changed attitude towards France and the attempt to reassure the West and France in particular that a Hitler government would not necessarily lead to additional complications in French-German relations. For Neubauer this was a "grotesque contradiction" which represented betrayal,

"those betrayed and deceived will thus be the masses of the German people who actually hope for national liberation from Hitler and can expect only a more humiliating enslavement."<sup>22</sup>

The foreign policy of the German bourgeoisie was thus fated to follow the same path whether it was directed by Stresemann, Brüning or Hitler.<sup>23</sup>

The opinion that Hitler had become an important enemy of the Soviet Union was taken up elsewhere in the Communist press. Thälmann, for example, drew attention to the "anti-Soviet hate" of the Nazis and to the increased risk of a war of intervention which they

represented.<sup>24</sup> It is important to notice that it was the anti-Soviet as distinct from the anti-Communist aspects of the Nazi position which were the cause for worry and there were disturbing new signs of this. On the 23rd of June the Nazi delegation in the Prussian Landtag brought forward a motion that the central government be requested to demand that the Soviet embassy recall all Soviet citizens from the district of Düsseldorf, and if after three days the request were not met, the motion called for the arrest of all "Soviet agents" and their deportation as undesirable aliens.<sup>25</sup> This and similar Nazi initiatives were noted with concern in the Soviet Union.<sup>26</sup>

The new perception that the Nazis represented an uncertain, and potentially dangerous, anti-Soviet force came at a particularly difficult time for Soviet policy in Germany. The new Papen government offered much reduced opportunities for Soviet diplomacy. Unlike Brüning, Papen seemed determined to regard closer relations with France as a clear alternative to good relations with the Soviet Union and the established balance in German foreign policy was rapidly being lost. This was an especially threatening development given the growing evidence of more clearly anti-Soviet attitudes among the Nazis. Communist commentary pointed to the possibility that the Nazis, even if they did not enter a coalition, could provide the Papen government with a base of mass support and the way would then be open for a re-alignment in German foreign policy of indefinite duration.<sup>27</sup> Thus by the summer of 1932 the Communists were faced with a completely different situation from that of the previous year.

Then the SPD, from its position of strength in Prussia, had provided the necessary (if passive) support for Brüning and had at the same time been in a strong position to exert pressure against the Ostorientierung. Under those circumstances, the KPD's opposition to the Prussian government and its decision to support the referendum could be seen to make sense. After the Prussian Landtag elections it was the NSDAP which had emerged as the dominant party. The Communists and the Nazis together controlled a majority in the Landtag. One obstacle to the Soviet design in Germany had been removed but perhaps only to be replaced by another.<sup>28</sup>

In view of the reduced influence of the SPD in Prussia and consequently also in national affairs, it was understandable that the Communists would turn more of their attention to the potential new threats. It was also true that in 1932 the Soviets could be expected to be especially sensitive to the indications of new difficulties in Germany. There was a growing sense of isolation and of danger. While more and more of Soviet energy was being absorbed in the difficulties of the First Five Year Plan, outside pressure also mounted. Not only was there the problem of the Soviet Union's increasing isolation in Europe, there was also a new problem in the East and Stalin nervously watched the rising and aggressive power of Japan.<sup>29</sup>

In the changing situation the Soviets sought increased diplomatic flexibility. In 1931 there were important indications of a shift in the Soviet attitude towards France. In May negotiations were

undertaken for a trade agreement and a non-aggression treaty. At the end of the year and in the early months of 1932 parallel negotiations were begun with Poland, Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Rumania.<sup>30</sup> These moves reflected a re-examination of Soviet strategy in Europe and especially Stalin's determination to reduce the Soviet Union's diplomatic dependence on good relations with the Germans. According to reports in the German Foreign Ministry archives, Stalin had concluded that it was no longer possible to hope to oppose French influence on the basis of an alliance between the Soviet Union, Germany and Italy. The fact of French dominance on the continent had to be accepted and while good relations with Germany was the main Soviet trump, an effort had to be made to achieve better relations with France and French credits for Soviet economic development would be sought.<sup>31</sup>

The shifts in the KPD's tactical emphasis could be traced to these foreign policy considerations. One report in the Russian Menshevik press claimed that Moscow forced a modification in KPD tactics after the Presidential elections.<sup>32</sup> According to this, Stalin had decided that the Japanese threat in the East had made it imperative that everything be done to reduce the dangers to the Soviet position in Germany. Specifically, the KPD was to eliminate everything from its tactics which might make a Hitler victory easier. Stalin sought, in other words, to reduce the possibility of new upheavals in the West while his attention was for the moment turned towards Japan

and towards the problem of improving relations with France. In connection with the tactical changes the Soviets apparently also demanded a purge of the KPD Central Committee.

This report was based on information obtained through the Menshevik underground and its accuracy cannot be checked. It is nonetheless consistent with what actually happened in the KPD. The changes in the KPD's tactics did become apparent after the alleged intervention. Moreover, there was a purge of party leaders.

Although the purge was not completed until later in the year,<sup>33</sup> the report provided further support for the argument that it was the Soviet attempt to de-emphasize earlier policies towards Hitler which best account for the decline of Neumann. The report gains further credence from the fact that Neumann surrendered his functions in the KPD early in April and was recalled to the Soviet Union; that is, at the time when the Menshevik report claimed that both he and Thälmann were present in Moscow to receive the new instructions.

<sup>34</sup> Anyway, the foreign policy concerns which accounted for the fluctuations in the KPD's tactics can be inferred from the party's public statements. Thälmann, for example, emphasized that it was important for the party's campaign against the Nazis to stress the connections between Hitler and Papen's pro-French and anti-Soviet foreign policy,

"The Hitler party openly carries the responsibility for the Papen government, which is firmly committed to the French orientation and to a policy of constructing an anti-Soviet block. Against the

foreign policy of this cabinet...and against its National Socialist satellite, we shall stress our opposition to Versailles, according to the line of our programme of national and social liberation, more aggressively...than ever before."<sup>35</sup>

The tide of doubt proved to be shallow and of brief duration. By the end of July it had receded and the original tactical emphasis had largely returned. As late as the 20th of July there still seemed to be hope for a new line. At the end of June the Communist delegation in the Prussian Landtag declared its willingness to support Zentrum and SPD candidates in the elections to the Landtag Presidium providing that certain conditions were first met.<sup>36</sup> Early in July the Communists showed some willingness at least to discuss the possibility of united front co-operation with the SPD against Fascism.<sup>37</sup> There was also a stronger emphasis than in 1931 or in the first months of 1932, on united front appeals which stressed the importance of the struggle against Fascism.<sup>38</sup> Finally on the 20th of July, in a move which was seemingly calculated to keep united front hopes alive, the KPD called a general strike in protest against the Papen government's decision to dissolve the Prussian Landtag.<sup>39</sup>

On the SPD side there was little positive response to any of these initiatives and perhaps there should have been. It was unwise or so it must seem with hindsight, to make so little effort to exploit the doubts of the Communists. Yet, the SPD attitude was understandable. Goodwill and good sense could perhaps have overcome the obstacle of "Social Fascism" and the long history of vicious

anti-Social Democratic propaganda. There was, however, another obstacle and that was the lack of clarity in the Communist position. What, after all, could be made of invitations to join under Communist guidance in the campaign against "Fascism"? In 1932, just as earlier, Fascism meant only one thing to the Social Democrats-- Hitler. Even if one could discount the absurdity of "Social Fascism", and it was by no means clear in the spring and early summer of 1932 that it was possible to do so, the Communist understanding of Fascism was still much broader than that of the SPD. In fact, "anti-Fascism" as a subject in Communist propaganda had been carefully selected; for Fascism was meant to include both the Nazis and the Papen government.<sup>40</sup>

Beyond this there was a deeper consideration. As in the past, the Social Democrats understood the struggle against Hitler to be an essential part of their effort to defend the Republic. For the Communists the Republic meant the Weimar coalition and a strong influence for the SPD on both domestic and foreign policies. In June, Thälmann made this very clear,

"In the struggle against Fascism, against Papen-Schleicher and against Hitler, we cannot allow the illusion to emerge that we are interested in fighting for the Weimar constitution; that it is our goal to maintain conditions which are compatible with the constitution. Naturally we fight against Fascism but one cannot devote a minute of his energy to that fight just in order to make it possible for Brüning and Groener to return to power. If Papen and Hitler were beaten and Brüning, Severing, Braun etc. took their places again, then the German proletariat would be robbed of the fruits of its victory."<sup>41</sup>

On the Communist side, therefore, the choices were very different from the ones which faced the SPD. In the summer of 1932 there was an inherent instability in the KPD's tactics. A war on two fronts conception was better suited for the pages of the theoretical journals than it was for Communist tactics. Since the resources of the KPD were limited, the emphasis of practical effort had to fall on one side or the other, and a decision had to be made whether it was Nazism or Social Democracy which was the more serious enemy.

The choice was not in doubt for long. By the end of July all the indications were that the old tactical emphasis was to remain. The hesitant overtures to the SPD were now condemned as "opportunistic" and Thälmann called upon the party to redouble its defenses against the "right opportunistic tendencies towards block building with the Social Democrats". According to Thälmann this tendency had been rooted in the false view that the Communists should direct their main attentions against the Nazis.<sup>42</sup> The Social Fascist argument was reasserted and, as if to emphasize the end of doubt, it was stressed with particular vehemence.<sup>43</sup> The more militant resistance to Nazi strong-arm tactics was also questioned. Anti-Fascist struggle had been too much confined to the streets and too restricted in its targets. Ideological struggle and the united front from below approach was what was required, as well as an understanding of Fascism which went beyond the Nazis to include Social Fascism and the Papen-Schleicher government.<sup>44</sup> By the end of the year the return

to the earlier approach to the Nazis was complete. United front appeals were stressed and were once more carried into Nazi meetings. Functionaries were instructed to clarify the distinction between the Fascist leadership of the NSDAP and its honest but misled anti-capitalist following.<sup>45</sup> The way was again open for tactical collaboration and in November that fact was dramatically confirmed in the strike of Berlin transport workers.

