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Mittag, Jürgen

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# The Social Democratic Party of Württemberg during the Republic of Weimar An Analysis of the Members of Parliament

*Jürgen Mittag\**

Abstract: The historical evolution of a party, even of a regional section, is hard to understand without its political-parliamentary leadership elite. Consequently, the biographical background of the Social Democratic politicians in the *Landtag* of Württemberg during the Republic of Weimar and the resulting parliamentary functions are of central significance to the Social Democracy in Württemberg and its position within the party system.

## Introduction

In almost every area of historical endeavour, research has been done in an increasingly detailed manner, this in the case in the two interconnected fields of parliamentary and party research. Already in the 1950s, Werner Conze and Gerhard A. Ritter insisted on systematical studies in regional history as foundation for a real understanding of parties and a prerequisite for general conclusions<sup>1</sup>. At the beginning of the 1990s, Karl Schmitt repeated this postulate in his criticism of current party research. He argued that such research often regards parties as monolithical formations without any regional differentiations<sup>2</sup>. His theory of linking party history with regional history provides the basic framework for this article.

\* Address all communications to Jürgen Mittag, Institut für Politische Wissenschaft und Europäische Fragen, Universität Köln, Gottfried-Keller-Str. 6, D-50931 Köln, E-Mail: [mittag@uni-koeln.de](mailto:mittag@uni-koeln.de).

<sup>1</sup> See Conze, Werner Wahl *Soziologie und Parteigeschichte, Neue französische Forschungen*, in: Hermann, Alfred (ed.): *Aus Geschichte und Politik, Festschrift zum 70. Geburtstag von Ludwig Bergstraesser*, Düsseldorf 1954, p. 244 ff. See Ritter, Gerhard A.: *Die Arbeiterbewegung im Wilhelminischen Reich, Die Sozialdemokratische Partei und die freien Gewerkschaften 1890-1900*, Berlin 1958, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> See Schmitt, Karl: *Parteien und regionale politische Traditionen, Eine Einführung*, in: Oberndörfer, Dieter / Schmitt, Karl (ed.): *Parteien und regionale politische Traditionen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, Berlin 1991, p. 6.

The examination of the *Landtagsfraktion* of the SPD<sup>3</sup> in Württemberg is an interesting research topic as it provides a wealth of new information. Neither the individuals of the *Landtagsfraktion* nor the parliamentary group as a whole with its organizational and relating structures, have been previously thoroughly researched. Like no other party in the first period of the Republic of Weimar, in the *Reich* or in Württemberg, the SPD was particularly influential in shaping the first German republic. The co-operation of the Social Democratic movement and the middle class groups can be considered the foundation of the functioning of the state. The SPD was regarded as the most important stabilizing party and identifies itself as such. For this reason, the tragic end of the Republic of Weimar can also be assumed as the end of the Social Democratic Party at that time. Moreover, the Social Democratic *Landtagsfraktion* is an interesting field for individual biographical examinations. Over various periods of time, the membership of the parliamentary group included such different persons as Artur Crispian, who was for many years one of the chairmen of the SPD; Theodor Leipart and Wilhelm Eggert, the chairmen of the *ADGB*; Wilhelm Keil, an important financial expert and speaker in the *Reichstag*, the »militant socialist« and first chairman of the SPD after 1949 Kurt Schumacher, Erwin Schöttle, who was later vice-president of the *Bundestag* and Clara Zetkin, the famous suffragette and one of the founders of the *USPD*. The analysis of these and other politicians, who stood as a parliamentary group at the seam of state and society and who were directly involved in the political incidents, is of high significance.

To summarize the political history of Württemberg during the Republic of Weimar, it can be said that there was a virtual working parliamentary system from 1919-1932. The rules of elections, formation of democratic structures and changes of governments worked within the constitutional frame, such that a high correspondence between the sense and the reality of the constitution can be established for Württemberg. The political conditions were thereby very stable, which can be seen in the fact that elections were held regularly. Due to the election results, there was a permanent need for the formation of coalitions, which could be achieved when necessary, despite the existence of great ideological conflicts. All the larger parties were involved in the government, although the *Zentrum* turned out to be a governance-party »par excellence« ruling throughout the first German republic in Württemberg. In contrast, the Social Democrats were members of the government only for a short time. With the exception of 1928-1930, all the governments had a solid basis for their administration. Radical positions neither from the left nor the right had any chances in the parliament until 1932. Yet, with the so-called »destiny year« of 1932, the political stability of Württemberg vanished, in spite of the existence of the executive government under Eugen Bolz which was in office until the elections of March 1933.

<sup>3</sup> In this article »SPD« includes the »Mehrheitssozialdemokratie (MSPD)« between 1916/17 and 1922 as well as the reunited SPD after 1922.

