LUISS

Degree Program in International Relations and Diplomacy

Course of Russia and the International Order: History and Challenges

Homegrown Bolsheviks? The Swedish Left-Wing Socialists and the Question of Revolution 1917–1921

Prof. Carolina De Stefano

SUPERVISOR

Prof. Allen Lynch

CO-SUPERVISOR

Ada Berg Arbro

CANDIDATE

Academic Year 2023/2024

Abstract

This thesis examines the revolutionary currents within the Swedish left and its connections to the international socialist movement in the early 20th century, an aspect often overshadowed by Sweden's long history of reformist social democratic rule. Focusing on the Swedish Social Democratic Left Party (SSV), later the Swedish Communist Party (SKP), this study analyzes the party's objectives between 1917 and 1921. The outbreak of World War I and its profound impact on the international socialist movement created a political rupture that forced left-wing factions across Europe to reassess their strategies and allegiances. Sweden 1917 saw significant revolutionary and uprisings sentiments, with workers' movements and strikes escalating in response to food shortages and political tensions. This climate of unrest, marked by demands for greater political change, set the stage for the formation of SSV and its eventual alignment with the Bolshevik-led international revolutionary movement. The study finds that, despite close relations to leading Bolsheviks, SSV/SKP struggled to define its identity and objectives. Even after its accession to the Comintern in 1919, the party lacked a concrete revolutionary strategy and remained largely anchored in the social democratic tradition. Its political agenda, primarily based on the party programs of the Swedish Social Democratic Party (SAP), reflected a Kautskyist teleological conception of revolution rather than a Leninist one. While SKP formally embraced communist principles, its ideological and structural ties to Swedish social democracy persisted. Rather than actively pursuing a Bolshevik-style revolution in Sweden, the party projected its revolutionary aspirations onto the idea of an imminent international revolution that never materialized.

Keywords: Swedish Left-Wing Socialists, Social Democracy, Bolshevism, Internationalism, Revolution, Reformism, World War I, the Zimmerwald movement and the Comintern.

List of Abbrevations

ADAV	The General German Workers' Association
AVPRF	The Russian Foreign Policy Archive
Comintern	The Third / Communist International
DFP	The German Progress Party
ECCI	The Executive Committee of the Communist International
FSU	The International Association of Friends of the Soviet Union
GARF	The State Archive of the Russian Federation
ISB	The International Socialist Bureau
ISC	The International Socialist Commission
IWMA	The International Working Men's Association
PSI	The Italian Socialist Party
RCP(b)	The Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks)
RS	The Party of Socialist-Revolutionaries
RSDLP	The Russian Social Democratic Labour Party
SAP	The Swedish Social Democratic Workers' Party
SDAP	The Social Democratic Workers' Party of Germany
SDUF	The Swedish Social Democratic Youth Federation
SDKPiL	Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania
SKP	The Swedish Communist Party
SSV	The Swedish Social Democratic Left Party
SYI	The Socialist Youth International
USPD	The Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany
USSR	The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VOKS	The Society of Cultural Relations with the Soviet Union

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION **5**

State of the Art **9**

Interest of the Research, Purpose and Research Questions **16**

Method, Sources, and Limitations **18**

CHAPTER 1: SITUATING THE SWEDISH LEFT WITHIN ITS WIDER HISTORICAL, POLITICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL CONTEXT **21**

1.1 The Swedish Labor Movement and the Birth of Social Democracy **24**

1.1.1 Springboard to Party Politics: The Popular Movements 25

1.1.2 Swedish Social Democracy Takes Form: From Agitation to Organization 28

1.1.3 The Theoretical Underpinnings of Swedish Social Democracy: Lassalle, Kautsky and Bernstein 31

1.2 The Swedish Left in Relation to the International Socialist Movement **37**

1.2.1 Roots and Evolution of Socialist Internationalism: From Utopian Socialists to the First International 38

1.2.2 The Rise and Fall of the Second International: Reform, Revolution, and the Challenges of War 41

1.3 Radicals on the Margins and Breakaway Tendencies within the Swedish Labor Movement **45**

1.3.1 Left Opposition Through the Youth Movement 48

1.3.2 The Formation of the Zimmerwald Movement 51

1.3.3 Section Summary 55

CHAPTER 2: THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION AND THE POLITICAL ORGANIZATION OF THE SWEDISH LEFT-WING SOCIALISTS **56**

2.1 A Brief Background to the Russian Revolution **57**

2.1.1 The February Revolution and the Fall of Tsar Nikolai II 62

2.1.2 The October Revolution and the Bolshevik Tactics 64

2.2 The Reception of the Russian Revolution in the Swedish Labor Movement **66**

2.2.1 The Response by Branting and the Stockholm Conference That Never Was Held 67

2.2.2 The 1917 “Revolutionary Moment” in Sweden 70

2.3 The Constitution of the Swedish Social Democratic Left Party and its Relations to Russian Bolsheviks **72**

2.3.1 The Organization of the Swedish Left-Wing Socialists 72

2.3.2 Lenin’s Journey Through Sweden: A Prelude to Revolution 75

2.3.3 A Bridge Between East and West: The Creation of the Bolshevik Stockholm Bureau ..80

2.3.4 Section Summary 82

CHAPTER 3: THE QUESTION OF A SWEDISH REVOLUTION 85

3.1 Revolutionary Pacifism: An Ambiguous Ideological Foundation 86

3.1.1 Humanism, Democracy and the Legacy of SAP in the Development of SSV's First Party Program 89

3.1.2 Red Journeys before the Second Party Congress of 1918 97

3.1.3 The Debate on Party Tactics During the Second Party Congress of 1918 99

3.2 The Revolution Imported? The Creation of the Communist International and the Transition to the Swedish Communist Party 105

3.2.1 The Founding of the Communist International 2–6 March 1919 107

3.2.2 Toward a Bolshevik Revolutionary Tactics? The Third Party Congress of 1919 111

3.2.3 The Twenty-One Conditions 115

3.3 Homegrown Bolsheviks? 119

3.3.1 Centralization, Subjugation and Monolithism: The Fourth Party Congress of 1921 ... 120

3.3.2 Revolutionary Aspirations and Political Reality 125

3.3.3 Epilogue 128

CONCLUSIONS 132

BIBLIOGRAPHY 134

INTRODUCTION

"There are decades when nothing happens, and there are weeks when decades happen." This quote is often attributed to Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, the leader of the Russian October Revolution, more commonly known as Lenin. Even though it is disputed whether he actually said it or not, it captures a fundamental historical dynamic: long periods of seemingly gradual change can suddenly be disrupted by events that overturn the established order and pave the way for new political and organizational forms. These disruptions often come in the form of revolutions and wars, which was undeniably true for Lenin during the Russian Revolution in 1917, which occurred when World War I was still raging across Europe. In its aftermath, the Bolsheviks quickly absorbed the radical factions of the international socialist movement and restructured it into a Bolshevik-led organization, The Third International (Comintern), that for a time sought to challenge the entire Western order.

Neither the revolution of 1917, nor the Comintern did however occur in a historical vacuum. On the contrary, the revolutionary forces within Russia were deeply intertwined with the radical international socialist movement that developed in Europe during *The Long Nineteenth Century* and the beginning of the *The Short Twentieth Century,* terms popularized through historian Eric Hobsbawm's tetralogy on modern history.[1] Following the failed liberal revolutions in 1848, political activism in Europe underwent a significant shift. While the immediate uprisings were largely crushed, the demands of workers, peasants, and intellectuals endured, paving the way for organized labor movements in the second half of the 19th century. In countries such as Germany, France, Britain and Italy, labor movements began to form political parties and unions, drawing heavily from the ideas of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Later influential thinkers such as Ferdinand Lassalle, Karl Kautsky, and Eduard Bernstein further developed their own theories, often in dialogue with and sometimes as reactions to original Marxist thought. While these movements emerged within their distinct national contexts, they were also deeply internationalist in nature, recognizing that the struggles of the working class transcended borders. The formation of the First and Second

[1] See Hobsbawm, E. *The Age of Revolution: 1789–1848* (1962); *The Age of Capital: 1848–1875* (1975); *The Age of Empire: 1875–1914* (1987); *The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914–1991* (1994). For an interesting account of Russian radical intellectuals within émigrés communities in Europe, see Hillis, F. (2021). *Utopia's Discontents: Russian Émigrés and the Quest for Freedom, 1830–1930s*. Oxford University Press.

Internationals in 1864 and 1889 respectively, hence served to further organize and unify these national movements on an international scale. The outbreak of the World War I however marked a significant turning point as the initial goals and hopes of the labor movement were crushed under the weight of the states' demands of national subjugation. As a consequence, the Second International collapsed, leaving behind a fragmented labor movement. At the same time, from 1915 onward, Lenin began to organize radical anti-war and anti-reformist factions within the international socialist movement, with the goal of reorienting them around the revolutionary ideals of the Bolshevik model.

The attempts to replicate the Russian Revolution were felt across Europe in the years following 1917 but these quickly failed. Historian Mark Jones, in *Founding Weimar* (2016), outlines how the 1918 November Revolution in Germany, which sought to establish a new socialist order influenced by Bolshevik ideas, was quickly suppressed when moderate socialists and the military took power, leading to the failed Spartacist Uprising in early 1919.[2] In Hungary a Soviet Republic under the leadership of the revolutionary Béla Kun took hold the same year, although it was short-lived and dissolved after 133 days. Historian Péter Csunderlik notes in his 2022 article *Memory Politics Issues in Relation to the Hungarian Soviet Republic (1919)* that while the Hungarian revolution undoubtedly was depicted differently by various political groupings, it should not be understood as an alien coup that was imposed upon Hungary, but rather as a product of the chaotic post-World War I context in which radical left-wing intellectuals believed that a world revolution was imminent.[3] This view aligns with what historian Silvio Pons points out in his book 2014 book *The Global Revolution: a History of International Communism 1917–1991.* Pons argues that, in light of the end of the war and the Russian Revolution, the European left envisioned a complete transformation of the social order.[4] The Bolsheviks, through the establishment of the Comintern, helped solidify this vision, stating that the war and its aftermath would result in national identities being subordinated to the global class struggle, which ultimately would

---

[2] Jones, M. (2016). *Founding Weimar*. Cambridge University Press.

[3] Csunderlik, P. (2022). Memory Politics Issues in Relation to the Hungarian Soviet Republic (1919). *Russian Studies*. HU, 2022(2), pp. 105-114.

[4] Pons, S. (2014). *The Global Revolution: A History of International Communism 1917–1991.* Oxford University Press, p. 16.

lead to a revolutionary wave across the continent.[5] As we know, this did not materialize. On the contrary, as Pons emphasizes, the war gave rise to national revolutions rather than social ones.[6]

In the wake of these failed revolutions and the birth of fascism that followed some years later, a new wave of Marxist thought emerged in Western Europe, as thinkers such as Antonio Gramsci, György Lukács, Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer in the 1920s and 1930s sought to explain why the revolutionary moment had passed. Gramsci, in his *Prison Notebooks*, focused on the concept of cultural and ideological hegemony, arguing that the ruling class maintains power not just through economic dominance, but by shaping the values and beliefs of society.[7] Lukács, who himself had participated in the Hungarian revolution of 1918 alongside Kun, emphasized the importance of class consciousness as a precondition for revolutionary action, asserting that as long as the working class lacks a clear understanding of their *own* exploitation, they will not carry out a socialist revolution.[8] Meanwhile, theorists such as Adorno and Horkheimer argued that it was capitalism's entrenchment in the culture that prevented the working class from developing a class consciousness, paving the way for fascist and reactionary ideologies to take hold.[9] In sum, many of these new lines of Marxist thought in one way or an other amounted to a revaluation of the teleological aspects of Marxist orthodoxy. The revolution increasingly became a question of historical contingency, rather than necessity.[10]

This thesis focuses on the period *before* the rise of these aforementioned ideas, when Western Europe still found itself in a revolutionary moment following the events of 1917. Sweden was however never involved in the war and did not witness any revolution, neither national nor

---

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] See Schwarzmantel, J. (2014). *The Routledge Guidebook to Gramsci's Prison Notebooks*. Routledge.

[8] Cf. Lukács, G. (1972). *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics.* The MIT Press.

[9] Cf. Horkheimer, M. & Adorno, T.W. (1998) [1947]. *Dialectic of Enlightenment.* Verso.

[10] For an interesting account of the rise of Western Marxist thought post 1917, see Žižek, S. (2000). From History and Class Consciousness to the Dialectic of Enlightenment... and Back. *New German Critique,* 81, pp. 107-123.

social. Instead, the country embarked on a path toward a national welfare state, based on social democratic reformism. From an academic point of view, there is significant interest in researching Swedish social democracy, and particularly the so-called Swedish model, which emerged during the 1920s and 1930s, based on the idea that central labor market actors – trade unions and employers – regulate working conditions without state intervention. This phenomenon, often characterized as a historical compromise and put in contrast to "full" socialism, has been the subject of extensive research in political science and economics, not least outside of Sweden.[11] However, as the literature review below demonstrates, less attention has been paid to the fact that this trajectory of compromise was preceded by an internationalist revolutionary tradition, first within the party and later beyond it. In 1917, a radical faction of the Swedish Social Democratic Workers' Party (SAP) broke away to form the Swedish Social Democratic Left Party (SSV) which aligned itself with the Bolsheviks and later was transformed into the Swedish Communist Party (SKP). While these radical forces in Sweden undoubtedly belonged to the group of European socialists who in the wake of the war and the Russian revolution envisioned a radical break with history, they were – as is thoroughly discussed throughout this thesis – still deeply rooted in a Swedish social democratic tradition.[12] Consequently, the Swedish left-wing socialists found themselves in a strange position at the nexus of their social democratic origins and international ambitions. Against this background, the motivation of this thesis is to explore the visions, contexts, protagonists and key moments of the emergence of Swedish left-wing socialism/communism during the years when socialist revolutionary sentiments in Europe were at their peak following the Russian Revolution, between 1917 and 1921. In doing so, it also suggests that research on Swedish left-wing socialism may be situated within the broader context of the international history of socialism.

---

[11] Cf. Blyth M. (2001). The Transformation of the Swedish Model: Economic Ideas, Distributional Conflict, and Institutional Change. *World Politics.* 54(1), pp. 1-26. Cf. Rapini, A. (2012). I «cinque giganti» e la genesi del welfare state in Europa tra le due guerre. *Storicamente.* 8(8), pp. 1-11.

[12] Cf. Björlin, L. (2002). Kultur och politik. Kommunistiska frontorganisationer i Sverige. In: Blomqvist, H., Ekdahl, L. (Eds.). *Kommunismen – hot och löfte: arbetarrörelsen i skuggan av Sovjetunionen 1917–1991.* (Communism – Threat and Promise: The Labor Movement in the Shadow of the Soviet Union 1917–1991). Carlsson, pp. 39-40.

State of the Art

The state of research on the Swedish labor movement in the first decades of the 20th century is comprehensive, but fragmented. As historian Bengt Schüllerqvist points out in his 1992 dissertation *Från kosackval till kohandel: SAP:s väg till makten* (The rise to power of the Swedish Social Democrats: organizational changes in the Swedish labor movement 1928–1933), it seems as if the fields of research are divided along organizational lines and that there is a tendency to view e.g. trade unions and political parties as separate entities, and thus separate research objects even though these historically are deeply intertwined.[13] This view is confirmed by historian Karin Jonsson, who with a conceptual historical approach argues in her 2017 dissertation *Fångna i begreppen? Revolution, tid och politik i svensk socialistisk press 1917 – 1924* (Trapped in the concepts? Revolution, time and politics in the Swedish socialist press 1917 – 1924) that a similar separation is visible in terms of various political orientations within the broader labor movement. That is, many studies of the left party in the 1920s have primarily been placed within the broader history of socialism while studies of the SAP in the same years mainly have been in dialogue with research on the party's ideological and organizational development over time.[14] Jonsson further argues that this division both stems from and has been legitimized by the political division within the labor movement, specifically between reformists and revolutionaries.[15] Here however, it is essential to draw attention to the historian Kjell Östberg's 2024 book *The Rise and Fall of Swedish Social Democracy* which serves as an exception. The book certainly deals with the history of social democracy, but rather as a *movement* both in relation to and *through* other contemporary activities and events of the late 19th century and the 20th century, including the waves of radicalization, strikes and social struggle that took shape not only strictly either within or outside the party, but also in the the liminal space there in-between.[16] The use of SAP and the SSV/SKP as two distinct objects of research can also be understood in the light of what

---

[13] Schüllerqvist, B. (1992). *Från kosackval till kohandel: SAP:s väg till makten* (The rise to power of the Swedish Social Democrats: organizational changes in the Swedish labor movement 1928 – 1933). Tiden, pp. 17-20.

[14] Jonsson, K. (2017). *Fångna i begreppen? Revolution, tid och politik i svensk socialistisk press 1917 – 1924* (Trapped in the concepts? Revolution, time and politics in the Swedish socialist press 1917 – 1924). Elanders, p. 33.

[15] Ibid, p. 21.

[16] Östberg, K. (2024). *The Rise and Fall of Swedish Social Democracy.* Verso Books, p. 101.

historian Jan Bolin has pointed out in his book on the history of the Swedish Left Party *Parti av ny typ? Skapandet av ett svenskt kommunistiskt parti 1917–1933* (Party of a New Type? The Creation of a Swedish Communist Party 1917–1933) from 2004. According to Bolin, there has been a tendency to portray Swedish left-wing socialism and communism as anomalies within the Swedish labor movement, in clear contrast to SAP. Bolin further argues that the Swedish left often, and wrongly, has been perceived as a form of foreign ideology and organization that was imposed on a group of left-wing Swedes in the first half of the 20th century.[17] This is a particularly interesting aspect that directly intersects with the themes of this thesis.

The division along organizational and political lines within the research field is moreover reflected in the fact that there exists significantly more studies on Swedish social democracy than on Swedish left-wing socialism. Historian Lars Björlin has pointed out that the latter has occupied only a very marginal position within the field and that one reason for this might be due to its historical failure.[18] This imbalance however raises the question of dominating narratives and here, it is worth highlighting historian Åsa Linderborg's 2001 dissertation *Socialdemokraterna skriver historia: Historieskrivning som ideologisk maktresurs 1892 – 2000* (The Social Democrats write history: History Writing as an Ideological Power Resource 1892 – 2000). Linderborg makes use of the Gramscian concept of hegemony in relation to SAP's efforts and struggle over public historical consciousness, and argues that its historiography has been used, both internally and nationally, as an ideological power resource. This overarching argument functions as an analytical framework through which Linderborg examines SAP's transformation over time. Linderborg suggests that even though the goals of the labor movement remained more or less the same, the means gradually changed, which in turn also affected the party's political priorities: The threat of an imminent revolution in the late 1910s forced the bourgeoisie to make concessions and meet some of the labor class's demands. Against this backdrop, SAP began to serve as a mediator between "the

[17] Bolin, J. (2004). *Parti av ny typ? Skapandet av ett svenskt kommunistiskt parti 1917–1933* (Party of a new type? The creation of a Swedish Communist Party 1917 – 1933). Stockholm University Press, pp. 10-11. Cf. Csunderlik, P. (2022), pp. 105-114.

[18] Björlin, L. (1982-1983). Vänstersocialistiska riksdagsgruppen. In *Meddelande från Arbetarrörelsens arkiv och bibliotek*, no. 24-25, p. 8.

forces of capital" and the working class.[19] This simultaneously transformed the social democrats in the sense that the party – originally a counter-hegemonic formation – gradually became integrated into the bourgeois hegemonic order, both economically, ideologically, and culturally.[20] This view is in line with Östberg's insights. Although Östberg does not explicitly use the concepts of hegemony and counter-hegemonic formation, he notes that the party relatively early on, in the late 1910s, embarked on a parliamentary reformist path based on the understanding that real social change depended on an economic policy that first increased production and consequently economic growth, and then democratized income distribution.[21] At the same time, SAP continued to employ a language with clear Marxist references. The party program from 1920, for instance, says that "(…) the working class becomes conscious of its historic mission to be the bearer of a new order of production, freed from the profit motive, and emerges as the leader among the exploited classes (…)."[22] According to Östberg, the party has never truly reconciled this ambiguity. Instead, Östberg argues, there has been a tendency to assert that the political agenda has been more radical than it actually has been, thus projecting a radical socialist glow onto what has essentially been a fairly pragmatic, tactical *realpolitik* without any actual potential, nor intention, to overcome capitalism.[23] Building on essentially the same argument, Linderborg further contends that SAP's de-radicalization, along with the fear of a new party split, which has not occurred since 1917, quite early on contributed to unity becoming a paramount value for the party. Consequently, there has been limited room for left-wing dissenters over the years, as the primary focus has been to keep *the entire* party aligned with an increasingly reformist agenda. This, in turn, has led to the suppression of oppositional elements within the organization, including the left-

---

[19] Cf. Aucante, Y. (2020). Paradoxes of Hegemony: Scandinavian Social Democracy and the State. In: Fulla, M., Lazar, M. (Eds.). *European Socialists and the State in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries.* Palgrave Macmillan, p. 105.

[20] Ibid, p. 103. Cf. Eley, G. (2017). Marxism and Socialist Revolution. In: Pons, S., Smith S.A. (Eds.). *The Cambridge History of Communism*. Cambridge University Press, p. 61.

[21] Östberg, K. (2024), p. 270.

[22] Misgeld, K. (2001). *Socialdemokratins program: 1897 till 1990.* (The Social Democratic Program: 1897 to 1990). Arbetarrörelsens arkiv och bibliotek, pp. 32-38.

[23] Östberg, K. (2024), pp. 269-272.

wing socialists of the late 1910s and early 1920s, who are the focus of this thesis.[24] Linderborg describes how, for example the left-wing socialist Zeth "Zäta" Höglund, seen through the lens of SAP, can be understood as a figure who created "an aura of martyrdom around him."[25] As one of the leading members of SSV during the late 1910s and early 1920s, Höglund wrote the book *Branting som bolsjevikdödare* (Branting as a Bolshevik killer), which was a bitter confrontation with the "father of Swedish Socialism", Hjalmar Branting and the path that SAP had chosen.[26] Six years later Höglund would, ironically, become Branting's official "hagiographer" when he returned to SAP and was commissioned to write his memoirs.[27] Linderborg states that the biography "became Höglund's apology for the struggles of his youth and for the misstep to communism."[28] The use of the word "misstep" is particularly interesting, and has earlier been raised by Jonsson who argues that it can be understood against the backdrop of SAP's dominating position. Consequently, the transition of individuals and collectives from SAP to left-wing socialism and communism has by the party been regarded as a deviation, and the movement back as a return, also in a normative sense.[29] This thesis does not intend to delve deeper into SAP's historiography. Yet, the preceding discussion is both intriguing and relevant, as it highlights SAP's significant legacy in relation to on the one hand, the historical sense of self and collective identity of the labor movement and on the other hand how this is reflected in the existing body of literature, as discussed above. In contrast to this framework, this thesis diverges from the study conducted by Linderborg, which analyzes these themes from the perspective of SAP. Instead, it positions itself on the opposing side, exploring these issues through the lens of the Swedish left-wing socialists, arguing that their ideological formation(s) can be understood as a reaction to SAP's shift toward the center and its embrace of parliamentary reformism over extraparliamentary, i.e. revolutionary means.

---

[24] Linderborg, Å. (2001). *Socialdemokraterna skriver historia: Historieskrivning som ideologisk maktresurs 1892-2000* (The Social Democrats write history: History writing as an ideological power resource 1892-2000). Atlas, pp. 177-191.

[25] Linderborg, Å. (2001) p. 64.

[26] Cf. Höglund, Z. (1920). *Branting som bolsjevikdödare.* (Branting as a Bolshevik Killer). Fram förlag.

[27] Linderborg, Å. (2001), p. 64.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Jonsson, K. (2017) p. 36.

In terms of studies that more directly address the overarching theme of this thesis, namely the transnational and international dimensions in which the Swedish left-wing socialists were embedded, it is worth mentioning historian Werner Schmidt's 1996 book *Kommunismens rötter i första världskrigets historiska rum: en undersökning kring arbetarrörelsens historiska misslyckande* (The Roots of Communism in the Historical Space of World War I: A Study on the Historical Failure of the Labour Movement). Schmidt argues that the experience of World War I should be seen as a constitutive historical space for both the reformist and the revolutionary parts of the labor movement. Regarding the development of Swedish left-wing socialists toward the formation of the SSV in 1917, Schmidt suggests that their radical ideology and organization should be understood primarily in the light of international events, and especially the World War and its effects on the international labor movement, rather than the social and political unrest that was going on in Sweden at the same time.[30] Although interesting, Schmidt's rationale will not be further discussed in this context since it is not the intention of this thesis to "prove" to what degree the former or the latter shaped the ideology of the Swedish left-wing socialists. Instead, it assumes that all these dimensions; the war, the Russian revolution, trans- and international socialist networks – including the Internationals –, SAP's shift toward reformism as well as Swedish strikes and social protests *jointly* contributed to the ideational foundation of the Swedish left-wing socialists. One part of Schmidt's work is however of particular interest to this thesis, namely his study of the relationship between Swedish left-wing socialists and Russian Bolsheviks that developed during the war, rooted in a shared revolutionary conviction, deeply intertwined with the struggle for peace. Schmidt however takes great care to emphasize what he argues was a difference in terms of perspective on both means and ends between the two, something which the Swedish left-wing socialists, according to Schmidt, did not fully realize.[31] To put it somewhat bluntly, Schmidt describes a group of Swedish radicals that saw the antimilitarist peace movement and its ideals as prerequisites for achieving a successful revolution, while Lenin and the Bolsheviks, on the contrary, believed that peace depended on the proletariat

---

[30] Schmidt, V. (1996). *Kommunismens rötter i första världskrigets historiska rum: en undersökning kring arbetarrörelsens historiska misslyckande* (The Roots of Communism in the Historical Space of World War I: A Study on the Historical Failure of the Labour Movement). Brutus Östlings Bokförlag Symposion, pp. 228-230.

[31] Ibid, pp. 134-135.

first coming to power, which would necessarily involve violence.[32] In the light of Schmidt's argument, the gap between Swedish left-wing socialists and Russian revolutionaries in terms of objectives seems to have been fairly wide. A different picture is however presented by historian Aleksander Kan who seems to not agree that so much importance should be attached to these differences regarding the struggle for peace vis-à-vis revolution. His 2005 book *Hemmabolsjevikerna: den svenska socialdemokratin, ryska bolsjeviker och mensjeviker under världskriget och revolutionen 1914–1920* (Home Bolsheviks: Swedish Social Democracy, Russian Bolsheviks and Mensheviks during the World War and the Revolutionary Years 1914–1920) confirms on the one hand that there were diverging views on the relationship between revolution and peace, and that Lenin in 1917 prioritized the former but, on the other hand argues that Swedish interaction with the Bolshevik revolutionary movement in Russia was closer than that of any other Western nation.[33] According to Kan, these ideational and practical exchanges, in combination with the national unrest, seem to have influenced the decision of a number of Swedish left-wing socialists to leave SAP and continue the struggle for a Swedish revolution through SSV and eventually SKP, section of the Comintern.[34]

This study thus positions itself closer to Kan's line of reasoning in the sense that the starting point is not, as in Schmidt's case, to reduce the significance of the relations between the Russian Bolsheviks and the Swedish left-wing socialists, by pointing at distinctions between their revolutionary thoughts in relation to the war, even if these differences as well as other divergences are relevant and thus adressed and discussed later in the thesis. What is of interest, however, is not to *measure* the ideological proximity between the Bolsheviks and the Swedish left-wing socialists. It is thus not a question of which ideas the latter *fully* incorporated or rejected in their beliefs, but rather what visions they *did* develop within the framework of their connections to leading Bolsheviks and their subsequent commitment to the Comintern, as well as how these can be understood as a reaction to SAP's gradual shift

---

[32] Ibid, p. 138.

[33] Kan, A. (2005). *Hemmabolsjevikerna: den svenska socialdemokratin, ryska bolsjeviker och mensjeviker under världskriget och revolutionen 1914 – 1920* (Home Bolsheviks: Swedish Social Democracy, Russian Bolsheviks and Mensheviks during the World War and the Revolutionary Years 1914 – 1920). Carlsson, pp. 505-528.

[34] Ibid, p. 329.

toward the center and its abandonment of the objective of a full transformation of the political and economic system.

Against this backdrop, it is necessary to finally move toward the work of historian Lars Björlin, who has devoted an entire scholarly career to study the relations between the Swedish left-wing socialists and their Russian counterparts. Through more than five decades of collecting and studying both Swedish sources and the material from several Russian archives, such as The State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF) and The Russian Foreign Policy Archive (AVPRF) which were partly opened in the early 1990s, Björlin's research reveals that the Swedish left in general and SSV/SKP in particular maintained close, sometimes intense, contacts with the international communist movement and its leadership in Moscow.[35] For what regards the latter, Björlin demonstrates that the *Communist Party of Russia/USSR (RCP (b))* early on acquired influence over the Swedish section of Comintern, which was established and maintained both on a party-level and through other, non-party channels, such as the Swedish-Russian Association (later the International Association of Friends of the Soviet Union, FSU), the Society of Cultural Relations with the Soviet Union (VOKS) and Russian/Soviet embassy staff in Sweden.[36] At the same time, Björlin argues, in line with Bolin's statement, that it would be inaccurate to view the Swedish left-wing socialists and SSV/SKP as "remotely controlled" by Moscow. Firstly, Björlin points out that the Swedes had close contact with other socialist/communist parties, not least in their neighbouring Scandinavian countries.[37] Secondly, as Björlin claims, the Swedish left-wing socialists of the 1910s and 1920s had an identity deeply rooted in Swedish social democracy, and ultimately intended to implement their policies in Sweden, with revolution as a diffuse,

---

[35] Björlin, L. (2006). Om svensk och rysk kommunism. In: Gerdin, M., Östberg, K. (eds) *Hur rysk är den svenska kommunismen? Fyra bidrag om kommunism, nationalism och etnicitet.* (How Russian is the Swedish Communism? Four Contributions on Communism, Nationalism and Ethnicity). Södertörns högskola, Research Reports 2006:7, p. 11. Cf. Björlin, L., & Carlbäck, H. (1999). *Sverige i ryska arkiv: guide till ryska källor om svensk historia under 1900-talet.* (Sweden in Russian Archives: Guide to Russian Sources on Swedish History in the 20th Century). Riksarkivet.

[36] Ibid, pp. 15-16.

[37] Ibid, p. 13. Cf. Björkegren, H. (1985). *Ryska posten: de ryska revolutionärerna i Norden 1906–1917*. (Russian Mail: The Russian revolutionaries in the Nordic Countries 1906-1917). Bonnier.

yet overarching, objective.[38] This in turn affected, sometimes strained, the party's relationship to the RCP (b) and the Comintern leadership with its gradual demands for subordination and ideological and organizational unity.[39] This dynamic is something that this thesis particularly aims to delve deeper into by exploring how the visions and objectives of SSV/SKP evolved during the period 1917–1921. According to Björlin, tensions would escalate during the second half of the 1920s, making SKP end up in a difficult position of dependence on Moscow which not only contributed to the several party-splits in the following years, but also eventually reduced the party to "a pawn" in the USSR foreign policy game during the 1930s.[40] To further explore how this development was reflected in SKP's priorities and actions in Sweden during the following decades requires a separate study, which is why it is appropriate to limit the time-scope of this thesis to 1917–1921.

Interest of the Research, Purpose and Research Questions

The *motivation* for this thesis stems from the fact that Sweden is often associated with reformist social democracy, which laid the foundations of the modern Swedish society as we know it today. At the same time, the revolutionary elements of the Swedish left and its ties to the revolutionary international socialist movement during the early 20th century have been widely neglected in historical research in general and research on Swedish political history in particular. As discussed above, SAP has itself contributed to the marginalization of these revolutionary tendencies and ideas through its own historiography, which to a large extent has shaped the Swedish sense of self, or "national myth."[41]

For what regards the *purpose* of this thesis, it is necessary to return to the question of the relations between Swedish left-wing socialists and Russian Bolsheviks: Björlin, whose own work has contributed to mapping these, argues that the fact that these relations and

---

[38] Björlin, L. (2002). Kultur och politik. Kommunistiska frontorganisationer i Sverige. In: Blomqvist, H., Ekdahl, L. (Eds.). *Kommunismen – hot och löfte: arbetarrörelsen i skuggan av Sovjetunionen 1917–1991.* (Communism – Threat and Promise: The Labor Movement in the Shadow of the Soviet Union 1917–1991). Carlsson, pp. 39-40.

[39] Björlin, L. (2005). *Mellan bolsjevism och socialdemokrati. Den kommunistiska rörelsen i Sverige och Komintern.* (Between Bolshevism and Social Democracy. The Communist Movement in Sweden and the Comintern). Comintern Working Paper 2005 (2), pp. 2-3

[40] Ibid.

[41] Linderborg, Å. (2001), pp. 475-482.

"networks" existed does not answer to what extent and *how* they shaped the development of SSV/SKP.[42] To try to approach this question, it is thus necessary to take a closer look at the party's priorities and goals in the domestic political arena, given that it was situated in a position somewhere between the national context and SAP on the one hand, and the international movement led by the Bolsheviks on the other hand. This leads us to the questions that this thesis aims to answer:

1) What did the SSV/SKP aim to achieve between 1917 and 1921?

2) Did the SSV/SKP during this period commit to revolutionary aims based on the Bolshevik model?