As Weingartner observes, what was at work here was a kind of Comintern, foreign policy, version of the SPD's "lesser evil" formula.<sup>46</sup> For several reasons the SPD was judged to be the greater threat to Soviet interests especially over the longer run. The Communists once more succeeded in convincing themselves, that of their two rivals, it was the SPD which was the stronger. Just as in 1923, Nazi strength was the product of crisis. Economic collapse had radicalized large masses of the German population and made them susceptible to Nazi "demagogic". For the Communists, however, there was a natural outer limit to this process of radicalization. The July Reichstag elections, although they resulted in large gains for the Nazis, marked the end of the possibility for further Nazi expansion.<sup>47</sup> The middle class parties, with the exception of the Zentrum had disappeared. Any additional Nazi gains would, then, only be at the expense of the working class parties.

It was precisely on this point that the Communists found grounds for optimism. When it came to the working class voter it was the KPD and not the NSDAP which was the principal beneficiary of the

crisis. If further Nazi penetration into the ranks of the working class could be checked, Hitler's hopes for power would be dashed. The prospects for blocking Nazi access to the workers were seen as all the more promising because of the tensions within the NSDAP; for it was the working class elements, especially within the SA and the NSBO, which provided the main source of discontent among the Nazis.<sup>48</sup> It was on the basis of these considerations that the Communists saw their own role as decisive. According to the resolutions of the Twelfth EKKI Plen, Germany had reached the end of the period of "relative stabilization". This did not, however, mean that the continuing crisis of capitalism worked to the advantage of Fascism. The Papen government was declared to be "one of the forms of Fascist dictatorship", but the further development of Fascism, (and under the circumstances this could only involve a larger government role for the Nazis), could be stopped by the KPD. If the KPD was successful in mobilizing the immense power of the German working class, Fascism would collapse and the Nazi following would melt away.<sup>49</sup>

As in the past, the task of mobilizing the workers underscored the continuing importance of the KPD's united front work with the SPD rank and file and with the proletarian elements among the Nazis. It is important to notice, however, that Communist tactics were only in part designed to meet the perceived requirements of the struggle against "Fascism". The KPD was equally determined to work

against the other possible "way out" for the German bourgeoisie. That way out was a democratic resolution of the crisis and a return to parliamentary rule. Thälmann warned the party that it was wrong to argue that there could be no return to democracy from the Papen dictatorship.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, the insistence that it was the Social Democrats and not the Nazis who were the central problem indicated that the democratic outcome would be even less welcome than the consolidation of Fascism.

The Communist forecasts seemed in part vindicated by the results of the November Reichstag elections. The KPD, alone of the four major parties, increased its share of the vote; the Zentrum, NSDAP and the SPD all suffered significant losses. This was interpreted as a great triumph for the KPD, and several aspects of the results were particularly gratifying. Not only had the party gained against the SPD, but the Nazis had once more failed to expand their support among the workers. In fact, with the exception of Berlin, the Nazi losses were particularly heavy in the major industrial centres. It was equally reassuring that the DNVP and the Deutsche Volkspartei both made gains at the expense of the Nazis.<sup>51</sup> Taken together with the continuing evidence for discontent in the ranks of the SA, the results were encouraging enough so that the one Communist observer was prompted to announce the end of the "Hitler psychosis".<sup>52</sup>

Optimism, however, was not grounded simply on the KPD's electoral fortunes. Despite the setbacks, both the NSDAP and the SPD

still commanded much more of the German electorate than did the KPD. Had they wished, the Communists might have applied to their own fortunes the prognosis which they had developed for the Nazis after the July elections. Barring a complete collapse of the economy, there were likely to be few new reserves of the unemployed for the KPD to attract to its list, and without the unemployed and the general atmosphere of crisis the KPD's electioneering efforts were bound to go down before the SPD's towering strength in the trade unions. In other words, it could easily be argued that Communist no less than Nazi strength was a product of the crisis. There should, therefore, have been few illusions that the KPD could play a decisive part in stopping Hitler. What probably coloured the Communist attitude in a much more serious way were certain other reassuring conclusions of their analysis.

The concerns, expressed earlier in the year, that some permanent arrangement might be found whereby Papen would be able to rely on the Nazis for popular support had proved to be groundless. The Nazis were behaving much more as an independent factor in German politics than the Communists had anticipated. The Communists now saw serious divisions in the ranks of the German bourgeoisie and especially between the radical petit bourgeois following of Hitler and the dominant industrial and financial interests. The potential base of support for German capitalism had thus shrunk, and according to the new analysis it was still the SPD which indirectly offered

whatever backing was available for Papen. The SPD therefore retained its influence on German foreign policy.

It was against the background of these conclusions that the earlier attitudes towards Hitler again became dominant. That is not to say that there was a complete return to the optimism of 1930; nevertheless after the July elections Hitler was a less worrisome consideration in the Communist analysis than he had been between April and July. There were formidable obstacles of distrust and conflict of interest which stood in the way of coalition arrangements with the Nazis. There was also the power of the Wehrmacht to be taken into account and an accommodation between the army and Hitler seemed unlikely to emerge. If despite all these difficulties, Hitler did manage to enter a government, the Soviets were confident that Nazi influence could be controlled by the army and industrial interests.<sup>54</sup> Anyway, a Nazi foreign policy need not be unduly feared. Contemporary accounts of Soviet attitudes towards a possible Nazi government stressed that there was no expectation of disaster but only a widely shared opinion that there would be a difficult transition period before Nazi policy yielded to the logic of the need for good relations with the Soviet Union. According to Gustav Hilger, the Soviets would have liked to establish contacts with Hitler in order to lessen the impact and shorten the duration of such difficulties.<sup>55</sup>

Optimism seemed more than justified in December when Schleicher

was named Chancellor. The continuing parliamentary crisis and the strength of the nationalist opposition had led to a situation which suited the Soviets well. The prospects for the Ostorientierung had never been better. Radical nationalist and anti-Versailles sentiment had badly compromised Papen's plans for better relations with France and there was every reason to believe that Schleicher's foreign policy would have to operate within the same constraints. On the positive side, Schleicher could be seen to represent those political forces in Germany which were most open to the policy of close co-operation with the Soviet Union while Schleicher's own foreign policy preferences were clearly in favour of the Ostorientierung.<sup>56</sup> The Soviets were also hopeful that Schleicher's plans to consolidate the authority of his government would meet with success. In particular, they exaggerated the importance of the tensions within the NSDAP and of Schleicher's ability to find a formula for government which depended on gaining the support of Gregor Strasser.<sup>57</sup>

For the KPD, the result of these foreign policy calculations was to confirm the existing tactical balance. As long as Stalin held out any hope for good relations with Germany there would be no significant break in the continuity of KPD tactics. Thus it was, that the equation did not collapse when Hitler was named Chancellor but only when his determined anti-Soviet orientation was clear for all to see.<sup>58</sup> Long after there was very little of the KPD left to direct, it was directed to the same targets according to the same

priorities and according to the same "revolutionary" logic. Throughout 1933 the "Social Fascism" thesis remained intact. So all pervasive was it, that it survived, as a dark ironic poison in the outlook even of Communist inmates in Hitler's concentration camps. When, for example, Social Democrats arrived at Oranienburg they were reported to have been jeered and insulted as "Social Fascist swine" (etc.) by their Communist fellow prisoners.<sup>59</sup>

As for the Nazis, the same united front from below approach continued to take precedence over anti-Fascist united front efforts to join with the other victims of National Socialism. Any evidence of discontent especially among the proletarian elements within the SA and the NSBO were carefully reported as evidence for the sharpening of the contradictions of Hitler's regime and as evidence for new revolutionary opportunities. A whole literature was devoted to this theme.<sup>60</sup> At the same time the dwindling remnants of the party were instructed to penetrate the Nazi organizations, to construct "Trojan Horse" cells within them and to direct their agitational efforts towards winning recruits for the KPD among the disgruntled Nazi membership.<sup>61</sup> The belief in the essential fragility of the Nazi proletarian organizations was remarkably tenacious.

The truth was, of course, very different. The working class organizations and parties were destroyed utterly. Following the Reichstag fire, thousands of Communist functionaries were rounded up and arrested. There had been little effective preparation for

illegality and the intensity of Nazi oppression had caught the party completely off guard.<sup>62</sup> At the top there was complete confusion concerning the meaning of events and the likely future course of Hitler's policies.<sup>63</sup> Some functionaries stayed behind and struggled to find ways of remaining useful which did not expose them to immediate arrest. Of those who escaped Hitler's camps some, like Neumann, were to disappear in Stalin's. There was little justice. Seldom has the truth of the German aphorism concerning the fate of swine and men been better borne out -- "Es regnete so stark, dass alle Schweine rein und alle Menschen dreckig wurden.". And among the survivors there was indeed some swinish behaviour. At the darkest moment in the campaign of Nazi arrests, some comrades could not resist seizing the opportunity to settle old feuds and to consolidate personal positions within the emigration. Margarete Buber-Neumann mentions this and her charges are supported in reports in the Foreign Ministry Archives. According to these sources, some in the KPD Paris emigration betrayed to the Gestapo the hiding places and cover identities of Communists who had remained in Germany.<sup>64</sup>

In other words, a full price in pain and humiliation was extracted from the KPD for its past policies. Not that the party was ever in a position to be the decisive obstacle in Hitler's path. Few, however, could disagree that it might have done more both to stop Hitler and to save itself. There was tragic irony in the party's failure. When all was said, the KPD had sacrificed everything in

the service of Soviet interests only to discover that in the end it had served those interests badly. No outcome either for the KPD or for Soviet foreign policy objectives could have been worse than January 1933. Indeed, there was some recognition of this. There was soul searching, but those inside and outside the party who might have expected an honest admission of error were disappointed. The villain of the piece was found -- Social Democracy.<sup>65</sup> It had been Social Democracy which had systematically prepared the ground for Hitler and had in fact allied itself with Hitler, while turning its back on the Communist anti-Fascist campaign. The Social Democratic leaders had divided the workers and had led them away both from decisive confrontation with the Nazis and from the revolution.