Two aspects of the situation of the SPD in Württemberg can be emphasized, especially in comparison with the other territorial-states in the Republic of Weimar. In the first place, the election results of the SPD in Württemberg were continuously on a lower level than the results in other parts of Germany<sup>4</sup>. Only in Bavaria did the SPD experience the same weak outcomes, in all other areas it was better represented. In the second, the length of participation in governance and the influence on the laws and the budget was negligible compared to other territorial-states<sup>5</sup>. Again, only in Bavaria did the SPD govern for a similar short period as in Württemberg, while in Prussia, Hesse and Baden the Social Democratic Party was part of coalition cabinets for a majority of the first German Republic<sup>6</sup>.

These two aspects offer the basis for an analysis of the weak parliamentary position of the SPD in Württemberg and the possible reasons for such a position. The main task of this article is to focus particularly on the analysis of the parliamentarians and their responsibility for the above mentioned position. Off course, such an analysis cannot be answered with a simple monocausal model which regards only the parliamentarians. Usually the socio-economic and religious structures were regarded as important aspects in party analysis. However, these structures do not need to be further discussed for Württemberg. Because similar socio-economic and religious structures in other regions produced a considerably large proportion of votes for the social democracy, it is rather clear that they did not typically lead to low SPD representations. Therefore, these structures don't seem to be the determinate factor for the low proportion of SPD votes in Württemberg.

Instead, the cause of the low election results and governmental participation might be explained through the examination of the actors of the parliamentary assemblies, the Social Democratic parliament members<sup>7</sup>. All Social Democratic

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<sup>4</sup> To the election results see Schröder, Wilhelm Heinz: *Sozialdemokratische Parlamentarier in den deutschen Reichs- und Landtagen 1867-1933, Biographien, Chronik, Wahldokumentation, Ein Handbuch*, Düsseldorf 1995, especially pp. 825-889.

Most of the biographical data used have been taken from W.H. Schröder's handbook. Moreover, being allowed to work with the biographical material existent in the archive of the Zentrum für Historische Sozialforschung (ZHSF) has been of utmost help in gathering the empirical data for this investigation.

<sup>5</sup> This criterion as to party analysis in general, see Steffani, Winfried: *Parteien als soziale Organisationen*, in: *Zeitschrift für Parlamentsfragen* 4 (1988), pp. 545-560 (here p. 550).

<sup>6</sup> See to the topic of government participation Schröder pp. 97-340.

<sup>7</sup> The difficulty of analysing the perception of parties and politicians was emphasized, beneath others, by Jürgen R. Winkler. Winkler summarized, »[was die] Bewertungen von Parteien und Politikern [betrifft], so wissen wir allerdings sehr wenig. Die vielen Fragen bedürfen dringend der Aufarbeitung, so groß die methodologischen Probleme auch sein mögen«. Winkler, Jürgen R.: *Sozialstruktur, Politische Traditionen und Liberalismus, Eine empirische Längsschnittstudie zur Wahlentwicklung in Deutschland 1871-1933*, Opladen 1995, p. 45.

representatives, elected or nominated, that fulfilled a mandate in the *Landtag* of Württemberg or in the *Verfassungsgebenden Landesversammlung*, will be examined<sup>8</sup>. The parliamentarians that were elected in 1919 for the USPD to the constitutional assembly and who, after 1922, rejoined the SPD fraction instead of the communist fraction, which will also be taken into consideration. Overall, eighty-nine representatives are included in this investigation.

In general, all fraction members are considered as equals. However, when one observes parliamentary work, it becomes evident, particularly in the differing functions of the representatives within the party and parliament that exceptions to this fundamental equality are made. It can be assumed that the influence of the individual Social Democratic parliamentarians in the Württemberg Parliament was distinctly different. It will therefore be investigated which of the representatives carried more meaning and a stronger influence than others. The existence of dominating personalities, groups or a central core within the SPD fraction in Württemberg, as well as biographical information will be examined, through a study of offices and parliamentary functions. It is through such duties that influence in parliamentary practice is exercised, and therefore these duties can be used as measures of influence.

With regard to the methodology, it should be noted that the selection and classification of the parliamentary case studies are relatively subjective and may lead to discussion. The question arises if the individual case studies can be successfully compared; for example, should »committee work in parliament« have the same significance as »fraction leadership.« In the following examination, the methodology will be executed by weighing each criterion equally. In this way, the unavoidable subjectivity does not result in an arbitrary study<sup>9</sup>.

#### Fraction Leadership<sup>10</sup>

Leadership in a fraction is a critical area for examination because considerable influence and power is used in the development of the politics, organization and agenda setting in a parliamentary fraction. In conjunction with other fraction leaders, the fraction chair prepares the agenda for the parliament sessions, organizes the parliamentary initiatives of the party, co-ordinates the

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<sup>8</sup> In this way all social democratic parliamentarians were taken into consideration who were members of the *Landtag* from March 1933 until July 1933.