The thesis aims to answer these questions by studying the SSV/SKP, its roots, and ideational development over time on a *institutional* level primarily through testimonies such as congress protocols, party programs and articles. It should however be noted that the term *institutional*, in this context, does not equate to *organizational.*[43] Political scientist Jörgen Hermansson who has researched SKP after the dissolution of the Comintern in 1943, suggests that a political party may be studied either in terms of its ideology, its political action or its organization.[44] Given this division, this thesis aligns with the first approach, as the objective is to grasp what the party *aimed* to achieve. The aforementioned reference to *ideational,* rather than *ideological* development underlines the lack of a coherent or homogenous ideological foundation in SSV/SKP within the timeframe of this study. A characteristic of the party which this thesis aims to explore further. In addition, *biographical elements* are incorporated in relation to several key individuals who, in various ways and to varying extents, contributed to shaping the party, both within and beyond it. There are two reasons for this dual focus. First, the belief that biographical elements will serve as a valuable complement in addressing the research question, especially given the party's heterogeneous, to not say fluid, character in terms of ideas and objectives. Moreover, as mentioned above,

---

[42] Björlin, L. (2006), p. 22.

[43] Cf. Bolin, J. (2004).

[44] Hermansson, J. (1984). *Kommunism på svenska?: SKP/VPK:s idéutveckling efter Komintern.* (Communism – the Swedish Way?: The Ideological Development of SKP/VPK since the Comintern). Almqvist & Wiksell International, pp. 28-29.

relations with the Russian Bolsheviks existed at multiple levels, both formal and informal. Second, previous studies have highlighted a gap in the field, particularly in exploring similar themes through a biographical approach.[45] This leads us to the next two sections which will adress the methods, sources and limitations, as well as the theoretical concepts.

Method, Sources, and Limitations

This thesis employs a *qualitative historical analysis* centered on an interpretative reading of both primary and secondary sources.[46] This qualitative approach involves synthesizing information from written and oral testimonies into a narrative analysis aimed at capturing the ideological development of SSV/SKP between 1917 and 1921 as the party occupied a complex position between the reformist SAP and revolutionary Russia. The qualitative analysis is conducted *inductively*, through a close engagement with the sources. This approach enables an understanding of the various perspectives and motivations within the party, as revealed through firsthand accounts and documents.[47] In parallel, extensive use is made of secondary sources, including monographs, anthologies and articles on themes such as international and European socialism and communism, social democracy, Swedish social democracy and Swedish left-wing socialism and communism to provide a broader historical context and to situate the primary sources within the existing body of research. For what regards specific information on the relationships between the Swedish left-wing socialists and Russian revolutionaries, particular use is made of the works by the aforementioned Bolin, Björlin, Kan and Schmidt. Firstly, their works are used as secondary literature in their own right. Secondly, the thesis relies heavily on these authors, and especially Kan, for what regards the Russian sources, both in a linguistic and material sense, due to the language barrier and the current inaccessibility caused by the ongoing war in Ukraine. On the whole, the dual use of primary and secondary sources contribute to a synthesis as the former offer

---

[45] Jonsson, K (2017) p. 36. Cf. Hägglund, J. (2023). *Demokratins stridslinjer: Carl Lindhagen och politikens omvandling, 1896–1923.* (The Battle Lines of Democracy: Carl Lindhagen and the Transformation of Politics 1896–1923). Södertörn Doctoral Dissertations.

[46] Thies, C.G. (2002). A Pragmatic Guide to Qualitative Historical Analysis in the Study of International Relations. *International Studies Perspectives*, 3(4), pp. 351–372.

[47] Howell, M. C., & Prevenier, W. (2001). *From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods.* Cornell University Press, pp. 63-68.

the raw material for understanding specific events and actors, while the latter help to frame, interpret, and compare these findings against existing research.[48]

For what regards the primary sources, extensive use is made of archival material provided by the Archive and Library of the Labor Movement in Stockholm (ARAB). Specifically, the study draws on primary sources from the collections of the Social Democratic Left Party (SSV) 1917–1921 and the Swedish Communist Party, Section of the Comintern (SKP) 1921–1924. In particular, the congress protocols' have proved very valuable thanks to their richness in details. Through transcribed and reproduced speeches, proposals, debates, and decisions, the empirical data offers a comprehensive view of the party's development, *from within,* from its formation in 1917 to its transformation into SKP in 1921. Another valuable source of information is the extensive external material produced by the party, such as newspaper and magazine articles written by key Swedish left-wing socialists, as well as published articles and other texts produced by their international comrades. These writings offer significant insights into the views and positions that were debated at the time. Additionally, it is particularly interesting to compare these texts with letters, travelogues, diary notes and memoirs, which are in this work primarily collected from the SSV/SKP-member Otto Grimlund's personal archive, which contains seven volumes in total. While being personal accounts and thus less reliable for concrete data due to potential memory lapses, embellishments, or intentional concealments, they nonetheless enrich our understanding of the time by "bringing history to life."[49]

The limitation in access to primary sources, along with other constraints such as time and scope, has of course also influenced the choice of focus and research questions. Although the thesis demonstrates that the SSV/SKP partly emerged within a broader international context, the emphasis on SAP and the Bolsheviks may give the impression that the circumstances that surrounded the left wing of the Swedish labor movement were unique to Sweden. This was not the case. Additionally, due to the limited scope of the thesis, it omits the transnational connections and collaborations that existed between the various parties, beyond the Internationals. For instance, the cooperation between the SSV/SKP and the Nordic parties

[48] Howell, M. C., & Prevenier, W. (2001), pp. 17-34.

[49] Howell, M. C., & Prevenier, W. (2001), pp. 18-19.

was significant, but unfortunately, this is not given much attention in the thesis.[50] Moreover, had the circumstances been different, it would undoubtedly have been particularly interesting to explore the Russian perspectives "first-hand" through direct access to primary documents, including correspondence and reports from Russian revolutionaries themselves. However, the authors mentioned above seem to have thoroughly engaged with these sources, which adds further justification for relying on their comprehensive contributions.

Lastly, a few words on the challenges of translation given that most of the primary material used in this thesis is originally in Swedish. Translating historical documents requires not only a linguistic conversion but also a careful interpretation of cultural and contextual nuances that may not always have direct equivalents in English.[51] This is especially significant when dealing with idiomatic expressions, political terminology, and historical references specific to any context, in this case early 20th-century Sweden. The risk of losing meaning or altering the nuance of certain expressions is a constant concern. For instance, certain political terms or rhetorical styles prevalent in Swedish socialist discourse of the time may not have straightforward English counterparts.[52] However, it is important to acknowledge that complete objectivity in reading, processing and translating primary, as well as secondary, sources is unattainable. Interpretations inevitably shape the way these texts are rendered in English, reflecting not only linguistic challenges but also a subjective understanding of the sources as well as the broader historical context, ultimately contingent upon cultural perspective, historical knowledge, and individual biases.[53] Despite these limitations, which are impossible to fully overcome, every effort has been made to ensure that the English text faithfully convey the essence of the original sources in order to ensure that these are not lost in translation.

---

[50] Cf. Myklebost, K. A., Nielsen, J. P., & Rogatchevski, A. (Eds.). (2020). *The Russian Revolutions of 1917: The Northern Impact and Beyond*. Academic Studies Press. Cf. Elmgren, A. (2015). The Socialist Soviet Republic of Scandinavia. *Ajalooline Ajakiri*, 3 (153), pp. 287-326.

[51] Venuti, L. (Ed.). (2018). *Rethinking translation: Discourse, subjectivity, ideology* (Vol. 2). Routledge, p. 11.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Howell, M. C., & Prevenier, W. (2001), pp. 146-148.

CHAPTER 1: SITUATING THE SWEDISH LEFT WITHIN ITS WIDER HISTORICAL, POLITICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

The notion of achieving social justice by seizing and reshaping state power dates back to the late 18th century, notably the "bourgeois" French Revolution of 1789 which, as historian Enzo Traverso points out, presented a new vision of possibility, namely a radical historical break that turned the old power structure on its head and transformed *the people* into an active, sovereign subject.[54] The formation of organized labor as a political force however, took shape in a more deliberate way during the 19th century. For instance in Britain where the rapid industrialization process during the 1830s and 1840s gave rise to the Chartist movement, which sought universal male suffrage and increasing political rights for the working class.[55] Eventually, by 1900, this movement would be institutionalized in the *Labour Party.*[56] In Switzerland, an educational circle called the Grütli Association was formed in 1838 which gradually moved left.[57] In France, early socialist ideas had developed during the time of the 1789 revolution. Following the 1848 revolutions – an era of widespread uprisings across Europe driven by demands for political freedoms, social reforms, and national unity – radical political movements in France began to take shape, some of which had their roots in clandestine societies. Another important vehicle was the establishment of "proto-unions", *National Workshops* (Ateliers nationaux), with figures such as Louis Blanc, who formulated new ideas around worker's cooperations and advocated for state intervention to guarantee employment for workers.[58] A similar development took place in Germany after 1848 and around the same time the old guild system was replaced by organizations such as the *Workers' Brotherhood* (Arbeiterverbrüdung).[59] It was also there, in the Saxon city of Leipzig,

---

[54] Traverso, E. (2021). *Revolution: An Intellectual History.* Verso Books, p. 46. Cf. Blomqvist, H. (1989). *Den röda tråden.* (The Red Thread). Röda rummet, pp. 6-7.

[55] van der Linden, M. (2022). Introduction to Volume II. In: van der Linden, M. (Ed.). *The Cambridge History of Socialism*: Volume 2. Cambridge University Press, pp. 1-7.

[56] Ibid. Cf. Callaghan, J. (2022). The British Labour Party. In: van der Linden, M. (Ed.). *The Cambridge History of Socialism*: Volume 2. Cambridge University Press, pp. 110–131.

[57] van der Linden, M. (2022), p. 2.

[58] van der Linden, M. (2022), p. 2. For an interesting account of the rise of socialist associations during the 19th century, see Błesznowski, B., & Kuligowski, P. (2023) Road Not Taken? Inventing, Modernizing, and Renegotiating the Concept of Association in the 19th-century Socialism. *Journal of Political Ideologies*, pp. 1-20.

[59] Sperber, J. (2013). Karl Marx the German. *German History,* 31 (3), p. 392.

that the first socialist political party, the German Workers' Association (ADAV), was formed in 1863. ADAV was founded by Ferdinand Lassalle, a philosophy-trained German thinker who had participated in the 1848 revolution. He died just one year after the party's founding, though his ideas lived on.[60] The core of Lassalle's political vision was that capitalism should be defeated through the establishment of producers' co-operatives which would pressure the government to transfer control of the industries to the workers.[61] Following the creation of ADAV, a rival socialist party, the Social Democratic Workers' Party of Germany (SDAP), was formed. SDAP, led by August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht, rejected Lassalle's ideas and instead took guidance in Marxism. Like Lassalle, Liebknecht had participated in the 1848 revolution, but he had also spent several years in exile in London, where he became acquainted with Marx and other socialist émigrés.[62] A few years later, in 1875, these two partys would merge and in 1890 the new party was re-named the *Social Democratic Party of Germany* (SPD).[63] Between 1878 and 1890 however, SPD was outlawed by the German government under the so-called Anti-Socialist Laws, which severely restricted socialist activities across the newly unified German empire.[64] Nonetheless, as we shall se throughout the following chapter, the theoretical underpinnings of SPD would to a large extent serve as SAP's guiding framework in the years to come.

Following the creation of ADAV in 1863, a wave of similar organizations emerged across the continent and beyond, and by the late 1880s labor parties and unions had been established in most European countries.[65] Common to all these labor parties was their aspiration of seizing the state apparatus and restructuring according to socialist principles, which included measures such as improved working conditions and expanded suffrage. However, as historian Marcel van der Linden points out: even if many of these parties identified as revolutionary and Marxist, the overarching objective of a *socialist transformation of the state* was often

---

[60] Berger, S., & Welskopp, T. (2022). Social Democracy in Germany. In: van der Linden, M. (Ed.). *The Cambridge History of Socialism*: Volume 2. Cambridge University Press, pp. 51-52.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Berger, S., & Welskopp, T. (2022), pp. 52-55.

[65] van der Linden, M. (2022), pp. 7-8.

sidelined as the concrete political demands took precedence.[66] For instance, Marx himself accused Liebknecht of failing to absorb his and Engels' orthodox doctrine, instead engaging in "associational socialism."[67] One reason for this however, may be due to the fact that neither Marx, nor Engels, in their writings proposed a concrete action plan for how a socialist revolution was to be carried out. At the core of their theory, or doctrine, as presented in their joint publication *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) and Marx' work *Capital: A Critique of the Political Economy* (1867) was the notion of the working class, the proletariat, as the historical agent. It was thus the task of the proletariat to overthrow the capitalist state, which was modelled on the interests of the bourgeoisie, and replace it with a classless society, the proletarian state. This, Marx believed was a historical necessity as the ever-growing exploitation of the working class, coupled with the widening gap between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, would ultimately lead to revolution.[68] After the revolution, a transitional period, the *dictatorship of the proletariat* would follow, during which the proletariat would dismantle the old capitalist order and establish the new socialist state.[69] However, what this transition would look like in detail and what concrete institutions and structures would be needed to replace the functions of the old state, was something that was rarely discussed.[70] This in turn left a gap in the emerging socialist movements. While the theoretical foundations of Marxism certainly provided a systemic understanding of the economic basis and ideological superstructure of society, there was no clear guidance on *how* the working class should organize itself to take power, or what the new state should look like. This was however to change dramatically in 1917 when Lenin and the Bolsheviks actually put Marxist theory, albeit modified by Lenin, into practice.

After having briefly outlined the emergence of labor organizations and German socialist thought, it is now time to turn our attention to the Swedish labor movement and the creation of SAP. The following chapter thus begins with a discussion of the social and political

---

[66] Ibid, p. 7.

[67] Berger, S., & Welskopp, T. (2022), p. 51.

[68] Miller, R.W. (1991). Social and Political Theory: Class, State, Revolution. In: Carver, T. (Ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to Marx.* Cambridge University Press, pp. 55-105.

[69] Ibid, pp. 65-72.

[70] Ibid. Cf. Berger, S., & Welskopp, T. (2022), p. 51.

context of nineteenth century Sweden, against which later events and developments can be understood. It traces the origins of Swedish social democracy, its key characteristics, and then explores how it related to the international socialist movement before 1914.

1.1 The Swedish Labor Movement and the Birth of Social Democracy

Until the latter half of the 19th century, Sweden was marked by a largely apolitical culture. The teachings of the reformist church served as the prevailing ideology, emphasizing individual contentment and obedience as core values.[71] At the same time, Sweden experienced several periods of material hardship. In the absence of organized mass politics and with few channels for the broader population to influence social or political development, this led instead to a wave of mass emigration to America starting in the mid-19th century. In less than 100 years, 1.2 million Swedes, corresponding to roughly 20% of the total population, had left for the United States.[72]

Sweden's "sonderweg" toward a mature, democratic political system is often, and perhaps a bit misleadingly, associated with the 1866 representation reform. This reform introduced a bicameral parliamentary system in the Swedish *Riksdag*, with an "upper house" for the elite and a "lower house" that was somewhat more popular. However, representation in the lower house was still restricted by income and property requirements, resulting in a domination by relatively wealthy, self-owning farmers.[73] For the vast majority of Swedes at the time, pursuing political change independently was neither feasible nor relevant, especially since they still lacked the right to vote.[74] Even among the privileged 5.6 % percent of the population who were eligible to participate in parliamentary elections, political apathy appeared widespread; for instance, in the 1872 election, less than 20% of eligible voters cast

---

[71] Möller, T. (2015). *Sveriges politiska historia: strid och samverkan under tvåhundra år*. (Sweden's Political History: Struggle and Cooperation during Two Hundred Years). Studentlitteratur, pp. 38-39.

[72] Ibid, p. 41. Cf. Gustafson Olsson, A. (2013). "Swedes and Swedish Americans, to 1870" in Baker, E.R. (Ed.). *Immigrants in American History: Arrival, Adaptation, and Integration. Volume One: 1600–1870.* Bloomsbury, pp. 161-171.

[73] Bengtsson, E. (2020). *Världens jämlikaste land?* (The Most Equal Country in the World?). Arkiv Förlag, p. 88.

[74] Östberg, K. (2024), p. 12.

their ballots.[75] The situation would soon change, however, and political passivity would be replaced by an active popular will, mobilized and eventually institutionalized in a modern party system. The triggering factor has been described as the so-called tariff war of 1887.[76] Due to new technology and improved transport facilities, competition from the United States and Russia for grain had intensified, causing financial struggle for many Swedish farmers.[77] This led to the emergence of a mobilized opinion in favor of protectionist policies. Although tariffs were not implemented immediately, the situation altered the dynamic between parliamentarians and voters, as many of the latter now had clear incentives to demand answers and action from their representatives.[78]

1.1.1 Springboard to Party Politics: The Popular Movements

While a large majority of the Swedes during the late 19th century were still agrarian, a process of industrialization and urbanization alongside "enlightenment" ideas imported from the continent had resulted in the emergence of new strata; the bourgeoisie and the working class. The ideas sparked by the French Revolution were felt in Sweden as well, and it was initially the bourgeoisie that gradually strengthened its position in the Swedish political environment and pushed for economic liberalism and pro-democratic policies, but the working class would quite soon organize and gain ground over time.[79] There would also be collaborations between liberals and socialists on several fronts, in various phases and to varying extents.[80] As mentioned earlier, the Swedish political system was still relatively

---

[75] N.a. (1873). *Statistiska centralbyråns underdåniga berättelse rörande riksdagsmannavalen år 1872.* (The Humble Report of the Central Bureau of Statistics Regarding the Parliamentary Elections of 1872). P.A. Norstedt & söner.

[76] Möller, T. (2015), p. 42.

[77] Dugstad Sanders, A.R. (2018). *Europe's Northern Resource Frontier: The political economy of resource nationalism in Sweden and Norway 1888-1936.* PhD Thesis. European University Institute, p. 28.

[78] Möller, T. (2015), p. 49. Cf. Bengtsson, E. (2021). "The Evolution of Popular Politics in Nineteenth Century Sweden and the Road from Oligarchy to Democracy." *Lund Papers in Economic History*, no. 226, p. 26. For a more comprehensive account of the tariff dispute, see Lewin, L. (1988). *Ideology and Strategy: A Century of Swedish Politics.* Cambridge University Press, pp. 33-52.

[79] Bengtsson, E. (2020), p. 87.

[80] Östberg, K. (1990). *Byråkrati och reformism: en studie av svensk socialdemokratis politiska och sociala integrering fram till första världskriget.* (Bureaucracy and Reformism: A Study of the Political and Social integration of Swedish Social Democracy up to the First World War). Arkiv förlag, pp. 73-118.

underdeveloped in the mid-19th century, at least from the point of view of popular will. Similar to the *National Workshops* in France and the *Workers' Fraternization* in Germany, a significant catalyst for organized party politics was the emergence of the so-called *popular movements*. These movements, born out of liberal ideas, were developed from the grassroots by the lower middle class and workers. Following the 1866 reform, a variety of collective social organizations emerged, gradually increasing their influence on social development: the free church movement, temperance societies, women's associations, educational societies, savings banks and insurance associations to name a few.[81] These movements arose from the needs of the new social classes: the bourgeoisie needed business communities and trade associations, while the emerging working class required provisions such as health and unemployment support.[82] Some of these popular movements were eventually transformed into political mass organizations, not least the labor movement, which was shaped both by local conditions and ideological influences from abroad.

The first demand of the workers was the right to form trade unions and with it the right to strike. This demand was symbolically expressed in a strike in 1879 at a sawmill in the northern town of Sundsvall. Due to an international recession, the workers' wages had drastically been cut by half, while the sawmill owners on the contrary were offered government support amounting to approximately three million Swedish crowns.[83] In response, almost half of the town's citizens, around 4000 workers, went on strike which included several tent camps outside the city. The authorities, led by the governor, tried to quell the mobilization by deploying military guards, including six gunboats, and informing the workers that their actions were illegal.[84] Strikers who refused to resume their work did

---

[81] Östberg, K. (2024), pp. 13-14. See also Jansson, T. (1985). *Adertonhundratalets associationer: forskning och problem kring ett sprängfyllt tomrum eller sammanslutningsprinciper och föreningsformer mellan två samhällsformationer c:a 1800–1870.* (Nineteenth-century Associations: Research and Problems Concerning an Explosive Vacuum or Principles and Forms of Organization Between two Social Formations circa 1800–1870). Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis.

[82] Östberg, K. (2024), pp. 13-14.

[83] Östberg, K. (2021). *Folk i rörelse: vår demokratis historia.* (People in Motion: the History of our Democracy). Ordfront, p. 17.

[84] Hirdman, Y. (1979). *Vi bygger landet: den svenska arbetarrörelsens historia från Per Götrek till Olof Palme.* (We Build the Country: The History of the Swedish Labor Movement from Per Götrek to Olof Palme). Pogo Press, pp. 33-34.

not only loose their jobs but were arrested and evicted from their homes.[85] The strike was called off after 10 days and the workers returned to work without their demands being met.[86] The leaders of the strike were arrested and put on trial but were eventually acquitted by the Swedish Court of Appeal.[87] The Sundsvall strike is, even though it failed, often described as the starting point of the organized Swedish labor movement in the sense that it was the first time that so many workers came together to act as an autonomous group.[88] Although the mobilization was spontaneous, as there was no trade union behind it, many workers had previous experience in community organizations. This was particularly true through the Free Church movement, which had recently established so-called free churches in many smaller communities across the country, operating independently of the Swedish state church.[89] The temperance movement's commitment to restrictive alcohol policies was also reflected in the strike. Among the demands for better working conditions, there was also a call for taverns in the Sundsvall area to remain closed, at least on Sundays, as alcohol was seen as a major cause of social problems, such as poverty and family issues, faced by the working class.[90] The ideological underpinning of the strike, however, was not distinctly socialist and the first Sawmill Workers' Union in Sundsvall rested on a liberal foundation with a program that included, for example, freedom of religion.[91] Although the union put forward demands for a ten-hour working day and a wage increase, it was careful to emphasize that it "rested on very moderate foundations" and was not to be associated with socialism.[92] Whether the toned-down rhetoric was due to an actual rejection of socialist ideas or that they simply had not yet taken hold among the workers is difficult to answer. What is clear, however, is that the strike

---

[85] Ibid.

[86] Bergman, M. (2010). *Constructing Communities: The Establishment and Demographic Development of Sawmill Communities in the Sundsvall District, 1850–1890.* PhD Thesis. *Umeå University*, p. 53.

[87] Frängsmyr, T. (2002). Svensk idéhistoria: Bildning och vetenskap under tusen år. Del II 1809–2000. (Swedish History of Ideas: Education and Science Over a Thousand years. Part II 1809–2000). Natur & Kultur, p. 187.

[88] Linderborg, Å. (2001), p. 337.

[89] Östberg, K. (2024), p. 14.

[90] Hirdman, Y. (1979), p. 33.

[91] Frängsmyr, T. (2002), p. 187. Cf. Östberg, K. (2024), p. 17.

[92] Frängsmyr, T. (2002), p. 187.

of 1879 had failed to achieve its objectives and within a couple of years the unions had been taken over and re-organized on a clear class-basis by the emerging social democrats.[93] The following year, a major strike erupted in Stockholm, marking the country's first notable phase of trade union organization.[94] However, trade union organizing and strikes soon faced opposition from the right. Employers' associations were founded, and in 1899, a special law was introduced that made it a criminal offense to prevent someone from working, which in practice made it easier for employers to quell strikes with the help of strikebreakers.[95]

1.1.2 Swedish Social Democracy Takes Form: From Agitation to Organization

Two individuals played a particularly crucial role in the early development of socialist thought in Sweden and in the rise of Swedish social democracy. The first is August Palm, a tailor from southern Sweden who, by the late 19th century, became known for his agitation against capitalists and industrialists. Palm had encountered socialism during work trips to Germany, and in the fall of 1881, he delivered a famous speech titled *Vad vilja Social-demokraterna?* (What do the Social Democrats Want?).[96] The speech was followed by numerous agitation tours across the country, and a year later, he launched the first socialist newspaper, *Folkviljan* (People's Will).[97] The second figure is Hjalmar Branting, born into a wealthy bourgeois family in Stockholm, who abandoned liberalism in 1885 to co-found and later serve as the first official leader of the Swedish Social Democratic Workers' Party (SAP) from 1907 to 1925. In 1896, Branting was elected to the Second Chamber of the Swedish *Riksdag* as SAP's first representative, and he served as Prime Minister three times: in 1920, 1921–1923, and 1924–1925.[98] Both Palm and Branting should be understood as key figures

---

[93] Östberg, K. (2024), p. 16.

[94] Ibid.

[95] Hentilä, S. (1979). *Den svenska arbetarklassen och reformismens genombrott inom SAP före 1914: arbetarklassens ställning, strategi och ideologi.* (The Swedish Working Class and the Breakthrough of Reformism in SAP Before 1914: the Working Class' Position, Strategy and Ideology). Forssan Kirjapaino Oy, p. 133.

[96] Lindgren, J. (1936). *Från Per Götrek till Per Albin: några drag ur den svenska socialdemokratiens historia.* (From Per Götrek to Per Albin: Some Features of the History of Swedish Social Democracy.) Albert Bonniers förlag, p. 36. Cf. Palm, A. (1881). *What Do the Social Democrats Want?* Retrieved 21 December 2024 from: https://www.marxists.org/archive/palm-august/1881/speech.htm

[97] Östberg, K. (2024), p. 17.

[98] Östberg, K. (2024), pp. 38-39.

in connection with SAP's constituent congress in Stockholm in 1889, alongside trade unions, sickness and burial funds, and various smaller socialist groups. A prerequisite for the founding of the party was probably that the Swedish Central Trade Union Committee in 1885 had adopted a socialist program under a social democratic leadership.[99] However, there are diverging views within Swedish historical debates regarding whether Palm or Branting should be credited with the greatest significance in relation to the early days of the party.[100] Linderborg argues that SAP's own historiography similarly reflects different opinions on who was first vis-à-vis most important.[101] Branting is widely known in a broader Swedish context as "the father of the Swedish labor movement" or "the chief," titles that Linderborg suggests have played an important role in the social democratic historiography and not least in the shaping of the party's sense of self.[102] At the same time, it is difficult to overlook Palm's central role in spreading socialist ideas among the broader public, especially before the party's formation in 1889. Linderborg proposes that the relationship between them can be understood by viewing Palm as the "awakener" and Branting as the "leader."[103] However, in line with the purpose of this thesis, it should be added that neither Palm nor Branting were the first, nor the only ones in Sweden at the time to embrace, at least parts, of the heterogeneous body of proto-socialist and socialist thought. For instance, a Swedish, albeit broad-minded, translation of the Communist Manifesto was published as early as 1848 by the bookseller and saint-simonian Per Götrek, under the title *Kommunismens rötter* (The Roots of Communism).[104] Another interesting figure is the lawyer Nils Herman Quiding, who, in the 1870s, in his writings, attacked the concept of private property and instead proposed the establishment of collective housing, along with ideas of anti-authoritarian child-rearing and

---

[99] Östberg, K. (2024), p. 17.

[100] See for example Lindgren, J. (1950). *August Palm.* Folket i bilds förlag, p. 13. Cf. Höglund, Z. (1951). *Härliga tider* (Joyful Times). Tiden, p. 26.

[101] Linderborg, Å. (2001), pp. 330-333.

[102] Ibid.

[103] Linderborg, Å. (2001), p. 333.

[104] Cornell, P. (1967-1969.). *A Peter (Per) Götrek.* Svenskt Biografiskt Lexikon, vol. 17, p. 685. Retrieved 22 December 2024 from: https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sbl/Presentation.aspx?id=13467&forceOrdinarySite=true

full gender equality.[105] Quiding was also the one who, within a Swedish context, introduced and popularized the concepts of the "upper class" and the "lower class', terms that later became important tools in Swedish socialist agitation.[106] Although Quiding did not consider himself a socialist, historian Yvonne Hirdman argues that his ideas align with the three key principles of socialism outlined by the French utopian socialist Charles Fourier: 1) the right to existence, 2) the right to work, and 3) the right to the fruits of labor.[107]

As the 1880s progressed, the socialist movement in Sweden began to take a more formal shape. Already in 1884, a social democratic discussion club had been established in Stockholm on the initiative of cigar worker C.A. Johansson.[108] In addition to class-conscious artisans who, like Palm, had encountered socialism abroad, the club included intellectuals such as journalist and later chairman of the *Swedish Trade Union Confederation* (LO), Fredrik Sterky, as well as writers, actors, and other cultural workers.[109] Furthermore, during the mid-1880s, prior to the founding of SAP, several radical newspapers were established that would eventually become mouthpieces of the party. *Tiden* (Times) and *Social-Demokraten* (The Social Democrat) were among the most significant. The latter was founded by Palm in 1885 as a reaction to Branting, in his capacity as editor-in-chief of *Tiden*, refusing to label the newspaper as socialist.[110] Ironically, Branting would soon also assume leadership of *Social-Demokraten*.[111] Whether the rift between Palm and Branting was primarily due to ideological disagreements or their respective claims to power is difficult to determine. Even if Branting may have been less radical than Palm at the time, he allowed *Tiden* to publish *The Communist Manifesto* in 1886, this time translated by journalist and student Axel Danielsson who had

---

[105] Linderborg, Å. (2001), p. 332. Cf. Meidal, B. (1982) *Från profet till folktribun. Strindberg och Strindbergsfejden 1910–1912.* (From Prophet to Tribune. Strindberg and the Strindberg Feud 1910–1912. Tiden, p. 121.

[106] Hirdman, Y. (1979), p. 29.

[107] Ibid.

[108] Ibid, pp. 27-28.

[109] Ibid.

[110] Hirdman, Y. (1979), pp. 40-41.

[111] Linderborg, Å. (2001), pp. 81-83.

also outlined a plan in 1885 for how the Swedish labor movement should organize itself.[112] In 1887, Danielsson founded the social democratic newspaper *Arbetet* (Work) in Sweden's third largest city, Malmö.[113]

The original concepts did thus not emanate *from* Palm and Branting, nor were they the only ones contributing to the movement. Although Palm and Branting may have been the most successful in putting the socialist concepts into motion, these were primarily imported from the myriad of socialist ideas from the continent, particularly from Germany, and then revised and modified to fit specific political objectives, both through and beyond SAP. Ideas and practices that either preceded or deviated from the party-line and those of its members who operated on the margins are discussed in more detail in chapter 1.3.

1.1.3 The Theoretical Underpinnings of Swedish Social Democracy: Lassalle, Kautsky and Bernstein

In terms of the theoretical foundation of early Swedish social democracy, it is worth revisiting August Palm and his 1881 speech, which was likely modeled after a German original. It was within the German labor movement that Palm was educated, first in a Lassallean association and later in the Gotha Programme of German Social Democracy.[114] Palm's ideological views have thus been described as a combination of the teachings of the German socialists Lassalle and Marx.[115] A central dimension of Lassalle's political ideas was the belief that the state should intervene to support worker-owned enterprises, enabling them to compete with traditional, private businesses.[116] This notion can, albeit somewhat simplistically put, be traced to Lassalle's vision of the socialist state as the ultimate embodiment and representative of the people, as a fully realized expression of their collective

---

[112] Lindström, R. (1950). *Axel Danielsson.* Folket i Bilds förlag, p. 16.

[113] Lindström, R. (1950), p. 19.

[114] Östberg, K. (2024), p. 18.

[115] Hirdman, Y. (1979), p. 25.

[116] Östberg, K. (2024), p. 18.

will.[117] This stands in contrast to Marx's, and later Lenin's, conception of the bourgeois state's inevitable dissolution, followed by the gradual withering away of the proletarian state, ultimately leading to a classless and stateless post-capitalist society, as envisioned through the lens of historical materialism.[118] Although Palm's 1881 speech contains "basic" socialist references, such as the idea that the workers themselves should reap the fruits of their labor, it particularly reflects Lassallean ideas regarding the state's role and function.[119] Palm articulated it as follows:

> (…) That, my gentlemen, is the way for the worker, he who as long he was able to work every day made his employer richer. From this story, which cannot be denied, you, my gentlemen, can see that it is not the social democrats who wants to share, but rather they are the one who wants to forbid this sharing system which now every day is practised by the capitalists. The social democrats want the workers to have all the excess of their work, but they won't get it until free competition is abolished, and the state provides work, either by overtaking the production, the manufactures, or by getting loans to the Workers' Associations, which would be easy for the state to do without risking anything, since taking over the Interest Guarantee (…).[120]

The question of whether SAP and its key figures at the time of its founding were revolutionary or not has been widely debated in Swedish historical discourse.[121] As previously mentioned, Palm has often been interpreted as more radical than Branting, yet no explicit references to the concept of revolution can be found in his 1881 speech.[122] Nor does SAP's first party program, written by Danielsson and adopted at the 1897 congress, provide a

---

[117] Voigt, S. (2020). From Marxism to Agenda 2010: German Social Democratic Notions of the State from Its Founding until Today. In: Fulla, M., & Lazar, M. (Eds.). *European Socialists and the State in the Twentieth and Twenty-first Centuries.* Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 299-300. Cf. Hirdman, Y. (1979), p. 36.

[118] Miller, R. (1991). Social and Political Theory: Class, state, revolution. In: Carver, T. (Ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to Marx.* Cambridge University Press, pp. 65-72. Cf. McLellan, (1979). *Marxism after Marx: An Introduction.* Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 98-99.

[119] Hentilä, S. (1979), pp. 109-117.

[120] Palm, A. (1932). [1881]. *Hvad vil Sosial-Demokraterna? Föredrag i Malmö den 6 november 1881.* (What do the Social Democrats Want? Lecture in Malmö on November 6, 1881). Tiden, p. 5. Note: Only 13 out of a total of 28 pages of Palm's speech were transcribed and published in 1932, with an introduction and commentary by John Lindgren. The speech was originally recorded by Palm in a notebook, which is physically held at ARAB Stockholm, August Palm's archive, vol. 3, as well as in digital format through the following link, retrieved 26 December 2024, https://www.arbark.se/dokument/temp/palm-hvad-vil-sosial-demokraterna.pdf

[121] Hentilä, S. (1979), pp. 136-146.