Beyond this excuse, there was another. The heresies of Neumann were once more relied upon to account for failure. At no time did the KPD need Neumann or some surrogate Neumann more than it did after 1933. Policies had been correct, analysis sound, only Neumann had prevented the party from finding success in its attempts to mobilize the workers.<sup>66</sup> There never was an admission, nor could there ever be, that the real source of error lay elsewhere. It lay in the very structure of the KPD -- in its purposes as defined by Soviet interests and by an ideology which had been manipulated to serve those interests. Under the circumstances, Marxist-Leninist doctrine obscured rather than illuminated the realities of the Nazi

threat and failed altogether as a guide to meaningful action. It might also have been true that under any circumstances the results of a Marxist analysis would have been inadequate. The Marxist outlook, especially in its Marxist-Leninist forms, simply asked for too much. Its categories demanded definitive and final solutions for problems which eluded solutions. More tragically, it placed the KPD at the centre stage of German history and politics, a position which it had no strong claim to occupy. The Communists could never, therefore, free themselves from their own expectations sufficiently to recognize their own limitations.

On these basic points of understanding the judgments must be harsh but they must also be placed in their appropriate historical setting. When the distorting influence of the Soviet connection is subtracted from consideration, the conclusions of the Communist analysis, at least on the specific points of the nature of the Nazi threat, did not stray so very far from the conclusions of others who worked within the same tradition. Even such a detached and elegant Marxist scholar as Kirchheimer could argue at the time from class conflict assumptions which obscured important realities of the problems which faced Weimar. How was it possible to conclude in 1932 that "...state and government forms are in themselves never good or bad" or, while Hitler was present, to argue that no representative of the people could ever hope to transcend the class interests which he represented?<sup>67</sup> On the more immediate tactical

questions too, the Communists were not the only ones to make mistakes. The Social Democrats had the precedent of their successful strike action against the Kapp conspirators in 1920, yet they did not respond to the Communist general strike calls in July 1932 and January 1933.<sup>68</sup> The SPD editor, Stampfer, offered an explanation for this which was poignantly revealing of the SPD's limitations,

"The Social Democratic Party was for decades a party of peaceful evolution, of reasonable and balanced consideration, of understanding without force. If it had given the signal for violent action, it would have attempted to appear what it indeed was not."<sup>69</sup>

Even with the admission of helplessness, this was a much more satisfactory epitaph for a great party than any which a Communist could provide for the KPD.

The persistent, wrong-headed analysis of Fascism and National Socialism need not have led the Communists to disaster had not the KPD isolated itself from the more clear sighted perceptions of danger which could be found among its own rank and file. It was Bolshevization which had served that end. Discipline was never complete but it was complete enough to ensure that the concerns of the membership were overridden and that Communists were directed to illusory and self-defeating ends.

## FOOTNOTES

- 1 For a discussion of these elections and the Nazi gains see, Alfred Milatz, "Das Ende der Parteien im Spiegel der Wahlen 1930 bis 1933", in, Erich Matthias and Rudolf Morsey, Das Ende der Parteien 1933, Düsseldorf, 1960, pp. 762-770; cf: Paul Langner, "Die neue Lage in Deutschland: Vor der Regierungsbeteiligung der Nazis in Preussen?", Inprekorr, No. 35, (29 April 1932), p. 1069.
- 2 See, "Bericht über die Sitzung von der RGO eingeladen Betriebsräte Grossberlins", (4 June 1932), BHA (Koblenz), R/58 372 and see above, fn. 2, p. 246.
- 3 See, for example, Karolski, "Der antifaschistische Kampf des deutschen Proletariats", KI, No. 14/15, (10 Aug. 1932), (Zurich edition), pp. 1062-1072.
- 4 The KPO, especially, seized on this change as a signal for a new united front line. See, GdS, No. 10, (7 May 1932), and cf: "Die ultralinke Politik und der Faschismus", GdS, No. 11, pp. 124-127.
- 5 RF as cited in GdS, No. 10, ibid.
- 6 This appeal appears to have been prepared in April before the Prussian Landtag elections and it was first made public on the 25th of April in an open letter of the KPD Central Committee. See, KPD Rundschreiben, "Kursusmaterial KPD, Bezirk Niederrhein", HSA Düss., RDPA, 17187, Pp. Düss., (4 June 1932) and cf: Thomas Weingartner, Stalin und der Aufstieg Hitlers: die Deutschlandpolitik der Sowjetunion und der Kommunistischen Internationale 1929-1934, Berlin, 1970, p. 132.
- 7 The "Iron Front" was founded in December 1931 under the auspices of the Social Democrats. Although it was based on the Reichsbanner, it was meant to rally all democratic forces in defense of the Republic.
- 8 "Was lehrt der Fehler der badischen Landtagsfraktion?", (unsigned), I, No. 5, (May 1932), pp. 247-253, (p. 247).
- 9 Ibid., p. 250.
- 10 Ibid., p. 250.
- 11 See, Ernst Thälmann, "Zu unserer Strategie und Taktik im Kampf gegen den Faschismus", I, No. 6, (June 1932), pp. 261-292.

12 Ibid., p. 285.

13 Ibid., p. 274. For restatements of the KPD priorities which stressed that the main attention of the party had to be directed at the SPD see also, KPD Rundschreiben, Bl. Ruhrgebiet, Agitprop Abtl., HSA Düss. RDP, 30657(g), Pp. Essen, (18 May 1932); KPD Rundschreiben, "Kursusmaterial KPD, Bezirk Niederrhein", HSA Düss. RDPA, 17187, Pp. Düss., (4 June 1932).

14 Thälmann, ibid., p. 281.

15 Thälmann, ibid., p. 284.

16 See above, pp. 179-180.

17 For a thorough contemporary analysis of competing foreign policy lines in the NSDAP which was compiled from the Nazi press see, NSSA (Hannover), Hann. Des. 122 XI 79, Pp. Berlin, (1 April 1931).

18 As cited in NSSA (Hannover, ibid..

19 NSSA (Hannover), ibid.; cf: Theodor Neubauer, "Die auswärtige Politik des deutschen Nationalsozialismus", Inprekorr, No. 41, (18 May 1932), pp. 1253-1256, (p. 1255).

20 Neubauer, ibid..

21 Ibid., p. 1253.

22 Ibid., p. 1255.

23 Ibid., p. 1255.

24 Thälmann, op. cit., (fn. 11 above), p. 272; see also, "Nazis als Youngknechte", RF, (4 June 1932) and "Papen-Hitler und Lausanne", RF, (11 June 1932).

25 See, Karlheinz Niclauss, Die Sowjetunion und Hitlers Machtergreifung: Eine Studie über die deutsch-russischen Beziehungen der Jahre 1929 bis 1935, Bonn, 1966, p. 78. The motion referred to Russian technicians under training in German factories.

26 Niclauss, ibid., p. 79.

27 On the differences between Papen and Brüning concerning the question of relations with the Soviet Union, see, Harvey Leonard Dyck, Weimar Germany and Soviet Russia, 1926-1933, London, 1966, Part Five, 7, especially pp. 250-252. The Soviet fears that the

government might be stabilized on the basis of Nazi support were not groundless. Papen did hope to draw the Nazis into such an arrangement. See, Koppel S. Pinson, Modern Germany: Its History and Civilization, 2nd ed., New York, London, 1966, pp. 476-477, and Franz von Papen, Der Wahrheit eine Gaffe, Munich, 1952, p. 172 ff., esp. p. 195.

28 Moscow recognized that the new balance in the Prussian Landtag had destroyed the basis for a national government which depended on support from Prussia. See, Pravda (lead), (26 April 1932), as cited in Inprekorr, No. 35, (29 April 1932), pp. 1087-1088.

29 See the documents on the development of Soviet-Japanese relations in the early months of 1932 in Jane Degas (ed.), Soviet Documents on Foreign Policy, Vol. II, 1925-1932, Oxford University Press, 1952, p. 523 ff.

30 See, Dyck, op. cit., p. 236 ff. and Degas, ibid., pp. 522 and 547-548. See also, the thoughtful review of Soviet foreign policy developments by Raphael Abromovitch, "Die Russenpolitik der Sowjetunion", RSD, No. 31, (11 Aug. 1932).

31 See, AA BRM, Akten betr. Russland, Vol. 27, (19 Oct. 1931) and see above, p. 182.

32 See, "Moskau über das Schicksal der KPD", RSD, No. 16, (28 April 1932).

33 Among those purged with Neumann or later were Remmele, Kuntz, Dahlem and the leader of the KgdF, Schlaffer. See the report on the Berlin Parteikonferenz (15-18 Oct.) in BHA (Koblenz), R/58 390, Pp. Berlin, (6 Nov. 1932); cf: Hermann Weber, Die Wandlung des deutschen Kommunismus: Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimarer Republik, Frankfurt am Main, 1966, Vol. II, entries on Dahlem, (p. 92), Kuntz, (p. 200), Schlaffer, (pp. 272-273), and Remmele, (pp. 255-256).

34 Weber, ibid., Vol. II, p. 234.

35 Ernst Thälmann, "Unsere Strategie und Taktik im Kampfe gegen den Faschismus", Inprekorr, No. 56, (8 July 1932), p. 1770.

36 See, "Die Erklärung der KPD im Preussischen Landtag", Inprekorr No. 52, (24 June 1932), p. 1646 and "Rote Einheitsfront gegen die Preussen-Reaktion: Aufruf des ZK. der KPD und der Fraktion der KPD im Preussischen Landtag", Inprekorr, No. 43, (24 May 1932), pp. 1319-1320.

37 See, "Unterredung von 20 SPD-Funktionären mit dem Genossen Thälmann, Inprekorr, No. 57, (12 July 1932), p. 1796. This is a report of a five hour long meeting held between Thälmann and representatives of the SPD and the ADGB. Twenty-one questions concerning the possibility of a united front between the SPD and the KPD were put to Thälmann. During the course of the meeting Thälmann did not surrender the united front from below position of the party. See also, Wie schaffen wir die Rote Einheitsfront?, Berlin, 1932.

38 See, for example, the manifesto on anti-Fascist action, RF, (10 July 1932). The Manifesto was issued in connection with an anti-Fascist congress which was sponsored by the KPD on the 10th July in Berlin. The congress was the occasion for strong united front appeals on the Fascist question. Once more, however, there was no suggestion of united front from above.