<sup>9</sup> The methodical problems, linked with the measure of influence, are not further discussed in this study. Especially the American political sciences developed attempts for the analysis of structures of parties and the recruitment of political elites. A short research overview is given by Niedermayer and Schmitt. See Niedermayer, Oscar / Schmitt, Hermann: *Sozialstruktur, Partizipation und politischer Status in Parteiorganisationen*, in: PVS 24 (1983), pp. 293-310.

<sup>10</sup> Source for the analysis of fraction leadership were the handbooks of the assemblies in Württemberg and the supplements of the assembly files.

long term goals of the party and fraction and manages the leadership. In sum, the chair is responsible for the politics, inside and out, of the fraction.

The assembly had altogether eight Social Democrat fraction chairmen. Wilhelm Keil was in office for the longest time, namely during four legislative periods: he was first chairman of the fraction for most of the time. Albert Pflüger was chairman for three legislative periods and served as vice-chair throughout his time in office. Six parliamentarians acted as fraction chairmen for one legislative period. In the fourteen years of the Republic of Weimar, the occupation of this important position was reserved for a few parliament representatives only. Just two other parliamentarians, Keil and Pflüger, were fraction chairmen on a continual basis. Their only reason for not acting as chairmen was the requirement to fill the office of a *Landtagspräsident*.

#### Committee Work<sup>11</sup>

The membership in committees is another criteria to be taken under consideration as this membership is often connected to a certain influence on the law-making initiative. Because detailed treatment of a suggested law is not possible in a parliamentary debate, this task falls onto the committees, and thereby creates an opportunity to exercise influence. From 1920 onwards, the number of standing committees for the Württemberg Parliament was seven, but the number of special and fact-finding committees varied.

Included in the following numbers are all representatives that sat in a committee for at least one legislative period: this amounts to forty-eight representatives (54% of all representatives). It should be noted that in the *Verfassungsgebenden Landesversammlung* an overproportional share of parliamentarians were members of a committee. Presumably due to the flood of expected tasks to be done, many of the committees were established with a large number of members. The number of committees, as well as the number of members, was considerably reduced after 1920; at that time, only twenty-one Social Democratic representatives (35%) were active in a committee. Fifteen of these representatives (19%) were active in two committees in at least one legislative period. The Social Democrat Albert Pflüger belonged to three committees within one assembly period, and the Representative Friedrich Winker, who in almost every legislative period belonged to most of the committees, sat on six committees simultaneously between 1928 and 1932. It can be summarized, that work in committees was regularly divided within the Social Democratic fraction. Nevertheless, there were a lot of parliamentarians who did not achieve a seat in one of the committees; nine of the twenty-two representatives between 1928 and 1932 have not been committee members. In spite of this, some parliamentarians were committee experts and members of quite a few committees.

<sup>11</sup> Source for the committee work were again the assembly files and the handbooks of the assembly.

## The Seating Order in the Stuttgart Half-Moon-Hall<sup>12</sup>

The seating order plays a role in the influence of a parliamentarian as it has become parliamentary practice that the influential representatives take the foremost seats in the plenary session. Until 1905, the parliamentarians sat in parliament according to age, not party<sup>13</sup>. In the parliamentary building, the *Halbmondsaal*, so named for its shape of a half moon, there were three rows of seats. For the 150 representatives of the *Verfassunggebenden Landesversammlung*, the number of rows was expanded.

Eleven of the parliamentarians (12%) sat predominantly in the first row. Eight of the representatives (9%) sat in the second row. Sixty-nine parliamentarians (77%) sat in the third row or further back. In 1919, the constitutional assembly had a large number of SPD representatives who sat in the first row, in part due to the fact that the USPD, without status as a fraction, held no seat in the first row and was placed in the back rows. In the following years, very few parliamentarians held the right to a seat in the front row of the Stuttgart Parliament for almost the entire length of the Republic: among them were Wilhelm Keil, Bertold Heymann and Friedrich Göhring.

## The Frequency of Speaking in Parliament\*

The theoretical reasoning behind this variable is that significant representatives more often than »back benchers" speak in parliament about important, basic debate questions as well as smaller points.

The most frequent speakers in the Weimar Republic were Albert Pflüger and Bertold Heymann, who were the main speakers of the SPD fraction. They were followed by Wilhelm Keil who made speeches in important debates, but not as often as Heymann and Pflüger. This was probably due to his participation in the *Reichstag* sessions that frequently caused him to miss some parliament sessions in Württemberg. In addition to these three parliamentarians, Fritz Ulrich and Friedrich Winker made frequent speeches. Also Friedrich Göhring and Kurt Schumacher have given speeches at regular intervals in the *Landtag*. The larger part of the other representatives did not deliver speeches within a legislative period, or they only took the floor when they had to make a committee report or when a debate in their area of expertise occurred.

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<sup>12</sup> The information of the seating order were taken from the handbooks of the assembly.

<sup>13</sup> See Keil, Wilhelm: *Erlebnisse eines Sozialdemokraten*, Stuttgart 1947/48, Bd. 1, p. 182 f.