[122] Palm, A. (1932). [1881], pp. 1-13.

clear stance on the matter. However, the program's core principles are clearly Marxist, with statements such as:

> Social Democracy (…) seeks to completely transform the bourgeois society's economic organization and achieve the social liberation of the working class, ensuring the advancement of both spiritual and material culture (…) This can only be accomplished by abolishing the private capitalist monopoly on the means of production and transforming them into common property belonging to society as a whole, as well as replacing unplanned commodity production with a socialist production aligned with society's actual needs (…).[123]

It also includes a number of concrete demands, such as universal and equal suffrage, the abolition of the First Chamber of the *Riksdag*, dissolution of the state church, an eight-hour workday, and progressive taxation on income, wealth, and inheritance.[124] However, these demands reveal little about how the "transformation" of bourgeois society was to be achieved. There thus seems to have been a discrepancy between, on the one hand, the overarching goal – a socialist society – and, on the other hand, the means of achieving it. This vagueness has been pointed out in several earlier analyses. It has for example, as Östberg points out, been argued that the initial party program revealed a "strategy without tactics, and ends without means."[125] According to historian Seppo Hentilä, the program was to a large extent inspired by Kautskyist Marxism, even though Palm, without gaining support, tried to steer it in a more Lassallean direction.[126] In contrast to Lassalle, the German theorist and SPD-leader Kautsky advocated a so-called orthodox Marxism, which became the foundation for most European social democratic parties as well as the Second International.[127] Both the European socialist movements and the Second International are discussed in chapter 1.2. Hentilä describes Kautskyism as a form of "waiting revolutionism."[128] He also highlights the vagueness surrounding its goals and methods, which has previously been discussed in relation to SAP's Kautsky-inspired party program from

---

[123] Misgeld, K. (2001), pp. 13-14.

[124] Ibid, pp. 14-15.

[125] Östberg, K. (2024), p. 19. Cf. Hentilä, S. (1979), pp. 121-122.

[126] Hentilä, S. (1979), p. 122.

[127] Salvadori, M. (1979). *Karl Kautsky and the Socialist Revolution, 1880–1938.* Verso Books, p. 6.

[128] Ibid, p. 145.

1897.[129] According to Hentilä, Kautsky, following Marx's ideas, believed capitalism would develop according to the inherent laws of historical development.[130] The labor movement, therefore, should wait for conditions to mature rather than act prematurely, thus contrary to Lenin's strategy during the Russian Revolution of 1917.[131] During this waiting period, the primary task was to strengthen the working class and improve conditions for future action, with particular focus on securing the masses' support of the trade unions.[132] The labor movement therefore had to engage on all possible fronts, participating in parliaments and even governments which would then be transformed and cease to be a "mere instrument of the rule of the bourgeoisie."[133] However, how this accumulated class strength was to be used in practice and what the imminent revolution would be like was less clear.

Kautsky's orthodox Marxism would gradually be replaced by non-revolutionary reformism, which is perhaps what one primarily associates with "modern" social democracy. This transition marks a turning point that played a decisive role in the division within the left across Europe which gradually took place around the turn of the 20th century, culminating with the Bolsheviks' successful October Revolution in 1917. It is also precisely at this intersection, but from a Swedish perspective, that this thesis positions itself. In order to understand the objectives of the Swedish left-socialists, given that they were situated between the increasingly reformist SAP on the one hand, and the Bolshevik's revolutionary strategy on the other, it is necessary to first delve into the reformist turn of mainstream social democracy. At the center of this stood the revisionist theory authored by another German and SPD-member, Eduard Bernstein, a theorist and politician who had spent many years in exile in Britain, where he was influenced by its strong parliamentary tradition and gradualist approach to political change.[134]

---

[129] Ibid.

[130] Hentilä, S. (1979), p. 18.

[131] Ibid. For an in-depth account of Kautsky's view on the Bolshevik revolution, Leninism and Stalinism, see Salvadori, M. (1979), pp. 217-245.

[132] Hentilä, S. (1979), p. 18.

[133] Salvadori, M. (1979), p. 29.

[134] Fletcher, R. (1987). The Life and Work of Eduard Bernstein. In: Fletcher, R (Ed.). *From Bernstein to Brandt: A Short History of German Social Democracy.* Edward Arnold, pp. 45-47.

Bernstein always maintained that he was a Marxist, though one who critically examined Marxism rather than accepting it as an unchallenged, doctrinal belief.[135] The adherence to Marxism meant that, in contrast to many other reformists, Bernstein still aimed to overcome the capitalist state. However, he argued that the approach should no longer be to overthrow the state through violence, but to gradually take control of it through a democratic process, using elections and, as he perceived it, necessary parliamentary alliances.[136] Bernstein was thus also a key figure in developing, from a social democratic perspective, a liberal-democratic constitutional understanding of the state before 1914.[137] This understanding helped "solving" the theoretically complicated question of the state's existence or non-existence in a post-capitalist scenario, as briefly discussed above in relation to Lassalle and Marx.[138] The question of the state had become pressing as social democracy had gained increasing parliamentary influence across Europe at the turn of the 20th century. For, even though the parties continued to differentiate itself to bourgeois society, they were gradually "drawn into the system."[139] Moreover, Bernstein argued that capitalism had overcome its tendency to fall into crisis, and the classical Marxist doctrine of a constantly increasing gap between capitalists and workers (absolute pauperization), embedded in the labor theory of value, could no longer be considered true, as recent years had brought, although limited, improvements in living standards for many people.[140] Therefore, Bernstein argued, labor movements should focus on achieving gradual change via reforms *from within the system* that

---

[135] Berger, S. (2020). Between Challenging the Authoritarian State and Democratising It: German Social Democracy, 1914–1945. In Fulla, M., & Lazar, M. (Eds.). *European Socialists and the State in the Twentieth and Twenty-first Centuries.* Palgrave Macmillan*,* pp. 37-38.

[136] Ibid.

[137] Ibid.

[138] Cf. Hentilä, S. (1979), p. 143.

[139] Eley, G. (2017). Marxism and Socialist Revolution. In: Pons, S., Smith S.A. (Eds.). *The Cambridge History of Communism*. Cambridge University Press, p. 61.

[140] Eley, G. (2017), p. 62. Cf. Marx's concept of *relative pauperization,* i.e. the gap between workers and capitalists increases, even though workers experience material improvements over time. They receive a smaller share of the total wealth created in society, as capitalist profits grow faster than wages. See for example McLellan, D. (1980). *The Thought of Karl Marx.* Macmillan, pp. 50-51.

would ultimately lead to the end of capitalism, rather than by *overturning* the system through revolution.[141]

Bernstein's revisionism was largely embraced by the SAP leadership. Branting in particular seems to have been convinced.[142] Hentilä has written extensively about SAP's shift away from revolutionary Kautskyism toward reformism in the early 20th century. By examining both SAP's attitude toward the political system and its own role within it, as well as the party's policies regarding private ownership of the means of production and the conditions for the reproduction of labor, Hentilä concludes that the turn toward reformism was a complex process that developed gradually in the party's political practices.[143] Regarding the first point, Hentilä highlights the party's stance on the suffrage issue as particularly significant.[144] As early as the 1890s, SAP had discussed the idea of a general strike as a means of bringing about universal suffrage.[145] However, the strike was postponed several times as some forces within the party leadership were afraid that it would harm SAP's collaboration with the Liberals.[146] It was not until 1902 that the general strike was finally carried out, with over 120 000 participants. However, SAP's proposal ultimately didn't go through.[147] Two years later, Branting had changed his position on the use of strikes as a means of struggle and a compromise was eventually made with the Liberals and the Conservative Party, led by Prime Minister Arvid Lindman.[148] According to Hentilä, SAP's rejection of a new mass strike in connection with the suffrage reform was a clear break from

---

[141] Tudor, H. & J.M. Tudor. (1988). *Marxism and Social Democracy: The Revisionist Debate 1896–1898.* Cambridge University Press, pp. 168-169.

[142] Hentilä, S. (1979), pp. 156-157.

[143] Ibid, p. 109.

[144] Ibid, pp. 127-128.

[145] Berg, J.O. (2011). *På spaning efter en svensk modell: Idéer och vägval i arbetsgivarpolitiken 1897–1909*. (In Search of a Swedish Model: Ideas and Choices in Employer Policy 1897–1909). Berg Bild Rum & Färg Förlag, p. 79.

[146] Ibid.

[147] Hentilä, S. (1979), p. 135.

[148] Ibid, pp. 157-167. Between 1907 and 1909, limited suffrage for men was introduced. Women were granted the right to vote only in 1919, and true universal suffrage for both men and women was applied from the 1921 election onwards. Cf. Bengtsson, E. (2021), pp. 3-5.

extraparliamentary actions in favor of a strictly parliamentary strategy, consistent with Bernstein's revisionism.[149] This shift also marked a transformation in the party's character. Hentilä describes how the party step by step began to focus its attention on the *voters*, and during the 1910s sought to reinvent itself as a "party for all" – that is, for industrial workers, farmers, and the emerging middle class alike.[150] This strategic change, combined with the reformist ideology that emphasized gradual societal change through parliamentary means, significantly contributed to SAP's growth during the following years. In the 1908 election to the Second Chamber of the *Riksdag*, SAP more than doubled its seats, gaining 34 compared to 13 in the 1905 election.[151] This was followed by continued growth and in 1914, it was the largest party in the Second Chamber with 36% of the votes.[152] The focus was on parliamentary work, characterized by both confrontations and strategic alliances with the Liberals.[153] However, not everyone within SAP was pleased with the party's success, given its de-radicalization in favour of tactical reformism. While the preceding discussion has focused on this shift from the perspective of the party leadership, chapter 1.3 explores how it was perceived by the more radical factions on the margins of the party, some of whom eventually broke away to form SSV in 1917.

1.2 The Swedish Left in Relation to the International Socialist Movement

Sweden's political development from the mid-19th century onward was far from an isolated process. While shaped by distinct national events, it was also deeply influenced by broader international currents. To understand the ideological development within the Swedish left, comprising both SAP and its left-wing socialist "breakaways" who later joined the Bolsheviks and the Comintern, it is thus necessary to first turn to the continent and the revolutionary and reformist movements there. The objective is thus to understand to what extent the Swedish left, from an ideological perspective, was embedded in a larger international socialist context. This chapter, therefore, primarily focuses on the relationship

[149] Hentilä, S. (1979), pp. 176-177.

[150] Ibid, pp. 270-271. Cf. Hirdman, Y. (1979), pp. 121-122.

[151] Lewin, L. (1989), p. 329.

[152] Östberg, K. (2024), p. 36.

[153] Hentilä, S. (1979), pp. 231-244.

between SAP and the international workers' organizations, namely the First and Second Internationals. It concludes with the outbreak of World War I and the split of the Second International.

1.2.1 Roots and Evolution of Socialist Internationalism: From Utopian Socialists to the First International

Internationalism was a core principle of transnational socialist organization during the mid-19th century, but its roots dates back longer than that. The Left, from its origins in the revolutionary turbulence of France, was deeply shaped by internationalist ideals. While early revolutionary movements primarily focused on national struggles, the idea of international solidarity and revolution gradually emerged as a defining concept, marking one of the first major ideological divides between Left and Right.[154] Even before this divide was fully articulated, utopian socialists such as Henri de Saint-Simon, who, with a liberal desire for progress combined with the experience of the revolution followed by the Napoleonic era, envisioned a new international order, still based on nations, but beyond the conventional borders of the great powers, led by a technocratic elite of scientists, engineers, and savants.[155] Thinkers influenced by Saint-Simon, together with radical republicans, later aimed to unite the principles of democracy, equality, and transnational solidarity, as seen in Étienne Cabet's vision of an egalitarian utopia in *Icaria* and Charles Fourier's idea of a cooperative, globally interconnected social order.[156] Historian Mark Mazower has suggested that Marxian internationalism should be understood within this broader framework of political thought, which emerged as a reaction to the conservative "Concert of Europe" post 1815.[157] A constitutive event was of course the 1848 wave of liberal revolutions that swept across

---

[154] Di Donato, M & Fulla, M. (2023). Leftist Internationalisms in the History of the Twentieth Century. In: Di Donato, M., Fulla, M. (Eds.). *Leftist Internationalisms: A Transnational Political Theory.* Bloomsbury Academic, pp. 7-8.

[155] Eijking, J. (2022). A "Priesthood of Knowledge": The International thought of Henri de Saint-Simon', *International Studies Quarterly* 66, no. 1: 1–11, p. 1-4. Cf. Jennings, J. (2023). Saint-Simon and Saint-Simonism. In: Van Der Linden, M. (Ed.). *The Cambridge History of Socialism.* Cambridge University Press, pp. 126-146.

[156] Beecher, J. (2023). Charles Fourier and Fourierism. In: Van Der Linden, M. (Ed.). *The Cambridge History of Socialism.* Cambridge University Press, pp. 167-188. Cf. Johnson, C.H. (2023). Etienne Cabet and the Icarian Movement in France and the United States. In: Van Der Linden, M. (Ed.). *The Cambridge History of Socialism.* Cambridge University Press, pp. 188-214.

[157] Mazower, M. (2012). *Governing the World: The History of an Idea.* Penguin Books, pp. 25-29.

Europe. While many of these revolutions failed to achieve their goals, they underscored the need for international cooperation among workers and highlighted the limitations of national struggles.[158] It was in the same year, 1848, that Marx and Engels published *The Communist Manifesto*, which called for the unification of the working class across national borders.[159] This context, alongside the political changes of the 1860s such as the unification of Italy and Germany and liberal reforms, ultimately contributed to the formation of the International Working Men's Association (IWMA), more commonly referred to as the The First International, in 1864 which provided a platform for the coordination of socialist efforts on a transnational scale.[160] This dual development with the emergence of a socialist strategy based on party organization, and the constitutional changes that made it possible, came to characterize the socialist mainstream until the challenges that emerged in the beginning of the 20th century when World War I broke out.[161] The IWMA sought to unite workers across Europe, advocating for better working conditions, the abolition of child labor, and the rights of workers to organize. In order to do this, a general council was set up and it was decided that the IWMA would hold annual congresses, alongside the publication of newspapers and circulars. Exact membership figures are difficult to obtain, but recent estimates show that at its peak between 1871 and 1872 the IMWA had around 150,000 members, many of whom joined automatically through their unions.[162] In particular, the IMWA was dominated by workers from France, Britain, Belgium, Switzerland, Italy, and Spain.[163] It also hosted refugees and dissidents from eastern Europe, including Tsarist Russia, and its influence extended beyond Europe over time, with branches established in the United States and Latin America.[164] The organization was founded by British union organizers, but what it actually

---

[158] Hobsbawm, E. (1996) [1962]. *The Age of Revolution: 1789–1848.* Vintage Books, p. 305.

[159] Eley, G. (2017), p. 65.

[160] Musto, M. (2014). *Workers Unite!: The International 150 Years Later.* Bloomsbury Academic, pp. 51-57.

[161] Eley, G. (2017). p. 55.

[162] Bensimon, F. (2023). The International Working Men's Association (1864–1876/7). In: Van Der Linden, M. (Ed.). *The Cambridge History of Socialism.* Cambridge University Press, pp. 243-244.

[163] Ibid.

[164] Ibid.

aimed to achieve was not initially clear even though its statutes were written by Marx.[165] During the years between 1866 and 1870, the IWMA was strengthened in the light of a wave of strikes across Europe, including tailors in Britain, miners in Belgium and construction workers in Switzerland.[166] At the 1868 Brussels Congress, the IWMA embraced a clear socialist approach by adopting resolutions on the collectivization of the means of production.[167] Another particularly significant event was the proclamation of the short-lived and brutally suppressed, yet impactful Paris Commune of 1871, which was supported by the IWMA.[168] Eventually, internal tensions emerged in the organization, especially between the Marxist faction and the anarchists under Mikhail Bakunin's leadership. This ideological divide came to a head in the early 1870s, which contributed to the First International's dissolution in 1876.[169]

As demonstrated in the introductory sub-chapter, Sweden was politically underdeveloped during this period. The uprisings of 1848 did indeed reach the country, with protests in several cities against both political oppression and social inequality. However, neither liberals nor socialists were organized at the time, and the protests have in hindsight not been considered a serious revolutionary attempt.[170] Moreover, SAP was as mentioned earlier not founded until 1889, thirteen years after the dissolution of the First International in 1876. This can be contrasted with the first German liberal party, German Progress Party (DFP), which was founded in 1861 and the first social democratic party, ADAV, which was established in 1863 and led by Lassalle.[171] A Swedish audience could nonetheless encounter the theories of Marx and Engels as early as 1848, when the bookseller and Saint-Simonian Per Götrek published a Swedish translation of the Communist Manifesto. Interestingly, Götrek had replaced the final words, "Workers of all countries, unite!", with the less radical slogan, "The

---

[165] Ibid.

[166] Ibid, p. 240.

[167] Ibid, p. 242.

[168] Musto, M. (2014), pp. 211-227.

[169] Eley, G. (2017), pp. 62-63. Cf. Hirdman, Y. (1979), p. 36.

[170] Björkman, J. (2020). *"Må de herrskande klasserna darra": Radikal retorik och reaktion i Stockholms press, 1848–1851.* ("Let the ruling classes tremble" : Radical Rhetoric and Reaction in the Stockholm press, 1848–1851). Gidlunds, pp. 126-127.

[171] Avineri, S. (2019). *Karl Marx: Philosophy and Revolution.* Yale University Press, p. 125.

voice of the people is the voice of God."[172] In the end the publication did not generate much attention in the Swedish debate.[173] Radicalized craftsmen, such as the tailor Palm for example, were the ones who eventually brought the German socialist thought to Sweden in the 1880s. Not least, Lassalle's and later Kautsky's ideas would play an important role in the early development of Swedish social democracy's ideology. It was also these ideas that largely shaped the Second International, which was established in the same year as SAP, 1889, and of which the party was one of the founding members.[174]

1.2.2 The Rise and Fall of the Second International: Reform, Revolution, and the Challenges of War

The Second International, or the Socialist International, was a resumption of the work of the IWMA but on a much greater scale. Over the course of the first decades following its founding in 1889, mass-working parties would be established across Europe. The Second International functioned as a platform, or "world parliament" that united the international labor movement. It also contributed to promoting and advancing the movement's strategic objective of overthrowing the capitalist system. [175] It was composed of parties from all across the world, spanning from Spain, Japan, South Africa and Turkish Armenia.[176] However, recent studies have shown that there was in fact a clear dominance of Western European countries, particularly France, Germany, and the United Kingdom, at the organization's nine congresses between 1889 and 1914. Delegates from these three countries together accounted for 58% of all participants, while countries such as Sweden and Russia had much smaller representation, each making up around 3% of the delegates (3.5% for Russia and just under 3% for Sweden).[177] The work within the organization mainly took place through congresses, during which the parties gathered to decide on the way forward. In 1900, in connection with a congress in Paris, a governing body, the International Socialist Bureau (ISB), was

[172] Hirdman, Y. (1979), p. 35.

[173] Ibid.

[174] Hentilä, S. (1979), p. 145.

[175] Taber, M. (2023). *Reform, Revolution, and Opportunism. Debates in the Second International (1900-1910)*. Haymarket Books, pp. 2-5.

[176] Ibid.

[177] Dogliani, P. (2016). The Fate of Socialist Internationalism. In: Sluga G, Clavin P. (Eds.). *Internationalisms: A Twentieth-Century History*. Cambridge University Press, p. 46.

established, which met regularly between congresses. In addition, a permanent secretariat was set up in Brussels.[178] Membership in the ISB varied as each country sent one to three representatives at a time. From 1903, Sweden was represented by Branting, and he participated in five of its 16 meetings until 1914.[179]

Swedish social democracy developed in close connection with the organization, which in turn was modeled after the orthodox marxist ideas of Kautsky, leader of SPD.[180] However, from the very beginning, the Second International faced problems concerning its ideological foundation and strategy. Already at its founding congress in Paris in 1889, organized in close collaboration with Engels, reformist forces, the so-called Possibilists, initiated a rival congress. Although the Second International officially adopted a revolutionary stance from the start, this issue would continue as a line of conflict within the organization during the early years of the 20th century. Historian Mike Taber has pointed out that despite the fact that its initial resolutions explicitly called for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism, there was a lack of a concrete theoretical and practical explanation of the role of *revolutionary action* in such a transformation.[181] As a consequence, the relationship between reform and revolution became a constant point of contention and debate within the organization's respective parties.[182] This was undoubtedly the case within SAP. As demonstrated and discussed in the previous sub-chapter, the party program of 1897 included Marxist statements in terms of general objectives, but there was an apparent lack of any concrete plans in how to achieve them.[183] This vagueness was in turn rooted in the ambiguous approach toward the question of collaboration with other non-socialist forces, essentially whether socialist parties should

---

[178] Ibid, pp. 42-43.

[179] Grass, M. (n.d.). '*Socialismen är en makt som ingen kommer förbi' Internationellt i Hjalmar Brantings arkiv.* ('Socialism Is a Power That No One Can overcome' . International in Hjalmar Branting's Archives). Arbetarrörelsens arkiv och bibliotek, p. 1. Retrieved 12 January 2025 from: https://www.arbark.se/pdf_wrd/vik/vik15.pdf

[180] Hentilä, S. (1979), p. 122. Cf. Salvadori, M. (1979), p. 6. Cf. Fulla, M. (2020). Using the State to Democratise it. Introduction to Part I. In: Fulla, M., Lazar, M. (eds) *European Socialists and the State in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries*. Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 30-33.

[181] Taber, M. (2023), pp. 2-5.

[182] Ibid.

[183] Östberg, K. (2024), p. 19. Cf. Hentilä, S. (1979), pp. 121-122.

collaborate with e.g. liberals in order to push through, at least some, reforms.[184] At an SPD congress in Dresden in 1903, a resolution authored by Kautsky and Bebel was adopted, which unequivocally condemned any socialist participation in capitalist governments, without exception.[185] The French Workers' Party, led by Jules Guesde, then presented the SPD's Dresden resolution at the Second International's congress in Amsterdam in 1904, which was followed by an intense debate. In France, this led to a temporary split in the party, with some joining Guesde, while others followed the more reformist Jean Jaurès.[186] Branting's position at the Amsterdam Congress indicates that by this time, SAP had aligned itself with the less radical, reformist side. Branting himself expressed it this way:

> (…) We in Sweden, living under conditions of subordination and without the right to vote, know how difficult it is to establish correct tactics and to follow them. It would have been best if we could have done so without alliances, but we were compelled to repeatedly support the radicals, who declared themselves in favor of universal suffrage, in order not to strengthen the conservative regime. But we always maintained our position of principle.[187]

The debate over whether to allow cooperation with non-socialist parties was an expression of a deepening rift within the international socialist movement, which was fundamentally about whether or not to push socialism through revolutionarily. It would eventually become a pressing issue in relation to the position on war and militarism, which ultimately led to the collapse of the Second International in 1914 when most of the European social democratic parties chose to support their respective national governments in the war effort. It was also in connection with this issue that Lenin and the Bolsheviks would come to distinguish themselves within the organization. *The Russian Social Democratic Labor Party* (RSDLP) had been a member since the foundation of the International in 1889, and Lenin had personally been part of the ISB.[188] Despite this, the Russian delegates were relatively underrepresented. As mentioned earlier, they only accounted for 3.5% of the delegates at the

---

[184] Hentilä, S. (1979), p. 143.

[185] Salvadori, M. (1979), pp. 67-70.

[186] Taber, M. (2023), pp. 26-40.

[187] Taber, M. (2023), p. 37. The term "radicals" here refers to the Liberals, cf. p. 32.

[188] Barber, J. (1981). *Soviet Historians in Crisis, 1928-1932.* Palgrave Macmillan, p. 107.

nine congresses.[189] When the issue of war was discussed at the 1907 Stuttgart Congress, Lenin, together with the radical SPD member Rosa Luxemburg, presented a resolution proposal that was approved.[190] Through this resolution, members pledged to cooperate through the ISB in the event of a war threat. If war did break out, they would collectively seize the opportunity and use the war as a lever to accelerate the abolition of capitalism. The resolution was later confirmed at the congresses in Copenhagen (1910) and Basel (1912).[191] However, with the outbreak of World War I, Kautsky and the SPD chose national allegiance over international solidarity, thus breaching the agreement from 1907. Instead of opposing the war as resolved, they supported the German government, a stance that was followed by a majority of the parties, including SAP.[192] This shift in policy is known as *Burgfreiden* in Germany and Sweden, and as *Union sacrée* in France.[193] As a result, the Socialist International essentially collapsed and Lenin, who earlier had admired Kautsky, launched a sharp attack on the position of the majority in general, and Kautsky in particular.[194] It was precisely within this context of revolutionary dissent and the collapse of the Second International that the Swedish left-wing socialists began to break away from SAP, eventually leading to the formation of SSV and later SKP. That said, these tendencies did not emerge suddenly in 1914, but had deep roots in earlier currents within the party, particularly among the youths. The outbreak of war in 1914, however, acted as a catalyst, further polarizing the party and pushing these radical elements toward the final break. This shift was a first step toward their eventual alignment with the Bolsheviks, which would initially go through their participation in the left wing of the international anti-war movement that emerged post 1914. Chapter 1.3 will outline the historical development of these radical factions within SAP and examine how the war and its aftermath accelerated their departure from the mainstream party,

---

[189] Dogliani, P. (2016), p. 46.

[190] Hentilä, S. (1979), p. 190.

[191] Eley, G. (2002). *Forging Democracy: The Left and the Struggle for Democracy in Europe, 1850–2000.* Oxford University Press, pp. 92-93.

[192] Ibid. Cf. Salvadori, M. (1979), pp. 175-185.

[193] Tosstorf, R. (2022). The Second International Reconstituted: The Labour and Socialist International, 1923–1940. In: van der Linden M. (Ed.). *The Cambridge History of Socialism. The Cambridge History of Socialism.* Cambridge University Press, p. 300.

[194] Barber, J. (1981), p. 107. Cf. Salvadori, M. (1979), pp. 217-221.

alongside their engagement in the international anti-war movement that led them to the Bolsheviks and eventually the communist Third International.

1.3 Radicals on the Margins and Breakaway Tendencies within the Swedish Labor Movement

The ideological and political line of SAP did not, of course, change without internal conflicts. Contradictions constantly arose within the party. The first opposition within the Swedish Social democratic labor movement was anarchists, the so-called Young Socialists, with whom SAP had several confrontations. At the party congress in 1908, their main representatives, Hinke Bergegren and Carl G. Schröder, were expelled.[195] Particularly the former attracted considerable attention, both within and outside SAP. For example, the Swedish right-wing press speculated that Bergegren had connections to Russian anarchists, and he was often the subject of satirical images and caricatures.[196] Linderborg argues that both Bergegren and Schröder were significant power figures and that Branting saw them as a threat both to himself, his position, and SAP's reformism.[197] Certain syndicalist tendencies within the trade union movement also constituted an opposition within SAP. This group was "officially" organized in connection with the 1909 general strike, during which over 300,000 workers were mobilized across Sweden.[198] According to Hentilä, their main goal was to broaden the significance of the strike, advocating for a more revolutionary interpretation rather than a limited labor market action. The group, influenced by anarcho-syndicalist ideas, saw the strike as a potential catalyst for systemic change.[199] As we know, Branting and the party leadership had by this time abandoned extraparliamentary methods of struggle in favor of reformist parliamentarism.[200] Branting was critical of the strike as a revolutionary tool, emphasizing parliamentary reforms and warning against the risks of failure, which ultimately

---

[195] Hentilä, S. (1979), p. 177.

[196] Linderborg, Å. (2001), pp. 131-132.

[197] Ibid.

[198] Östberg, K. (2024), pp. 33-35.

[199] Hentilä, S. (1979), p. 178.

[200] Ibid, p. 176.

materialized as the strike ended in a significant defeat for the labor movement. As a consequence SAP lost half of its members.[201]

The most significant opposition within SAP, however, was found in the Social Democratic Youth League (SDUF) which was formed in 1903 after a conflict within the then-existing youth league, which largely consisted of the aforementioned anarchist elements.[202] SDUF was dissatisfied with the party's ideological and strategic shift and called for a "return" to the revolutionary SAP.[203] Hentilä characterizes the so-called Young Democrats as Kautskyists who worked in the spirit of SAP's party program from 1897.[204] Much like the early days of its parent party, SDUF proclaimed solidarity with the international labor movement's revolutionary line and placed antimilitarism at the core of its agenda. The stance on defense policy was crucial for Swedish social democracy as a whole, as it was deeply intertwined with the labor movement's relationship to the existing political system. Marx and Engels famously declared that "the working man has no nation."[205] This maxim was rooted in the idea that workers were not to submit to the demands of the nation or the state, such as participation in war, which represented a direct and immediate form of subjugation. Furthermore, war as a concept was seen as a product of capitalism's pursuit of profit and power, and therefore something that would cease to exist after the socialist revolution. The Second International, like SAP, was fundamentally based on these ideas. SAP's first party program from 1897, for instance, proclaimed the intention to dissolve the national army and instead arm the people.[206] However, as is well known, this position shifted with the outbreak of war in 1914. One key reason for this change was linked to the Kautskyist interpretation of revolution as something to be awaited rather than actively instigated. Against this backdrop, the party did not actively mobilize the working masses toward revolution, nor did it actively

---

[201] Östberg, K. (2024), p. 35.

[202] Hirdman, Y. (1979), p. 130.

[203] Linderborg, Å. (2001), pp. 177-178.

[204] Hentilä, S. (1979), p. 179-180.

[205] Engels, F., & Marx, K. (1848). *The Communist Manifesto*. International Publishers, p. 28. Also available via Marxist Internet Archive. Retrieved 27 January from: https://www.marxists.org/archive/rosdolsky/1965/workers.htm

[206] Misgeld, K. (2001), p. 15.

rally them against militarism but instead relied on the assumption that the workers would develop a class consciousness and revolutionary aspirations on their own and thus "automatically" refuse to submit to a national army.[207] Thus, once World War I broke out, it became difficult for Europe's social democratic parties, including SAP, to maintain this position as the expectation that workers would reject militarism proved largely unfounded, exposing contradictions between their anti-militarist principles and the political pressures of wartime. SDUF, however, remained firmly committed to antimilitarism, both before and after 1914. Already in 1905, this question had become urgently relevant in Sweden. That year, Norway declared its independence from Sweden, marking the end of a union that had, in practice, subordinated Norway to Sweden since 1814.[208] The Swedish king and the conservative government, who opposed the dissolution of the union, sought to respond with a mobilization order. While SAP supported Norway's right to independence, it was particularly SDUF that reacted most forcefully. The organization launched the appeal "Down with Arms", which was distributed in 100,000 copies, urging soldiers to refuse mobilization and calling for a general strike.[209] This was followed by mass protests across the country, organized alongside the party and the peace movement. Ultimately, the threat of war was averted, and the independence of Norway was officially recognized. For SDUF, this episode further consolidated its commitment to antimilitarism, a stance that remained central even after 1914, when SAP had effectively abandoned it. Beyond antimilitarism, SDUF also held a strongly republican and anti-monarchist position and was sharply critical of the First Chamber of the *Riksdag*, the judiciary, the church, and other governing institutions of society.[210] In many ways, SDUF resembled SAP between 1889 and 1903 but sought to push further than the parent party in these matters. Over time, it became evident that a clearly defined left-wing opposition had emerged within SAP, leading to an intensification of the party's internal ideological debate.

---

[207] Hentilä, S. (1979), pp. 189-190.

[208] Stråth, B. (2005). De förenade rikena Sverige och Norge 1814–1905. (The United Kingdoms of Sweden and Norway 1814–1905). *RIG-Kulturhistorisk tidskrift*, 88 (2), pp. 65-79.

[209] ARAB Stockholm, SSV collection, vol. 2, Ned med Vapnen! (Down with the Weapons!).

[210] Ibid. Cf. Linderborg, Å. (2001), pp. 173-177.

Not all members of SDUF, of course, would leave the mother party in 1917, let alone approach Lenin and the Bolsheviks. However, it was from this group that a majority of those who did, emerged. Central figures were Zeth "Zäta" Höglund, Fredrik Ström, Ture Nerman, Otto Grimlund. They all had much in common. Firstly, all of them were born at the end of the 19th century, thus belonging to a younger generation than e.g. Branting. According to Hentilä, this is a characteristic of the left-wing opposition that emerged at this time within SAP.[211] Secondly, many of them would have personal contact with Lenin and other Bolsheviks from 1915–1917 onward, both in Sweden and during trips to Russia. Finally, all of them would move from having central roles within both SSV/SKP and the Third International to leaving their own party during the mid 1920s and returning to the reformist SAP. The following section provides a brief overview of these figures' attempts to halt SAP's reformist shift, offering context for the eventual split when the left wing broke away to establish SSV in 1917. There were several reasons for the split, as the section below will show. However, the mother party's position on the war question after 1914 became the final catalyst.[212] This development led to a rapprochement with the Bolsheviks even though initial contacts already had occurred a few years before, and definitely around 1915, when the anti-war movement, the so-called Zimmerwald movement, emerged in the wake of the collapse of the Second International.[213] Chapter one thus concludes with an account of the rise of the Zimmerwald movement, and the Swedish members' commitment to its left-wing, led by Lenin. The thesis then continues with chapter two and three, which present the empirical study aimed at answering the research questions.

1.3.1 Left Opposition Through the Youth Movement

The Young Democratic opposition made its first significant mark at SAP's party congress in 1905, where several of their leaders, including Höglund and Ström, participated as

---

[211] Ibid, p. 180.