39 Cf: Ossip K. Flechtheim, Die KPD in der Weimarer Republik, Frankfurt am Main, 1969, pp. 280-281.

40 See, for example, Wilhelm Florin, "Fragen unserer Einheitsfront-politik", I, No. 7/8, (Aug. 1932), pp. 339-347, esp. pp. 343-345.

41 Thälmann, op. cit., (fn. 11 above), p. 289. Thälmann repeated his argument in July; see, Inprekorr, No. 56, (fn. 35 above); cf: Weingartner, op. cit., (fn. 6 above), p. 176, where this passage is also quoted.

42 Ernst Thälmann, "Die neue Etappe der Bolschewisierung der KPD.", I, No. 7/8, (Aug. 1932), p. 314; see also, Wilhelm Florin, op. cit., (fn. 40 above), p. 346.

43 Cf: the KPO commentary on the revived "ultra left" course, in GdS, No. 22, (22 Oct. 1932), p. 261.

44 See, Karolski, "Einige Lehren des Berliner Verkehrsarbeiterstreiks", KI, No. 19, (31 Dec. 1932), p. 384 and Florin, op. cit., (fn. 40 above).

45 See, for example, BHA (Koblenz), op. cit., (fn. 33 above); KPD Rundschreiben, "Schulungsmaterial des 12. EKKI Plenum...", HSA Düss. RDP, 30671, (Dec. 1932).

46 Weingartner, op. cit., (fn. 6 above), p. 176. Although Weingartner stresses the importance of Soviet foreign policy concerns for the determination of the KPD's tactics, he makes an exception in the case of the modified united front line of early 1932. This he ascribes to the difficulties within the KPD and the demand by

some functionaries for a more flexible united front policy. One must ask why such problems were acutely felt and relevant for the design of tactics between April and July 1932 but of less importance both earlier and later. Surely there is ample evidence of such internal difficulties throughout the years Weingartner considers. Although consistency has its own pitfalls, it seems better to trace the fluctuations in KPD tactics during 1932 to changes in Soviet foreign policy calculations rather than to the ebb and flow of other kinds of doubts among the KPD's functionaries. It is important that Weingartner relies heavily on East German sources at this point in his argument and the East German sources place too much emphasis on the KPD's questionable capacity to make its own decisions.

47 On the stagnation of the NSDAP after the July elections see, Ernst Thälmann, op. cit., (fn. 42 above), pp. 316-317.

48 This theme was already well developed before the summer of 1932; see above, p. 47 and p. 173. After the July elections Thälmann pointed to working class dissension within the Nazi ranks as an important reason for the "stagnation" of the NSDAP; he claimed that between April and July the KPD had succeeded in winning the support of five hundred thousand working class Nazis. Throughout 1932 the Communists continued to emphasize the growing discontent within the Nazi ranks; see, "Das XII. Plenum des EKKI und die KPD", I, No. 9/10, (Sept./Oct. 1932), p. 385.

49 See, D. Manuilsky, "Das Ende der kapitalistischen Stabilisierung" (XII. Plenum des EKKI), Inprekorr, No. 8, (18 Jan. 1933), pp. 255-256; Knorin, "Das Anwachsen des revolutionären Aufschwungs und die Aufgaben der KPD" (XII. Plenum des EKKI), Inprekorr, No. 13, (27 Jan. 1933), p. 438; I, No. 9/10, ibid., p. 378.

50 See, Thälmann, op. cit., (fn. 11 above), p. 289.

51 See, Theodor Neubauer, "Der Vormarsch des Kommunismus in Deutschland im Spiegel der Reichstagswahl und die neue Verschärfung der Klassengegensätze", Inprekorr, No. 93, (8 Nov. 1932), p. 2981.

52 Hans Jaeger, "Das Ende der Hitlerpsychose", RA, No. 21, (Nov. 1932), pp. 968-976.

53 I, No. 9/10, op. cit., p. 379 and p. 385.

54 Radek, at any rate, was convinced of the dominance of the army and industrial interests in any arrangement with Hitler, see,

Karl Radek, "Die politische Krise in Deutschland: 'Präsidialregierung'", Inprekorr, No. 69, (19 Aug. 1932), pp. 2197-2200. Cf: Siegfried Bahne, "Die Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands", in Erich Matthias and Rudolf Morsey, Das Ende der Parteien 1933, Düsseldorf, 1960, p. 689 and Weingartner, op. cit., (fn. 6 above), p. 174. As the concerns which were expressed earlier in 1932 demonstrated, it would be wrong to suggest that the Communists had complete faith in the army and altogether ruled out the possibility of a Hitler government. Cf: Niclauss, op. cit., p. 80, for the same point.

55 See, Gustav Hilger and Alfred G. Meyer, The Incompatible Allies: A Memoir-History of German Soviet Relations, 1918-1941, New York, 1953, p. 253.

56 On Schleicher's pro-Soviet foreign policy preferences see, Weingartner, op. cit., (fn. 6 above), pp. 182-185.

57 On Soviet optimism concerning Schleicher's prospects see, Niclauss, op. cit., (fn. 25 above), p. 81 and p. 81, fn. 270. Cf: N. Kornew, "Gregor Strasser", Izvestia, (12 Dec. 1932), in Inprekorr, No. 105, (16 Dec. 1932), pp. 3357-3358. This article is a review of Gregor Strasser's career which is on the whole favourable. Strasser's statesmanlike and non-fanatical qualities are sympathetically emphasized, "The biography of Strasser shows that we do not have to deal here with a fanatic and a wild petit bourgeois, which is at least in part the case with Hitler, but with a sober politician who surely and steadily, if in a round-about way, approaches his goal, i.e. a ministerial chair." (p. 3358).

58 Thus Stalin, at the Seventeenth Congress (CPSU-B) in January 1934, emphasized that Communist attitudes towards Hitler depended primarily on Hitler's policy towards the Soviet Union, "...some German politicians say that the USSR has now taken an orientation towards France and Poland; that from an opponent of the Versailles Treaty it has become a supporter of that treaty, and that this change is to be explained by the establishment of a Fascist regime in Germany. That is not true. Of course, we are far from being enthusiastic about the Fascist regime in Germany. But Fascism is not the issue here, if only for the reason that Fascism in Italy, for example, has not prevented the USSR from establishing the best relations with that country... The point is that Germany's policy has changed. The point is that even before the present German politicians came into power, and particularly after they came into power, a fight began in Germany between two political lines: between the old policy, which was reflected in the well-known treaties between the USSR and Germany, and the 'new' policy...and this 'new' policy is

obviously gaining the upper hand...", "Report to the Seventeenth Congress of the CPSU(B)", in J. Stalin, Problems of Leninism, Moscow, 1947, pp. 467-468.

59 See, Volk und Führer, No. 5, "Das Gesetz zur Ordnung der Nationalenarbeit", Leipzig, n.d. (1934). This is a camouflage title for an account of conditions in Oranienburg concentration camp by the former SPD member of the Reichstag, Gerhart Seger. See also, a Communist account which makes the same point, Rudolf Becher and Claus Bremer, (eds.), Immer noch Kommunist: Erinnerung von Paul Elflein, Hamburg, 1978, p. 91.

60 See, Antifaschistische Front (AF). This was the paper of the KPD dominated, Antifaschistische Arbeitervereinigung Europas which began publication after January 1933 in Danzig, Copenhagen and Paris. Its main focus during 1933 was the drive to make united front headway in the SA and the NSBO.

61 See, RF, (June 1934), "We Communists must realize that from the perspective of the armed confrontation between the revolution and the Fascist counterrevolution, the SA represents a decisive factor. We must help the deceived, simple SA people to organize the class conscious opposition...". See also, AF (Danzig), No. 2, (Sept. 1933). The approach continued after 1934 and as late as 1939 united front appeals were made to the SA and the SS. See, RF, No. 4, (1939) for a report on the "rebellion" of SA and SS "workers". For the "Trojan Horse" formulation for these tactics see RF, No. 6, (1936).

62 For the surprised reaction of the Communists to the fall of Schleicher and the appointment of Hitler as Chancellor see, Horst Duhnke, Die KPD von 1933 bis 1945, Köln, 1972, p. 101; Weingartner, ibid., pp. 94-97 and Flechtheim, op. cit., (fn. 39 above), pp. 286-288. Among the more interesting precautions against illegality which the KPD took was the attempt to dispose of some of their press assets. There was evidence of negotiations to this end as early as 1930; see, GdS, No. 7, (15 Feb. 1930) and SDPK, No. 3, (March 1930).

63 For an account of the confusion which reigned in the KPD emigration and in Moscow, see, Jürgen Kuczynski, Memorien: Die Erziehung des Jürgen Kuczynski zum Kommunisten und Wissenschaftler, Berlin (East) and Weimar, 1973, p. 266. Cf: Duhnke, ibid., pp. 63-64.

64 Margarete Buber-Neumann, Von Potsdam nach Moskau: Stationen eines Irrewegs, Stuttgart, 1957, p. 255. Buber-Neumann claims that Ulbricht was involved in these activities and worked from

"black lists" of names of comrades which were to be betrayed to the Gestapo. In this way he eliminated his enemies among the functionaries who remained in Germany. Cf: AA RD, KP, 1, Deutschebotschaft, Paris-AA Berlin, (21 Nov. 1933); according to this a member of the KPD Zentrale in Paris had revealed the names of KPD functionaries (Fritz Lux, Erich Krollmann and Ernst Noffke). Fritz Lux was arrested by the Gestapo in 1933 and later executed, see Weber, op. cit., (fn. 33 above), Vol. II, p. 212. Ulbricht was in Paris from 1933 to 1937, Weber, Vol. II, p. 327. Buber-Neumann also claims that Ulbricht worked against the release of Thälmann, (pp. 264-265).

65 See, Wilhelm Pieck, "Warum konnte der Faschismus in Deutschland siegen?", KI, (Basel), No. 7, (5 April 1935), pp. 533-569.