<sup>14</sup> Basis for this analysis were the files of all assemblies between 1919 and 1933. Because of the lack of a speech-index, all assembly files were analysed to the individual speeches. No differences were made between length and kind of the various contributions.

## The List Placement

The placement in the list is the result of the general customary practice of placing important or influential politicians in parliament at the uppermost position in the list of those to represent the party in order to guarantee that they earn re-entry to the parliament. The list placement was decided through a meeting of the Württemberg SPD. After the election of 1920 (at the latest), the SPD was able to estimate which electoral district would most likely be won, which districts could only be won under certain circumstances and which districts would receive a limited number of votes, a case of defeat. This knowledge made it possible to list the candidates accordingly.

In the Social Democratic Party press of Württemberg, the list placement of the SPD candidates was announced approximately one month before the date of election. The list of the candidates consisted of one list for the individual voting districts and another list for the state. For this analysis the state list was viewed as the foundation and those electoral districts in which the SPD received a mandate in all elections of the Weimar Republic, the districts that could be defined as »certain,« were then added to this foundation. At the top of this list were the electoral districts of Göppingen, Heilbronn, Reutlingen and Esslingen as well as both of the first places of the Stuttgart city districts. The first four places on the state list were also termed as certain<sup>15</sup>. The uncertain list places of the SPD were those between the fifth and tenth place of the state list as well as the first district of Ulm, the second in Heilbronn and the third and fourth in Stuttgart. These electoral districts could only be won in some elections.

The following explanation shall differentiate between the certain, uncertain and hopeless list placements. With their placement fifty-eight parliamentarians had their candidacy almost secured, but forty-eight of them were candidates for the *Verfassungsgebenden Landesversammlung* only. The rest of the parliamentarians held an list placement without any perspective for a candidature. In other words, neglecting the constitutional assembly of 1919<sup>16</sup>, among the parliamentarians of the *Landtag* only ten representatives could expect to join the parliament. For four parliamentarians the entry into the parliament depended upon their electoral district and the total results of the SPD. Thus, a rather small group of representatives was sure of its continued placement in parliament, while for the rest of the candidates it was highly questionable, if they would gain entry to the *Landtag* .

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<sup>15</sup> For parliamentarians of the USPD the first three places on the state list or a place in Göppingen or Stuttgart can be regarded as sure.

<sup>16</sup> The election for the *Verfassungsgebenden Landesversammlung* was an exception. In this case, only a state list existed.

## The Length of Assembly Membership and Terms of Frequency of Re-election<sup>17</sup>

The reason for looking at the frequency of re-election is that influential or important politicians are usually re-nominated and re-elected to enable them, on behalf of their party, to exercise their influence during the next legislative period. The only exception to this practice was in such cases when parliamentarians had a real chance to run for a seat in the national parliament. Because of the relationship between the *Reich* and the *Länder* and the greater significance of the *Reichstag*, running for a seat in the *Reichstag* was more appealing than for one in the *Landtag*. In the Republic of Weimar there were only a few parliamentarians who moved from the assembly in Württemberg to the one in Berlin: Artur Crispian, Kurt Schumacher, Jakob Weimer and Fritz Ulrich. Of these men, only Ulrich returned after a short interlude in the *Reichstag*, and Weimer moved to the *Reichstag* not before March 1933. Schumacher and Crispian remained members of the *Reichstag* exclusively.

In the period of this study sixty-six parliamentarians, almost three-fourths of all Social Democratic representatives, were not re-elected, and were members of one assembly only. Ten representatives (11%) were re-elected once and were therefore members of the assembly in two legislative periods. Three parliamentarians (3%) were re-elected twice. Members of four assemblies and re-elected three times were two (2%) of the members of parliament. Five parliamentarians (4%) were in five *Landtagen*, which means that they were re-elected four times. Wilhelm Keil, Emilie Hiller, Albert Pflüger and Karl Ruggaber were the four parliamentarians that sat in all six legislative periods, from the *Verfassunggebenden Landesversammlung* to the *gleichgeschalteten Landtag* in 1933.

Thus, it is noticed that the majority of politicians were members of parliament for a short time only, mostly in the constitutional assembly. On the other hand, there were a few representatives that were fraction members for a long time. Taking into consideration that the SPD fraction from 1920 to 1928 and 1932/33 did not exceed seventeen parliamentarians, it is obvious that the composition of the fraction was reduced to only a few people and that there was a high rate of continuity.