[212] Hentilä, S. (1979), p.

[213] Cf. Tosstorff, R. (2022), pp. 300-320. Note: Lenin visited Stockholm already in 1910 and during the trip he met with Höglund and other SAP members. Cf. Leander, P. (2021). *Lenins kostym: de svenska socialisterna och ryska revolutionen.* (Lenin's Costume: The Swedish Socialists and the Russian Revolution). Carlsson, p. 26.

delegates.[214] Their views diverged on several issues, particularly regarding the interpretation of the general strike vote.[215] Tensions intensified when SDUF was denied financial support, a decision made late at night. After the congress, Ström criticized the meeting climate for preventing meaningful tactical discussions.[216] The conflict between the party leadership and SDUF deepened in 1905/1906 over the former's support for the liberal Karl Staaff's government, as the so-called Staaff laws restricted freedom of speech. Ström publicly criticized Branting for seeking to renew cooperation with the liberals despite these laws.[217] Initially, the party leadership downplayed the tensions between SDUF and the mother party. This became evident after a congress in 1907 during which Branting spoke positively about SDUF's radical stance on defense policy, but reduced its significance by suggesting that youthful radicalism was merely a passing phase.[218] However, tensions escalated further at the 1908 congress. Some Young Democrats collaborated with the more extreme anarchist faction that still existed of the SDUF, even though they simultaneously criticized the violent dimension of the anarchist means. Yet, representatives of the right faction of SAP accused SDUF as a whole for adopting anarchist methods which they argued alienated party members and voters.[219] SAP was indeed in decline during this period, but as Hentilä points out, this was probably due to the harsh economic situation and difficult labor market rather than the internal struggles of the party.[220] By the end of the year, Höglund, who had succeeded in obtaining a seat in SAP's party leadership, initiated a new radical, alternative weekly magazine called *Stormklockan* (The storm clock) which would be essential in galvanizing the left-wing opposition against the party's policies.[221] From this moment, the party crisis, which within a few years would lead to a split, was a fact.

---

[214] Hentilä, S. (1979), p. 181.

[215] Ibid.

[216] Ibid.

[217] Ibid, p. 182. Cf. Höglund, Z. (1951). *Härliga tider.* (Good Times). Tiden, pp. 130-135.

[218] Ibid.

[219] Ibid.

[220] Ibid, p. 183.

[221] Ibid. Cf. Ewins, K. (2017). Swedish Communism in Print, 1917–45. *Twentieth Century Communism*, 12 (12), pp. 200-234.

Several attempts were made to resolve the strained relationship between SAP and the youth league in the years before 1917. At SAP's eighth congress in 1911, several SDUF members were elected to the party board, and Ström was appointed party secretary, a position he would hold until 1916.[222] However, the friction remained and in parallel SDUF experienced internal conflicts leading to a split between left and right factions. The rift thus now ran both through the party as a whole and within its opposition group.[223] Despite the internal conflicts within both SDUF and SAP, the latter strengthened its external position. In the Second Chamber election in the autumn of 1914, shortly after the outbreak of World War I, the party received nearly 36.5% of the votes.[224] However, the outbreak of the war deepened the ideological differences. SDUF's left wing intensified its anti-militarist stance, while SAP chose to support the newly formed technocratic and conservative government led by the civil servant Hjalmar Hammarskjöld.[225] SDUF's anti-militarist position had support in the party program of 1908, where the demand for disarmament had been articulated. SAP however, aimed at reinterpreting and nuancing this position.[226] In 1913, Höglund, along with Ström and a third party-comrade named Hannes Sköld, published a pamphlet in which they argued that anti-militarism should be considered a means in the class struggle, which drew sharp criticism from Branting.[227] Following the outbreak of the war, SAP called an extraordinary congress. During this congress, a resolution was adopted that effectively subordinated the youth league to the mother party.[228] However, only a month later, SDUF dismissed the resolution as they adopted their own version of it which stipulated that the youth league would take decisions in full accordance with the party's program *but also* with the principles of socialism.[229]

---

[222] Hirdman, Y. (1979), pp. 143-144. Cf. Hentilä, S. (1979), p. 330.

[223] Hirdman, Y. (1979), pp.

[224] Hentilä, S. (1979), p. 272.

[225] Ibid, p. 201.

[226] Hirdman, Y. (1979), p. 132. Cf. Höglund, Z., Sköld, H., & Ström, F. (1914). *Det befästa fattighuset: antimilitaristisk och socialistisk handbok*. (The Established Poorhouse: An Anti-Militarist and Socialist Handbook). Fram förlag.

[227] Hirdman, Y. (1979), p. 135.

[228] Ibid.

[229] Ibid, p. 146.

1.3.2 The Formation of the Zimmerwald Movement

The final break of the left opposition with SAP in 1917 can partly be understood in the context of the Zimmerwald movement, which, to some extent, sought to continue the work of the collapsed Second International after 1914. However, it should be noted that several other international socialist groups and anti-war associations existed prior to 1914. For example, members of the SDUF, including Höglund, had since at least the 1910s been engaged in the Socialist Youth International (SYI) which was created in 1907.[230] SYI consisted of young socialists, many of whom, like the Swedish left-wing socialists, were critical of the de-radicalization of their mother parties and especially their stance on the war issue.[231] SDUF's own congresses between 1907 and 1912 can thus also be understood within the framework of SYI. The Swedish left-wing socialists antimilitarist sentiments would, however, soon be channeled into another international anti-war movement, where both younger and older socialists came together. In September 1915, Swiss and Italian social democrats organized a four-day conference in the small alp village Zimmerwald with the intent to re-organize a collective, international effort for peace.[232] The criterion for parties that wished to participate was that they distanced themselves from their national government's support of the war.[233] Given the aforementioned shift in position that applied to a majority of the social democratic parties that had been part of the International, there were almost exclusively opposition groups, a total of 38 persons, who joined the new movement.[234] Contrary to the Second International which had been dominated by Western and Central European parties, particularly Germany's SPD, and in which the Russians had held a marginal position, the Zimmerwald constellation was dominated by parties from the Russian and East European

---

[230] Dogliani, P. (2023). *A Political History of the International Union of Socialist Youth 1907-1917.* Palgrave Macmillan, p. 149. Cf. Kan, A. (1999). Lenin, Branting och Höglund: Vad visste man inom svensk arbetarvänster om bolsjevikerna före Lenins sista Stockholmsbesök. (Lenin, Branting and Höglund: What Did the Swedish Labor Left Know About the Bolsheviks Before Lenin's Last Visit to Stockholm?). *Scandia: Tidskrift för historisk forskning*, 65 (1), pp. 97-111.

[231] Hirdman, Y. (1979), pp. 53-73.

[232] Tosstorff, R. (2022), p. 301.

[233] Hirdman, Y. (1979), p. 146.

[234] Eley, G. (2002), p. 525.

periphery.[235] Among the participating groups were the Bolshevik and Menshevik factions of RSDLP, the Socialist Revolutionaries (RS), the Latvian party, the Bund, the Social Democrats of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania (SDKPiL), as well as the Serbian, Romanian, and Bulgarian social democrats.[236] Additionally, the newly formed Polish left and the Polish segment of the SPD opposition, with prominent figures such as Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Radek, joined the movement. A key role was played by the Bulgarian and future Bolshevik Christian Rakovsky, who had gathered the Romanian, Bulgarian, Greek, and Serbian parties to form the Revolutionary Balkan Social Democratic Labor Federation.[237] The Italian Socialist Party (PSI) stood out among many of the other parties with its unified stance against the war, making it the largest Western European party to join.[238] One of its delegates, The PSI member Angelica Balabanova, of Ukrainian, Italian and Jewish descent, would have a central role both within Zimmerwald and eventually the Russian revolution.[239] After the first Zimmerwald congress in 1915, she was elected into the newly formed International Socialist Commission (ISC) which was intended to coordinate the future activities of the movement.[240] As demonstrated in chapter two and three, she also developed strong connections with some Swedish left-wing socialists, including Höglund, Ström and Grimlund from 1917 onward.[241]

---

[235] Ibid, p. 129. Cf. Dogliani, P. (2016), p. 46.

[236] Eley, G. (2002), p. 129.

[237] Ibid.

[238] Ibid. Cf. Berti, G. (1969). L'internazionale e il PCI. (The International and the PCI). *Studi Storici*, 10(2), pp. 423-425.

[239] Cherubini, D. (2017). G. E. Modigliani in the Zimmerwald Movement: 'War Against War' and the United States of Europe. In: Olmstead, J. (Eds.). *Reconsidering Peace and Patriotism during the First World War*. Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 61-69.

[240] Meynell, H. (1960). The Stockholm Conference of 1917. *International Review of Social History,* 5 (1), pp. 1-25.

[241] Cherubini, D. (2017), pp. 61-69. Cf. Blomqvist, H. (2022). *Socialism in Yiddisch: The Jewish Labor Bund in Sweden.* Södertörn University, p. 27. Note: Angelica Balabanova is sometimes also referred to as Angelica Balabanoff.

Even though the participating delegates had the international struggle for peace in common, questions on what the movement actually aimed for soon emerged.[242] Some advocated for a clear revolutionary position, arguing that it was irrelevant who and what had caused the war since the reason that it broke out in the first place was due to the imperial capitalist system which had to be overthrown. Taken to its extreme, this perspective, championed by Lenin, saw the war as an opportunity for the international working class to rise up and transform the inter-state war into a class-based civil war.[243] Others assumed a somewhat more moderate pacifist position with the primary objective of restoring peace rather than carrying out a revolution.[244] Particularly Lenin and his Bolshevik comrade Grigory Zinoviev, the Polish Radek as well as the Swiss Fritz Platten advocated for the revolutionary position.[245] This group, the so called Zimmerwald left, did however not gain majority and in the end a less radical manifesto was adopted. The manifesto, which was drafted by Leon Trotsky, called for a joint effort to end the war, but did not specify what the means would be.[246] However, despite this, within a year, the movement had shifted toward a more explicit revolutionary orientation. At the second conference the year after in Kienthal, a new manifesto was adopted, which clearly stated that the war was caused by imperialism, and that the only way to end wars was for the working class to take power and abolish private property. It was a clear step to the left, though still far from Lenin's demands of a full commitment to a class-based civil war across the European continent.[247]

Höglund, who together with his SDUF comrade Ture Nerman, participated in the inaugural conference joined the Zimmerwald Left. This position had already been decided already during the summer, when the Swedish and Norwegian youth organizations, along with the Bolshevik and later Soviet ambassador to Sweden, Alexandra Kollontai, coordinated efforts

---

[242] Tosstorff, R. (2022), pp. 301-302.

[243] Eley, G. (2002), pp. 128-129

[244] Ibid.

[245] Ibid.

[246] Leander, P. (2021), pp. 26-27.

[247] Service, R. (2017). Lenin as a Historical Personality. In: Pons, S., Smith S.A. (Eds.). *The Cambridge History of Communism*. Cambridge University Press, p. 126.

for a united Scandinavian stance in the upcoming conference.[248] Once in Switzerland, Höglund and Ström met with Lenin and Zinoviev already at the train station in Bern where they were invited to see Zinoviev's apartment to discuss the conference.[249] Nerman later wrote in his memoir, that Höglund and him "(…) were able to witness something like the preparation for the great world-historical spectacle that would break out in the east two years later."[250] However, as Hirdman points out, it was a bit complicated to apply the revolutionary conception of the war to the Swedish context as the country was non-belligerent.[251] Yet, quickly after the first conference, articles by leading Bolsheviks appeared more frequently in *Stormklockan* and it informed its readers about the Zimmerwald meeting, published its manifesto, and reported on the left-wing group's ongoing projects. For example, Nerman wrote on October 23, "one must prepare for the coming social revolution. Scandinavians must become the trumpet fanfare of the great new world war, the wind fan that stirs the great liberating storm over the earth!"[252] Shortly after, SDUF began planning for an international peace conference in Stockholm, in the spirit of the Zimmerwald left. The conference was carried out in March 1916 and several prominent Bolsheviks participated.[253] Afterward, Höglund, along with two party comrades, were sentenced to one year in prison under the pretext of treason, as they had advocated for a general strike in connection with a potential Swedish entry into the war.[254] The imprisonment triggered a storm of criticism in both the left-wing and liberal press. Höglund's comrades such as Ström, Nerman, Carl Lindhagen and Ivar Vennerström wrote a number of articles in *Stormklockan* and *Politiken* in which they demanded justice for their convicted friends. The event also spread beyond Sweden's borders. SYI sent out a protest call to its members and the Zimmerwald movement's ISC also urged

---

[248] Kan, A. (1999), p. 99.

[249] Leander, P. (2021), p. 26.

[250] Ibid, p. 27.

[251] Hirdman, Y. (1979), pp. 146-147.

[252] Kan, A. (1999), p. 100.

[253] Ibid.

[254] Cf. Leander, P. (2021), pp. 39-47.

its organizations to take a stand for the imprisoned peace fighters.[255] Even Lenin praised the Swedish peace congress and compared the arrested Höglund with the left-wing socialist and expelled SPD-member Karl Liebknecht who had met the same fate after a similar peace conference in Germany.[256] According to Hirdman, the conference was yet another move from the left-wing opposition within the party, led by Höglund, to try to mobilize support for the party's return to its original socialist principles.[257] In retrospect, the newfound commitment to the left wing of the Zimmerwald movement was not just an attempt to steer SAP back in a more radical direction. Rather, it was the definitive starting point of the Swedish left-wing socialists' move away from its mother party, toward the Bolsheviks and the future communist Third International.

1.3.3 Section Summary

Chapter one has demonstrated that the radical foundation of the Swedish left-wing socialists existed within SAP long before 1917 and that it was channeled through its youth league as well as through international fora such as SYI and particularly the Zimmerwald movement, as a response to the reformist turn of SAP. The Swedish left-wing socialists where thus not reformist social democrats who suddenly got radicalized by the Bolsheviks. They rather advocated for ideas in line with the early Kautskyist social democracy which SAP, as well as many of the other European parties, gradually abandoned from 1903 onwards. Now that we have clarified this, it is time to move on to the empirical part of this thesis with the aim of grasping what the SSV/SKP aimed to achieve and explore how their own visions developed, on the one hand, in relation to their social democratic tradition and Swedish context, and on the other hand, to their alignment with the Bolsheviks and the broader international communist movement through the Comintern. These two points thus constitute the basis of the remaining part of the thesis.

---

[255] Höglund, Z. (1953). *Minnen i fackelsken 2 Från Branting till Lenin: 1912 – 1916.* (Memories in Torchlight 2 From Branting to Lenin: 1912 – 1916). Tiden, pp. 229-234.

[256] Ibid, p. 233. Cf. Kan, A. (1999), p. 101.

[257] Hirdman, Y. (1979), p. 148.

CHAPTER 2: THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION AND THE POLITICAL ORGANIZATION OF THE SWEDISH LEFT-WING SOCIALISTS

Throughout the years, SSV/SKP occupied a marginal position in the Swedish political landscape, as it never attained governmental power. As Bolin points out, the party was small and often isolated in the Swedish political discourse.[258] It did however take shape during a period of historic upheaval. Over a few decades, from the mid-1800s to the early 1900s, a workers' movement had emerged, social democratic parties had been established and shifted from revolutionary to reformist, a left-wing opposition had grown, a world war had broken out, and a revolution had taken place in Russia. All these events and transformations form the backdrop for the actual empirical study of this thesis, with the purpose of clarifying what the SSV/SKP sought to achieve between 1917 and 1924. The party was, on the one hand, rooted in a Swedish social democratic tradition and, on the other, served as a link in the revolutionary mass movement led by the Bolsheviks that, for a period, sought to challenge the entire Western order.

As the first chapter of this thesis shows, the Swedish left-wing socialists, as a political entity, emerged from the anti-militarist, internationalist left wing of the social democratic movement. However, the Swedish left-wing movement would only consolidate and eventually become institutionalized as a party against the backdrop of two key events: the Russian Revolution and the domestic unrest that characterized Sweden in the spring of 1917, driven by famine and a repressive conservative government.

The Russian Revolution would completely upend the conditions for the international labor movement and fundamentally alter its dynamics. With the Bolsheviks' seizure of power in October 1917, the revolution was no longer an abstract vision but a concrete reality – and, at least for the most radical left-wing socialists, a realistic *possibility*. The unrest and revolutionary sentiments in Sweden during the spring of 1917 hade given further momentum to the Swedish left-wing socialists. Although the discontent was primarily directed at the sitting conservative government and its inability to meet the material needs of the "masses," it nevertheless put pressure on SAP to define what kind of party it wanted to be – should it seize the revolutionary mood or attempt to suppress it and continue on the parliamentary

[258] Bolin, J. (2004), p. 5.

path? SAP chose the latter, and in the same process, the Swedish left-wing socialists established their own party. It is thus at the intersection of these two events that the origins of the Swedish left-wing socialists' political *organization* outside of SAP can be understood. The following chapter therefore aims to examine this in greater detail.

The chapter begins with an account of the background to the Russian Revolution, followed by a discussion of the February Revolution and the fall of the tsar as well as the October Revolution, and the Bolsheviks' seizure of power. It then moves on to analyze how the February Revolution was received within the reformist Swedish labor movement, with a particular focus on the failed attempt to revive the work of the Second International through a peace conference in Stockholm. This is followed by a brief discussion of the "revolutionary" situation in Sweden at the time, in order to further clarify the context in which the SSV took shape as a party when its political separation from SAP became definitive.

Chapter two then continues by exploring the Russian Revolution through the lens of the Swedish left-wing socialists, focusing on their intensified contacts with Russian revolutionaries in general and the Bolsheviks in particular during the spring of 1917. Drawing on Grimlund's documented memories of Lenin's train journey and visit to Stockholm in April, a series of articles in the Swedish left-wing socialist press, and the establishment of the Bolshevik bureau in Stockholm – which served as a "bridge" between Petrograd and Western Europe – this section provides an overview of the transnational activities taking place at the time. Building on Kan's previous research, it also suggests that the connections with the Bolsheviks, particularly through articles published in the party magazines *Stormklockan* and *Politiken*, played a key role in explaining and spreading Bolshevik ideology and tactics within the same period.

2.1 A Brief Background to the Russian Revolution

The Russian Revolution of 1917 was the culmination of a longer process, in which several events gradually undermined the Tsarist regime which set the stage for the final upheaval. Tsarist Russia experienced its first revolution in 1905, just a few months after the brutal

defeat in the war against Japan in 1904.[259] In the light of this war, Tsar Nikolai II's position was weakened and the military demoralized, which, combined with growing discontent among both workers and peasants, led to a large mobilization in the cities of the masses against the regime.[260] On January 22, crowds of workers gathered outside of the Winter Palace for a peaceful demonstration and were immediately fired at by guards. However, the unrest soon spread widely, from the Baltics to eastern Armenia. Its intensity and scale forced Tsar Nikolai II to issue the October Manifesto, which would guarantee certain civil liberties and the establishment of a form of quasi-democratic legislature, the Duma.[261] Eventually, a new constitution was also adopted and Russia officially became a constitutional monarchy.[262] In 1907 however, the Tsarist order was practically restored, yet the revolution had sown the seeds of change – a harbinger of the profound upheaval that would shake the empire a decade later.[263]

As mentioned above, Tsar Nikolai II was severely weakened in the light of the war against Japan in 1904. However, the revolution of 1905 cannot be understood without considering the broader backdrop of modernization, which had been unfolding in imperial Russia since the mid-19th century. This transformation, partly comparable to developments across Europe, including Sweden, created new social and economic tensions that would fuel unrest in combination with the immediate triggers of economic crises, military failures, and violent repression. A significant event was the enactment of the so-called Emancipation Manifesto of 1861 through which a majority of the empire's serfs were liberated.[264] The serfdom system had not only served as an effective instrument to oppress and control large parts of the

---

[259] Steinberg, M. D. (2006). Russia's Fin de Siècle, 1900–1914. In: Grigor Suny, R. (Ed.). *The Cambridge History of Russia: Volume III the Twentieth Century.* Cambridge University Press, pp. 67-68.

[260] Bushkovitch, P. (2011). *A Concise History of Russia.* Cambridge University Press, p. 283.

[261] Ibid. Cf. Lih, T.L. (2017). Bolshevik Roots of International Communism. In: In: Pons, S., Smith S.A. (Eds.). *The Cambridge History of Communism*. Cambridge University Press, p. 144

[262] Bushkovitch, P. (2011), p. 283.

[263] Ibid, p. 287.

[264] Steinberg, M.D. (2006), pp. 86-88.

population but had also hindered the possibilities for economic development and growth.[265] While the reform freed millions of serfs and laid the groundwork for social transformation, it also accelerated the process of industrialization as new investments and infrastructure projects took hold.[266] This development profoundly impacted the class composition, with a growing working class in the cities alongside the agrarian peasant class, which was however still the largest in terms of numbers.[267] Gradually, a more substantial political consciousness began to develop, especially in urban areas where industrial workers became increasingly organized and vocal.[268] In the countryside, political awareness was slower to take shape, remaining centered on local grievances, particularly concerning many of the now free peasants' high tax burden given that the land still primarily was owned by the nobilities.[269] However, both arenas gradually became fertile ground for the spread of new radical ideas.[270]

Another important factor, and prerequisite for the subsequent political action, was the development of new ideas that were partly imported from Europe. Although Russia had underwent several phases of "Europeanization" before, notably during the reigns of Peter the Great and later Catherine the Great, it was by the mid 19th century that a wave of progressive ideas spread across the empire and reached "the masses."[271] German idealism, and especially Hegel, as well as evolutionary thinkers such as Darwin and Spencer played a crucial role in shaping new ways of thinking in general, and new ways of relating to the state in particular.[272] For example, the legal philosopher Boris Chicherin perceived the Russian state through the lens of a teleological notion that autocracy was the "primitive" stage, and that Russia would, out of necessity, reach "higher" stages with time.[273] By this time, there were

---

[265] Bushkovitch, P. (2011), p. 159.

[266] Ibid.

[267] Steinberg, M.D. (2006), p. 86.

[268] Ibid, pp. 193-194.

[269] Bushkovitch, P. (2011), p. 218.

[270] Ibid.

[271] Ibid, pp. 96-100, 125-133.

[272] Ibid, pp. 199-200.

[273] Ibid.

also members of the emerging intelligentsia who developed ideas centered around different forms of agrarian socialism, such as Alexander Herzen and Nikolay Chernyshevsky.[274] In terms of socialist ideas, the most central figure was Georgii Plekhanov, a man born into a wealthy noble family who by the late 1890s got inspired by the emerging German Marxism and introduced it to Russia and Russians in exile.[275] Eventually small Marxist groups were formed in the cities, led by young intellectuals such as Julius Martov and Lenin.[276] As industrialization continued to progress, an increasing number of peasants took up seasonal work in factories, creating a hybrid social group that moved between rural and urban economies. Rather than a fully consolidated working class, the emerging industrial workforce was thus fluid and still closely tied to the countryside.[277] Within this shifting social landscape, RSDLP was established in 1898.[278] At the turn of the century, however, a split emerged within the party that bore similarities to the divisions in the European labor movement, rooted in the tension between, on the one hand, Kautsky's orthodox Marxism and, on the other hand, Bernstein's reformism.[279] However, while the split in the European labor movement primarily concerned the balance between reform and revolution in advanced capitalist societies, the division within the RSDLP was shaped by the specific conditions of Tsarist Russia and had a different focus. The differences within the two factions of the RSDLP revolved around ideology, strategy, and principles of organization. In 1902, Lenin published the pamphlet *What Is to Be Done?*, in which he rejected both Bernstein's ideas, which he considered "opportunistic", and the "economists" within the Russian social democratic movement which he argued focused too much on economic demands, rather than a thorough, *systemic* transformation.[280] Lenin's main point was that the working-class would not develop a

---

[274] Cf. Ulam, A.B. (1976). *Ideologies and Illusions: Revolutionary Thought from Herzen to Solzhenitsyn.* Harvard University Press, pp. 10-49.

[275] Bushkovitch, P. (2011), pp. 226-227.

[276] Ulam, A.B. (1976), pp. 74-76.

[277] Lieven, D. (2015). *The End of Tsarist Russia: The March to World War I and Revolution*. Penguin Books, pp. 62-65.

[278] Bushkovitch, P. (2011), p. 225.

[279] Hentilä, S. (1976), pp. 157-177.

[280] Lenin, V.I. (1902). *What Is To Be Done?* Marxist Internet Archive. Retrieved 10 January 2025 from https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1901/witbd/

revolutionary consciousness solely through economic struggles, e.g. strikes. Instead, this consciousness had to be brought to the workers *from outside*, through the formation of a party, consisting of a small core of professional revolutionaries, who would function as an underground *avantgarde*, fully dedicated to the revolutionary struggle.[281] In the first stage, the bourgeois revolution, the tsar would be overthrown and afterwards, the so-called *dictatorship of the proletariat* would be established by all the oppressed classes, who together would implement and consolidate socialism.[282] The Marxian idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat, through the lens of Lenin, meant that the oppressed classes, the majority, would forcibly strip the capitalists and landowners, the minority, of their power. Violence was in this context thus seen as a necessary means.[283] In this sense, Lenin transformed the original Marxian idea which was not very well defined in terms of practice, into concrete *political action*. Lenin believed that not only the workers, but also the peasants and the bourgeoisie had incentives to remove the tsar, but that it was important that the latter group did not lead the revolution, especially not the second phase of it.[284] If they did, the revolution would remain incomplete, as the bourgeoisie aimed to establish a liberal, modern "bourgeois society" rather than a socialist one.[285] Martov, on the contrary, argued that the party should be open to a broader circle of sympathizers and workers, including those who were not "professional" revolutionaries. With a broader base and a shift in focus from the peasants to the liberals, the Tsarist regime could then be jointly overthrown, paving the way for socialism to be introduced gradually and democratically.[286] Against the backdrop of these disagreements, the party split during the Second Congress in 1903. A majority, including Plekhanov, followed Lenin and formed the Bolsheviks (bol'she meaning "more"), while the

---

[281] Studer, B. (2017). Communism as Existential Choice. In: Pons, S., Smith S.A. (Eds.). *The Cambridge History of Communism*. Cambridge University Press, p. 509. Cf. Lenin, V.I. (1902), chapter 4 "The Primitiveness of the Economists and the Organization of the Revolutionaries."

[282] Bushkovitch, P. (2011), p. 280.

[283] Lane, D. (2021). VI Lenin's Theory of Socialist Revolution. *Critical Sociology*, *47*(3), pp. 455-473. Cf. Service, R. (2017), p. 123.

[284] Ibid.

[285] Lih, T.L. (2017), p. 144.

[286] Ibid.

rest joined Martov and formed the Mensheviks (men'she meaning "less").[287] Alongside the Marxists however, there were groups of agrarian socialists who in the spirit of Chernyshevsky developed ideas centered around a peasant revolution. They formed a party in 1901–1902 called the Party of the Socialists-Revolutionaries (SR) and many of them advocated for the use of terrorist means, which was rejected by the Marxists.[288] The SRs, eventually under the leadership of Alexander Kerensky, would play a central role in the overthrow of the tsar and the subsequent creation of an interim government during the February Revolution of 1917.

2.1.1 The February Revolution and the Fall of Tsar Nikolai II

The February Revolution of 1917 was, from the point of view of Lenin as discussed above, the bourgeois revolution – the first phase. It began while the war was still raging across Europe. Russia, belonging to the Triple Entente, had until this point experienced mixed outcomes: a major victory against Austria and the Turks in 1916, but devastating defeats in East Prussia and Poland the year before.[289] World War I had a severe impact on Tsarist Russia, not only leading to a governmental crisis as the regime struggled to maintain control but also exacerbating food shortages that fueled discontent among the population.[290] In February 1917, workers in Petrograd began striking, including at the city's largest factory. At the same time, demonstrations were organized which quickly gained momentum. On February 23 (March 8 according to the Gregorian calendar), female workers went on strike, demanding "bread for our children" and "the return of our husbands from the trenches."[291] A series of meetings were also held, gradually shifting from economic to political demands. After three days of demonstrations, on February 25 (March 10 according to the Gregorian calendar) the Tsar sent a troop of soldiers to the city to suppress the uprisings by force, which they did. However, soon after, whole regiments of the Petrograd garrison chose to desert and

---

[287] Bushkovitch, P. (2011), p. 280.

[288] Ibid, p. 227.

[289] Ibid, p. 297.

[290] Ibid.

[291] Kollontai, A. (1920). *International Women's Day.* Marxist Internet Archive. Retrieved 10 January 2025 from https://www.marxists.org/archive/kollonta/1920/womens-day.htm

instead join the demonstrators. The revolution was thus set in motion, and Tsar Nikolai II forced to abdicate.[292]

The Tsarist rule was quickly replaced by the so-called Provisional Government which aimed to hold power until a new governmental system could be established through free and universal elections. It was composed mostly of liberal members of the Duma and headed by Prince Georgii Yevgenievich L'vov.[293] The Bolsheviks remained largely passive during this initial phase of the revolution, not least as Lenin and other members were in exile in Switzerland.[294] Instead, it was the *soviet,* council, of Petrograd that primarily challenged the Provisional Government.[295] The Petrograd Soviet had been established in connection with the protests and served as a popular political platform for mobilization during the February Revolution and consisted mostly of Mensheviks and SRs.[296] Its leaders did not allow their members to join the government, with the exception of Kerensky.[297] Instead, they sought to independently mobilize support from industrial workers and soldiers, thereby pressuring the government to adopt policies in their favor. Thus, a situation arose where the Provisional Government, led by the liberals, held *de jure* power, while the Petrograd Soviet, supported by the masses, held *de facto* power.[298] A similar pattern emerged on the local level, where liberals enjoyed official power through newly established city governments, while local socialist-led soviets, consisting of primarily workers, peasants and soldiers, quickly gained the popular support.[299] Tensions between the Provisional Government and the Menshevik-led Petrograd Soviet intensified in April over the war question as the former pushed for a Russian

---

[292] Wade, R.A. (2017). The Russian Revolution and Civil War. In: Pons, S., Smith S.A. (Eds.). *The Cambridge History of Communism*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 74-75.

[293] Bushkovitch, P. (2011), pp. 298-300.

[294] Ibid.

[295] Cf. Rabinowitch, A. (1987). The Evolution of Local Soviets in Petrograd, November 1917–June 1918: The Case of the First City District Soviet. *Slavic Review*, 46 (1), pp. 20-37.

[296] Smith, S.A. (2004). Petrograd in 1917: The View From Below. In: Wade, R.A. (Ed.). *Revolutionary Russia: New Approaches to the Russian Revolution of 1917.* Routledge, pp. 16-24.

[297] Wade, R.A. (2017), pp. 75-76.

[298] Ibid.

[299] Ibid.

victory while the latter categorically opposed involvement in the war. Yet, the Mensheviks did not present a concrete plan to stop it, nor did they explicitly call for a socialist revolution.[300] The Provisional Government however continued its war commitment, which in turn sparked massive demonstrations of workers and soldiers who opposed its continuation. In light of the political stalemate over the question of war and the fear of a political crisis, L'vov was compelled to form a coalition government with members of the Petrograd Soviet.[301] This compromise did however not lead to much and the popular dissent toward the liberal and moderate forces grew, leading to a rise of Bolshevik and leftist Menshevik support in the soviets.[302] This development coincided with Lenin's return from his exile in Switzerland. Determined to complete the revolution upon his arrival in Russia, he published the so-called April Theses, which ignited the debate within the soviets and shifted the political momentum toward a more radical position.[303]

2.1.2 The October Revolution and the Bolshevik Tactics

The April Theses may be understood as a continuation of Lenin's initial ideas as outlined in the pamphlet from 1902 but far more practical and immediate in their approach. Lenin argued that Russia, with its relatively underdeveloped capitalism and widespread social unrest, represented a vulnerable point, or a "weak link", in the global imperialist system.[304] This, Lenin believed, positioned Russia as a potential starting point for a transition to socialism on a world scale.[305] Against this backdrop, Lenin insisted that all power must be transferred to the proletariat and poor peasants through a republic structured around the soviets. This implied the total overthrow of the capitalist regime, including the police, military and bureaucracy alongside confiscation and redistribution of landed estate, and the nationalization of all banks. The former would be allocated to local soviets, represented by workers and

---

[300] Bushkovitch, P. (2011), pp. 299-300. Cf. Wade, R.A. (2017), pp. 77-78.

[301] Ibid.

[302] Wade, R.A. (2017), pp. 76-77.

[303] Cf. Lenin, V.I. (1917). *The Tasks of the Proletariat in the Present Revolution.* Marxist Internet Archive. Retrieved 12 January 2025 from: https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/apr/04.htm

[304] Smith, S.A. (2004), pp. 19-20.

[305] Ibid.

peasants and the latter would merge into one single national bank, managed by the Soviet of Workers' Deputies. Lenin also condemned the war as an "imperialist war" that the Bolsheviks must resolutely oppose.[306] After som internal opposition, the party adopted these ideas, which were summarized in the slogans "All power to the Soviets!" and "Down with the war!."[307] The "new" line quickly gained mass support amid food shortages, worsening economic conditions, industrial conflicts, factory closures, rising crime, and general unrest. This harsh situation eventually led to the so-called July Days, when massive protests against the Provisional Government broke out. As a result, Lenin was forced to flee to Finland, and Trotsky was imprisoned.[308] Kerensky, who had taken over as prime minister after the July Days, promised to restore order, but his attempts failed. A few months later, radical left-wing coalitions led by the Bolsheviks managed to take control of several major soviets, including the Petrograd Soviet, with Trotsky as chairman.[309] Meanwhile, debates raged among leading Bolsheviks about the next step. Both Zinoviev and Trotsky opposed Lenin's violent approach and advocated for a democratic transfer of power through the upcoming Soviet Congress on October 24 (November 6 according to the Gregorian calendar). Lenin who just had returned to Petrograd remained firm in his idea of armed insurrection, which was ultimately supported by the party.[310]

The revolution did indeed begin with direct violent actions, but its culmination came not by force, but through the aforementioned Soviet Congress, which opened on October 25 (November 7 in the Gregorian calendar). The events leading up to this moment were marked by intense strategic hostilities: during the night between October 24 and 25, the armed actions that would lead to the overthrow of the Provisional Government began. The Red Guard, which primarily consisted of radicalized soldiers and workers who supported the Bolsheviks, occupied strategic positions and seized key buildings, including the Winter Palace.[311] At the

---

[306] Lenin, V.I. (1917), see theses 1, 5-7.