66 Pieck, ibid., pp. 539-544.

67 Otto Kirchheimer, "Weimar and What Then?", in Frederic S. Burin and Kurt L. Schell, Politics, Law and Social Change: Selected Essays of Otto Kirchheimer, New York and London, 1969, p. 43 and pp. 70-71.

68 For the KPD's strike call on the 30th January 1933 see, Flechtheim, op. cit., (fn. 39 above), p. 3287. Given the failure of the strike call of July 1932 and the weakness of the KPD in the trade unions there could have been little hope that this initiative would have led to a different result. Cf: Rolf Becker and Claus Bremer, op. cit., (fn. 59 above), p. 79, which suggests that the expectation that the appeal would fail was widespread in the party.

69 Friedrich Stampfer, "Die vierzehn Jahre der ersten deutschen Republik", 3rd ed., Hamburg, 1953, p. 579, as cited in Pinson, op. cit., (fn. 27 above), p. 476.

## CONCLUSIONS

Inevitably, a study of this kind is susceptible to telling criticism. In its attempt to break new ground and to highlight a hitherto under-regarded and in many ways novel perspective, it almost unavoidably underemphasizes the significance of established research, inspired by alternative points of view. It is at once -- or so it might be thought -- both too narrow in concentration and too broad in focus: for example, in its concern with the hitherto little-examined agitprop relations between the KPD and the Nazis (see especially Chapters III, IV and V) it scants the significance of more violent forms of competition.<sup>1</sup> Whilst, in attempting to provide an overview of KPD policies for a tumultuous ten-year span of national and international upheaval, it covers a very broad canvas indeed. Much remains to be done, of course; the need for further book-length research is obvious. Nor should this study's heuristic emphasis on continuity be seen as springing from a disregard for the very real changes in the contours of German politics and KPD policies over the period of a decade. This last point receives further notice in what follows.

Still, the facts are as they appear set out in the preceding chapters, and the arguments that underly and inform their discussion are valid. Hence, to concede the legitimacy of alternative perspectives is, clearly, in no way to compromise the soundness of the reasoning presented throughout this essay. What then of the differing points of view just alluded to and how may the themes of the present study be made integral with them?

Where others have emphasized Communist hostility to the Nazis, or have argued that this hostility was limited only by a parallel antipathy to Social Democracy, the present study seeks to contribute a useful shift in interpretive orientation, a complement to earlier and contemporary treatments. It contends that the Communists' on-going campaign against the SPD had as one of its important consequences the attempt to keep all questions of the KPD's relations with the Nazis secondary to its main goals and efforts. Official tactical doctrine as it found expression in the Communist press, theoretical journals and policy statements makes this point very clear. In the years between 1923 and 1933 there was not a single instance where the anti-Nazi dimension of the party's stance was assigned a clear and unqualified precedence over the central issues of the struggle against Social Democracy. It was argued throughout the preceding chapters that these priorities did not find their importance only at the level of theoretical abstraction but influenced both the content and the direction of the party's anti-Nazi efforts.

It was also argued that the party to a large extent failed to find the ways to implement its priorities. An important obstacle was the simple one that the struggle against the Nazis became, in practice, if not in tactical doctrine, all important for the party's survival. After 1928, especially daily conflict with the Nazis was the central preoccupation of the party's membership. It is one of the most interesting aspects of the party's overall tactical stance that this basic element of conflict did not resonate more than it did in the authoritative commentary on tactical questions. Instead there was,

throughout, ambiguity in the overall Communist position. The increasing Nazi threat did not lead to a more determined search for an understanding with other anti-Fascist forces nor did it lead to a greater emphasis, at the top, on the combative and confrontational tactics which had become dominant in the party's day to day life.<sup>2</sup> In addition to the tactics of confrontation, the party at all times argued for agitational and propaganda work as the more appropriate mode of struggle against the Nazis. There were, of course, reasons for this which had nothing to do with the party's priorities. There was the danger of illegality and state repression and there was the question of the combative limitations of the KPD. Nevertheless it was clear from the authoritative commentary on tactics that the emphasis on "ideological struggle" better reflected the priorities of the party hierarchy.

This is not, of course, the same thing as saying that the agitational and propaganda work actually occupied most of the attention of the Communist membership. Pitched battles and desperate self defence measures came to eclipse the party's efforts in the other direction and made the ambiguities and tensions in the overall Communist position obvious. Even during the years 1924 to 1928, when the Nazis posed much less of a threat to the KPD's organization and membership, the scope for persuasion, as reflected in the party's "united-front" efforts with Nazi supporters, was strictly limited. This fact was frequently noted in the pages above.<sup>3</sup> A crucial limitation on the tactics of persuasion was the attitude of most Nazis and the emphasis of the argument in Chapters III and V above was in no sense meant to obscure that fact. The suspicions and indeed the

murderous anti-Marxist/Communist hostility of the Nazis left little scope for these tactics.

An equally important constraint on this approach was present in the shape of the attitudes of most workers -- Communist and non-Communist, alike. The tension between the needs and perceptions of the rank and file and the priorities of the centre was a fact of life of the KPD which was frequently mentioned in this study. The stress placed in tactical doctrine on agitational and propaganda work among the Nazi following often revealed that tension. However much tactical doctrine might stress the "contradictions" in the Nazi ranks, most workers apparently possessed a much less subtle perception. They were, in the first place, clearly suspicious of the Nazis. The best evidence for this conclusion is provided by the great difficulty which the Nazis always experienced in gaining access to the workers even at times when they placed stress on the need to recruit workers and on the "socialist" element of their appeal. Especially in the major industrial areas where both the SPD and the KPD possessed a long and well-established tradition, Nazi "socialist" appeals could make little headway.<sup>4</sup> For these workers a "Schlagt die Faschisten..." position contained most of the truth. Even in 1923, when there may have been less certainty concerning the socialist and working class dimension of Nazism, there is evidence that many among the Communists were suspicious of "Schlageter" style tactics.<sup>5</sup>

These considerations, of course, point to a larger observation: in fact, to what is by now the obvious given the relationship between the two parties. As has been shown, conflict between Communists and Nazis was constrained and qualified by considerations which had little

to do with the basic clash of interests and perceptions which were represented by the two parties. There was some overlap of the two constituencies but not enough seriously to qualify the basic observation that the NSDAP and the KPD represented different and on balance opposed interests. No study of the relationship between these parties, no matter how concerned to emphasize other and less obvious dimensions of their relations could ever lose sight of that fact. The Nazis did not represent the interests of labour and most workers showed that they knew that. The stress which the Nazis placed on terror and on demonstrations in working class districts not only attests to their doctrinal anti-Marxism but also to their failure to make headway among the workers.

In this connection Bohnke, for example, notes, in apparent contrast to the emphasis of Chapter III, that political meetings where Nazis, Communists and Socialists were in attendance frequently ended in chaos and fighting.<sup>6</sup> Still, the "dialectal" tensions in the party's approach to the Nazis which was apparent in 1923 continued, if in a subdued form. In the cases mentioned above, the united front intentions of Communist speakers was apparent.<sup>7</sup> The same intention is also apparent from the KPD circulars which stress the importance of agitational work among the Nazis. The agitational, as distinct from the confrontational motive was one of the reasons for the decision to attend Nazi meetings in the first place, regardless of the actual Nazi response and regardless too of the actual importance attached to such tactics by most workers, who were on balance much more interested in heckling Nazi speakers and disrupting their meetings.

The different emphasis in Bohnke and in other of the studies of the NSDAP at the regional level follows from a very different perspective (but not of basic interpretation) from the one presented here, and probably stems from the concentration on the Nazis rather than on the KPD. Whatever positive response there was from the Nazi following to this dimension of KPD tactics does not disturb the prevailing view of the importance of the links between Nazism and conservative/reactary interests. The manifest anti-Marxism of most Nazis underscored that observation. The Nazis were, however, at times prepared to exploit the differences on the left and it was also true that some were open to Communist overtures and were susceptible to socialist propaganda. These aspects of Nazism were, however, not decisive and not important enough to ensure the success of Communist agitational efforts; still less could they be all that important for any overall interpretation of Nazism. To the extent that this study draws attention to any wider questions of the sociology and ideology of the NSDAP, it conforms readily enough with the established consensus in that it recognizes the anti-Communism of the NSDAP, its connections with middle class interests and the characteristic opportunism and cynicism of Nazi tactics.

The same difference of perspective is important for other aspects of the argument, especially with respect to the events which were or were not stressed in the analysis. For example, the Munich putsch and especially the 1926 referendum on the expropriation of the princely estates are of crucial importance for an understanding of Nazism but are not necessarily central to an understanding of the Communist

approach to the Nazis. Thus Noakes, for example, appropriately emphasizes that the internal Nazi debates on the question of the expropriation were important for an interpretation of Nazi "socialist" pretensions and for the party's efforts to gain a working class following between 1925 and 1928.<sup>8</sup> Kele, in his anxiety to stress the "working class" dimension of the NSDAP would have done well to reflect more on the meaning of these events.<sup>9</sup> The Communists, on the other hand, did not so much require additional evidence for their understanding of the NSDAP as a reactionary and Fascist movement. Their analysis had established that much from the very first moment they noticed the Nazis. Nor did those events prevent them from continuing to stress the contradictions within the NSDAP; that is, the contradiction between the interests and orientation of the Nazi leaders and the "misled" proletarian and lower middle class elements among their followers. Any evidence for the reactionary outlook of the Nazi leaders was exploited in Communist agitational material designed to explode Nazi "social demogogy" and it must be said that most of the Nazi leaders most of the time provided them with numerous opportunities to follow that line.

Since the whole weight of the Communist commentary on the 1926 referendum is concerned with the KPD's relations with the SPD it is difficult to judge if Hitler's decision had much of a bearing on the agitational dimension of KPD tactics. The KPD did not, in any case, drop these tactics after 1926. The Communist reaction to the Munich putsch, which is dealt with in Chapter III above, seemed to confirm the value of agitational and propaganda methods. The banning of the

NSDAP and the imprisonment of Hitler was interpreted as a defeat for "petit bourgeois" Fascism by other forms of Fascism which were more closely linked to established capitalist interests. The NSDAP constituency was now available for the Communists.<sup>10</sup> Thus, even though the Communists recognized that the Nazis and the "Volkische were much less important in German politics between 1923 and 1928, they nevertheless continued to see the petit bourgeois following of the Fascist groups as a suitable target for the KPD's "united front" efforts. That much is clear from the resolutions of the Fifth Comintern World Congress which called for the continuation of such agitational efforts.