### The Influential Social Democratic Representatives in Württemberg

The results of the examination sketched above are presented in a graph, which shows those representatives of the *Landtag* that meet at least half of the investigated criteria. Fourteen of the eighty-nine parliamentarians are included in this graph. In the graph, the height of the individual bars demonstrates to what extent a criteria applies to the respective representatives; for example,

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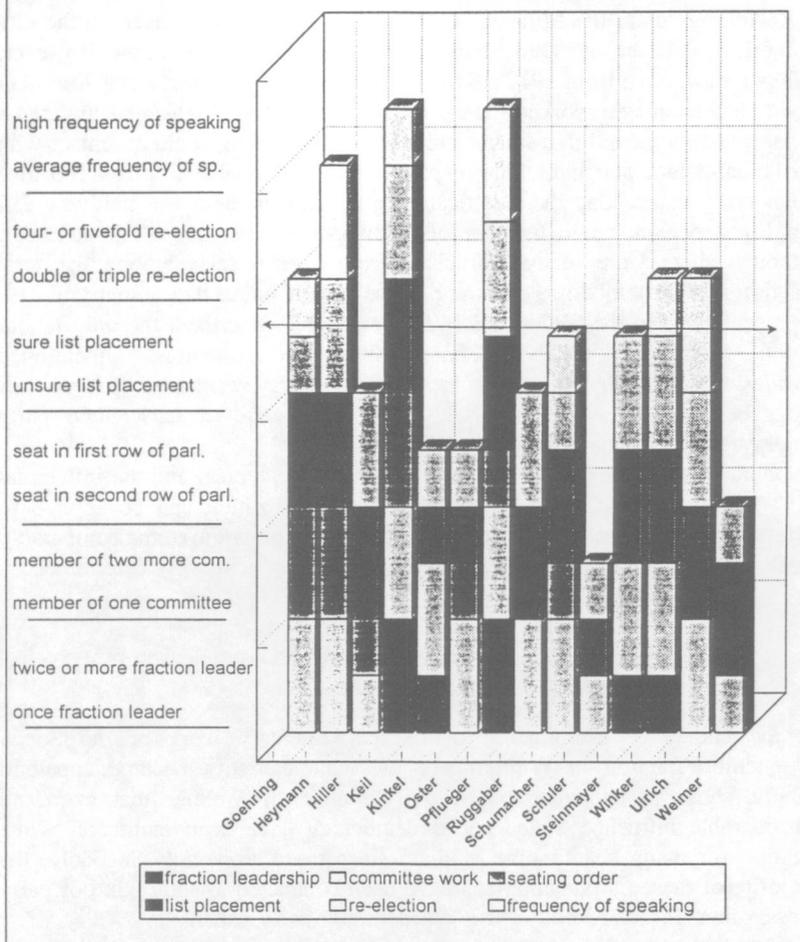
<sup>17</sup> The length of assembly membership was taken from different biographical handbooks.

whether he had a secure list placement (high level), an insecure list placement (middle level) or a hopeless list placement (no level). The combined effect of all criteria is evident through the total height of the bar. The higher up the bar reaches, the more applicable the level of the criterion is showing, and the larger is the influence of the respective representative in the fraction. With the help of the investigation criteria used in this way, first conclusions regarding the overall structure of the Social Democratic fraction can be made. For example: because Emilie Hiller was represented in all assemblies and continually secured a high list placement, one could assume that she belonged to the important parliamentarians of the SPD fraction. Yet, when one reviews the level of the other investigative criteria, it becomes obvious, that the representative did not give speeches frequently, nor was she very active in committees, nor did she occupy a prominent position in the fraction leadership. From these additional factors, it can be deduced, that her importance in the fraction was limited. As the only long-standing female parliamentarian of the SPD, she was more likely a sort of parliamentary »token woman«; she only had a limited amount of influence on the fraction proceedings. Albert Pflüger, on the other hand, is an example for a strong contrast to Emilie Hiller. Like her, he sat in all assemblies and held a secure list placement. But unlike Hiller, he was also (vice-) fraction-chairman for many years, he was active in many committees and he often spoke in the *Landtag* for the SPD. Much more direct influence on the parliamentary work can be attributed to him than to Emilie Hiller.

There are eight representatives above the average in the graph and can therefore be defined as the most influential representatives of the fraction. A closer study of these representatives reveals two basic characteristics. Firstly, these parliamentarians were long-standing members of the fraction. Almost all representatives who gained a larger influence and exercised their influence for many years, not only for a short period. None of the significant representatives were parliament representatives for less than seven years: many have been in parliament throughout the entire Weimar Republic. A »core fraction« crystallized, particularly after the »reduction of fraction strength« in 1924 that originated from a distinct decline in participation to the elections as well as a reduction of the number of mandates of the *Landtag*. Within this core group, only a few members of parliament executed central parliamentary tasks in the fraction and the plenary sessions. To be more precise, there were only three actual members of parliament.