[307] Smith, S.A. (2004), pp. 19-20.

[308] Bushkovitch, P. (2011), p. 301.

[309] Smith, S.A. (2004), pp. 25-26.

[310] Wade, R.A. (2017), pp. 81-83.

[311] Ibid, pp. 82-83.

same time, Kerensky ordered a strike to prevent the congress from convening, delaying its start. Chaos quickly ensued and during the night, Lenin distributed leaflets proclaiming the overthrow of the Provisional Government.[312] When the congress the day after finally convened, the Bolsheviks, along with the radical Mensheviks and SRs, got a majority of the votes. It thus seemed as though a broad socialist coalition government would be formed, but in an unexpected turn, the Mensheviks and more moderate SRs physically left the meeting hall, leaving the Bolsheviks with full control and the opportunity to form a government which they named "The Government of the People's Commissars."[313] The new government was headed by Lenin, and other prominent Bolsheviks and radical SRs were appointed to the other posts. Trotsky became head of foreign affairs, Kollontai was appointed commissar for welfare issues, Shliapnikov took charge of labor, and Joseph Stalin was tasked with the nationalities issue.[314] Thus, the Bolsheviks were firmly in control, marking the beginning of the Soviet regime and the full transformation of Russia into a socialist state.

2.2 The Reception of the Russian Revolution in the Swedish Labor Movement

The Russian Revolution had significant implications for the European labor movement. Many of the mainstream social democratic parties from the Allied nations, which supported their national governments' war efforts, feared that Russia would sign a separate peace with Germany. In response, Allied socialists such as Albert Thomas from France, Emile Vandervelde from Belgium, and Arthur Henderson from Britain actively sought to engage with the Provisional Government, aiming to persuade the Mensheviks and the SRs to continue their war effort.[315] Meanwhile, SAP was engaged in the planning of a peace conference in Stockholm which however never materialized due to the October Revolution and the Bolshevik takeover.[316] Beyond the war issue, the Russian Revolution reshaped the

---

[312] Ibid.

[313] Bushkovitch, P. (2011), p. 302-303.

[314] Ibid.

[315] King, F. (2015). Dilemmas Of a 'Democratic Peace': World War One, the Zimmerwald Manifesto and the Russian Revolution. *Socialist History*, (48), pp. 8-33.

[316] Meynell, H. (1960). The Stockholm Conference of 1917. *International Review of Social History*, 5(1), pp. 1-25.

ongoing debate between reform and revolution, which took on new meaning when the latter was realized in a country that had not yet gone through all the stages of capitalism that earlier socialist theory had deemed historically necessary.

While the Russian Revolution had far-reaching effects on the European labor movement, reshaping debates around war and revolution, it undoubtedly affected the Swedish left-wing socialist movement. In the spring of 1917, after the split with the SAP in February, before the February Revolution in Russia, the Swedish left-wing socialists began to organize. At this point, Lenin was still in exile in Switzerland and the prospects of a socialist revolution were highly uncertain.

2.2.1 The Response by Branting and the Stockholm Conference That Never Was Held

The news of the February Revolution and the fall of Tsar Nikolai II were in Sweden initially received positively in both the liberal and socialist mainstream press. However, as the political turmoil in Russia intensified and the Bolsheviks' position grew stronger, different stances began to crystallize. Like most other social democratic parties, SAP also welcomed the first phase of the Russian Revolution. Branting, for instance, stated that "the essence of revolution was a radical democratic breakthrough."[317] He was also the first European social democratic leader to visit the new Russia, arriving as early as March 23 (April 5 according to the Gregorian calendar), thus less than a month after the revolution.[318] The visit included several ceremonial elements and almost resembled a state visit. For instance, Branting was invited to lay a wreath at the grave of the revolution's victims. He also spoke at the Petrograd Soviet and gave interviews to Russian journalists, including one published in the Bolshevik newspaper *Pravda*. In that *Pravda* interview, it was claimed that Branting, unlike his European counterparts from the Entente, supported a separate peace between Russia and Germany, but this turned out to be a politically motivated fabrication.[319] Branting who on a ideological level was aligned with the Mensheviks would later, during the spring and summer, express his support for the Provisional Government rather than the more radical

---

[317] Kan, A. (1999), p. 103.

[318] Ibid, p. 107. Cf. Meynell, H. (1960), pp. 4-7.

[319] Kan, A. (1999), p. 107.

forces within the Petrograd Soviet, such as the Bolsheviks.[320] Soon after the visit however, Branting's engagements with both the Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet would intensify as plans for a peace conference in Stockholm unfolded.

The February Revolution was by many European social democrats perceived as a window of opportunity to resume the work of the Second International, which had collapsed in the wake of the outbreak of the war. The initiative was, after pressure from the Danish Social Democrats, taken by the provisional ISB, which was temporarily placed in The Hague as The Netherlands remained neutral in the war.[321] By the same token, Stockholm was considered a suitable location and the ISB was therefore temporarily relocated there at the end of April 1917. Subsequently, an organizing committee for the Stockholm Conference, the Dutch-Scandinavian Committee, was formed under the leadership of Branting and Pieter J. Troelstra (Holland) and Second International Secretary Camille Huysmans (Belgium). The committee, which officially supported Kerensky, prepared for the conference by meeting with delegations from the affiliated organizations and other delegations in separate negotiations.[322] However, to find common ground proved to be highly complicated, for two main reasons. First, because the ideological fault lines that ran through the Second International before 1914 remained. The gap that had emerged between the more moderate and "patriotic" social democratic parties and the more radical "internationalist" groupings had not been bridged, rather the opposite. Moreover, the latter group, as discussed earlier, had its own anti-war movement in Zimmerwald. Second, since the former group now had their loyalties to their national governments, those from belligerent countries were either loyal to the Central Powers or the Entente. Consequently, both sides were suspicious of the planned Stockholm Conference. Some of the Entente social democratic parties accused the conference of being a German plot, carried out by the Dutch socialists to push through a separate German-Russian peace.[323] Many from the Central Powers, on the other hand, believed it was an Entente manoeuvre to corrupt the German Socialists and encourage the strike movement that had

[320] Ibid.

[321] Ibid.

[322] King, F. (2015), p. 48.

[323] Meynell, H. (1960), p. 13.

followed the Russian Revolution. Against this backdrop they thought that the German Socialists should be allowed to go only if they could achieve a separate peace with Russia.[324] In the light of these critical reactions, a communiqué was published on May 5 in which the Organizing Committee denied any aspiration for a separate peace, instead reaffirming that its objective was to reach a general peace based on the principles adopted by the Second International in 1910.[325] This did however not help, and the disagreements continued throughout the summer and the peace efforts remained at a deadlock. In addition, both the Petrograd Soviet and the Zimmerwaldists sought to organize their own peace conferences to clarify their positions in relation to the Stockholm Conference.[326] The Zimmerwaldists did organize their own conference, which was held on May 31 and Russian Zimmerwaldists belonging both to the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks participated.[327] Additionally, in order to get closer to revolutionary Russia in general, the Zimmerwaldists also decided to relocate the organization's governing body, ISC, from Bern to Stockholm with Balabanova as its head.[328] She was further joined by three Swedish left-wing Zimmerwaldists: Höglund, Nerman and their comrade C.N. Carleson.[329] However, the Bolsheviks and the radical former SPD members who in 1914 had formed the revolutionary Spartacus League under the leadership of Luxemburg and Liebknecht, among others, decided to boycott the Stockholm Conference all together.[330] In addition, Lenin wrote negatively about the peace efforts in the illegal Bolshevik paper *Rabochy,* arguing that it was wrong in principle to seek cooperation with pro-government social democrats, whom he referred to as social-chauvinists.[331] Lastly, two further reasons contributed to the failure to realize the conference. First, the United States had entered the war on April 6 which contributed to strengthening the Entente's positions at the

---

[324] Ibid.

[325] Ibid.

[326] King, F. (2015), pp. 26-27.

[327] Schmidt, W. (1996), pp. 164-166.

[328] Ibid, p. 161.

[329] Meynell, H. (1960), p. 21. Cf. pp. 55-56.

[330] Meynell, H. (1960), p. 12.

[331] Lenin, V.I. (1917). *The Stockholm Conference.* Marxist Internet Archive. Retrieved 14 January 2025 from https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/sep/08b.htm

front.[332] This in turn made the pro-German social democrats less inclined to seek consensus with the Russians, and especially the pro-war Provisional Government as hopes for a negotiated peace became increasingly strained.[333] Second, as demonstrated in the introduction to this chapter, the Bolshevik support in Russia gradually grew during the summer of 1917 before the final outbreak of the October Revolution, which, for obvious reasons, completely obliterated the prospect of international cooperation under the auspices of European social democrats.

2.2.2 The 1917 "Revolutionary Moment" in Sweden

Around the same time as the February Revolution broke out, a series of riots and large-scale strikes occurred across Sweden. In retrospect, this period has by some scholars been described as a "revolutionary moment" in Swedish history, sometimes referred to as "The Potato Revolution."[334] These events were however not primarily sparked by revolutionary beliefs in a theoretical sense, but were rather a response by the "masses" to food scarcity, poor working conditions and political exclusion. Food shortages were severe and had been greatly worsened by the effects of the ongoing war.[335] Just like in Tsarist Russia, it was women who triggered the protests. Especially potatoes were an important food staple and a scarce commodity, and when rumors spread that traders were hoarding stocks to drive up prices, some of the hard-working women had enough and gathered for a collective protest which quickly gained momentum.[336] SAP and LO thus found themselves in an unprecedented situation, and this time, the internal debates over the use of extraparliamentary means became perhaps more pressing and immediate than ever before. Moreover, these debates fed into the growing struggle for universal suffrage. SAP member Värner Rydén, for example, who had taken part in Branting's trip to Russia the previous month argued passionately for immediate

---

[332] King, F. (2015), p. 27.

[333] Cf. Bushkovitch, P. (2011), pp. 299-300.

[334] Cf. Andræ, C.G. (1998). *Revolt eller reform: Sverige inför revolutionerna i Europa 1917–1918*. (Revolt or Reform: Sweden and the European Revolutions of 1917–1918). Carlsson. Cf. Blomqvist, H. (2017). *Potatisrevolutionen och kvinnouppploppet på Södermalm 1917: ett historiskt reportage om hunger och demokrati.* (The Potato Revolution and the Women's Riots in Södermalm 1917: A Historical Reportage on Hunger and Democracy). Hjalmarson & Högberg. Cf. Klockare, S. (1967). *Svenska revolution 1917–1918.* (The Swedish Revolution 1917–1918). Prisma.

[335] Östberg, K. (2024), pp. 51-54.

[336] Ibid.

action, proclaiming that failing to seize this opportunity would mean letting history slip through their fingers.[337] His enthusiasm, however, alarmed both SAP moderates and LO officials, who feared the implications of escalating tensions.[338] There was also a worry that if a proper attempt at revolution occurred, the military might side with the insurgent workers, which undoubtedly would create a genuine threat to the existing order.[339] Despite the tensions within SAP, some of its most prominent figures leaned into a somewhat revolutionary rhetoric. Speaking before a crowd of 100,000 in Stockholm on May 1st, MP and SAP-member Per-Albin Hansson declared that Sweden's "hour of reckoning" had come, warning that if the bourgeoisie armed itself against the working class, the workers would respond with the same means.[340] Despite the revolutionary language, SAP, including Branting, and LO hesitated to commit to concrete action. In particular, the LO leadership firmly opposed calls for a general strike, which they perceived as a straight-up revolutionary action.[341] LO representatives such as Herman Lindqvist emphasized the importance of maintaining stability and adhering to collective agreements as revolutionary fervor could lead to chaos and destruction without solving the pressing issues of hunger and disenfranchisement.[342] Tensions reached a boiling point on June 5, when SAP supporters gathered outside the *Riksdag* to hear the government's response to Branting's demand for a radical constitutional revision, including universal suffrage. The response, delivered by the conservative Prime Minister Swartz, who had entered office after Hammarskjöld was forced to resign in March, was ironically dismissive: elections in the fall would determine Sweden's path forward, even though the very issue at hand was about voting rights.[343] The government's response was met with outrage, both within the *Riksdag* and outside. Protesters at Gustav Adolfs Torg clashed with police and mounted officers, resulting in injuries and panic and Branting himself attempted to calm the crowds. However, his calls for patience were met with protests and

[337] Hirdman, Y. (1979), p. 176.

[338] Ibid.

[339] Ibid.

[340] Ibid, p. 178.

[341] Ibid, p. 143. Cf. Klockare, S. (1967), pp. 24-25.

[342] Hirdman, Y. (1979), p. 143.

[343] Klockare, S. (1967), p. 36.

chants for a general strike, as frustration among the masses boiled over.[344] Behind the scenes, the leaders of SAP and LO faced mounting pressure from more radical factions, including the left-wing socialists who distributed flyers advocating for a general strike. Yet, SAP and LO remained firm in their refusal to endorse such measures and by mid June as the peak of the protests had subsided, they issued a manifesto, rejecting calls for a strike and urging workers to channel their energy into the parliamentary elections scheduled for the fall.[345] In these elections, the political landscape shifted as the conservative right lost 20 seats in the Second Chamber, while SAP, despite internal divisions, retained their dominant position with 86 seats. A coalition government of Social Democrats and Liberals was formed, marking a significant step forward for the parliamentary system.[346] It however also implied that revolutionary rhetoric had to give way to cautious governance, as SAP formally transitioned from agitation to administration. Meanwhile, the newly established SSV, under Höglund's leadership, secured 11 seats, marking the emergence of an organized left-wing force that would not only continue to challenge SAP but also begin forging closer ties to the Bolsheviks, which is the focus of the following section.[347]

2.3 The Constitution of the Swedish Social Democratic Left Party and its Relations to Russian Bolsheviks

2.3.1 The Organization of the Swedish Left-Wing Socialists

SSV was officially founded in May 1917, during a highly turbulent and uncertain period both domestically and in Europe. In Sweden, as noted earlier, the atmosphere was charged with revolutionary sentiments due to widespread public dissatisfaction with food shortages and the repressive political system. In the light of this unrest, some left-wing socialists had in April initiated the *Soldiers' and Workers' Association* in order to establish organized collaboration between soldiers and workers, whom they believed shared common interests as proletarians.[348] As a counter-reaction, a bourgeois militia with fascist leanings was set up to

[344] Östberg, K. (2024), p. 56.

[345] Hirdman, Y. (1979), pp. 177-181. Cf. Klockare, S. (1967), p. 37.

[346] Östberg, K. (2024), p. 57.

[347] Ibid.

[348] Leander, P. (2021), pp. 72-73. Cf. Andræ, C.G. (1998), p. 88.

respond directly to the state's need for reinforcements to be used against the revolutionary forces.[349] This was in turn met with strong protests from both the left and the liberals. There was however never a direct confrontation between the two organizations and before long, Prime Minister Swartz was forced to disband the militia out of fear that sympathies for the *Soldiers' and Workers' Association* would grow so strong that they would actually pose a serious threat in the form of a "red guard."[350] In any case, the initiative was symptomatic of the growing radicalization that had gained momentum over time and accelerated in the spring of 1917.

The groundwork for SSV however, had already begun in February before the riots broke out, in connection with SAP's party congress, during which the radical youth league was expelled. As discussed in chapter 1.3, a left-wing opposition had emerged as early as the first years of the century, aiming to push the party in a more radical direction, for instance, by advocating for general strike as a means of struggle and condemning cooperation with the liberal Staaff government.[351] The conflict escalated further with the outbreak of war in 1914, when SAP, as is well known, committed to the nation at the expense of the international class struggle. It was thus the diverging views on the party's principles and tactical activities, combined with the pressing issue of the war, that ultimately led to the party's split during the February congress.[352] The left-wing opposition expressed their perspective in a manifesto adopted in connection with their expulsion, in which they also laid out the plans to establish a new party by May.[353] The manifesto, signed by several leading SAP members, including Höglund, Ström, Lindhagen, and Vennerström, began by accusing the party of abandoning its ideological principles.[354] The left-wing socialists argued that as SAP's influence in the *Riksdag* grew and it moved closer to governmental power, the party increasingly adopted a

---

[349] Leander, P. (2021), pp. 72-73.

[350] Ibid.

[351] Hentilä, S. (1979), p. 181.

[352] Bolin, J. (2004), pp. 68-70.

[353] Ibid, p. 68.

[354] Ibid. Cf. ARAB Stockholm, SSV collection, vol. 1, Berättelse över Socialdemokratiska Vänsterpartiets verksamhet 1917. (Report on the Activities of the Social Democratic Left Party in 1917). Fram förlag, 1918. pp. 1-5.

purely tactical approach, which effectively aligned it more closely with the ruling classes.[355] They further claimed that this shift led the party to suppress dissenting voices, exemplified by the ultimatum that the mother party gave SDUF: either conform to the party line or leave. It was thus now the task of the left-wing socialists to "realize the basic principles of democracy" since these were considered to have been lost in SAP's quest for governmental power.[356] As Bolin points out, the manifesto expressed a sense of obligation both toward the origins of social democracy and toward the new challenges of the time. It called for the establishment of a new party with an explicit anti-war policy, ideologically based on the vision and principles that had formed the foundation of social democracy during its breakthrough in the 1890s, namely the "Kautskyist" orthodox Marxism.[357] The left-wing socialist Ernst Hage went so far as to claim that the formation of a new party even was a political necessity dictated by the laws of nature.[358] Furthermore, there was disappointment over those SAP members who had previously allied themselves with the radical opposition but chose to remain in SAP during the party split, such as the aforementioned Hansson who just a few days before had not ruled out arming the working class.[359] A prominent left-wing figure in SAP and later in SSV/SKP, Kata Dalström, who belonged to Branting's generation of social democrats and who had been a member of SAP's executive committee since 1900, later described the party's "renegades" in the following way:

> (...) the ideals have fallen in the muck, and they stand there as pure careerists, stripped of all idealism, while we remain in the struggle. They mock what they once fought for, they have aligned themselves with the social patriots, and the ideals of socialism are to them nothing but empty words. Power is everything.[360]

---

[355] Bolin, J. (2004), p. 68.

[356] Ibid, p. 69.

[357] Ibid. Cf. Linderborg, Å. (2001), pp. 177-178. Cf. Hentilä, S. (1979), pp. 179-180.

[358] ARAB Stockholm, SSV collection, vol. 1, Protokoll fört vid Sverges socialdemokratiska vänsterpartis konstituerande kongress i Stockholm 13 – 16 maj 1917, p. 5. (Protocol of the Sweden's Social Democratic Left Party's constitutive congress in Stockholm, 13 – 16 May, 1917).

[359] Hirdman, Y. (1979), p. 178. Cf. p. 76. Per-Albin Hansson would later become prime minister of Sweden and play a key role in both the development of Sweden's welfare state and SAP. Hansson served two terms, between 1932–1936 and 1936–1946. Cf. Östberg, K. (2024), pp. 91-167.

[360] Dalström, K. (1918). Några intryck från socialdemokratiska ungdomsförbundets genombrottstid. (Some impressions from the breakthrough period of the Social Democratic Youth League). *Stormklockan*, no. 12. ARAB Stockholm, Otto Grimlund's Archive, vol 5.

When the constitutive congress was held on May 13–16 in the headquarters of the temperance society, IOGT, in central Stockholm, SSV already had about 20,000 members, including 15 members of parliament who had entered the *Riksdag* as SAP members during the 1914 election.[361] At the congress, in addition to Swedish left-wing socialists, several international guests from various countries and socialist factions participated, all in the spirit of the Zimmerwald movement. The congress, its international guests, as well as the party program that was adopted, will be further discussed at the beginning of chapter three. In order to understand the political direction of SSV, it is necessary to first take a closer look at the intensified contacts between Swedish left-wing socialists and Russian revolutionaries that developed before the formal constitution of SSV.

2.3.2 Lenin's Journey Through Sweden: A Prelude to Revolution

Contacts between Swedish left-wing socialists and Russian revolutionaries, including Bolsheviks, had existed for some time, and the relationship deepened through the collaboration within the Zimmerwald Left from 1915 onward. Since Sweden was neutral in the war, it was one of the few routes Bolshevik emigrants could use to communicate with their comrades in Russia. According to Kan, for instance, up to 2 000 copies of newspapers, brochures, and leaflets from Scandinavia were sent to Russia every week already in 1915.[362] Against this backdrop, several exiled Bolsheviks resided in Sweden, acting as the party's "functionaries" in exile. Among them were Nikolai Bukharin, Alexander Shliapnikov, and the previously mentioned Kollontai.[363] However, all three would be expelled or voluntarily leave the country before 1917, yet Sweden's role as a "bridge" between East and West remained. One example of this is a Swedish-speaking Bolshevik from Petrograd, known by the name "Stachova." In March 1917, she was sent to Sweden to deliver a letter written by Shliapnikov (who had since returned to Russia) addressed to the Swedish Zimmerwald comrades and to Lenin.[364] In addition, her mission was to provide the exiled Bolsheviks in Sweden with an update on the development in Russia and to encourage them to return to take part in the next

---

[361] Leander, P. (2021), p. 75.

[362] Kan, A. (2005), p. 63.

[363] Kan, A. (2005), pp. 63-70.

[364] Kan, A. (1999), p. 106.

phase of the revolution.[365] Shliapnikov's letter, without mentioning Stachova, was afterward published in the left-wing newspaper *Politiken* (The Politics) under the headline *A Revolutionary Letter to the Swedish Opposition.* The letter informed the Swedes that the Bolsheviks would remain fully autonomous and thus not align themselves with the Provisional Government and that the party "(…) moves forward and spreads the revolution further."[366] Moreover, the letter encouraged the Swedes to urge the German proletarians to rise up in order to end the war.[367] It was neither the first nor the last Bolshevik message published in the Swedish left-wing socialist press. On the contrary, the newspapers became an increasingly important channel, especially from February 1917 onward, both for the Swedish left-wing socialists, the Bolsheviks, and their comrades in exile, serving both to spread information and mobilize support. For instance, *Stormklockan* published twelve major translated articles by Bukharin during the autumn of 1916, in which he discussed socialism, imperialism, the disintegration of the Second International, and the tactics of the Bolsheviks.[368] According to Kan, these articles in particular contributed to cementing the newspaper's revolutionary profile.[369]

A crucial event for the Swedish left-wing socialists was when Lenin, in early April, returned from his exile in Switzerland to "complete" the revolution in Russia. Apart from a six-month stay during the first revolution of 1905–6, he had by 1917 been away from his homeland for almost seventeen years.[370] Lenin returned aboard a sealed train, via Germany and then up all the way through Sweden and over to Finland, which at the time belonged to Russia. The Entente countries had refused to issue visas, so instead one of Lenin's associates, the Swiss socialist Platten had negotiated with the Germans who finally agreed to let the trip go through Germany, where they could take the ferry Queen Victoria over to the neutral Sweden and thus

---

[365] Ibid.

[366] Ibid.

[367] Ibid. Cf. Kan, A. (2005), p. 126.

[368] Kan, A. (2005), p. 63.

[369] Ibid.

[370] Smith, S.A. (2006). The Revolutions of 1917–1918. In: Grigor Suny, R. (Ed.). *The Cambridge History of Russia: Volume III the Twentieth Century.* Cambridge University Press, p. 124.

continue the journey northwards.[371] The journey began on April 9 (April 22 according to the Gregorian calendar) and Lenin arrived in Petrograd eight days later, on April 16 (April 29 according to the Gregorian calendar). The traveling companions consisted of about thirty to forty people. Among them were, apart from Platten, Lenin's wife Nadezhda Krupskaya, his Russian-French mistress Inessa Armand, his close ally Zinoviev, Polish Yakov Ganetsky and Radek.[372] From the Swedish side, it was initially intended that Ström, as a member of parliament, would escort the group, but he was unable to leave Stockholm and instead the lot fell to Grimlund who at the time was the district chairman of SDUF in Malmö. This was also the traveller's first stop, where they stayed for a few hours to have a smorgasbord, the Swedish equivalent to zakuski, at the elegant Hotel Savoy.[373] After the meal the trip continued throughout the night toward Stockholm. Grimlund who later recalled his memories from the trip in an oral interview from 1965, remembers that he shared compartment with Radek, Ganetsky and Lenin, and that the latter was eager to hear more about SAP, its leader Branting, the party's left wing and their future plans for Sweden. Grimlund himself put it this way:

> He wanted to know details, he wanted to know people's opinions, he wanted to listen. I know of no famous politician at all who had such an ability to patiently listen to small matters and details, and from them draw out broad perspectives and theoretical speculations. (…) That night, he showed an incredibly strong interest in our views in general, not only regarding our opinions on domestic affairs, but also on how we assessed the political situation outside our own neutral country.[374]

The discussion continued until the early hours and Grimlund remembered that he listened carefully when Lenin expressed his thoughts on the political situation in Russia and the world.[375] According to Grimlund, Lenin drew parallels between the Mensheviks and the RS in Russia and the Social Democrats in Sweden, arguing that they had all abandoned the

---

[371] Leander, P. (2021), pp. 53-54.

[372] Ibid.

[373] Merridale, C. (2017). *Lenin on the Train.* Metropolitan Books, p. 110.

[374] Grimlund, O. (1965). *Oral history interview with Otto Grimlund 1965.* Unknown interviewer. Digital Library Collection, Columbia University. Retrieved 14 October 2024 from: https://dlc.library.columbia.edu/time_based_media/10.7916/d8-vw5n-4023.

[375] Ibid.

interests of the proletariat and instead chosen to form an alliance with the bourgeoisie.[376] Lenin stated that the Bolsheviks must seize the power in Russia through force and establish the *dictatorship of the proletariat,* in order to liberate workers globally and dismantle capitalist rule. This, he believed, would not only bring an end to capitalism but also automatically stop the ongoing, "imperialistic" war.[377] Based on Grimlund's account, during the conversation, Lenin clearly and decisively conveyed his party's stance on the then current-stage of the revolution, ridiculed the RS led by Kerensky and the "bourgeois imperialists", and outlined the Bolshevik action plan based on the maxim "All powers to the workers' councils! Peace to the peoples! Land to the peasants!"[378] Grimlund, who an hour into the conversation decided to pull up a pen and a notebook expressed it this way:

> This interview was never published. It still lies in one of the drawers of my writing desk. But for me, those night hours while the train rattled northward were more than an interview. It was a lesson in socialism, a flight over the field of struggle that I will never forget. Lenin was one of those who didn't need a large audience to develop his thoughts. He believed that a young journalist from small Sweden also needed to present his views on the political situation in the world.[379]

The morning after, they arrived in Stockholm and Lenin and his travelling companions were escorted to Hotel Regina in the city centre.[380] A meeting was then organized at the hotel in order for Lenin to meet with the leading figures of the newly formed Swedish left and together put forward a plan for the "Russian-Swedish tactics." According to Grimlund, "Lenin expressed there the same thoughts that he had during our conversation the night before."[381] Five of the Swedish participants in the meeting also signed a declaration of

---

[376] Ibid.

[377] Cf. Bushkovitch, P. (2011), p. 280.

[378] Grimlund, O. (n.d.). *Na perevale.* The Lenin Project. Retrieved 6 October 2024 from: https://lenin.rhga.ru/upload.pdf Cf. Grimlund, O. (1979). 'Na perevale'. In: G. N. Golikov et al. (Eds.). *Vospominaniia o Vladimire Il'iche Lenine,* vol. 5. (Memoirs of Vladimir Il'ich Lenin). Political Publishing House, pp. 93-94.

[379] Grimlund, O. (n.d.), p. 924.

[380] Leander, P. (2021), p. 60. Cf. Yurov, Y. (1967). *Путешествие по ленинской адресной книжке Источник*. (A Journey Through Lenin's Address Book). Издательство политической литературы, pp. 39-41.

[381] Grimlund, O. (n.d.), p. 924.

solidarity with the Bolsheviks, which was published in *Politiken* on April 14 under the title "The Certificate From Internationalist Socialists."[382] On the same day, the left-wing socialist Nerman also published sections of what would later become part of Lenin's *April Theses* in the same newspaper, including the new Bolshevik tactics of a socialist revolution which would lead to the creation of a full socialist state, and not a republic based on democratic principles. Nerman's article ended with a greeting: "The Russian revolutionary social democrats are fighting for the same cause as we are. Therefore, we once again send them our farewell greeting: long live the Russian, long live the international socialist revolution!"[383] Moreover, Lenin was supposed to travel to Långholmen Prison outside Stockholm to visit Höglund, who, as previously mentioned, was imprisoned for "treason" after attempting to mobilize his anti-militarism at a peace congress organized by SDUF the year before.[384] However, due to lack of time the visit could not be arranged and Ström was instead tasked with delivering a handwritten greeting from Lenin which said "Greetings, soon to return to freedom and the struggle"[385] Instead the Swedes, Grimlund included, took Lenin and his wife to the department store PUB in which they bought Lenin a new suit. Grimlund later recalled that Lenin was reluctant to buy anything else and he is reported to jokingly have said "I am going home to Russia, not to open a tailor shop, but to make a revolution!"[386]

The travelling Bolsheviks asked for two more things from the Swedes before they left. Firstly, a document declaring that the transit through Germany had exclusively been negotiated with the Swiss, and not the Germans. According to Grimlund, it was of utmost importance to Lenin to let everybody know that they had not interacted with a single German during the trip since he feared that they would otherwise be labeled as traitors.[387] Secondly, they asked for financial support to continue the journey. From the Swedish side it was

---

[382] The Swedes who signed the declaration of solidarity include Carl Lindhagen, Fredrik Ström, C.N. Carleson, Karl Kilbom, and Ture Nerman. All publication dates for non-Russian newspapers, etc., refer to the Gregorian calendar. Kan, A. (2005), p. 115.

[383] Kan, A. (2005), p. 116.

[384] Merridale, C. (2017), p. 127. Cf. Höglund, Z. (1953), pp. 205-244.

[385] Kan, A. (2005), p. 115.

[386] Grimlund, O. (n.d.), p. 924.

[387] Grimlund, O. (1965). Cf. Merridale, C. (2017), p. 128.

decided that the left-wing socialist and parliamentarian, Fabian Månsson, would try to raise a few hundred crowns by asking fellow left-wing socialist MPs in the *Riksdag*. According to Grimlund, the fundraising went well and even the right-wing politician and then Foreign Minister Admiral Arvid Lindman signed the petition, albeit with a different motive. Following Grimlund's account, Lindman is supposed to have said: "If you guarantee that the bastard leaves tonight, so that we get rid of him, I'll sign with a hundred crowns!"[388] Hence, even a Swedish conservative politician indirectly contributed to the continued development of the Russian Revolution

2.3.3 A Bridge Between East and West: The Creation of the Bolshevik Stockholm Bureau

At 6.37 pm, the train that would take Lenin and his companions all the way to Haparanda, near the Finnish border, departed.[389] Radek did however not accompany them. It had previously been decided that he would remain in Stockholm to establish a Bolshevik foreign bureau together with the Russian Vatslav Vorovsky, who already lived and worked in Sweden and who would later become the first – by Sweden recognized – diplomatic representative to Scandinavia, even though he would eventually be expelled by the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[390] The purpose of the bureau was twofold. First, to maintain communication with the Bolsheviks in Petrograd, the editorial staff of *Pravda*, and Lenin personally, in order to inform about developments and the prospects of the revolutionary movement in Western Europe. Communication often went through Finland which at the time belonged to Russia, via the telegraph station in Haparanda, as well as through letters and personal couriers such as the aforementioned "Stachova."[391] Second, the bureau was tasked with informing the socialist parties in Western Europe about the Bolshevik tactics and the development of the revolution in Russia. Thus, the bureau in Stockholm acted as an intermediary between the Bolsheviks and their comrades in the West, particularly the German Spartacus League led by

---

[388] Grimlund, O. (1965).

[389] Merridale, C. (2017), p. 130.

[390] Lazitch, B & Drachkovitch, M.M. (1973). *Biographical Dictionary of the Comintern: New, Revised and Expanded Edition.* Hoover Institution Press, p. 430. Cf. Kan, A. (2005), p. 124.