The contradictions which the Communists identified in the NSDAP were real enough. The Nazis did in fact have a lower class constituency which the Communists could appeal to. The Communists pointed to defections and discontent, especially within the SA, as evidence for this and the cases where Nazis did defect to the Communists were adduced as evidence also for the potency and relevance of the Communist appeal. Fluctuation and defection, however, cut both ways and what was more important, the Nazis showed a greater ability to live with their contradictions than the Communists allowed. Perhaps at some point in the future the contradictions would have proved more important but, despite the results of the November 1932 Reichstag elections, there was no way of being sure of this. In the meantime the Communists exaggerated the potential of their appeal especially among the Mittelstand supporters of Hitler. Their insistence on an underlying community of interest between their own supporters and the lower class

elements among the Nazis was overstated, and too much overlooked the power of the more irrational dimensions in the Nazi appeal -- its racism, its nationalism and its hero worship. The account of Nazism provided in Chapter I, while brief, makes clear the inevitable harm which would follow from the Communist error in granting NSDAP ideology more rational coherence than it possessed. In particular, it makes clear the error of an over-insistence on the links between Nazism and established economic and class interests. The Communists largely overlooked, in other words, the ability of Nazism to act as an independent political force in German politics.<sup>11</sup> In short, even though the Communists tried to exploit and to re-interpret the Nazi positions, their basic rationalist stance, their ties to the Soviet Union and their internationalist outlook generally, were serious handicaps with respect to much of the Nazi following. Ironically, the Communist efforts in this direction conceded too much to the Nazi outlook.

This is not to say that everything in the KPD's orientation led them inevitably to failure. If they were not so well placed to counter Nazi demagogic, they had a larger chance, at least electorally, when it came to the working class. Although in this respect it is exceedingly difficult to isolate the KPD's exploitation of nationalist issues or the militant anti-Fascism of most Communists as factors which contributed to the party's electoral successes after 1930, these aspects of the KPD's position might well have been important. Given the internationalist traditions of the German working class movement, it is easy enough to assume that for most workers the KPD's insistence

on the intimate links between nationalist issues and more general considerations of capitalist and imperialist exploitation would be more intelligible and acceptable than the corresponding Nazi positions.

Eva Cornelia Schöck argues convincingly that it was the general militancy of the KPD on a range of issues which when taken together with the SPD's failure to secure the interests of its supporters led to an increasing audience for the KPD among workers.<sup>12</sup> As it turned out, this was not a decisive factor in breaking the SPD's hold on the factories but there can be little doubt that the continuing crisis and the growing disillusionment with the SPD were important electorally and provided encouragement for the KPD's electoral and overall strategic stance. Even in the factories there were grounds for optimism. As was noted above in Chapter V the Communists found it easier after 1930 to circumvent the SPD dominated union structure when it came to the question of unauthorized strikes. This must have been some indication of a growing acceptance, if not of rival KPD organizations and leadership, then at least of the Communist point of view on many basic economic questions.

It remains, however, a central contention of this study that the KPD chose its strategic policies and saw this choice vindicated less on the basis of the successes or failures of particular tactics than out of regard for Soviet and Comintern evaluations of Communist interests in Weimar politics. Thus, although there were some doubts at the top, notably in the early months of 1932, the SPD was judged to be the more important strategic enemy of Soviet interests and this fact was reflected in the KPD's policies and tactics.

In the existing literature Weingartner, especially, stresses the importance of the Soviet and Comintern constraints on the KPD. Yet even after Weingartner's useful contribution much remained to be said and there was a clear need to extend the analysis. Weingartner, for example, claims that it was only after 1928 that Soviet strategic calculations made themselves felt as an important influence on the KPD. The chapters above clearly demonstrate that such a conclusion is misleading and that the basic hostility to Social Democracy, on strategic grounds, was present all along as an important consideration for an understanding of the KPD's orientation in Weimar. The importance of this point is obscured by the fact that it only became of crucial importance for the KPD during the crisis of 1930-1933. The roots of the KPD's priorities during those years, however, extend back in time at least as far as 1923. At every stage the Social Democrats were identified as a serious obstacle to good relations between Germany and the Soviet Union and KPD opposition to the SPD was consistently linked to this theme. This was true during 1923 and during every year thereafter. Nor can it be said that this consideration was present at the periphery of the party's concerns. There is not a single assessment of the SPD on the Communist side which did not stress the dangerous anti-Soviet orientation of the SPD and the need for the party to combat the Social Democrats for this reason (and of course for other reasons). The theme was present in every KPD and every Comintern conference, in the theoretical journals, in the press and in the party's internal circulars. The influence on the KPD's propaganda efforts is equally clear. The defence of the Soviet Union theme is

always present and is especially and very firmly linked to the propaganda campaign against Versailles and the various other treaties and accords which were concluded between Germany and the Western powers.<sup>13</sup>

As noted at the start of this chapter, the preceding remarks do not constitute a comprehensive claim for continuity in KPD policies and certainly not in German politics. Indeed, the KPD's policies changed on a variety of problems over time; though they did not change on the question of whether the SPD was or was not an enemy of Soviet interests. The principal change was in the mode of struggle itself; the emphasis shifted between a united front from below and a united front from above approach according to whether a "left" or a "right" general line was dominant. These themes have been well explored in earlier research on the KPD.<sup>14</sup> The KPD's response to the Nazis also changed over time and reflected especially the KPD perception of the changing importance of the NSDAP for Weimar politics. Hence the otherwise surprising discovery that for a time, after 1923, the NSDAP scarcely impinged in any way on the KPD's tactical and strategic calculations.<sup>15</sup>

Nor is it clear that Weingartner adequately stresses the actual impact of these considerations on KPD tactics. The direct influence of Soviet interests on the decision to support the Stahlhelm and Nazi sponsored referendum in 1931 is now beyond dispute, as is Soviet influence on the programme of National and Social Liberation in the summer of 1930. These aspects of KPD policy are emphasized here, in Weingartner, and elsewhere.<sup>16</sup> There were, however, less clear but

still interesting cases where Weingartner is much less satisfactory.

In light of Communist accounts of the BVG strike for example,

Weingartner's merely passing reference to this strike is unfortunate.<sup>17</sup>

It is highly significant that a strike which the Communists themselves pointed to as the most valuable and instructive example of their

"united front" line involved them, in their own view, in close co-operation with the Nazis and in opposition to the SPD. Here too was a good example of what the party's priorities could mean at the most practical level of the KPD's work. It is moreover an example which has hitherto received little attention in the literature.

On the other hand Weingartner gives less weight than this study to the limitations of the KPD as a "bolshevized" instrument of Soviet purposes. He provides, for example, only one brief reference to the KgdF and he largely neglects the whole question of the difficulties which the party experienced in its attempt to counter Nazi terror and more generally the influence which the party's priorities had on this struggle. As was shown in Chapter IV above, the party had in practice to pay more attention to the Nazis than its official, theoretical, statements of priorities suggested. On the other hand, those same priorities had the effect, in practice, of stretching the resources of the KPD and of confusing its purposes: the confusion of purpose was even evident in the case of the Communist organizations which were explicitly directed to counter Nazi terror.

The emphasis in Weingartner and even to some extent the emphasis in the present study, points to a difficult problem of interpretation, namely the problem of arriving at an overall balanced view and

balanced judgement of the KPD's role under Weimar. In one way or another the difficulties of striking such a balance are evident in any interpretation of the KPD. Even the careful and thorough work of Hermann Weber misses something of the essence of the KPD. Weber places an analytically useful stress on factional strife in the KPD and he traces the course of debate and factional division on a range of issues which faced the party. He shows convincingly how his invocation of the categories of factional division are useful for an analysis of the KPD's relations with the Soviet Union and its relations with the SPD. The same categories are considerably less helpful, however, for a discussion of the KPD's response to the Nazis. In an important sense the Nazi question broke through all the KPD's established factional divisions. Left and right oppositionists found common ground here and at some level, which must remain difficult to establish, so too did the working class movement as a whole.

It is this fact which is at the heart of all difficulties in judging where the stress ought to be placed in any assessment of the KPD's response to the Nazis. For when all is said, when full weight is attached to the complicating factor of the tie with Soviet purposes and interests, the KPD remained a bitter enemy of the NSDAP and was recognized as such by the Nazis.

Horst Schumacher is correct to observe that the theoretical and tactical pronouncements of the KPD and the Comintern did not provide a complete guide to the party's approach to the Nazis.<sup>18</sup> To the extent that his argument transcends apology for past mistakes, it points to an important truth. The militant anti-Nazism of the party

is much more obvious when one turns from a consideration of the theoretical pronouncements on strategy made by the hierarchy and looks instead at the actual experience of the party in the streets. Anti-Nazi militancy was evident from the emphasis which local party organizations placed on anti-Fascist defence measures, and it was more obvious still in the frequent and bloody pitched battles between Communists and Nazis. From the moment of first contact, violent confrontation was present and violent confrontation forms the inescapable background against which other aspects of the relationship can be explored. Between 1930 and 1933 especially the police files were replete with accounts of these events.<sup>19</sup> But the police files are hardly needed to make this point. For the citizen of Weimar violent confrontation was the most visible and important dimension of the relationship between the parties. Full scale pitched battles such as took place in Altona in July 1932 provided a lasting testimony to the depth of the enmity which separated the parties.<sup>20</sup>

Yet, if the search for balance is to continue one must attempt to go beyond the consensus established in the East German sources, and even beyond its more convincing representatives such as Horst Schumacher. An element of apology does after all remain in the East German work. One cannot erase the past influence of the party's theoretical and official priorities by drawing attention to the obvious anti-Nazi militancy of the rank and file. Nor will it do to try to disguise other aspects of the party's work by re-writing such materials as Ulbricht's report on the BVG strike. Alliances were made, and broken, at the centre; priorities no matter how difficult and uncertain in execution, were established at the centre; critics

were purged from the ranks; support was given or withheld from subordinates; the relationship with the Comintern and the Soviet Union was given substance -- all this was done at the centre of the party.