A second characteristic is found in the biographical background of the most important parliamentarians. In almost all criteria this elite group did not differ from the total fraction in Württemberg, but their practiced profession differs significantly from the other parliamentarians. Indeed, it is the most obvious difference between the influential and all of the *Landtag* parliamentarians in Württemberg. Five of the eight key parliamentarians, almost two-thirds of this fraction elite, were professionally active in the field of journalism. Among

## The Influential Social Democratic Representatives in Wuerttemberg



these five there are three that belong to the four parliamentarians with the highest total level of influence. Among these five parliamentarians there were also four that worked in the party press: Keil, Göhring, Ulrich and Schumacher. Keil was editor-in-chief of the *Schwäbische Tagwacht* in Stuttgart, Göhring editor-in-chief of the *Donau-Wacht* in Ulm and Ulrich editor-in-chief of the *Neckar-Echo* in Heilbronn. Bertold Heymann worked as a freelance journalist for many years and wrote contributions for the *Vorwärts*, particularly for the party press of Württemberg.

The high representation of the parliamentarians active in the field of journalism and who are among the significant politicians is quite striking, because in the whole fraction only 16% of the representatives worked in press. The other three of the influential, elevated representatives were Albert Pflüger, a *Regierungsrat* in the Ministry of Economics, Friedrich Winker on the city authorities counsel and Otto Steinmayer, the state party secretary. However, Pflüger was active from 1912-1918 as an editor at the *Schwäbische Tagwacht* and Otto Steinmayer worked for the *Internationale Metallarbeiter Rundschau*, a paper that belonged to a labour union, thus, both were in close contact with the social democracy and labour or party oriented journalistic circles. It is also noteworthy that among the significant representatives there was neither a self employed person, nor a member of the working-class, nor a labour-leader, although there were many politicians from these circles among the total fraction in Württemberg. For example, the labour union had a share of 21% representatives in the SPD fraction. In the graphic described, the only labour union leader is Jakob Weimer. With the previously mentioned *Landesparteisekretär* Steinmayer, as well as the party secretaries of Ulm, Karl Ruggaber, and of Stuttgart, Carl Oster, there were at least three party employees among the influential parliamentarians.

Overall, there is a distinct difference between the typical and the influential SPD parliamentarian. To what extent this generalization can be applied to Württemberg and can serve as an attempt at an interpretation of the comparably weak position of the Württemberg SPD should be conclusively determined.

#### A »Structurally Conservative Tradition SPD« as Reason for Political Weakness?

In the course of examination of the parliamentary work of the Social Democratic fraction in Württemberg two characteristics became apparent. Firstly, those parliamentarians of the Republic of Weimar that exercised considerable influence in the social democracy have been members of the fraction for many years, some of them since the *Kaiserreich*. Secondly, the majority of these parliamentarians have been connected to some kind of party press, often as (chief-) editor of a Württemberg party paper.

What had been evident after the elections of 1920 did not vary significantly within the Württemberg SPD fraction until 1933. The number of first-time members of parliament decreased steadily. In fact, in all elections after 1920, only very few new Social Democratic politicians joined the *Landtag*. Between 1920 and 1933, there was only a total of ten new parliamentarians who represented the SPD in the *Landtag*. Of these ten, only six reached the fraction through elections, four were nominated. Thus, a core of eight to eleven representatives were continuously in the assembly, which is evident by the high number of parliamentarians who were re-elected five or six times. Of these

parliamentarians several were successful in gaining important parliamentary positions and functions. This was especially the case with Wilhelm Keil, Albert Pflüger and Bertold Heymann. Among the parliamentarians, who entered the *Landtag* later, only Kurt Schumacher and Jakob Weimer obtained to a certain measure influential positions in the fraction (both left the *Landtag* of Württemberg at the end of the first German republic). It can be concluded, that between 1920 and 1933 the Württemberg Social Democratic fraction possessed important parliamentary positions through an exceptional high personnel continuity which was the result of a relatively fixed and rigid structure within the fraction.

The question arises, how this continuity within the fraction was perceived by the Württemberg electorate: if it was seen as a positive professionalism or if it was seen as negative »organizational conservatism«. Because there were no (voting) surveys in the first German republic, this question cannot be empirically examined via survey outcomes. However, the statements of contemporaries and the findings of historians can be interpreted in order to come to conclusions regarding the perception, and, at the same time, the position of the Württemberg SPD in the Republic of Weimar.

The type of functionary described by Peter Lösche and Franz Walter, who came from the new middle class, pressed his way into a party position, and conquered an already engaged parliamentary seat, did not exist in Württemberg. Instead, the majority of those who occupied seats in parliament were of the »old guard« coming from the group of skilled workers of wood and metal and were characterized by their steady continuity since the *Kaiserreich*\*. Keil, Pflüger and Heymann are the three influential parliamentarians who make their continuity to the *Kaiserreich* most distinctly seen. Pflüger had been member of the *Landtag* since 1914, Heymann since 1906 and Keil since 1900.