[391] pp. 78-79. Cf. Kan, A. (1999), p. 106. Cf. Lenin, V.I. (1917). *To: The Bureau of the Central Committee Abroad.* Correspondence from Lenin sent from Helsingfors to Stockholm on Augusti 17 (30) 1917. Marxist Internet Archive. Retrieved 19 December 2024 from: https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/aug/17bcca.htm

Luxemburg and Liebknecht.[392] According to Kan, the bureau grew both in terms of scope and significance in connection with the planning of the previously discussed Stockholm Conference, which the Bolsheviks later distanced themselves from and that ultimately never took place.[393] The tasks of the bureau were achieved through Bolshevik contributions to the Western European socialist press, including *Stormklockan* and *Politiken*, as well as through bulletins, for which Ström and later Grimlund became responsible editors. Grimlund, later described the work with one of these bulletins, *Bote Der Russischen Revolution* (Messengers of the Russian Revolution) like this:

> (…) It was published from April, through May, and throughout the summer until the October Revolution became a reality. We sent it each week to newspaper editorial offices, to members of parliament, and to political figures throughout Europe. It was an informational bulletin that clearly communicated what the Bolsheviks aimed for during the summer. Lenin wrote many essays for this publication over the summer, which we received via these illegal routes. Some articles were written here in Stockholm, and we received a substantial amount of material from Petrograd from other Russian leaders. Besides this printed magazine, we also distributed mimeographed bulletins, *Mitteilungen der russischen Revolution*, one of which was called *Pravda Mitteilungen*. These, too, contained information that could be of interest to Western Europe and stimulate increased revolutionary struggle in the Western European countries as well.[394]

Apart from these transnational bulletins, Grimlund remained an active writer in *Stormklockan*. Although he never published his discussion with Lenin on the train, another interview was published shortly afterwards on May 5 in which Lenin explained his new tactics: “Declaration of no confidence in all bourgeois governments – appeal to the working class to defeat these governments”[395]. As previously discussed, the situation in Russia during the spring and summer was unstable, culminating with the so-called July Days when massive, spontaneous street demonstrations against the Kerensky government took place in Petrograd.[396] According to Kan, the following autumn brought a measure of caution among Swedish left-wing socialists, including Grimlund, despite the close relationship between the

---

[392] Kan, A. (2005), pp. 127-129.

[393] Ibid. Cf. chapter 2.1.

[394] Grimlund, O. (1965).

[395] Kan, A. (2005), p. 132.

[396] Cf. Wade, R.A. (2017). The Russian Revolution and Civil War. In: Pons, S., Smith S.A. (Eds.). *The Cambridge History of Communism*. Cambridge University Press, p. 79.

left-wing socialists and the Bolsheviks. Kan suggests that this may have been due to the great uncertainty surrounding how the revolution, if it were to happen, would unfold in Russia.[397] Furthermore, as previously discussed, there had been parliamentary elections in Sweden in September and SAP had formed a coalition government together with the Liberals, meanwhile several of the former SAP parliamentarians for the first time represented the newly formed SSV which in total gained 11 mandates. Around this time, Grimlund and Nerman urged the SDUF, which was overall more radical than its parent party, to promote the idea of a gradual revolution in a broader sense, without any explicit references to Bolshevik rhetoric.[398] Despite this cautious turn in Sweden, Grimlund would soon take on a much more active role during the decisive days of the October Revolution in November 1917 as he managed to overcome the difficulties in communication caused by striking telegraph operators in Petrograd. From Haparanda, near the Swedish-Russian border, he sent crucial updates from the Bolsheviks to their comrades abroad.[399] This was particularly valuable to the Russian revolutionaries in Swedish exile and Grimlund was soon formally appointed Bolshevik representative in Sweden with his telegrams to be considered official.[400] In the wake of the October Revolution, Radek returned to Petrograd, while Vorovsky remained in Stockholm. Moreover, the previously mentioned Balabanova, who had chaired ISC when it was relocated to Stockholm a few months earlier, also joined.[401] With his newly acquired status, Grimlund thus formally aligned himself with his Russian comrades to jointly lead the Bolshevik Stockholm Bureau, which, in practice, functioned as the world's first Soviet embassy.[402]

2.3.4 Section Summary

The formation of SSV in 1917 should primarily be understood as a direct response to internal disappointment over how the mother party, SAP, like European social democracy at large,

---

[397] Kan, A. (2005), p. 141.

[398] Ibid.

[399] Grimlund, O. (1965).

[400] Kan, A. (2005), pp. 172-173.

[401] Leander, P. (2021), pp. 80-81. Cf. Meynell, H. (1960), p. 21. Cf. p. 74.

[402] Leander, P. (2021), p. 95.

had abandoned its revolutionary principles in favor of political pragmatism and adaptation to the bourgeois state. This opposition, which gradually grew between 1903 and the formal split in February 1917, sought to restore the core values of socialism, particularly its anti-war stance, and adopt a more radical position in line with orthodox Marxism. Initially, this discontent was channeled through the Zimmerwald movement, but when the Russian Revolution broke out in 1917, the premises changed – both for the reformist labor movement and the Zimmerwald left.

The February Revolution was perceived by many European social democrats, including Branting, as a window of opportunity to resume the work of the Second International, which had collapsed in the wake of the war. However, when the Bolsheviks seized power, the prospect of international socialist cooperation across the rift between reformists and revolutionaries became unviable.

In Sweden, these events coincided with widespread unrest due to food shortages and harsh working conditions. Strikes and violent demonstrations made the question of extraparliamentary actions urgent for SAP, which faced the choice of either giving in to revolutionary sentiments or continuing along the parliamentary path. Despite its support for protesting workers and occasional revolutionary rhetoric, SAP ultimately chose the latter and consolidated itself as a party that formally transitioned from agitation to administration. Against this backdrop, SSV emerged as a political alternative.

This is one side of SSV's emergence. The other concerns the intensified contacts with Russian revolutionaries in general and Bolsheviks in particular that took place between the February and October Revolutions of 1917. Drawing on Grimlund's memoirs and Kan's extensive knowledge of the subject, this chapter has sought to reconstruct the most pivotal moments: Lenin's train journey through Sweden, during which the Bolsheviks and left-wing socialists developed a shared tactical approach, and the establishment of the Bolshevik Stockholm Bureau, which facilitated continued collaboration and communication between Swedish and Russian revolutionaries. Through this bureau, some Swedish left-wing socialists occasionally even acted as "proxies" for the Bolsheviks in Sweden. Based on these findings, the relationships, contrary to Schmidt's claims, appear to have been quite intense at the

time.[403] Given this, it is reasonable to assume that SSV's first party program would reflect a Bolshevik perspective on revolution and societal transformation. The next chapter, however, will demonstrate that this was not the case.

[403] Cf. Schmidt, W. (1996), pp. 134-135.

CHAPTER 3: THE QUESTION OF A SWEDISH REVOLUTION

Chapter two has demonstrated that the Russian Revolution, and particularly the time between the February Revolution and the Bolshevik seizure of power through the October Revolution, had a significant impact on the Swedish left-wing socialists in the sense that they – through interactions with leading Bolsheviks – got acquainted with their revolutionary tactics. However, as Björlin points out and as discussed in the purpose section of this thesis, simply mapping these relationships is not enough to understand what the SSV/SKP *sought to achieve as a party* in Sweden.[404] Nor is it possible, within the scope of this thesis, to go into detail on all these interactions, which have already been extensively covered by Kan, Björlin and others. Chapter three thus shifts its focus toward SSV in order to grasp the party's ideological visions and political ambitions, before and after the party joined the Comintern. The first congress, held from May 13–16, 1917, took place during a time when collaboration with the Bolsheviks, such as through the revolutionary bulletins, was in full swing. The intention of the next section is thus to, through the first congress protocols, explore party's general principles, objectives, and adopted resolutions given that at least some Swedish left-wing socialists, as demonstrated above, had embraced and actively promoted the revolutionary ideas and tactics developed by the Bolsheviks. The thesis then moves forward to the period after which the party had accepted the Twenty-one conditions and thus formally "subordinated" itself to Moscow, with the objective of understanding whether a Bolshevik-modelled Swedish revolution, at this point, was something the party aimed for.

The main findings show that despite a commitment to the international revolutionary left, and intensified contacts with leading Bolsheviks, the emergence of the SSV as a political alternative to the SAP primarily reflected an effort to reinvent the social democracy that members of the left opposition had long believed was lost. Against this backdrop, the Russian Revolution and the Bolsheviks served as a projection surface for the Swedish left socialists. Events in Russia became a lens through which the Swedish left-wing socialists could formulate their own ambitions and ideals, rather than a direct model to follow. From an ideological perspective, the new party was not Bolshevik even though it embraced some Bolshevik elements such as the establishment of the *Soldiers' and Workers' Association.*

[404] Cf. Björlin, L. (2006), p. 22.

Rather, it was heterogenous to not say fluid, in character. While some of SSV's leading figures sought to adopt Bolshevik principles – particularly regarding the role of the party and the necessity of actively pursuing a revolution – others envisioned SSV as a broader socialist movement, emphasizing that the party should concentrate on spiritually emancipating the labor class, beyond materialist concerns. What united them was a desire to reconstruct a Swedish socialist project that they perceived as diluted by reformist pragmatism and undemocratic managerialism by SAP. However, without a coherent joint political vision, beyond antimilitarism and its opposition to SAP, formulating a new political program proved significantly challenging. As the end of this chapter shows, it was not until the party's entry into the Comintern in 1919 and the adoption of the Twenty-one Conditions in 1921 that SSV was forced to formulate a clear ideological and organizational direction. The strict requirements imposed by Moscow necessitated a fundamental restructuring of the party, aligning it more closely with the Bolshevik model of a centralized, disciplined vanguard party. This transition led to internal tensions, as some members resisted the increasing ideological rigidity and the subordination to the Comintern's directives.

3.1 Revolutionary Pacifism: An Ambiguous Ideological Foundation

The first party congress of SSV was held, as aforementioned, on May 13–16 in the headquarters of the temperance society, IOGT, in central Stockholm. By then, almost 20,000 members had already joined in, and around a hundred attended the congress. Although the work of organizing the new party had begun already in February, it was now that the party formally came into being. The congress opened with a speech by the poet Ragnar Jändel:

> (...) We are the defiled women and men of the red battle line, for the promise we once made to one another remains the same. We stood where the stones rained down the hardest, and it was our greatest fault that, after our words, we demanded that the action be carried out fully and in proper order.
>
> (...) Outside, a people in starvation await – a land that offered starving children and mothers sabers and shackles in exchange for bread awaits. Outside, a world aflame in salvation's vernal celebration awaits – outside, history's greatest and proudest struggle awaits!
>
> So let us forge our chain and bind ourselves tightly together, friends, in the sacred assurance that the country we have dreamed of will be ours! Every man in our ranks is a comrade, and every comrade a spokesman for all that is best felt and dreamed by Sweden's oppressed people.

> Equality, Freedom, and Brotherhood, friends – they are the stars that shall shine forth the unity of the divided here! May they always shine clearly down upon our battles, just as they have shone upon us in past years and as they shine today![405]

The words of Jändel encapsulate the mood that had surrounded the left-wing socialists in the past few months. They had dramatically broken with SAP after many years of internal strife, war had been raging in Europe for almost three years and Sweden had recently been shaken by revolutionary riots, which had been brutally suppressed by those in power. The left-wing socialists now envisioned a turning point, strengthened by the February revolution that had recently materialized in Russia. It was now time to take the international struggle for socialism and peace beyond SAP.

Moreover, the congress had an air of internationalism with a number of international guests participating, including comrades affiliated with the Zimmerwald movement from Finland, Norway, Denmark, Switzerland, Poland, and Bulgaria. Additionally the aforementioned Grimm took part, who at the time of the conference was still the chairman of the ISC in Bern, as well as the German Willi Münzenberg, who was the head of SYI.[406] On the Russian side, the Petrograd Soviet's courier Helene Lurie participated, along with the Menshevik Boris Mehr. Also attending was Radek, who, as mentioned above, had remained in Stockholm in connection with Lenin's train journey two weeks earlier.[407] Kollontai, who within a few months would become minister, or commissar, for welfare affairs in Russia, was not present at the congress, but sent a short greeting to the newfound party.[408] Toward the end of the congress, five Russian comrades, who were passing through Sweden on their way back to Russia, joined the meeting. Among them were Menshevik leader Pavel Axelrod and his fellow party member Alexandr Martinov, who was one of those Lenin had criticized in his 1902 pamphlet *What is To Be Done* for being an "economist", a term he used to describe those who advocated for a gradual, reformist approach to socialism rather than the immediate

[405] SSV Congress Protocol 1917, pp. 3-4.

[406] SSV Congress Protocol 1917, pp. 9-14.

[407] Ibid.

[408] Ibid, p. 149.

revolutionary struggle.[409] Also joining was Balabanova, who would, as demonstrated above, soon return to Stockholm to take over the chairmanship of the ISC and later work with the Bolshevik's Stockholm Bureau, alongside Grimlund and others.[410] Balabanova thanked for the warm reception and sent greetings on behalf of the 250 Russian revolutionaries who were currently in Sweden on their way to Russia:

> (...) they are proud to return to Russia, not because it is their national homeland, but because it is the sacred ground of the revolution. They are all martyrs and victims of the revolution. They now have the sacred duty to devote all their strength to the cause of the revolution, so that it may be fulfilled. (…)[411]

SSV member Carleson addressed the Russian guests, welcoming them as representatives of "the new international socialism, which today is the only true socialism."[412] He further explained that SSV fully supported the principles outlined in Zimmerwald and Kienthal, "for which our Russian comrades are the honorable champions."[413]

There was no doubt that the party was united from the start in its commitment to the Zimmerwald movement. The question of the party's formal accession was addressed on the final day of the congress and was unanimously approved without debate.[414] However, debates on other issues reveals that SSV, at its inception, actually was rather heterogenous in terms of ideas and objectives. As a result, reaching a common understanding of what kind of party SSV should be, and most importantly, what is *sought to achieve,* turned out to be a complicated task. This issue would gradually intensify in the years to come. The following section thus outlines the discussions that preceded the adoption of the first party program. Subsequently, the party's first two "official" trips to Petrograd after the October Revolution are presented, during which they participated in several meetings and, among other things, concluded a trade agreement with the Bolshevik government. Finally, the content of the

---

409 Cf. Lenin, V.I. (1902), chapter four.

410 Cf. Leander, P. (2021), pp. 80-81.

411 SSV Congress Protocol 1917, p. 148.

412 Ibid, p. 147.

413 Ibid.

414 Ibid, pp. 132-134.

party's second program from 1918 is discussed, with the aim of examining in what ways the October Revolution and the aforementioned trips shaped the party's development and ideological orientation.

3.1.1 Humanism, Democracy and the Legacy of SAP in the Development of SSV's First Party Program

As discussed in previous chapters, the conflict between SAP and the left-wing socialists was largely shaped by SAP's shift toward the center, or its "adaptation" to the Swedish parliamentary situation, as well as the war question. Thus, these issues were at the heart of the discussions regarding the adoption of the party's general principles and program. The draft statement that was presented to the delegates of the congress had been prepared by a working committee elected in connection with the preparations in February. This interim committee consisted of the previously mentioned Lindhagen, Ström, Carleson, Vennerström, Månsson, Kilbom, and three other party comrades.[415] The draft was undoubtedly grounded in a fundamental socialist understanding of capitalist society and resembled the program adopted by SAP in 1911, which the party, at least formally, still adhered to. It was perhaps not surprising that the proposal was largely modeled on this program, given that the aforementioned individuals, who had been part of the left wing of SAP before the party split, had played a major role in shaping it.[416]

Regarding constitutional issues, the new proposal was, in essence, identical to that of SAP: universal, equal, and direct suffrage for all men and women aged 21 and over should apply, and Sweden should be transformed into a republic based on democratic governance. SSV, however, added the demand for a "unicameral parliamentary system", which had been part of SAP's 1897 program but was omitted in 1911.[417] Similarly to SAP's 1911 program, the proposal affirmed the right to freedom of speech, press, and assembly. However, the SSV

---

[415] Ibid, p. 23.

[416] Kokk, E. (2001). Program för Sveriges socialdemokratiska arbetareparti 1911. (Program for the Swedish Social Democratic Workers' Party 1911). In: Misgeld, K. (Ed.). *Socialdemokratins program 1897–1990.* (The Social Democratic Programs 1897–1990). Arbetarrörelsens arkiv och bibliotek, p. 23.

[417] SSV Congress Protocol 1917, p. 31. Cf. Misgeld, K. (2001), p. 26.

committee introduced the additional point of "freedom to demonstrate."[418] Other points in alignment with the 1911 program included the following:

- A maximum workday and a minimum wage.
- Protective legislation aimed at safeguarding workers' health and dignity, including public pensions and insurance.
- Progressive income taxation.
- Public credit organized by the state.
- The land, its resources, and other essential means of production were to be transferred to the entire working population. Small farmers' land, however, was to be exempt, and measures were to be taken to prevent their land from falling under capitalist monopolies.
- Prohibition of alcoholic beverages.

Regarding industrial policy, the SSV proposal extended beyond SAP's stance, stating that "industries and enterprises of social importance should be socialized," a notion presented in slightly more cautious terms in the 1911 program.[419] The SSV proposal also displayed a more progressive approach to education and housing policies, such as housing for all citizens guaranteed by the state, free elementary education for all children and active state support for the "free educational pursuits" of all citizens.[420] A significant novelty in the SSV proposal, however, concerned militarism and the concept of democracy. While the 1911 SAP program had committed to opposing militarism and working toward the "gradual reduction of military burdens toward disarmament," as well as advocating for "strong international cooperation among workers' organizations against war," the party had, in practice, abandoned these points following the outbreak of war in 1914.[421] The SSV proposal, unsurprisingly, remained firmly anti-militarist, shifting the focus from "gradual disarmament" to an immediate attempt at disarmament.[422] Furthermore, the terms "international legal order" and "fraternity among

---

[418] Ibid.

[419] SSV Congress Protocol 1917, p. 32. Cf. Misgeld, K. (2001), pp. 27-29.

[420] SSV Congress Protocol 1917, p. 32.

[421] Misgeld, K. (2001), p. 26.

[422] SSV Congress Protocol 1917, p. 31.

peoples" were introduced.[423] In terms of democracy, a closer examination of the interim committee's proposal on the general principles is necessary.

The proposal began by stating, in line with Marxist argumentation, that it was capitalism's inherent tendency toward crisis that had ultimately contributed to "economic storms", and that capitalism, now in its "imperialist form" posed a constant threat to peace: "placing military burdens on peoples, under which they are economically oppressed and (…) bound ever more tightly in political unfreedom."[424] In the second part of the draft, the focus shifted to the "philosophy of power" which they argued was not only a significant characteristic of the ruling classes but had also permeated democratic movements.[425] Implicitly, this was understood to apply to SAP as well. According to the left-wing socialists, the result was despotism, oligarchy, and bureaucracy, which had "contaminated" democratic movements that now increasingly abandoned its "concern for the major principles and real issues."[426] It was therefore up to the new party to "deepen democracy and fulfill its tasks within it."[427] This ideal of democracy would apply both in the party's external policies and its internal organization. The latter was manifested in the adoption of the "democratic principles of the party" aimed at regulating its structure and functioning.[428]

The fundamental objective was further declared to be the pursuit, both through parliamentary and extraparliamentary means, of "abolishing class rule and creating economic and spiritual freedom for all, eradicating poverty, and establishing a social order that paves the way for bread, freedom, and personal responsibility."[429] This was to be achieved through "the organization of the oppressed classes' struggle for economic justice and efficiency, for

---

[423] Ibid.

[424] Ibid.

[425] Ibid, pp. 30-31.

[426] Ibid.

[427] Ibid.

[428] Cf. Bolin, J. (2004), p. 92. Cf. Hägglund, J. (2023), p. 265.

[429] SSV Congress Protocol 1917, pp. 30-31.

enlightenment and character traits (...) for a new society, one of socialism and humanism."[430] The draft then continued by stating that:

> The social democratic left acknowledges the truth of the great principle that the liberation of the oppressed classes can only be their own work. Not leadership rule, which degenerates into authoritarianism and minority oppression, killing the movement's lifeblood, spiritual freedom, or hardening into sterile bureaucracy, but solely the growing insight, strength, and ability of the working masses to take their destinies into their own hands, is the path to the goal. Extraparliamentary mass action is a necessary complement to contemporary class struggle, alongside parliamentary work, which alone is insufficient to bring the working class to victory. Mass action, conditioned by the growing scope and intensification of class struggle, is intended to develop individual self-responsibility and a sense of solidarity, thereby providing a moral boost of great significance to the socialist movement, which must be built on a morally and spiritually strengthened working class. With the awareness that the working class, everywhere, must confront the ever more formidable power of imperialist world capitalism by mobilizing the entire collective organizational strength and will of the world proletariat, resting on unbroken unity, regardless of nation or race, war or peace, the Swedish Social Democratic Left declares its solidarity with the oppressed classes and their organizations in all countries, who, following the same fundamental principles, are working for the great social transformation, for the liberated and united humanity.[431]

Despite explicit Marxist references and an emphasis on the need for extraparliamentarian mass action – which was not included in the SAP program of 1911 – there were other points that clearly deviated from the traditional socialist discourse, such as the notion of "humanism" and "spiritual freedom." Particularly, the emphasis on *the responsibility of the individual* may seem paradoxical, especially since the proposal simultaneously depicted the workers as a *collectively* oppressed class and stressed the importance of *mass action* to overturn this. It is however important to consider the intellectual and political context in which the Swedish left-wing socialists operated. As Bolin points out, this was a context that they themselves believed was shaped by negative, collective notions of authoritarianism, patriotism, nationalism, and passivity.[432] These elements, now perceived to have permeated even democratic movements, including the Swedish labor movement and SAP, were thus in their view, the reason why the "masses" in Sweden supported the war and lacked the will to

---

[430] Ibid, p. 31.

[431] SSV Congress Protocol 1917, p. 31.

[432] Bolin, J. (2004), pp. 80-81.

conquer state power and instead settled for gradual parliamentary change.[433] Against this backdrop, the emphasis on individual responsibility can be traced to the belief that the individual's "awakening" was a necessary condition for collective action. That is, the oppressed masses, as a collective, would only be "awakened" when each individual became aware of their own position within the exploitative capitalist system. A possible explanation for why the proposal included the ambiguous term "humanism" is that it was a result of negotiations between members of the interim committee with different ideological standpoints. For example, Lindhagen, who called himself a "humanist" and had been a member of the Liberal Party before joining SAP in 1909 was certainly not committed to orthodox Marxist ideology or Bolshevik tactics, which is evident in the debates that followed. Lindhagen repeatedly used the term "spiritual freedom" and preferred to refer to SSV as *a movement* rather than a party.[434] This can be contrasted with the draft program's co-author, Ström, who, as demonstrated in chapter two, together with Grimlund a few months later would be responsible for disseminating the Bolshevik bulletins to Western European socialists. This internal "struggle" over the content of the draft program is further confirmed by historian Josefin Hägglund, who notes that the draft underwent several revisions before Lindhagen ultimately edited it and introduced the humanist elements.[435] Hägglund further suggests that Lindhagen was probably the driving force behind making the ideal of democracy, both externally and internally, a central focus of the party.[436] The absence of explicit Bolshevik references may however be explained against the backdrop that the draft was formulated as early as February, that is, before relations between some left-wing socialists and the Bolsheviks began to intensify, a process that, as demonstrated in chapter two, took shape in April 1917.

The proposals for the party program and general principles were discussed during all three days of the congress. The debates, as recorded in the congress protocol, reveal that opinions

---

[433] Ibid.

[434] Lindhagen, C. (1917). *Vad vill det nya partiet?* (What Do the New Party Want?). Folkets förlag, pp. 12-13.

[435] Hägglund, J. (2023), p. 264.

[436] Ibid, p. 265. Cf. SSV Congress Protocol 1917, pp. 30-31.

were particularly divided regarding the party's "identity." Kilbom, for instance, opposed the proposed principles on the grounds that they were not "clearly socialist enough" but simultaneously stressed the importance of seeking consensus.[437] Carleson countered that the most crucial aspect was the realization of the program, even if it was not perfect.[438] This position was supported by Höglund, who argued that it was reasonable to build upon SAP's 1911 party program since the primary failure of SAP had been its inability to implement it.[439] Furthermore, Höglund emphasized that the key difference was that SSV, unlike SAP in 1911, recognized extraparliamentary action as an essential method of struggle. He also suggested that it was possible to merge Lindhagen's "humanism" with a Marxist doctrine but did not elaborate on how this was supposed to be done.[440]

Another major point of contention concerned the program's stance on anti-militarism. Nerman proposed an amendment to include the phrase: "struggle by all means against war and the threat of war."[441] Ström objected, arguing that such wording risked leading the party toward anarchist methods.[442] Höglund, on the other hand, contended that "struggle by all means" was important as it opened up for actual revolutionary resistance to the war.[443] In the end, Nerman's proposal was adopted. It was also decided that SSV "with sincere sympathy" would welcome and, both morally and financially, support the newly formed *Soldiers' and Workers' Association.*[444] Moreover, the party unanimously decided to reject the planned Stockholm conference led by Branting. It was also agreed that the adopted resolution would be translated into French and sent to the Russian workers' and soldiers' soviets:

---

[437] SSV Congress Protocol 1917, p. 34.

[438] Ibid, p. 34.

[439] Ibid, p. 36.

[440] Ibid.

[441] Ibid, p. 106.

[442] Ibid, p. 120.

[443] Ibid.

[444] Ibid, pp. 143-144. Cf. Leander, P. (2021), pp. 72-73.

> (…) The constitutive congress of the Swedish Social Democratic Left, which in itself represents a clear affirmation of international and radical socialism against social-patriotic and liberalizing tendencies, therefore sends its fraternal greetings to the class-conscious proletarians of Russia, who, through their workers' and soldiers' councils, have established an organization of admirable strength and power – one of the greatest significance for the rapid, democratic, and socialist development in these times of tremendous breakthroughs. (…) With joy, we welcome the workers' and soldiers' councils' decision to take the initiative for a peace congress based on the principles of Zimmerwald (…).[445]

Another key issue concerned the party's strategy in relation to the *working masses.* Following discussions and votes, it was decided that the party would draft a manifesto to be distributed to Swedish workers, with the aim of mobilizing them for a mass strike.[446] The manifesto began with a sharp critique of the government, blaming its mismanagement for the severe hunger crisis and political decay that had escalated in the years following 1914 and, as chapter two demonstrates, was at its height at the time of the congress. It declared that the working class now faced an urgent necessity: to take decisive action to save both themselves and the country from deepening misery.[447] The manifesto emphasized that discontent was already widespread and that increasing numbers of voices were calling for a unified mass movement to secure essential demands. To this end, the congress resolved to call upon LO to lead a general strike in coordination with representatives of key trade unions and political organizations. The immediate demands included a general wage increase, the introduction of an eight-hour workday, and the establishment of worker-elected supervisory committees in workplaces to protect workers' interests.[448] The manifesto further repeated the aforementioned calls for constitutional reforms and furthermore demanded amnesty for all political prisoners. Additionally, it urged for the cancellation of all military exercises scheduled for the year.[449] Lastly, the manifesto called for the immediate formation of local workers' councils to lead and coordinate the mass movement.[450] It concluded with an appeal

---

[445] SSV Congress Protocol 1917, pp. 132-133.

[446] SSV Congress Protocol 1917, p. 149.

[447] Ibid, p. 150.

[448] Ibid, p. 151.

[449] Ibid.

[450] Ibid.

to the workers to "rely entirely on their own strength, remembering the truth, now more than ever alive, that the liberation of the working class must be its own work."[451]

This section has aimed to illuminate the visions of SSV at the time of its formation in May 1917. A close examination of the issues addressed reveals that the party sought to operate primarily within a Swedish context, while nevertheless positioning itself as an international actor in the spirit of Zimmerwald. Regarding the former, it is clear that, in terms of concrete political ideas, SSV of 1917 remained rooted in its social democratic tradition. As several left-wing socialists articulated it above: it was the task of SSV to continue the work that the SAP had failed to realize. The focus, thus, remained on transforming Sweden into a democratic socialist republic, primarily through reformist means. Although the general principles were grounded in a Marxist, materialist understanding of economic policy – combined with the "humanist" and democratic elements of Lindhagen – the program statement did not include any concrete revolutionary proposals, aside from advocating for extraparliamentary means such as mass strikes. Aside from the appeal to establish local workers' councils inspired by the Bolsheviks, there were no calls for an immediate overthrow of the system. This suggests that the party, like SAP, still adhered to the Kautskyist, teleological notion of revolution. Regarding militarism, however, a more radical stance may be discerned. For instance in the, albeit vague, call to deploy "all means" in the struggle for peace, as well as in the support for the *Swedish Soldiers' and Workers' Association*.

That said, with regard to the international outlook of the party, it is apparent that at least the rhetoric was more radical, such as the explicit rejection of "social-patriotic" and "liberalizing" elements in Russia, in favor of the "class-conscious proletariat." It should, however, be noted that the October Revolution in Russia had not yet taken place at this point. As such, the lines between the various revolutionary factions in Russia were not yet sharply defined. However, after the October Revolution and the Bolshevik seizure of power, these divisions would be definitively delineated. In turn, this shift would be reflected in SSV, where the divide between those supporting Bolshevik tactics and those opposing them, particularly regarding the use of violence, would intensify. During the period between the first and second congresses, several SSV members had also visited Petrograd on two occasions and met with

---

[451] Ibid.

prominent Bolsheviks such as Lenin, Trotsky, Bukharin, and Kollontai. On the second trip, the SSV delegation participated in negotiations with the Bolsheviks to initiate cooperation in the field of trade. Therefore, before moving on to the 1918 party congress, it is useful to briefly sketch out these two trips. This is primarily done with the help of Kan's accumulated knowledge on the subject.[452]

3.1.2 Red Journeys before the Second Party Congress of 1918

The party's second congress was held from June 2 to 4, 1918, approximately six months after the Bolsheviks, led by Lenin, seized power in Russia which had now been declared a Soviet Socialist Republic. In the wake of the revolution, Russia had descended into a bloody civil war as the Bolsheviks were facing economic collapse and disintegration along ethnic lines.[453] To consolidate their authority, the Bolsheviks swiftly established a command system, and implemented three critical elements: the unconditional confiscation of private property, control over industrial supplies, and the regulation of surplus food production beyond the farmers' immediate needs. In stark contrast to the imperial and Provisional Governments, the Bolsheviks were thus prepared to use significant force and brutal violence to enforce these principles and secure their hold on power.[454]

Shortly after the October revolution, SSV had sent a greeting and a declaration of solidarity to Petrograd. The letter was physically delivered by Höglund and Kilbom at the beginning of December, during what became the first "official" visit.[455] The trip was planned in Sweden, and Höglund and Kilbom had their passports visaed by the above mentioned Vorovsky, who, as demonstrated in chapter two, acted as a diplomatic representative to Scandinavia via the Bolshevik office in Stockholm.[456] The greeting was delivered both to the soviets and to the Bolshevik government, formally the *Council of People's Commissars.* Afterward, it was

---

[452] Cf. Kan, A. (2005), pp. 176-185.

[453] Cf. Raleigh, D.J. (2006). The Russian Civil War, 1917–1922. In: Grigor Suny, R. (Ed.). *The Cambridge History of Russia: Volume III the Twentieth Century.* Cambridge University Press, pp. 140-167.

[454] Harrison, M. (2017). Foundations of the Soviet Command Economy 1917–1941. In: Pons, S., Smith S.A. (Eds.). *The Cambridge History of Communism*. Cambridge University Press, p. 358.

[455] Kan, A. (2005), p. 179.

[456] Ibid, p. 178. Cf. Lazitch, B & Drachkovitch, M.M. (1973), p. 430.

published in both *Izvestia* and *Pravda*.[457] According to Kan, the first trip was significantly facilitated thanks to the Swedish left-wing socialists' personal connections to several high-ranking Bolsheviks that had deepened from April 1917 onward. For instance, Smirnov acted as their interpreter, and they were escorted around the Smolny Institute, where the new government was temporarily located, by Bukharin.[458] On December 14, Höglund and Kilbom telegraphed home to SSV with a report from their meetings with Lenin, Trotsky, Kollontai, and Bukharin. Furthermore, Lenin himself wrote an article during the Swedes' visit titled "For Bread and for Peace", which was soon published in *Stormklockan*.[459] The Swedes also met with representatives from the Menshevik party, including its leader Martov, as SSV had collectively decided to still seek cooperation with both sides.[460] However, Kan suggests that both Höglund and Kilbom by this point already had decided to support the Bolsheviks over the Mensheviks.[461]

The Bolshevik takeover was consolidated and, above all, further institutionalized in January 1918 when they, with the help of the Red Guard, dissolved the Constituent Assembly, thus effectively implementing the dictatorship of the proletariat.[462] At that time, a second SSV delegation was present in Petrograd, consisting of Höglund, Kilbom, Lindhagen, Grimlund, and another Swede: the "red banker" Olof Aschberg.[463] Formally, Aschberg did not belong to SSV, and had instead independently developed relationships with the Russian revolutionaries, particularly the Bolsheviks, whom he openly supported, not least financially.[464] In any case, during the second visit, the Swedes not only witnessed the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly, but also participated in a large international gathering on January 24.[465]

[457] Kan, A. (2005), p. 179.

[458] Ibid.

[459] Ibid.

[460] Ibid.

[461] Ibid, p. 181.

[462] Smith, S.A. (2006), pp. 135-139.

[463] Kan, A. (2005), pp. 182-183.

[464] Cf. Marklund, C., & Hellenes, A. M. (2023). The Diplomat and the Entrepreneur: Olof Aschberg – Converter of Capital, Trader in Trust. *Diplomatica,* 5 (2), pp. 248-262.

[465] Kan, A. (2005), p. 184.

Furthermore, negotiations took place between the SSV delegation and the Bolsheviks, with Aschberg assisting in the talks, to establish a joint trade commission that would facilitate trade between the two countries. Eventually, a trade agreement was reached, and Höglund and Kilbom were appointed as members of a newly established trade commission.[466] Kan suggests that the Swedes played a crucial role for Lenin in this context, as the Bolshevik government had not yet been recognized by Western European countries, including Sweden. Consequently, for the time being, trade relations had to be negotiated with leftist groups such as SSV.[467] Apart from this, several private meetings were held with Lenin and others to discuss the situation in Finland, which had gained independence from Tsarist Russia after the revolution and was now torn by a civil war between the conservative, pro-German "Whites" and the Bolshevik-affiliated "Reds."[468] Without realizing it, the Swedes were departing at the last possible moment, as the route through Finland was about to be cut off. Lindhagen, Kilbom, and Aschberg arrived in Haparanda just one day before the "Whites" seized power in Torneå, severing connections to Russia after killing the Bolshevik border guards. Meanwhile, Höglund and Grimlund made their way back to Stockholm by steamboat a few days later.[469]

3.1.3 The Debate on Party Tactics During the Second Party Congress of 1918

The second congress of SSV began on June 2, 1918, with a speech by Höglund, who, with a grim tone, proclaimed that the year gone by had been one of "world-historic tragedy."[470] The revolutions that were believed to follow the Russian Revolution, which were supposed to lead to world peace, had either not occurred and all attempts had been crushed by the sitting governments. Consequently, Russia had been forced to sign a separate peace with the Central Powers through the peace treaty of Brest-Litovsk, and in doing so, been forced to give up large territories in the west, including Ukraine, Belarus, the Baltic States, and parts of Poland

---

[466] Ibid.