The official priorities were important in a more general sense. As the Nazi threat increased the morale and effectiveness of the party's organizations required clearer guidance from above than was in fact given. The party did not succeed in balancing the factors which were shaping its policies and as a result it did not succeed in concentrating its attentions, not even its anti-Fascist attentions, on the Nazis. Given the seriousness of the Nazi threat, too much energy was absorbed in competition with the KPD's working class rivals. Certainly the other working class parties thought so. The Social Democratic and Communist Opposition press is full of accusations that the Communists were more interested in attacking them than the Nazis. It was not just a question of abuse received in the columns of the Communist press. They complained too about much more practical matters -- the KPD's parliamentary stance, Communist sabotage work among their followings, attacks by Communists on their members and the failure of the KPD to co-operate in pursuit of common enterprises. Moreover, the cases of co-operation between the KPD and the NSDAP remained a source of outrage for the other working class parties even when they were viewed against the background of Communist sacrifice in combat with the Nazis.

Schumacher's observation that the overall direction of the party's efforts differed from its stated priorities, points, at least

in part, to the breakdown of discipline and consensus on the Nazi question. In this connection, the oft repeated strictures against "isolated acts of terror" testify to the concern at the top that an undue emphasis on violent opposition to the Nazis would too much distract the party from its central concerns.<sup>21</sup> The ideological mode of conflict was less threatening to priorities. It more clearly expressed the secondary status of the anti-Nazi campaign; it more clearly linked anti-Nazi with anti-SPD tactics; and it offered whatever hope there was of controlling the radical nationalist sentiments which were feeding the Nazis. The last point is an important one since there is ample evidence to suggest that from the Soviet point of view Nazi nationalism was a useful influence on the orientation of German foreign policy. That assessment was apparent in 1923 and notwithstanding the doubts which were explored in Chapter VI above, it was apparent again between 1930 and 1932. To the extent that the NSDAP figured at all in Communist strategic calculations between 1924 and 1930 this same assessment can be seen to have held also during those years.

To speak of "controlling the radical, nationalist sentiments", in this context, does not represent a concession to the Nazis; i.e. it does not mean that the Communists sought to reach a working understanding with the Nazis, to enlist them as allies, or to encourage them in their efforts to achieve power. The Communists frequently employed the term "neutralize" in connection with the agitprop aspects of their anti-Nazi tactics and this term provides a valuable clue concerning their intentions. The forces of German nationalism needed to be directed at the appropriate targets of

Western imperialism. In other words, the Soviet Union sought common cause with German nationalism as distinct from Nazism. The KPD could be directed to oppose such forces, most notably those of the SPD, which were obstacles to such a common cause. At the same time it could try to capture the nationalist sentiment directly, in competition with right wing nationalist forces, for a version of nationalism which stressed the common Soviet and German opposition to Western imperialism. Hence in the Communist press, in the Reichstag, in election campaigns and in other propaganda campaigns the party always championed the cause of opposition to Versailles and pursued other nationalist issues. Through its agitational work among the followers of the Nazis, among other nationalist groups and within the Wehrmacht it could also try to encourage a pro-Soviet and anti-Western version of German nationalism.

In addition to its connections with Soviet interests, such "neutralization" of right-wing strengths was part of the KPD's programme of self-defence against Nazi thuggery. Hence the stress, referred to above in Chapter IV, on the use of agitational literature to deflect Nazi hostility and to undermine Nazi power by winning away Nazi supporters. In view of the too-often weak defensive capabilities of the KPD's combat organizations as they were revealed in actual battle with the Nazis it could be easily argued (and was indeed argued by the Communists at the time) that agitational methods offered the best chance of preserving the party from Nazi violence.

In this regard Communist vocabulary is perhaps an obstacle to an interpretation of the direction of Communist efforts. Only rarely did "united front" indicate a concern to reach a broad understanding

with another party. It far more often implied the attempt by the Communist side to assert their leadership over common enterprises and to use their influence and leadership to undermine and re-direct rival organizations. In other words the "united front" idea was a weapon in the Communist arsenal, both with respect to the SPD and to the NSDAP. Moreover, in practice, it was always difficult for the party and for the outside observer to establish a clear line between the two formulations ("from above", "from below") of united front tactics. In practice both formulations required that a balance be struck between co-operation and competition with the members of the target group. In any case, the examples of "united front from above" work with the Nazis, which were set out in Chapter V, represented just one among the several practical devices which were at the disposal of the KPD in its two front war against the SPD and the Nazis. Given the ferocity of Nazi provocation these finer points in the discussion of the party's united front tactics might be seen as rather beside the point and indeed they were seen in just that light by many in the party. The realities of the Nazi terror cast into doubt the more subtle dimension of the anti-Nazi campaign and more generally it raised a serious question concerning the underlying wisdom of the KPD's official priorities.

At the same time, it would be wrong to conclude that the growing seriousness of the Nazi threat was in itself sufficient to cause the KPD membership to alter the intensity of their opposition to the SPD. That this hostility was vigorous, and far from merely theoretical, is demonstrated by such phenomena as the Communist-SPD clashes which

occurred even in Hitler's concentration camps. Nor should hindsight make the SPD's "lesser evil" formula seem more progressive than it then appeared to Communist leadership and rank and file alike: time and again the SPD allied themselves with reactionary economic and social policies, and implemented emergency administrative and legislative measures to the detriment of the SPD's own working class supporters. From top to bottom the KPD was only too well aware of this dimension of German Social Democracy; Communist hostility towards the SPD had deep roots.

"To Communists with personal, family or neighbourhood memories of the activities of the Freikorps in 1919-1920, directed as they were by Social Democratic Ministers, the 'social fascist' line of 1928-1933 will not have seemed a pure rationalization of ulterior interests on the part of the KPD leaders."<sup>22</sup>

In other ways, too, the SPD shared the responsibility with the Communists for sustaining the split in the working class movement. They did little, for example, to exploit the doubts which arose on the Communist side during 1932. More generally, given their own recognition of the overriding importance of the struggle against Hitler, their "lesser evil" approach could have taken another direction. They might, in the first place, have given more consideration than they did to softening the anti-Communism of the SPD press. In view of the importance of Soviet interests to the KPD, they could also have dropped or modified their persistent criticism of Soviet foreign and domestic policies.

Even more to the point the SPD was for very long periods in a strong position to give practical effect to its hostility towards the Communists. The KPD was, in particular, a frequent target for the attentions of SPD-dominated police forces. The spectacle of the

brutal suppression of unarmed Communists during the May Day demonstrations in Berlin in 1929 left a lasting legacy of hate and provided the KPD with a powerful symbol for its anti-Social Fascist propaganda.<sup>23</sup> In other words, the bitter enmity between the two parties doubtlessly played its part in sustaining the credibility of the struggle against Social Democracy even after the Nazi breakthrough in 1929-1930; as did the continuing argument that the SPD, with its hold on the factories and unions, was the main obstacle to the KPD's revolutionary hopes.

The Social Fascist argument and the degree of resonance which it undoubtedly found among the Communist rank and file raises a more general problem of interpretation. The degree to which the concerns of the rank and file both made themselves felt at the centre and worked also to constrain the choices of the leadership is an intriguing point for future enquiry. This problem deserves more attention than it has hitherto received and there is a clear need for more research at the level of the KPD's local organizations.<sup>24</sup> Such research must, however, come up against formidable problems of sources and interpretation and it is here, especially, that fuller access to the SED archives would be helpful.

As the present study bears directly on such problems it has noted the evidence for uncertainty and low morale among the rank and file as an indication of the tensions which were generated in the party by the priorities of the leaders. In addition, the concerns of the local organizations of the KPD, and the realities of their day to day struggle with the Nazis was interpreted as the principal obstacle in practice to a fuller implementation of the party's line with its

stress on the campaign against social Democracy and its insistence on more and more effective agitational efforts among the Nazi following. These conclusions are based on the warnings, guidelines and disciplinary strictures which can be found in the party's internal circulars and in the internal information sheets and papers of the KPD and KPD affiliated organizations. To the extent that the concerns of the membership can be seen as exerting pressure for a fundamental reversal of official priorities they did not make much impact. That is not, however, to say that they did not find confirmation in the attitudes of individual Communist leaders.

Despite the "Bolshevization" process there were still some at the top who, though they stayed in the party, remained critical of official priorities. Clara Zetkin was one of these, as was Willi Münzenberg.<sup>25</sup> Münzenberg's case is particularly revealing of the conflicting pressures which operated on the party. The emphasis of his work in the IAH and also the emphasis in the publications which he directed was often substantially different from that of the prevailing line. More than most in leading positions he was impressed by the Nazi threat. In the face of official reassurances he remained pessimistic about the likelihood of a Hitler government and about the direction of party policy. Babette Gross in her biography of Münzenberg has convincingly traced his efforts to work within a party line which left less and less room for his version of a "united front" policy which was both more flexible and assigned a higher priority to the anti-Nazi struggle.<sup>26</sup>

The dilemma which faced people like Münzenberg is well illustrated by his reaction to the KPD's decision to support the Stahlhelm and

Nazi sponsored referendum in 1931. He was one of those who opposed the decision and he did so in the strongest terms.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless in the end he yielded to Bolshevik discipline and supported the decision. In Gross's words for Munzenberg, too, "Parteibefehl war Parteibefehl".<sup>28</sup> Although Munzenberg was not at the centre of party decision-making and factional dispute, his predicament gains a more general significance from the fact that he was in the forefront of those in the KPD who retained independence of mind and who at the same time managed to attract a wide and sympathetic audience for the Communist point of view.