In 1932, Wilhelm Sollmann, temporary Minister of the Interior in Berlin, met with general approval when he criticized the Weimar organizational form of the Social Democracy for being too similar to that of the *Kaiserreich*. This criticism additionally supports the discussed nature of the Württemberg Social Democratic development. One cannot say of pragmatic politicians like Wilhelm Keil, that they had been too engaged with the technical apparatus of their predecessors; it is rather the closeness of their rise to party leadership, - of which nearly always those employed in official bodies of the party were concerned, - what can be criticized in Württemberg as well. In answer to Sollmann's criticism, Peter Lösche and Franz Walter emphasized that the problem was their being unable to get notice of worthwhile forces outside the official body. Wilhelm Sollmann's reproaches with regard to the one-sidedness of the nomination of candidates can also be used for an evidence of the recruiting methods of the social democracy in Württemberg.

\* See Lösche, Peter / Walter, Franz: *Die SPD - Klassenpartei - Volkspartei - Quotenpartei, Zur Entwicklung der Sozialdemokratie von Weimar bis zur deutschen Vereinigung, Darmstadt 1992, p. 70.*

These rigid structures, as described by Lösche and Walter, are also directly connected to the perception of the SPD. They wrote that the »organizational conservatism« of the party had the effect of giving off a pleasant stable smell to the inside, while it could be unbearable to the outside<sup>19</sup>. In addition, this personnel structure had a negative effect on the voters the SPD wanted to reach, and it made a rather poor impression of social democracy among the Württemberg electorate.

Wilhelm Keil himself gave an indirect proof of the connection between election success and personnel structure. At the turn of the century, Keil, as the youngest member of the *Landtag*, created a new spirit and introduced novel publicity methods which were responsible for a larger parliamentary group in the second chamber of Württemberg. Thirty years later, however, one can observe the same disorientation and the former old well-trodden paths of disastrous and slowly stiffening social democracy, as in the time preceding the rise of the social democracy in the early 1900s<sup>20</sup>.

In one of the most fundamental and pioneering contributions to the history of the SPD at the end of the Weimar Republic, the historian Erich Matthias came to the conclusion that the institutional thinking in terms of the traditional party apparatuses was characteristic for the SPD at the end of the first German republic<sup>21</sup>. He argued that conservative organizational thinking leads to a total overestimation of one's own power, promotes self-sufficiency and self-satisfaction, blinds against the real threats, and cripples the political initiative, because the closed preservation of the organization is more important than every high risk action in politics<sup>22</sup>. This conclusion of Matthias is fully applicable to the Württemberg SPD. »Blindness« was particularly stimulated because there was very little personnel fluctuation. The SPD fraction of Württemberg was not ready to run »high risks« in its actions, with the exception of the politics of Schumacher and Erwin Schöttle.

In a similar way, another renowned historian, Hans Mommsen, put more stress on the criticism of the Social Democratic recruitment and emphasized that the promotion of decentralization and opening within the SPD has not been put into effect, which would have helped to dismantle the oligaristic tendencies and the bureaucratic sterility<sup>23</sup>. Mommsen saw the tendency in the leadership

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<sup>19</sup> Lösche / Walter: S. 67.

<sup>20</sup> Gerhard A. Ritter, referring to the memoirs of Carl Severing, reflects in this way the situation of the social democracy in the southern parts of Germany at the turn of century. See Ritter, Gerhard A.: *Die Arbeiterbewegung im Wilhelminischen Reich, Die Sozialdemokratische Partei und die freien Gewerkschaften 1890-1900*, Berlin 1958, p. 128.

<sup>21</sup> See Matthias, Erich: *Die Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*, in: Matthias, Erich / Morsey, Rudolf (eds.): *Das Ende der Parteien 1933*, Düsseldorf 1960, p. 196.

<sup>22</sup> See, *ibid.*: p. 197.

<sup>23</sup> See Mommsen, Hans: *Sozialdemokratie in der Defensive, Der Immobilismus der SPD und der Aufstieg des Nationalsozialismus*, in: Mommsen, Hans:

committee of becoming senile and the concentration on inner-organizational work to be a decisive factor for a low innovation potential and thereby the missing attractiveness of the party<sup>24</sup>. The criticism of Mommsen, which was supported by recent research, regarding the »Machterhaltungskartell«<sup>25</sup> in the SPD, can also be applied to the position of the Württemberg SPD. The best example of this is the nomination of Bertold Heymann as Minister of the Interior in 1920. This nomination, predominantly supported by Keil and Pflüger, allowed Heymann - who was the long-standing colleague of the two leading Social Democrats - to become minister instead of the favoured young Gotthilf Hitzler, who, as consequence of his failure, left Württemberg disappointed and sought a career in Berlin.

Also of relevance is Hagen Schulze's reference to the number of Prussian Social Democratic representatives, as until 1918 only ten Social Democrats sat in the parliament. In this way, as presumed by Schulze, the Prussian social democracy possessed an unprejudiced attitude towards their parliamentary work and were in the better position to orient themselves to new challenges in the republic<sup>26</sup>. Accordingly, it can be stated that due to the decades of parliamentary experience, the Württemberg SPD was in a worse position to adapt the changing challenges than the Prussian Social Democrats.