[467] Ibid.

[468] Ibid, pp. 184-185. Cf. Bushkovitch, P. (2011), pp. 115-117.

[469] Kan, A. (2005), p. 185.

[470] ARAB Stockholm, SSV Collection, vol. 1, Protokoll fört vid Sverges socialdemokratiska vänsterpartis andra kongress i Stockholm 2-4 juni 1918, pp. 3-5. (Congress Protocol of the Swedish Social Democratic Left Party's Second Congress in Stockholm, June 2–4, 1918).

and Georgia.[471] Against this backdrop, the conditions for the European revolutionary forces worsened even further, as seen in Finland, where the "Whites" had already emerged victorious in the civil war.[472] Höglund continued his speech by calling for intensified efforts to strengthen Zimmerwald to ensure that the revolutionary, socialist pacifist ideas would "permeate the masses."[473] He then shifted to a more hopeful note: the election to the Second Chamber in September 1917, in which the party, as previously mentioned, won eleven seats, and the growing support for the party, which had already gathered over 20 000 members at its founding, according to Höglund, indicated SSV was "a political force to be reckoned with."[474]

Next, as at the previous congress, speeches and greetings were presented by the party's foreign guests. This time, Balabanova was the first to speak, as she had now become the chairperson of ISC, which had been moved to Stockholm. Interpreted by Nerman, it went as follows:

> (…) The situation in all countries is such that it does not need further commentary. From every drop of blood spilled in this war of conquest, from every tortured body that refuses to turn into a corpse, from every conscience that refuses to be suppressed, from every mind that fears the barbarity and cruelty of war, from every act of rebellion against the rule of violence and boundless lies – these pillars of war – rises a calling, pleading, threatening cry: "Proletarians of all countries, rise to fulfill your duty, rise to save humanity, rise to save the honor of the proletariat!" This cry echoes in all trenches in all languages as well as among the starving, homeless, fatherless, brutalized population at home behind the fronts. (…).[475]

Balabanova concluded her speech by emphasizing that it was now the task of Zimmerwald to "do what it can for the rebirth of the International."[476] Afterward, shorter speeches were made

---

[471] Ibid. Cf. Bushkovtich, P. (2011), pp. 305-306.

[472] SSV Congress Protocol 1918, pp. 3-5. Cf. von Hagen, M. (2006). The First World War, 1914–1918. In: Grigor Suny, R. (Ed.). *The Cambridge History of Russia: Volume III the Twentieth Century.* Cambridge University Press, pp. 111-113.

[473] SSV Congress Protocol 1918, p. 4.

[474] Ibid.

[475] Ibid, pp. 5-6.

[476] Ibid, p. 7.

by SSV's comrades from the Finnish, Norwegian, and Danish parties, along with written greetings from both local SSV branches and other international comrades.[477]

After addressing economic, technical, and evaluative issues, it was time for the congress to, under the direction of Höglund and Lindhagen, discuss the party tactics. The debate that followed indicates that the diverging views of what *kind* of party SSV should be, which already existed in 1917, had now become even more pressing. This was particularly true regarding the *revolutionary character* of the party. From Höglund's side, one can detect a slight shift in position. At the 1917 congress, Höglund had only mentioned mass strikes as a form of extraparliamentary action.[478] Now, it seemed he had broadened his view of what, at least in his opinion, should be included in the revolutionary tactics of the party:

> (…) The party is both a parliamentary and a revolutionary party. Our party and we want to utilize the opportunities the parliament and other forms of representation offer for our propaganda and for improving the position of the working class. That is why we participate and have participated in parliamentary elections and other similar votes. But not all strength should be focused on this. Parliamentarism is a tool and a support point, but not something that can alone save us. It must be complemented, as stated in our principles, by extraparliamentary action. This can be peaceful in its means, but it can also, even in an outward sense, be revolutionary. It depends more on our opponents than on us. We must admit that situations may arise when the use of force is unavoidable, whether we want it or not. This has been the case in Russia and Finland. None of us – though we may regret the actions of undisciplined elements – could possibly oppose the revolutions in these countries. In general, we should not approach revolutions from an ethical standpoint; to understand them correctly, we must view them from a social and historical perspective. They have arisen from a long historical development; they are the result of long-standing, unbearable social conditions. But if we start from here, we must say that in a certain given situation, the revolutionary forces in society become so strong that they can no longer be held back. Then, however, it is important that we are prepared to face such a situation and make the best of it for the working class. (…) We are not for revolution at any cost, but neither are we for legality at any cost. Naturally, it would be more pleasant for us and for our opponents if the dismantling of the capitalist social order could occur peacefully and without bloodshed, but we must face the truth that this will hardly be the case, and we must prepare accordingly (…).[479]

---

[477] Ibid, pp. 7-9.

[478] SSV Congress Protocol 1917, p. 36.

[479] SSV Congress Protocol 1918, pp. 33-35.

Thus, Höglund wanted the party to be *both* parliamentary and revolutionary. For Höglund, parliamentarism seemed to be a means, an instrument, and not an end in itself. At the same time, the revolution was not described as a final goal, but rather as a "necessary evil." If anything, one can detect in Höglund's view the same teleological approach to the concept of revolution that is found in early social democracy: the revolution will of necessity come, and when it does, the working class must be prepared.[480]

Höglund's statement was then met with a response from Lindhagen, who instead emphasized the importance of humanism and spiritual education. Lindhagen stressed that a singular focus on materialism risked neglecting the spiritual values, which he believed were necessary for the real emancipation of the working class.[481] Without these, the masses risked becoming "bourgeoisified" as soon as their living conditions improved. Furthermore, there was, according to Lindhagen, a risk that a revolution and the establishment of *the dictatorship of the proletariat* could lead to renewed oppression if the masses were not first given the opportunity to "improve their characters."[482] Lindhagen concluded his speech by suggesting that the party should rest on a "real-democratic humanism."[483]

Both Höglund's and Lindhagen's positions were criticized by other congress participants. Party member Fredrik Spak accused them both of being too vague. He argued that it would be unfruitful to place so much emphasis on the spiritual values that Lindhagen advocated. In contrast to Höglund, Spak contended that class struggle and social revolution should be the central focus, and that these were objectives SSV should actively work toward.[484] Spak then proposed that the party adopt a statement that recognized the importance of a "ruthless and incorruptible class struggle" and that they should prepare for "the overthrow and replacement of the class society with a socialist society."[485] In contrast to Höglund, Spak here expressed a view of revolution as an *active endeavor.* Similar thoughts were then expressed from several

---

[480] Cf. Hentilä, S. (1979), p. 145.

[481] SSV Congress Protocol 1918, p. 35.

[482] Ibid.

[483] Ibid, p. 36.

[484] Ibid, pp. 37-38.

[485] Ibid.

quarters, including Carleson, who emphasized that the entire political and social struggle "is rooted in the material needs of the people" and that this should not be obscured by "unclear statements."[486] Vennerström went as far as to suggest that the party should acknowledge the necessity of violence, arguing that there was essentially no moral difference between the violent acts carried out by the ruling classes and those carried out by revolutionaries in Russia and Finland.[487]

The resolution that was ultimately adopted, by a narrow majority, was clearly a compromise. It essentially incorporated elements from all the previously mentioned positions: on the one hand, it emphasized that the party should work toward the emancipation of the proletariat through revolutionary mass actions, ultimately aiming to overthrow the class-based society and replace it with a socialist one. At the same time, however, the resolution stated that the party should focus equally on spiritual liberation, directing economic development and expressions of popular will toward humanistic goals.[488]

Toward the end of the congress however, a group of 19 party members lodged a "serious objection" to the adopted resolution. Among them were Höglund, Grimlund, Carleson, Kilbom, and Nerman, all of whom argued that the party, in its tactical resolution, should adhere to a more strictly Marxist rhetoric and reject Lindhagen's humanism.[489]

In sum, while the 1917 party program formally remained in place, the party's ideological foundations were in 1918, if anything, even more ambiguous than at the party's inception. Moreover, with the exception of Lindhagen, all SSV members who had participated in the two trips to Russia in December 1917 and February 1918 belonged to the group that objected to the resolution on party tactics.[490] Yet, no concrete references were made to the trips. Neither in terms of concrete cooperation with the Bolsheviks, such as the establishment of a joint trade commission, nor in terms of revolutionary tactics. However, the party decided to

---

[486] Ibid, p. 38.

[487] Ibid, p. 39.

[488] Ibid, pp. 64-66, 72.

[489] Ibid, p. 73.

[490] Cf. Kan, A. (2005), pp. 176-185.

adopt a statement in support of both the Bolshevik takeover in Russia and the "Reds'" struggle in Finland. In the statement, the party proclaimed that in the Russian and Finnish revolutions, they saw "the first great signs of the coming united uprising of the entire international proletariat," which would eventually "eradicate the people- and culture-destroying wars" and "insane capitalist social system."[491]

Given the aforementioned speeches and debates, a discrepancy may be observed between how the question of revolution was presented and discussed in a domestic context versus in relation to the international movement: the Swedish left-wing socialists seemed to find it easier to relate to revolution as a distant international aspiration, rather than an immediate concern at home. The former is evident, for instance in the statement on the Russian and Finnish revolutions, which were referred to as the first signs of an imminent proletarian uprising on a global scale. Another example is Höglund's speech at the opening of the congress, in which he lamented the failed revolutions in Europe that had followed the Russian Revolution and called for a stronger Zimmerwald movement to advance the cause for peace and socialism. This position stands in contrast to how Höglund appeared to approach the prospect of a revolution at home. In that case, revolution was indeed framed as an inevitable outcome, dictated by historical necessity, yet not as something that the party should actively pursue at any cost.

These divisions and tensions would continue to intensify the following year with the establishment of the Bolshevik-led Third International. Compared to the Zimmerwald movement, which had gathered a broader group of socialists in ideological terms, the Comintern would be built on a distinct Bolshevik foundation. The decision of the party to join was made already at the 1919 congress, although the membership was not fully consolidated until 1921 when the party adopted the Twenty-one conditions. However, SSV's accession to the Comintern dramatically altered the party's trajectory, not least by forcing it to more clearly define what kind of party it intended to be and what it sought to do.

[491] SSV Congress Protocol 1918, p. 80.

3.2 The Revolution Imported? The Creation of the Communist International and the Transition to the Swedish Communist Party

As the months after the October Revolution passed, the hopes of the European left for an impending wave of revolution seemed more and more distant. A glimmer of hope was kindled in November 1918 when radical workers, social democrats and parts of the army rose up against Kaiser Wilhelm II, who soon abdicated. In the aftermath, the German Empire was replaced by the Weimar Republic, and Friedrich Ebert, leader of SPD, became head of the new provisional government.[492] The following months would however be tumultuous as different groups of radical socialists aimed to overthrow the SPD-led government and implement revolutionary socialism. Just like SAP, SPD had split in 1917, with a radical faction within the party forming the Independent Social Democratic Party (USPD).[493] At the time of the German monarchy's fall, a USPD member named Kurt Eisner sought to establish a socialist and democratic people's republic in Bavaria. In a few months, this would be replaced by a short-lived, even more radical Bavarian Soviet Republic, on a socialist, though not strictly Bolshevik, basis.[494] Before that however, in January, the radical Spartacists, who at this time belonged to the left wing of USPD, challenged the new provisional government under Ebert and sought to steer the German revolution in a Bolshevik direction.[495] This was met with strong resistance, and after extensive protests and street battles between revolutionaries and government forces, the revolutionary attempt was violently suppressed on January 12.[496] Three days later, on January 15, the forefront figures of the Spartacist League, Liebknecht and Luxemburg, were captured and murdered by the German right-wing *Freikorps*. A Swedish translation of Luxemburg's last known text from January 14, the day before she died, can be found in Grimlund's personal archive. In the text, Luxemburg describes her view on the failure of the Spartacist uprising:

---

[492] Jones, M. (2016), pp. 27-32.

[493] Weitz, E.D. (2017). German Communism. In: Pons, S., Smith S.A. (Eds.). *The Cambridge History of Communism*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 573-580.

[494] Jones, M. (2016), pp. 286-291.

[495] Ibid, pp. 173-209.

[496] Ibid.

> (...) Was it a case of raging, uncontrollable revolutionary energy colliding with an insufficiently ripe situation, or was is a case of weak and indecisive action? *Both!* The crisis had a dual nature. The contradictions between the powerful, decisive, aggressive offensive of the Berlin masses on the one hand and the indecisive, half-hearted vacillation of the Berlin leadership on the other is the mark of this latest episode. The leadership failed. But a new leadership can and must be created by the masses and from the masses. The masses are the crucial factor. They are the rock on which the ultimate victory of the revolution will be built. The masses were up to the challenge, and out of this "defeat" they have forged a link in the chain of historic defeats, which is the pride and strength of international socialism. That is why future victories will spring from this "defeat." "Order prevails in Berlin!" You foolish lackeys! Your "order" is built on sand. Tomorrow the revolution will "rise up again, clashing its weapons", and to your horror it will proclaim with trumpets blazing: I was, I am, I shall be![497]

The socialist revolution in Germany did not rise again the following day. However, two months after the Spartacist defeat, the Comintern was established, with the purpose of mobilizing the entire international left for world revolution. In addition to the idea of an imminent world revolution, the Bolsheviks, according to historian Serge Wolikow, saw two reasons for the creation of the Comintern: First, there were plans within the broader European social democracy to recreate the Second International during a conference in Bern in February 1919. Therefore, the revolutionary left urgently needed to organize itself transnationally. Second, it was believed that the Comintern could help strengthen Soviet power in light of both the ongoing civil war in Russia and external threats.[498]

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, SSV had by 1918 hardly adopted Lenin's Bolshevik doctrine. Yet, several members of SSV would soon after its establishment become involved in the Comintern, that is, even before the party voted for accession in June 1919. Already in April 1919, the Comintern established a Scandinavian bureau in Stockholm, led by Höglund, Ström, and Kilbom. The central task of the bureau was to receive and manage money from the Bolsheviks, which was secretly funneled out of Russia.[499] The Swedes were then

---

[497] ARAB Stockholm, Otto Grimlund's Archive, vol. 6., Ordning råder i Berlin. (Order Prevails in Berlin), pp. 1-5. Cf. Luxemburg, R. (1919). *Order Prevails in Berlin*. Marxist Internet Archive. Retrieved 27 January 2025 from: https://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1919/01/14.htm

[498] Wolikow, S. (2017). The Comintern as a World Network. In: Pons, S., Smith S.A. (Eds.). *The Cambridge History of Communism*. Cambridge University Press, p. 232.

[499] Similar collaborations also took place outside the party structure. For example, Swedish Olof Aschberg, who did not formally belong to the SSV or the Comintern but who in the same years played an important role in facilitating capital flows between the Bolsheviks and the West. Cf. Marklund, C., & Hellenes, A. M. (2023), pp. 249-262.

supposed to distribute the money to the other European parties affiliated with the Comintern.[500] In this sense, the Swedish left-wing socialists once again functioned as the Bolsheviks' "proxies" in the West. Particularly Ström played a key role who around the same time was appointed consul of Soviet Russia to Sweden, after the previously mentioned Vorovsky had been expelled by the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[501] Moreover, several of the Swedish left-wing socialists had personal connections to the Bolsheviks who would lead the work of the Comintern's Executive Committee (ECCI), including Balabanova, Vorovsky and Bukharin.[502] In connection with the Comintern's constituent congress however, SSV sent Grimlund to Moscow as its delegate. The following section therefore briefly outlines the circumstances surrounding the organization's establishment during the first congress. The thesis then proceeds to the last two chapters, which seek to explore how the entry into the Comintern shaped SSV's ideological identity and political priorities.

3.2.1 The Founding of the Communist International 2–6 March 1919

The founding congress of the Comintern was held in Moscow from March 2 to 6, 1919. Initially, the plan was to hold it in Berlin. However, this idea had to be abandoned due to the previously mentioned failed German revolution in November 1918 and the suppressed Spartacist uprising in January 1919.[503] In light of these challenges, Lenin considered holding the congress in Stockholm, but difficulties arose there as well since the Swedish government was not particularly sympathetic to the Bolsheviks or their cause. In the end, Moscow was chosen as the location, as the Bolshevik government had now relocated there.[504] SSV sent Grimlund as the Swedish delegate. He had just returned to the city after a train journey to Kharkiv, Ukraine, together with Balabanova, in the midst of the ongoing civil war.[505] Given

---

[500] Kan, A. (2005), pp. 404-414.

[501] Ibid, pp. 351-365.

[502] Ibid, pp. 436-437.

[503] Leander, P. (2021), p. 157. Cf. Newman, J.P. (2017). Revolution and Counterrevolution in Europe 1917–1923. In: Pons, S., Smith S.A. (Eds.). *The Cambridge History of Communism*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 102-105.

[504] Leander, P. (2021), p. 157.

[505] ARAB Stockholm, Otto Grimlund's Archive, vol 1., Dagens krönika. Enkla dagboksanteckningar från en intressant färd. (Chronicle of the day. Simple Diary Notes From an Interesting Journey).

the Entente's blockade of Soviet Russia, it was difficult for many European socialists to reach the congress. In the end, around fifty delegates from some thirty parties worldwide attended, spanning from Norway to Korea.[506] However, not everyone at the time was particularly optimistic about the founding of the Comintern, least of all the German socialists. On the one hand, they were the ones in whom the Bolsheviks placed the greatest hopes, but on the other, they had just experienced a failed revolutionary attempt.[507] For instance, the German delegate, Hugo Eberlein, argued during the congress that it was too early to establish the new International and suggested that the gathering should be seen as preparatory rather than constitutive. In fact, skepticism about forming a new, revolutionary International had been expressed by the Spartacists ever since the First Congress of Zimmerwald in 1915. They believed a revolutionary organization would be useless unless the masses had fully embraced a revolutionary conviction.[508] Grimlund, however, joined the group that insisted the Comintern should be founded immediately, which is what ultimately happened.[509] Zinoviev was appointed chairman, and Balabanova, in her capacity as a representative of the Zimmerwald Left, became its secretary.

On the Russian side however, there seemed to be optimism. Lenin opened the congress with a speech in which he hailed Liebknecht and Luxemburg as "the finest representatives of the Third International."[510] He then moved on to discuss how the dictatorship of the proletariat was on the verge of being established worldwide:

> All that is needed is to find a practical form to enable the proletariat to establish its rule. (…) The mass of workers now understand it thanks to Soviet power in Russia, thanks to the Spartacus League in Germany and to similar organizations in other countries (…) All this shows that a

---

[506] Cf. First Congress of the Communist International: Delegates. Marxist Internet Archive. Retrieved 4 February 2025 from: https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/1st-congress/delegates.htm

[507] Wolikow, S. (2017), pp. 232-233.

[508] Schmidt, W. (1996), p. 200.

[509] It has been suggested that Grimlund, at the time, did not have the party's mandate to vote for the establishment of the Comintern. Cf. Björlin, L. (2005), p. 1. Cf. Schmidt, W. (1996), pp. 198-199.

[510] First Congress of the Communist International: Speech at the Opening Session of the Congress. Marxist Internet Archive. Retrieved 4 February 2025 from: https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1919/mar/comintern.htm#s1

> revolutionary form of the dictatorship of the proletariat has been found, that the proletariat is now able to exercise its rule.[511]

After the organization was formally constituted, a resolution to the so-called *Theses on Bourgeois Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, was immediately adopted outlining the tasks of the newly affiliated parties on the domestic front:

1. To educate the broad masses of workers on the historical significance and the political and historical necessity of the new proletarian democracy, which must replace bourgeois democracy and the parliamentary system.
2. To expand the establishment of Soviets among workers in all industries, among soldiers in the Army, sailors in the Navy, as well as among farm laborers and impoverished peasants.
3. To secure a stable Communist majority within the Soviets.[512]

It was also decided that Zimmerwald should be dissolved immediately, as its work would now be carried out through the Comintern.[513] Balabanova, who had until then been the chairman of ISC, was later to send a letter to Höglund and Ström in which she expressed her positive view of the results of the congress and said that it was now necessary for the Zimmerwald movement to join forces with the newly formed organization, rather than compete with it.[514] In any case, after the resolution was adopted, several speeches were given and each party had the opportunity to present an overview of their national situation. Grimlund thus presented a report on SSV. In it, it was claimed that the party's membership grew every month, although, as Schmidt points out, it was actually decreasing significantly.[515] The report also described how SSV had waged a "consistent and irreconcilable struggle against the social patriots in general and against their Swedish

---

[511] Ibid.

[512] Resolution on the Thesis on Bourgeois Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. Marxist Internet Archive. Retrieved 5 February 2025 from: https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1919/mar/comintern.htm#s3

[513] Resolution on the Zimmerwald Association. Marxist Internet Archive. Retrieved 4 February 2025 from: https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/1st-congress/zimmerwald-resolution.htm

[514] ARAB Stockholm, Zeth Höglund's Archive, vol. 3, Balabanova to Höglund and Ström March 14 1919.

[515] Schmidt, W. (1996), p. 203.

representatives in particular."[516] However, exactly what this struggle entailed was not explained. Lenin, who appreciated Grimlund's contribution, subsequently invited him, along with the French socialist Henri Guilbeaux, Eberlein, and Platten, on a guided tour of Moscow the following night. During the tour, Grimlund also received two signed portraits of Lenin. Grimlund himself recalled it this way:

> It was decided that we would first take a short walk and then have coffee. So we set off, talked about the busts of Danton and Kalyayev at the city hall, looked at the white moonlight over the Red Square, the old Kremlin walls and the domes of the churches, and walked home through a desolate Kremlin. Lenin laughed merrily on the way: "Wouldn't the Central Committee 'discuss' me if they found out that I was taking a night walk instead of sitting and working (…)."[517]

The congress lasted a total of five days and concluded with the delegates unanimously adopting a joint manifesto, which clearly declared that the conquest of political power means the destruction of the hostile state apparatus, the disarming of the bourgeoisie and the arming of the proletariat.[518] It ended with the following words:

> Sweeping aside the halfheartedness, lies and corruption of the outlived official Socialist parties, we Communists, united in the Third International, consider ourselves the direct continuators of the heroic endeavors and martyrdom of a long line of revolutionary generations from Babeuf – to Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg.
>
> If the First International presaged the future course of development and indicated its paths; if the Second International gathered and organized millions of workers; then the Third International is the International of open mass action, the International of revolutionary realization, the International of the deed (…).[519]

As Wolikow points out, the structure and organization of the Comintern was initially weak and during its first year, it would function as a propaganda body rather than a movement for

---

[516] Ibid.

[517] Grimlund, O. (n.d.). *Na perevale.* The Lenin Project. Retrieved 6 October 2024 from: https://lenin.rhga.ru/upload.pdf Cf. Grimlund, O. (1979). 'Na perevale'. In: G. N. Golikov et al. (Eds.). *Vospominaniia o Vladimire Il'iche Lenine,* vol. 5. (Memoirs of Vladimir Il'ich Lenin). Political Publishing House, pp. 93-94.

[518] Schmidt, W. (1996), p. 201.

[519] The Communist International. (1919). *Manifesto of the Communist International.* Chicago Arbeiter Zeitung Publishing Company. Marxist Internet Archive. Retrieved 27 January 2025 from: https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/1st-congress/3-Manifesto%20and%20Governing%20Rules-CI-1919.pdf

concrete struggle.[520] Additionally, only a few months after its inception, during the spring and early summer of 1919, the short-lived Soviet republics in Bavaria and Hungary collapsed.[521] A concrete difficulty for the Comintern during its initial phase was that it offered little concrete ideological guidance to its affiliated parties, and most of these were not purely Bolshevik in character as neither broad-applicable Bolshevism, nor communism had yet been clearly defined.[522]

As mentioned earlier, the Scandinavian bureau was represented by SSV members Höglund, Ström, and Kilbom from 1919 onward. Together with Grimlund, they became part of what gradually developed into a left-wing faction within the party, supporting SSV's affiliation with the Comintern. This position was in contrast to the more moderate minority faction led by the humanist Lindhagen. The former also translated and published Lenin's aforementioned *Theses on Bourgeois Democracy and Proletarian Dictatorship*, which had been adopted during the congress. According to Schmidt, it was printed in up to 10,000 copies.[523] However, as the following section shows, none of the left-wing members of the SSV at this time, despite voting for affiliation with the Comintern, seemed to have been truly convinced Leninists. This would however change from 1920 onward when the Comintern leadership issued the so-called Twenty-One Conditions, which outlined strict criteria for membership that aimed to bring the parties, including SSV, in line with Bolshevik ideology and tactics.

3.2.2 Toward a Bolshevik Revolutionary Tactics? The Third Party Congress of 1919

The discussions held during the second congress, concerning the fundamental question of what, essentially, should constitute the party's aims and purpose, intensified at the third congress in June, 1919. According to Bolin, this issue of the party's identity had already been raised within SSV's Representative Assembly in late January 1919, following the defeated Spartacist uprising and the murders of Liebknecht and Luxemburg.[524] At that point, the

[520] Wolikow, S. (2017), p. 232.

[521] Newman, J.P. (2017), pp. 96-98.

[522] Cf. McDermott, K., & Agnew, J. (1996). *The Comintern: A History of International Communism From Lenin to Stalin.* Macmillan, pp. 14-27.

[523] Schmidt, W. (1996), p. 214.

[524] Bolin, J. (2004), pp. 263-264. Note: The *Representative Assembly* (Representanskapet) was composed of SSV members from local branches across the country.

party's executive committee was tasked with investigating whether the party program needed to be revised in a more radical direction.[525] Moreover, they took a clear stance on who they believed were responsible for the failure of the Spartacist uprising and the fates of Liebknecht and Luxemburg: the German Social Democrats.[526] With this position, Bolin argues, SSV's left-wing faction moved closer to Leninism in the sense that it was precisely the rejection of Social Democrats, or "social-chauvinists", as Lenin himself called them, that distinguished Leninism as a distinct ideology.[527] As discussed throughout the previous chapters, the Swedish left-wing socialists had already turned against SAP much earlier – after all, it was their dissatisfaction with the reformist direction of SAP, alongside its stance on the war question that was the very *raison d'être* of SSV. At the same time, as discussed at the beginning of this chapter, SSV had not fully broken with SAP's ideas at their first two congresses in 1917 and 1918. This was evident both in their adoption of a party program that was largely identical to the program of SAP in 1911, and in their highly ambivalent stance on its revolutionary tactics.

The third congress was held 12–16 June, 1919 and it was the last one before the party officially transformed into SKP. The Comintern had, as we know, been established a few months earlier, and Grimlund had represented the Swedish party during its constitutive congress. Now SSV was to discuss and decide on its stance toward this new development. Formally joining the Comintern would certainly bring the party closer to the Bolsheviks, both ideologically and organizationally. It would thus be difficult to reconcile membership in the Comintern with the views advocated by the party's more "moderate" forces, such as Lindhagen and his quest for humanism and spiritual freedom. Unsurprisingly, these problems and the emerging rift were reflected in the debates at the congress. The order was as follows: first it was to be decided whether the SSV would join the Comintern or not. If the majority voted in favor, it would proceed to the question of tactics. The former was fulfilled when 187

---

[525] Bolin, J. (2004), pp. 263-264.

[526] Ibid.

[527] Ibid. Cf. Lenin, V.I. (1917). *The Stockholm Conference.* Marxist Internet Archive. Retrieved 14 January 2025 from https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/sep/08b.htm

to 22 voted for accession.[528] The tactics debate was thus resumed, and this time the discussion would continue throughout all four days of the congress.

The divisions between the different factions within the party were monumental, and the atmosphere was tense, sometimes even hostile. Several resolution proposals were presented and they varied greatly in terms of content. Some SSV-members explicitly rejected the Bolshevik trajectory and suggested the party should continue as an autonomous socialist party.[529] Others, including Grimlund, Kilbom and Spak, called for the immediate establishment of Bolshevik-modelled workers', soldiers' and peasants' councils in order to push through the revolution, which would lead to the implementation of the dictatorship of the proletariat.[530] This position thus explicitly resembled Leninist, Bolshevik tactics. The resolution that in the end was adopted was however slightly more moderate, although it declared that SSV was now a revolutionary party both in terms of goals and means. It furthermore stated that it was the task of the working class to, through "extraparliamentary mass actions" overthrow class society, seize political power and implement socialism.[531] Additionally, it warned the working class against "bourgeois-democratic and reformist illusions."[532] This can be contrasted with the previous congress, where Höglund had argued that the party, by its nature, should be both parliamentary and revolutionary.[533] A shift in tone was also evident regarding the question of violence. While the resolution emphasized that Sweden had not yet entered a revolutionary situation, it stated that the working class should prepare for the great transition, and thus also be ready to "meet violence with violence."[534] While reservations were made about "aimless" violence and terror, it is clear that the reasoning here was in line with the argument expressed by Vennerström at the 1918 congress, namely that the blame for the violence should be placed on the bourgeoisie itself. The same

---

[528] ARAB Stockholm, SSV collection, vol. 1, Protokoll fört vid Sverges socialdemokratiska vänsterpartis tredje kongress i Stockholm 12-16 juni 1919, pp. 90-91. (Protocol of the third congress of Sweden's Social Democratic Left Party in Stockholm, 12-16 June 1919).

[529] Ibid, pp. 22-24.

[530] Ibid, p. 25.

[531] Ibid, p. 67.

[532] Ibid.

[533] Cf. SSV Congress Protocol 1918, pp. 33-35.

[534] SSV Congress Protocol 1919, p. 68.

apologetic view was repeated in the party press, where violence with increasing frequency was described as a necessary response to bourgeois repression.[535] Kan notes that the Swedish left-wing socialists, by this time, tended to actively underplay the extent of Bolshevik violence and terror, for instance by avoiding writing about the most brutal cases.[536] However, an explicit call for the arming of the working class was not included in the resolution, on the grounds that this was already part of the Comintern's program and thus, in the light of the party's impending accession, would apply in any case.[537] The proposal ended with a proclamation that the party "happily" welcomed the formation of the Comintern, and decided to join it.[538]

The resolution mentioned above was unacceptable to the minority, "right-wing" faction of the party, including Lindhagen who argued that the party should stick to parliamentarism but transform it into a democratic institution grounded on "spiritual" humanism.[539] This position was immediately rejected by the majority. Consequently, the adoption of the resolution made it practically impossible for the party to maintain the internal democracy that they, and particularly Lindhagen, had valued so highly in 1917. The rift within the party, caused by a significant leftward shift of the majority, could no longer be bridged. From this perspective, the 1919 congress may be understood as a turning point. Kilbom, who had joined the party's left-wing group early on, had, for instance, emphasized the importance of seeking consensus in 1917. Now, however, he depicted "heterogeneous elements" as a problem and spoke of the importance of "clarity." In fact, Kilbom seemed to view the tactical issue in an almost dichotomous way. He argued that it was a choice between: bourgeois *or* workers' dictatorship, parliamentarism *or* mass action, and Bern *or* Moscow.[540] Against this backdrop, it is clear that the majority group, i.e., the left-wing faction of the SSV, now began to act in a

---

[535] This logic was echoed in similar reasoning by other Western European revolutionaries, not least Luxemburg. Cf. Schmidt, W. (1996), pp. 173-175.

[536] Kan, A. (2005), pp. 268-269.

[537] Ibid, p. 79.

[538] Ibid, p. 69.

[539] Ibid, pp. 28-30.

[540] Ibid, p. 44.

manner similar to SAP at the February 1917 party congress, when they had forced SDUF to align with the party line.

3.2.3 The Twenty-One Conditions

Even though the Comintern, from the moment of its founding in 1919, had adopted a manifesto that explicitly stated that the organization was built on a Bolshevik/Spartacist foundation, it brought together a wide range of groups, leading to tensions similar to those that had plagued the Second International and Zimmerwald: organizations where competing factions coexisted under the same umbrella. It was thus not only SSV that struggled with internal conflicts over identity and strategy.

A central question for the Comintern was whether to prioritize the affiliation of left-wing parties, at the risk of making it impossible to maintain doctrinal purity and thus unity, or whether to insist on ideologically orthodox elite parties based on strict centralization that characterized the Russian Bolshevism which succeeded in carrying out the October Revolution.[541] This issue became particularly pressing as the League of Nations had been established just a few months earlier in the wake of the Versailles Treaty. To the Bolsheviks, the formation of the League posed a direct threat, signaling the consolidation of the post-war capitalist order. Consequently, the Comintern, reflecting Lenin's increasingly rigid approach to revolutionary strategy, began to place greater emphasis on the primacy of a centralized party structure modeled on the Bolshevik experience.[542] Lenin's views on the application of Bolshevism in the West had shifted as he reached the conclusion that the failure of revolutions in Central and Western Europe in 1919 was due to the weakness of the working-class movement, which had lacked proper organizational leadership.[543]

Against this backdrop, the conditions for membership in the Comintern were to be tightened. In connection with the congress in 1920, the Bolsheviks launched a number of formal membership requirements: the Twenty-one conditions.[544] These stipulated that member

---

[541] McDermott, K., & Agnew, J. (1996), pp. 15-17.