The line of enquiry pursued in the pages above has been directed at just the problem which faced people like Munzenberg. What in the end accounted for the ambiguous situation that the party found itself in? What were the roots of the party's priorities and its judgments on the Nazi question? What impact did those priorities have on the direction of Communist policy? No one at the moment can claim the final word on these large questions. If, however, the attempt to answer them is not to be abandoned altogether, the approach must be as comprehensive as it is here. That is, it must recognize that the Communist positions and priorities of the last years of the Republic had their roots in an earlier experience and an earlier evaluation of Nazism. It must recognize too that the KPD's ability to form its own strategic and tactical evaluations -- its ability, in other words, to respond in its own way to its own perceptions of its needs -- was throughout significantly constrained by its connections with the Comintern and the Soviet Union. From the perspective of its political tradition and the social and economic interests which it represented the KPD's opposition to Nazism was fundamental. The KPD's failure and its tragedy lay in the fact that this reality never found its full expression.

## FOOTNOTES

- 1 But see the references to the importance of confrontation with the Nazis cited above, p. 24, p. 35, p. 57, p. 69, n. 5, p. 125, p. 130 ff., pp. 154-155, pp. 188-193.
- 2 The early months of 1932 provided the most important exception to this general observation. At that time the Communist Commentary on tactical questions pointed more clearly to the positive value of aggressive tactics by emphasizing their importance for mobilizing the workers behind the KPD. That is, such commentary provided more positive authoritative support for tactics which had in any case come to absorb much of the efforts of the party's organizations. Cf: above, p. 274.
- 3 See above, pp. 101-104, pp. 107-108 and p. 140.
- 4 See especially, Wilfried Böhnke, Die NSDAP im Ruhrgebiet 1920-1933 Bonn-Bad Godesberg, 1974, "Part C".
- 5 See above, p. 121, n. 85.
- 6 Böhnke, ibid.
- 7 See above, p. 160, n. 35.
- 8 Jeremy Noakes, The Nazi Party in Lower Saxony 1921-1933, Oxford University Press, 1971, pp. 101-104.
- 9 It is apparent throughout Kele's work that he has too much stressed the importance of the "workers" for the NSDAP. This is true both for his interpretation of Nazi propaganda and for his understanding of the sociology of the NSDAP. With respect to the latter point a major difficulty stems from the fact that he never draws a clear distinction between the "Mittelstand" and the "workers" as social categories.
- 10 This point is made in an important Communist analysis of the Munich putsch. See Malepartus, "Der Hitler-Prozess in München", Inprekorr, No. 38, (25 March 1924), pp. 432-434, and cf: above, p. 133 and p. 159, n. 26.
- 11 As was pointed out in Chapter I above, some of the Communist analysis, especially that provided by Thalheimer, did allow for an independent political role for Fascism. See above, p. 62, n. 20.
- 12 See, Eva Cornelia Schock, Arbeitslosigkeit und Rationalisierung Die Lage der Arbeiter und die kommunistische Gewerkschaftspolitik 1920-1928, Frankfurt, New York, 1977. Cf: Babette Gross, Willi Munzenberg; Eine politische Biographie, Stuttgart, 1967; p. 241. Gross draws attention here to the importance of the KPD's anti-Nazism for its elector success during 1932.

13 This point has been underscored in the East German literature. See, for example, Herman Jürgen, "Zur Tätigkeit der KPD im Reichstag von 1924 bis 1929", Arbeiterbewegung und Parlamentarismus, 1977, No. 1, pp. 53-59. Jürgen argues that the defence of Soviet interests and the attempt to promote "normal and friendly relations between Germany and the Soviet Union" (p. 58) were central to the KPD's parliamentary work.

14 See especially Hermann Weber, Die Wandlung des deutschen Kommunismus: Die Stalinisierung der KPD in der Weimarer Republik, 2 Vols., Frankfurt am Main, 1969.

15 See above, Chapter III, esp. pp. 127-130.

16 See, Babette Gross, ibid., pp. 228-230.

17 In general, the discussion of these aspects of KPD tactics as set out in the chapters above, rests on fuller sources and on a more comprehensive use of the Communist press than is true in the case of Weingartner's book; hence, Weingartner's neglect of important detail.

18 Horst Schumacher, "Der VII. Kongress der Kommunistischen Internationale zu den Aufgaben und Möglichkeiten der sozialdemokratischen Bewegung im Kampf gegen Faschismus und Krieg", BZG, No. 1, (1979), pp. 42-54.

19 The police files contain monthly and yearly summaries of clashes between Communists and Nazis and clashes involving other parties. See, for example, "Übersicht über die in Bayern in der Zeit vom 1. Jan. bis 31. Dez. 1931 verübten politischen Gewalttaten", BHSA Abt. II, MA 100 426. This report lists one hundred and eighty-nine incidents involving the NSDAP; sixty-three involving the Reichsbanner and twenty-seven involving the KPD. See also, NSSA (Hannover), Han Des. 122a XI, Massnahme zum Schutz der Republik, Vol. 82, "Zusammenstossen politischer Gegner, (18 Dec. 1930). This report lists clashes in Hannover for 1930. According to this, there were ten clashes between the NSDAP and the KPD; twenty-six between the NSDAP and the SPD/Reichsbanner; one between the KPD and the SPD/Reichsbanner. The KPD circulars also carry summaries of these events. See, for example, KPD Rundschreiben, (April 1931), HSA (Duss.), Duss. 30642(b), Pp. Duisberg, (17 April 1931). This last notes that between January and March 1931 one hundred and one "revolutionary workers" were murdered by the Nazis.

20 Cf: Babette Gross, op cit., p. 242; Ossip K. Flechtheim, Die KPD in der Weimarer Republik, Frankfurt am Main, 1969, p. 284; Alan Bullock, Hitler: A Study in Tyranny, New York, 1961, p. 177.

21 This point is spelled out in the KPD's circulars. See, for example, KPD Rundschreiben, Bl. Ruhrgebiet, (24 Oct. 1931), HSA (Duss.),

RDP, 30657(f), Pp. Essen, (3 Nov. 1931). This is a strong appeal to Communist activists to emphasize ideological struggle against the Nazis. The circular insists on the need to link self defence measures with the agitprop dimension of the KPD's tactics and to recognize that complete reliance on physical force was wrong. See also, KPD Rundschreiben, Bl. Ruhrgebiet, HSA (Düss.), RDP, 30657(f), Pp. Bochum, (Dec. 1931). Numerous articles in the Communist press took the same line. See, for example, "Gegen den individuellen Terror, für den Massenkampf der antifaschistische Aktion", RF, No. 117, (31 May 1932). Cf: Babette Gross, ibid., p. 240. Gross notes Stalin's opposition to the tactics of violent confrontation.

22 This passage makes up part of a personal communication from Professor Timothy Mason of St. Peter's Oxford to whom I am indebted for reminding me of the profound moral and emotional elements in the Communist reaction to the SPD's betrayal of working class hopes.

23 Cf: Ossip Flechtheim, op. cit., pp. 253-254. Flechtheim personally witnessed these events.

24 See, Eve Rosenhaft, "The KPD in Berlin", unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Kings College, Cambridge, 1979. This work was brought to my attention at too late a date to be considered in the argument above.

25 See above, p. 33.

26 Babette Gross, op. cit., esp. p. 222 ff. and the Foreword to Gross's book by Arthur Koestler.

27 Babette Gross, ibid., p. 228.

28 Babette Gross, ibid., p. 229.

**APPENDIX I**

APPENDIX I

VOTING ALIGNMENTS IN THE REICHSTAG 1924-1932\*

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>NUMBER OF VOTES</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL</u>	<u>KPD-NSDAP</u>	<u>KPD-SPD</u>	<u>SPD-Z</u>	<u>NSDAP-DNVP</u>	<u>KPD-DNVP</u>
1924	19	9.6	+0.94 (18)	-0.84 (16)	+0.9 (17)	+0.73 (14)	+0.57 (11)
1925	21	10.6	+0.57 (11)	-0.71 (15)	+0.52 (11)	+0.68 (13)	+0.68 (13)
1926	26	13.2	-0.58 (15)	+0.58 (15)	+0.69 (18)	+0.65 (17)	+0.65 (17)
1927	24	12.2	+0.66 (16)	+0.62 (15)	-0.66 (16)	-0.58 (14)	-0.79 (19)
1928	17	8.6	+0.88 (15)	-0.88 (15)	+0.88 (15)	-0.58 (10)	+0.52 (9)
1929	17	8.6	+0.52 (9)	-0.58 (10)	+0.70 (12)	+0.82 (14)	-0.64 (11)
1930	26	13.2	+0.80 (21)	-0.65 (17)	+0.53 (14)	+0.65 (17)	+0.57 (15)
1931	32	16.2	+0.96 (31)	-0.96 (31)	+1.00 (32)	+0.96 (31)	+0.96 (31)
1932	15	7.6	+1.00 (15)	-0.73 (11)	+0.80 (12)	+0.66 (10)	+0.53 (8)
<u>TOTALS</u>	<u>197</u>	<u>99.8</u>	<u>+0.73</u> <u>(145)</u>	<u>-0.68</u> <u>(135)</u>	<u>+0.70</u> <u>(139)</u>	<u>+0.67</u> <u>(133)</u>	<u>+0.58</u> <u>(115)</u>

SUBTOTALS

1924-

1928

107

54.3

+0.66

-0.61

+0.64

+0.57

+0.51

(71)

(66)

(68)

(61)

(55)

1924-

1928

without

81

41.1

+0.74

-0.67

+0.63

+0.51

-0.53

1926

(60)

(55)

(51)

(42)

(43)

\*The numbers are simple percentage ratios. Given the high degree of voting discipline for all five parties, percentage ratios are adequate to establish the simple relationships required for this discussion. The plus indicates a positive correlation; the minus indicates a negative correlation. The numbers in brackets are the number of votes for each calculation. The basis for the selection of votes was random within the following framework: 1) votes were selected from several non-consecutive months in each of the years; 2) votes were discarded when either the KPD or the NSDAP delegations were not present in the Reichstag; 3) an attempt was made to balance the period of highest positive correlation between the KPD and the NSDAP (1931-1932) with the period of the lowest positive correlation, (1926-1927). The votes from 1931-1932 represent 23.8% of the total and those from 1926-1927 represent 25.4%. The votes were taken from Verhandlungen des Reichstags, Stenographische Berichte, for 1924-1932, Vols. 381, 383, 388, 391, 394, 428, 433, 444 and 446.



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