### Conclusion

It is evident that at the end of the Weimar Republic there were distinct signs of organizational conservatism within the German Social Democracy. As the majority of the substantial symptoms is also applicable to Württemberg, it can be assumed that these rigid structures also existed in Württemberg and likewise had a negative affect on the image of the party and the fraction in parliament.

A second outcome of this study has been the noteworthy connection between the profession of the remarkable Württemberg parliamentarians and their press activities. It can be construed that the exercised career is a determinate factor in the influence and importance of the Social Democratic representatives in Württemberg. Those parliamentarians who held a press-oriented career were dominating in almost all the fields of parliamentary work. Other representatives, who did not have these contacts at their disposal, did not reach the same level of importance.

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**Arbeiterbewegung und nationale Frage, Ausgewählte Aufsätze von Hans Mommsen, Göttingen 1979, p. 350.**

<sup>24</sup> See *ibid.*: p. 355.

<sup>25</sup> See Pyta, Wolfram: *Gegen Hitler und für die Republik. Die Auseinandersetzung der deutschen Sozialdemokratie mit der NSDAP in der Weimarer Republik*, Düsseldorf 1989, p. 517.

<sup>26</sup> See Schulze, Hagen: *Die SPD und der Staat von Weimar*, in: Stürmer, Michael (ed.): *Die Weimarer Republik, Belagerte Civitas*, Königsstein/Ts 1980, p. 282.

In this context, the question arises for the reasons and origins of such conditions of the SPD. In general, it might not be surprising at all that the position as an editor of the party publications is a promising prerequisite for a parliamentary mandate. Careers in the SPD show that of a total of 215 parliamentarians who represented the Social Democracy from 1867 to 1918 in the *Reichstag* 114 were journalists with a parliamentary mandate<sup>27</sup>. Indeed, a large number of Social Democrats shifted their main professional activity from trained handicraft careers to occupations in the party press as well as to the work at party offices and official labour functions, because political activity for the party on behalf of the Social Democrats often meant a restriction of available jobs or even the dismissal from a job. Further clarifying evidence for this point in Württemberg can be seen in the period at the beginning of the first World War and in the inner-party situation of the SPD. In addition to the *Landtag* fraction and the representative mandate, the *Schwäbische Tagwacht* was of crucial importance at that time and created an interest in the continual and approved position of the editor. Max Weber's lecture »Politics as a Career« also made it known in his time that under all given circumstances the journalism track constituted one of the most important means for professional political activity<sup>28</sup>. This track was, according to Weber in 1919, only favourable in the Social Democratic party, where editor positions predominantly went with the reputation of a civil servant.

The continuation of common structural analysis is beyond the scope of this paper. The particular meaning of the press for the position of the Social Democratic *Landtag* fraction and to what extent this characteristic was more important than the relatively rigid personnel structure which was like that of civil servants is an area for further examination. It could also be investigated how Gerhard A. Ritter's comment regarding the *Kaiserreich* can be applied to the Weimar Republic, when he states that the unilateral concentration of the German Social Democracy on the publicity activity, particularly the press, is a sign of a stiffening social democracy<sup>29</sup>.

There might be a number of possible reasons and explanations for the position of the SPD of Württemberg in the Republic of Weimar. It obviously would have been inadequate to present the biographical and functional structures as monocausal factors. However, the exact cause of the election outcomes and the continuous below-average position of the SPD is difficult to establish due to the factors as e.g.: the socio-economic structures of Württemberg, which limited the SPD to a restricted potential from the beginning; the relatively unsuccessful politics the SPD pursued on a straight

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<sup>27</sup> See Sperlich, Waltraud: **Journalist mit Mandat, Sozialdemokratische Reichstagsabgeordnete und ihre Arbeit in der Parteipresse 1867-1918**, Düsseldorf 1983, p. 10.

<sup>28</sup> See Weber, Max: **Politik als Beruf**, Tübingen 1994, p. 56.

<sup>29</sup> See Ritter p. 128.

social political track; the agitation of the SPD that neither did convince the middle-class citizens nor the radicals in Württemberg or, as shown, the personnel structures, which did not present the SPD as an attractive parliament representation for the voters. These are all plausible explanations, which all combined might have contributed to the fact that the SPD in Württemberg did not reach the electorate potential that Social Democrats achieved in other states.

Which of these factors particularly comes into play cannot be determined by a simple further investigation of social democracy; rather, to obtain a full explanation, a comparison should be made between the *Reich* and the *Länder*, and this comparison should also include a thorough discussion of the historical electoral development and the composition of the fraction. The author hopefully has explained the necessity and the perspective of such a further study as well as the relevance of a biographical investigation in Württemberg. Just as Falter and others called for intensive election research for the Republic of Weimar, this study attempts to show that the composition of the parliamentary fraction reflects opportunities, limits, structures and changes that provide rich and indispensable information for the analysis and explanation of the first German democracy.

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