[542] Ibid.

[543] Ibid.

[544] Lih, L.T. (2017), pp. 161-163.

parties were required to adopt a clearly revolutionary line and adjust their organization, propaganda, and practice accordingly. Among other things, the conditions demanded that parties purge reformist and centrist elements, introduce a strictly centralist party structure, and follow the directives of the ECCI, which were binding, without reservations.[545]

This push for doctrinal and organizational conformity was emphasized in Chairman Zinoviev's speech at the 1920 congress, where he addressed the heterogeneity within the organization. Among other things, he accused the French party of being too fragmented. In a newspaper article, they claimed that, despite joining the Comintern, they intended to continue cooperating with other French socialist parties and even declared their intention to act autonomously.[546] According to Zinoviev, this was unacceptable:

> (…) Apparently the notion prevails that the Third International is a kind of inn where representatives of various countries chant the "International", make one another compliments, then – part and carry on the old practice of the Second International to go on. But we shall never allow the accursed practice of the Second International to go on (…).[547]

Similar criticism was directed at several parties, such as Italian PSI, which at the time was deeply divided between a reformist and a revolutionary line. Zinoviev claimed that the party as a whole was "one of the best in the ranks of the Third International" but at the same time mocked reformists, such as parliamentarian Filippo Turati, whom he accused of remaining in the party for opportunistic reasons.[548] According to Zinoviev, the problem was that many of the Comintern-affiliated parties had members who were still Kautskyists, and he therefore urged the parties to now purge these elements. Zinoviev dwelled particularly long on SSV and seemed especially concerned that there were reformist forces within the party who wished to collaborate with SAP:

---

[545] Lenin, V.I. (1920). *Terms of Admission into Communist International.* Marxist Internet Archive. Retrieved 12 December 2024 from: https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1920/jul/x01.htm

[546] The Second Congress of the Communist International: Proceedings of Petrograd Session of July 17th, and of Moscow Sessions of July 19th – August 7th, 1920. Publishing Office of the Communist International, America 1921, pp. Marxist Internet Archive. Retrieved 12 December 2024 from: https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/2nd-congress/1-Second%20Congress%20of%20CI-1920.pdf

[547] Ibid, p. 205.

[548] Ibid, pp. 208-209. Cf. Pons, S. (2024). *The Rise and Fall of the Italian Communist Party. I communisti italiani e gli altri: A Transnational History.* Stanford University Press, pp. 3-16.

> Unfortunately the comrades who had been with us at the foundation of the International are not present here now. But we must speak out in this case also. The Swedish Left Wing has failed to adopt the name of Communist Party. This is not accidental. (…) But the main thing is that outspoken reformists are occupying a place in the Party. I shall not speak of Lindhagen, who is a member of the Party. On March 3d he proposed that the Party join the League of Nations, and had carefully elaborated five amendments to the Covenant of that League. It is true that there was an article written by the Party, disclaiming those views, but Lindhagen still remains a member of the Party and thereby also a member of the Third International. A deputy of the Swedish Party, Comrade Winberg, wrote an article advancing the social patriotic demand for disarmament, and declaring that it would be very easy to put and end to the War Ministry. He goes on to say that he expects the Right Social Democrats, meaning Branting, to support him in this matter. Then there is another well known deputy or leading comrade, Ivar Vennström, whose speeches induced Branting to remark that he was under the impression that the Left Wing in Sweden is trying to conclude a marriage with the Social Democratic Party. Lindhagen retorted to this that he personally was averse to marrying old Branting. Nevertheless, there was some talk in the Party to the effect that such conditions may arise where such a marriage could be made a matter for discussion. With all that, we cannot overlook the merits of the Left Wing of the Socialists of Sweden. It is a young movement having its origin in the Young People's Movement. We are aware that there are a number of comrades in it who are real revolutionists. But we must tell them definitely that we must have a Communist Party that could not think of discussing the possibility of a marriage with Branting, that has thrown the idea of disarmament on the rubbish heap, and that does not consider itself upon to amend the statutes of the League of Nations, but rather to bury them.[549]

According to the speech, Zinoviev seemed disappointed that Grimlund was not present. As mentioned in the previous section, Grimlund belonged to what gradually had turned into a more or less pro-Bolshevik faction of SSV. This time however, the party had sent Dalström as a delegate, along with another party colleague. It was Dalström's first trip to Russia. She had been invited by a group of Russian revolutionary women, led by Kollontai, to participate in a series of meetings before attending the congress.[550] The journey took her by boat and train through Northern Norway, the Arctic Ocean, Murmansk, and Petrograd, before she continued on to Moscow and the congress.[551] Despite Zinoviev's words above, Dalström had initially received a very warm welcome from the Comintern. Kan describes how she was celebrated as one of the "veterans of the international movement": she was greeted by the Red Army,

---

[549] The Second Congress of the Communist International: Proceedings of Petrograd Session of July 17th, and of Moscow Sessions of July 19th – August 7th, 1920, pp. 209-210.

[550] Västberg, M. (1951). *Kata Dalström.* Folket i Bilds förlag, p. 28.

[551] Ibid.

received awards, and then gave several speeches, translated by Balabanova and Kollontai, before Russian women, soldiers, and workers.[552]

As previously mentioned, Dalström belonged to the older generation of social democrats, and had been part of SAP's central committee since 1900. She had later become one of the party's foremost critics, and, alongside her likeminded comrades in SDUF, pushed for the creation of SSV. Yet, she was not a convinced Bolshevik and quickly turned critical of the Comintern, wishing instead that the Zimmerwald movement had continued. During the congress, she opposed the demands for submission and monolithism and voted against the Twenty-one conditions. In Balabanova's memoirs, she writes the following about Dalström, whom she compares to Giacinto Menotti Serrati – another PSI member – who would eventually also turn against the Comintern's authoritarian stance:

> I can only mention the second Congress of the Comintern with reverence and gratitude, but also with deep tragic pain when recalling the brave comrade Kata Dalström. She was guided by her sound instincts, her concern for the fate of the Swedish party, to which she belonged with every fiber of her being, and her disgust for all servility. Kata Dalström was used to expressing her opinion and, like Serrati, already at the second Congress, she sensed the looming danger that the Comintern leaders were exposing the revolutionary movement to. These two brave fighters for the working class, who foresaw much at that time, much of which we others only realized later after a series of fateful experiences and defeats – these two brave revolutionaries' political and personal fates were sealed at this Congress. Despite the vast differences between them – extreme north and extreme south, woman and man, mystically romantic and soberly passionate temperaments, representatives of parties that were not identical in their social structure and stage of development – even though they had hardly exchanged a couple of words, they were driven to the same stance by their honesty, sense of responsibility, personal courage, and love for the party (…).[553]

According to Balabanova, who was the secretary of the Comintern at the time of the congress, Dalström subsequently found herself on the Comintern blacklist.

Despite Dalström's critical stance toward the Bolsheviks in general, and the Twenty-one conditions in particular, a majority of SSV, during its fourth congress in 1921, decided to adopt them and thus confirmed the party's continued affiliation with the now more centralized organization. However, this decision, unsurprisingly, did not come without

---

[552] Kan, A. (2005), p. 203.

[553] Balabanoff, A. (1927). *Minnen och upplevelser.* (Memories and Experiences). Tiden, pp. 125-126. Cf. Pons, S. (2024), pp. 18-20.

internal resistance. On the contrary, the divide between the pro-Bolshevik faction and the more moderate wing deepened to such an extent that the latter ultimately split from the party, while the former transformed into SKP, section of the Comintern.

However, this development was not unique to Sweden, similar ruptures occurred across most socialist and communist parties that joined the Comintern. As Bolin points out, with the decision to structure the organization – and its affiliated parties – along Bolshevik lines, the division within the international labor movement became permanent.[554] In other words, the Comintern contributed to cementing the schism between reformism and revolution that had emerged in the early 1900s and that became acute in 1914 when the war broke out. Moreover, the adoption of the Twenty-one conditions by European socialist parties, including SSV/SKP, represented a dramatic departure from their own democratic traditions. As discussed in chapter one, the labor movements that emerged in Europe in the late 19th century had been deeply rooted in democratic principles, both in terms of objectives and internal organization. It was from this foundation that European social democrats, left-wing socialists, and communists had originally evolved.[555]

3.3 Homegrown Bolsheviks?

By accepting the Twenty-one conditions, the Swedish left-wing socialists thus officially embraced a revolutionary profile. At the same time, SSV, soon to be renamed SKP, had still not come to terms with what kind of party it should be. During the party congress of 1921, these differences could no longer be bridged. As a result, the party split, and several of the "moderate" members, including Lindhagen, left. The core of the criticism centered on the Bolsheviks' authoritarian tendencies toward other parties, which had become particularly evident during the Second Congress in 1920. From the acceptance of the Twenty-one conditions, the European parties, including SKP, were, in effect, directly subjected to Moscow's demands for centralization and monolithism.

For the purposes of this thesis, the pressing question is what party SKP actually became after joining the Comintern. Thus, the following – and last – parts of the thesis explores SKP's first

---

[554] Bolin, J. (2004), p. 133.

[555] Ibid. Cf. Hobsbawm, E. (1994), pp. 385-386.

congress, which was also SSV's last. However, to fully grasp the aims of SKP, it is also necessary to examine the broader political context of 1921. The Swedish political situation in 1921 was markedly different from that of 1917, when SSV had originally emerged. As demonstrated in chapter two, the country had in 1917 been marked by revolutionary uprisings. Since then, SAP had been in government twice, and in 1920 the party had adopted a new program, which was significantly more radical than the policies it had pursued at the time of SSV's exit. The question, then, is what role SKP itself envisioned for the future, from 1921 onward, and: did they work with conviction to realize a Swedish proletarian revolution?

3.3.1 Centralization, Subjugation and Monolithism: The Fourth Party Congress of 1921

Dalström was not the only one to react to the Comintern's conditions for accession. On the contrary, after its Second Congress, an intense debate erupted within the Swedish party over how to approach these strict demands for centralization, subjugation and monolithism.[556] According to Björlin, SSV even attempted to negotiate with the Comintern leadership during a USPD's congress in October 1920. However, these efforts did not yield any concrete results.[557] At the Fourth Congress of SSV, 25–29 March 1921, which also marked the first congress of SKP, the party was thus forced to confront these issues and settle for a more radical stance within the Comintern framework. However, this ideational change should not be seen as a sudden, unforeseen event. As outlined in Chapter 3.2.3, the foundation for the party's shift to the left had already been laid at the 1919 congress. The difference was that from 1921 onward, the party would be re-organized according to centralist principles, under which dissenting opinions would no longer be tolerated. Moreover, the alignment with the Comintern had implications beyond the internal party organization. The demand for monolithism served a deeper purpose than merely eliminating opposition: it was also intended to push member parties toward developing a clearer ideological identity.[558] This meant that, for the first time, SSV/SKP had to define and articulate exactly what kind of party it aspired to be.

---

[556] Bolin, J. (2004), pp. 314-317.

[557] Björlin, L. (2005), p. 2.

[558] Bolin, J. (2004), pp. 319-320.

The Fourth Congress began with a speech by the chairman of the executive committee, Höglund, who emphasized the necessity of self-examination within the party. According to Höglund, it was primarily dissatisfaction with SAP rather than a shared socialist vision that had unified the Swedish left-wing socialists in 1917. As a consequence, he argued, SSV had turned into a fragmented party, which in turn impeded effective action.[559] This, however, was now set to change, as the party would be restructured in a unified manner according to Bolshevik principles, thereby establishing a "firm foundation" to build upon.[560] Höglund further observed that the recent wave of revolutions and counter-revolutions was indicative of capitalism's ongoing "disintegration."[561] This international crisis, he contended, had also permeated Sweden, exacerbating class antagonisms. In this context, he maintained, Soviet Russia represented the pivotal reference point around which the European left – including SKP – should orient itself. Höglund concluded by proclaiming that it was now time for SKP to become a "combat-ready communist party, capable of leading and mobilizing in the inevitably forthcoming struggles."[562]

Similar ideas were subsequently expressed by Ström who elaborated on the party's relationship with the Comintern. Ström asserted that the world revolution, albeit progressing slowly, was in fact advancing. The reason for its delay, he argued, was "the workers' fatigue and indifference, caused by their disillusionment with the old leaders."[563] Ström then proceeded to discuss Scandinavia's position in relation to the impending world revolution. Scandinavia, he contended, occupied an exceptional position compared to the rest of Europe,

---

[559] ARAB Stockholm, SSV collection, vol. 1, Protokoll för vid Sveriges socialdemokratiska vänsterpartis fjärde kongress och Sveriges kommunistiska partis första kongress i Viktoriasalen i Stockholm den 25–29 mars 1921, p. 4. (Protocol of the Fourth Congress of the Swedish Social Democratic Left Party and the First Congress of the Swedish Communist Party in Viktoriasalen, Stockholm, March 25-29, 1921).

[560] Ibid.

[561] Ibid.

[562] Ibid.

[563] Ibid, p. 21.

as it had not yet entered the "revolutionary epoch."[564] Despite this, he concluded, SKP had to prepare itself organizationally and expel "pure enemies" from the party. He furthermore stated that "I do not want to say that we majority men are full-fledged communists, but we do have the will."[565]

In line with the adopted Twenty-one conditions, the left-wing majority of the party decided that members who were not prepared to submit to the new demands for uniformity would be expelled.[566] This thus marked the end of the ideological heterogeneity that had characterized SSV since 1917. Additionally, the party's democratic statutes were revised, now establishing that SKP rested on "the principle of democratic centralism," which meant that the party and all its sub-organizations would be under the authority of the party leadership, which in turn was subordinate to the Comintern and the ECCI.[567] At the same time, it was emphasized that this centralization should not lead to "the emergence of an autocratic leadership," and therefore, a clause was added stating that the party leadership would be democratically elected by the party members.[568] In this way, while the party largely conformed to the new organizational framework set by the Comintern, it still made an attempt to integrate and preserve at least some of its original democratic ideals, albeit in a limited form.

The formal transition of SSV to a communist party also raised the question of how to approach the party program. An immediate problem arose: should the program, like the one adopted in 1917, stipulate a set of reform demands to be pursued in the *Riksdag* until the revolution would be carried out, or should it be based on a revolutionary scenario in which the current parliament would no longer exist?

Once again, the party arrived at a compromise. SKP would no longer be "both a revolutionary and a parliamentary party," to borrow Höglund's phrase from the SSV congress

---

564 Ibid.

565 Ibid.

566 Ibid, pp. 22, 37.

567 Ibid, pp. 121-122.

568 Ibid.

of 1918.[569] Instead, it was stated that SKP would focus on promoting "mass actions, for which the party must dedicate all its strength."[570] Yet, it was still considered necessary to simultaneously promote parliamentary reforms *until* the revolution had succeeded. These reform demands were collected under the title "parliamentary program." Broadly speaking, this program was largely based on the one adopted in 1917, which in turn – as previously demonstrated – was fundamentally built on the SAP's party program from 1911. This "new" program included demands such as:

- The transition to a republic and the implementation of a unicameral system, universal suffrage, and freedom of speech, press, association, assembly, and demonstration.
- Disarmament and refusal of all military appropriations, including Sweden's withdrawal from the League of Nations.
- Complete religious freedom and the abolition of the state church.
- Progressive taxation.
- A legally regulated standard workday, paid vacation, and maintenance support for all those unable to work and involuntarily unemployed.[571]

Virtually all SKP members who participated in the congress seemed generally dissatisfied with the parliamentary program they themselves chose to adopt, as it was not inherently revolutionary in nature. Nevertheless, a majority had rejected an alternative proposal that had been submitted, which suggested that the party program should instead be formulated "ex-ante" and thus reflect the future *dictatorship of the proletariat* instead of the current pre-revolutionary situation. It included points such as:

- The proletariat seizes state power.
- Legislation and justice are exercised by the proletariat.
- The proletariat controls and regulates all production and distribution of goods.
- Expropriation of banks, all major industrial enterprises and land.[572]

---

[569] SSV Congress Protocol 1918, pp. 33-35.

[570] SSV/SKP Congress Protocol 1921, p. 110.

[571] Ibid, pp. 161-162.

[572] Ibid.

The rejection of this proposal and the retention of the old reform demands were based on a strategic consideration. It was simply deemed necessary to base the party's "day-to-day politics" on these non-communist demands while still maintaining the long-term goal of a socialist revolution.[573] Since Sweden was not yet considered to be in "the revolutionary epoch", to use Ström's words, SKP risked alienating the working class if it withdrew from the parliamentary system too soon – rendering these "ex-ante" demands pointless anyway.

To compensate for this, the party sought to clarify its revolutionary vision through a kind of "long-term program." This program declared that SKP was a revolutionary party in terms of both its objectives and methods and that, through the Comintern, it would serve as the "organizational and political lever" by which the broad "masses" would carry out the revolution and seize power.[574] As part of this effort, the program stated that the SKP would immediately work for the establishment of *soldiers' councils* and "conduct a systematic and extensive socialist enlightenment campaign among the military to secure its support for the implementation of socialism."[575] Furthermore, it was declared that the socialist state structure – which would emerge from the dictatorship of the proletariat – would be based on the council system, placing "all power in the hands of the working people and base citizens' suffrage exclusively on their participation in productive labor."[576]

In sum, it is clear that the 1921 Congress marked a significant turning point in the sense that the party formally – and nominally – became communist. The adoption of the 21 conditions was undoubtedly reflected in terms of the internal organization, which was restructured according to the demands for centralization and monolithism. Despite this, SKP seemed to face the same difficulties as before in developing a clear political identity: on one hand, it declared itself revolutionary in both aims and methods; on the other hand, it adopted a reformist party program that hardly differed from SSV in 1917 or SAP in 1911. Thus, the picture of SKP emerges as a party with a significant discrepancy between what it claimed to be and what it actually was. Ström's description of himself and his comrades as "not full-

[573] Ibid.

[574] Ibid, p. 109.

[575] Ibid, p. 111.

[576] Ibid, p. 110.

fledged communists," but with a *revolutionary will*, captures this dissonance between the party's declared revolutionary intentions and its continued involvement in parliamentary reform demands. This further supports Björlin's argument that the Swedish left-wing socialists of the 1910s and 1920s had an identity deeply rooted in Swedish social democracy.[577] While they formally and nominally in 1921 were part of a communist party and indeed were committed to revolution, at this point in Sweden, it was considered impossible to translate these ambitions into concrete political action. Instead, they were left to focus on reforms until the revolution eventually would reach Sweden. Although concrete actions, such as the creation of soldiers' councils were included in the program, there is no indication that the party, unlike the Bolsheviks in 1917 or the Spartacists in 1919, sought to form an avantgarde of professional revolutionaries. Rather than actively inciting revolution, their strategy was to prepare for it and await its arrival.

3.3.2 Revolutionary Aspirations and Political Reality

In addition to difficulties in formulating a clear identity, the SSV/SKP struggled to connect with "the masses" – Schmidt, for example, refers to the Swedish left-wing socialists as "jacobins moins le peuple."[578] Reaching the broader population was crucial for the party since it was proletariat which was considered the historical agent that would carry out the revolution. In contrast to SAP, which gradually established itself as a "party for all" during the 1910s, SSV/SKP focused exclusively on workers and small farmers.[579] However, they clearly faced difficulties gaining support from these groups. Contrary to what Grimlund reported at the Comintern's Second Congress, the party's membership had sharply declined since 1917. For instance, in 1919, SSV had just over 23,000 members, compared to SAP, which had 151,000 members at the same time.[580] Moreover, the 1920 election was a setback for the party as it only received 6.4% of the vote and consequently lost four of its eleven seats in the *Riksdag*. SAP, which had been in government since 1917, also lost support in the election, and Branting resigned as prime minister. However, the party still received nearly

---

[577] Cf. Björlin, L. (2002), pp. 39-40.

[578] Schmidt, W. (1996), p. 219.

[579] Cf. Hentilä, S. (1979), pp. 176-177.

[580] Bolin, J. (2004), p. 201.

30% of the vote. The following year, when universal suffrage was applied for the first time in Sweden, SAP strengthened its position and received 36.2%. With support from the liberals, they were thus able to form a government again.[581]

The left-wing socialists repeatedly claimed that they were the ones safeguarding the interests of the workers, warning the working class about "bourgeois-democratic and reformist illusions" which they argued characterized "right-wing socialism", i.e., SAP.[582] In reality, as chapter three demonstrates, SSV's day-to-day politics – through its party programs – were based on SAP-inspired reform proposals, although these were embedded in broader, explicitly revolutionary objectives that were missing in SAP's program. However, in 1920, SAP adopted a new program that was significantly more radical than its previous one. For example, it stipulated that the party should work toward a nationalization of industry, credit institutions, and infrastructure, as well as worker and consumer participation in management.[583] This represented a sharpening of SAP's socialist goals, where market forces explicitly would be subordinated to planned economic development, which thus undermined SSV/SKP's criticism.

Another central and immediate issue for SSV/SKP was that the revolutionary wave expected to arrive in Europe never materialized. In 1917, the Russian Revolution was fresh in everyone's memory, and there was a belief that Europe would soon follow suit. However, by 1921, after several failed socialist revolutions in 1919–1920, this hope had been shattered.[584] Against this backdrop, it may seem strange that SSV/SKP chose to continue following the Comintern line in 1921 and formally submit to Bolshevism. One possible explanation is, of course, that a majority of the party members were still convinced that a world revolution was imminent, or at least *hoped* so. From that perspective, the party's adhesion to the Comintern can be seen as a "final attempt" rather than wholehearted adoption of Bolshevism.[585] It is also important to remember that World War I had just ended. With that, there was still a belief that

---

[581] Hirdman, Y. (1979), p. 136.

[582] SSV/SKP Congress Protocol 1921, p. 109.

[583] Misgeld, K. (2001), pp. 32-38.

[584] Cf. Pons, S. (2014), pp. 7-35.

[585] Cf. Schmidt, W. (1996), p. 239.

“the world was open.” The Comintern was seen, by the international left, as a real challenger to the “bourgeois” League of Nations in the struggle to shape the future.

Another explanation is more practical: the party was simply economically dependent on the Comintern, which actively supported its member parties. SSV had struggled with financial difficulties from its inception. Already at the 1918 Congress, it was noted that agitation and organizational work during the party’s first year “could not be managed as desired” due to lack of financial resources.[586] SSV had even had to borrow money from its Finnish equivalence on two occasions in 1917.[587] After 1918, as Björlin points out, SSV began regularly receiving – and expecting – financial support from the Bolsheviks. This often occurred through secret agreements made during Swedish visits to Petrograd and Moscow, as well as through Bolsheviks who at times stayed in Stockholm. The money could be funneled through ISC or other subsidiary organizations.[588] Several times, Aschberg helped store the funds in his own bank.[589] It is also reasonable to assume that the Bolsheviks had an incentive to support the Swedish left-wing socialists, as they – at least at times – facilitated the Bolsheviks’ contacts with comrades on the continent. Moreover, clandestine economic cooperation with the Swedish left-wing socialists was particularly important before formal relations were established between the USSR and Western European governments, including Sweden.[590] However, already in 1920, Branting’s government had begun easing the trade blockade against Soviet Russia and was planning an extensive export of locomotives and railway materials.[591] The deal never went through, but its symbolic significance was immense, as it marked an opening for official economic relations between the new Bolshevik regime and Western countries. This in turn lead to a reduction in the role of smaller leftist

---

[586] SSV Congress Protocol 1918, p. 2.

[587] Kan, A. (2005), p. 395.

[588] Björlin, L. (2001). Russisk guld i svensk kommunisme. In: Thing, M. (Ed.). *Guldet fra Moskva. Finansieringen af de nordiske kommunistpartier 1917–1990.* (The Gold from Moscow. The Financing of the Nordic Communist Parties 1917–1990). Forum, pp. 42-127.

[589] Cf. Marklund, C., & Hellenes, A. M. (2023), pp. 253-255.

[590] Kan, A. (2005), p. 184.

[591] Leander, P. (2021), pp. 167-169.

factions like SSV/SKP compared to before, whose position became less central as the Bolshevik's diplomatic relations expanded.

3.3.3 Epilogue

The proletarian revolutions that the European left had hoped would sweep across the continent in the wake of 1917 failed or never materialized. Instead, the uprisings and revolutions that overthrew the European empires and gradually dismantled the Russian, German, Austro-Hungarian, and finally the Ottoman empires were, as Pons points out, national in character.[592] After 1921, new states had been established within the framework of the newly established Versailles settlement, with authoritarian regimes in the east serving as a buffer against Bolshevik power, and the fragile Weimar Republic in the center, which within a few years would collapse and pave the way for Hitler's rise to power. Despite this reshaping of the European political map, one counter-systemic power factor had not been removed: Bolshevik Russia. Lenin's experiment had survived against all odds and now appeared to Europe's ruling classes as an existential threat to the Western order, while simultaneously offering hope for a better future to the war-weary and impoverished "masses."[593]

At the same time, Russia itself was facing major changes. Between 1917 and 1922, a bloody civil war had been fought in the wake of the Bolshevik seizure of power. The civil war became a chaotic and brutal struggle where the Reds, the Bolsheviks, were pitted against the Whites, a loosely allied coalition of monarchists, liberals, and anti-Bolshevik socialists. At the same time, nationalist movements in Ukraine, Poland, and the Baltic regions fought for independence, while anarchists like Nestor Makhno's peasant army in Ukraine sought to create an alternative to both Bolshevik centralism and the Whites' conservatism.[594] To win the war, Trotsky built the Red Army into an effective and disciplined fighting force, often using brutal methods. Lenin and the Bolshevik leadership pushed through War Communism, a policy that involved forced requisitioning of food, nationalization of industry, and a ban on

---

[592] Pons, S. (2014), p. 16.

[593] Cf. Blomqvist, H. (2003). "Socialismus Asiaticus": bolsjevismen som orientaliskt hot för svenska socialdemokrater. In: Blomqvist, H., Ekdahl, L. (Eds.). *Kommunismen – hot och löfte: arbetarrörelsen i skuggan av Sovjetunionen 1917–1991.* (Communism – Threat and Promise: The Labor Movement in the Shadow of the Soviet Union 1917–1991). Carlsson, pp. 19-23.

[594] Wade, R.A. (2017), pp. 88-92.

private trade.[595] This policy hit the peasants and workers hard, leading to widespread famine and uprisings. In Ukraine, Makhno's anarchist forces fought both the Whites and the Bolsheviks, managing to maintain large areas of self-rule before being crushed by the Red Army in 1921.[596] The same year, the Bolshevik regime was also shaken by the Kronstadt Rebellion, where previously loyal sailors and workers rose in protest against the Bolshevik authoritarian rule. The rebellion was violently suppressed, but it highlighted the growing discontent within the revolutionary movement itself.[597] When the civil war finally ended in 1922, the Bolsheviks had triumphed, but the price was enormous. Millions had died in battles, famine, and disease, the economy was in ruins, and much of the population was exhausted from years of violence and suffering. To stabilize the situation, Lenin had in 1921 launched the New Economic Policy (NEP), which was a limited return to a market economy.[598] In 1922 however, the USSR was formally established, thereby fully consolidating the Soviet state.

This development was also reflected in the Third International, which was restructured in order to solidify the USSR's political order, both internally and in relation to the international communist movement. As chapters 3.2 and 3.3 demonstrates, 1921 marked a turning point with the launch of the Twenty-one Conditions, which forced all member organizations to adapt to the Bolshevik strategy. This called for strict centralization and a declaration of loyalty to Moscow, which in practice meant that national communist parties were subordinated to Soviet control. After Lenin's death in 1924 and Stalin's assumption of power, the grip on the Comintern was further tightened, and opposing currents within the international communist movement were severely marginalized or completely expelled. This occurred against the backdrop of Stalin's political reorientation – he abolished NEP and instead called for an intensification of the revolutionary struggle, but through the new policy: socialism in one country, which would spark debates both within the Bolshevik leadership as

[595] Ibid.

[596] Bushkovitch, P. (2011), pp. 312-317.

[597] Ibid, pp. 318-325.

[598] Lih, L.T. (2017), pp. 155-159.

well as in the national communist parties.[599] Trotsky, one of the chief architects of the Russian revolution and the former leader of the Red Army, opposed this shift and advocated for a more international and permanent revolution, warning that the Soviet Union would become isolated.[600] Trotsky's opposition led to his gradual marginalization, and he was soon expelled from both the Comintern and the Soviet Communist Party. In general, all dissenters, social democrats, and communist dissidents were labeled fascists by Stalin. In a speech in 1924, Stalin declared:

> Fascism is not only a military-technical category. Fascism is the bourgeoisie's fighting organization that relies on the active support of social democracy. Social democracy is objectively the moderate wing of fascism. There is no ground for assuming that the bourgeoisie's fighting organization can achieve decisive successes in battles, or in governing the country, without the active support of social democracy.[601]

This development also affected the European communist parties, many of which split. In the SKP as well, the divide deepened between those who fully embraced the "communist discipline" and those who wished to preserve the party's distinct characteristics, especially its democratic and spiritual dimensions.[602] For many of the Swedish left-wing socialists who had supported the incorporation of SSV into the Comintern and the transformation into SKP, Stalin's shift in direction proved unacceptable. A significant portion of the party leadership, along with many others, increasingly aligned themselves with Trotsky's position.[603] Consequently, during the Comintern's Fifth Congress that same year, ECCI harshly criticized the Swedish party, especially Höglund, who was accused by Zinoviev of failing to comply with the Comintern's demands.[604] A couple of weeks later, the ECCI declared the majority of

---

[599] Cf. Bordiga, A. (2020). [1925]. Against Stalin and 'Socialism in One Country'. In: Basso, P. (Ed.). *The Science and Passion of Communism.* Brill, pp. 226-264.

[600] Patenaude, B.M. (2017) Trotsky and Trotskyism. In: Pons, S., Smith S.A. (Eds.). *The Cambridge History of Communism*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 189-211.

[601] Stalin, J.V. (1924). *Concerning the International Situation.* Marxist Internet Archive. Retrieved 8 February 2025 through: https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1924/09/20.htm

[602] Leander, P. (2021), pp. 195-209.

[603] Ibid.

[604] Berg, N.J. (1982). *I kamp för socialismen: kortfattad framställning av det svenska kommunistiska partiets historia.* (In Struggle for Socialism: A Brief History of the Swedish Communist Party). Arbetarkultur, pp. 13-15.

the SKP's leadership as "renegades and enemies of communism."[605] This marked the definitive split within SKP, with Höglund, Ström, and several others leaving the party. After a brief attempt to form their own communist party outside of the Comintern structure, they returned to SAP.[606] This pattern would continue in the years that followed. In 1929, the party faced yet another split, with several members, including Grimlund, following suit and returning to SAP.[607] What remained of SKP was thus a group of hardline communists who not only blindly adhered to Moscow's directives but also viewed the split as a "necessary purge" of the "opportunistic elements" that had given the SKP a push forward in "clarity and strength" as Kilbom expressed it at the party's Sixth Congress the same year.[608] By this time, little remained of what had once been the core of the party founded just over a decade earlier, whose clearest guiding principle had been the defense of the democratic principles they believed had been lost within SAP. Instead, SKP had gradually lost its political autonomy and transformed into a pure satellite of the Soviet regime, with no real possibility for internal debate or independence. In this way, Stalin's ascent to power also marked the final chapter for the particular movement of Swedish left-wing socialists which had emerged out of SAP in 1917, as an independent political entity.

---

[605] Degras, J. (1971). *The Communist International 1919–1943 Documents. Volume II 1923–1928.* Routledge, p. 163. Also available via Marxist Internet Archive. Retrieved 11 February 2025 through: https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/documents/volume2-1923-1928.pdf

[606] Hirdman, Y. (1979), p. 118.

[607] Berg, N.J. (1982), pp. 19-20.

[608] ARAB Stockholm, SKP (KI) collection, vol. 10. *I kampens tecken. Förhandlingar och beslut vid Sverges kommunistiska partis (sektion av Kommunistiska Internationalen) sjätte kongress 22–24 nov. 1924.* (In the Sign of Struggle. Negotiations and Decisions at the Sixth Congress of the Swedish Communist Party (Section of the Communist International) 22–24 November 1924.), p. 7.

CONCLUSIONS

For the Swedish left-wing socialists, organized in SSV and later SKP, the concept of revolution was indeed central. However, in practice, their political program remained deeply rooted in Swedish social democratic traditions. Just as the question of revolution had been complex and ambiguous within SAP – where the party, before reformism ultimately prevailed, had maintained a degree of revolutionary rhetoric – SSV/SKP also found itself in a similarly ambivalent position. While they framed their policies within an internationalist and revolutionary context, their actual political approach reflected a continuity with pre-1914 social democracy rather than a decisive break with it. What the party sought, as expressed in their programs between 1917 and 1921, was essentially identical to SAP's 1911 program, though embedded within a broader, internationalist, and revolutionary framework.

The question of whether they aimed to pursue a Bolshevik-modeled revolution is more complex. Firstly, SSV/SKP was a heterogeneous movement with different factions, some more inclined toward Bolshevik ideas than others. Secondly, their understanding of revolution as a concept was ambiguous. It was easier for the party to vaguely relate revolution to the broader international movement, particularly as long as they could still hope for an imminent world revolution. Revolution in concrete terms within a Swedish national context was however more difficult to navigate. Although the party at times expressed a desire to establish soldiers' and workers' councils, there was never a well-developed strategy for a revolutionary seizure of power in Sweden. Rather, the party was shaped by Kautsky's idea of a "waiting revolutionism," a teleological view in which socialism would emerge gradually in line with historical developments. Unlike Lenin, the party never embraced the idea of an avantgarde of professional revolutionaries actively leading an uprising.

The failure of the Spartacist movement in Germany became a decisive turning point for SSV/SKP. When the German Spartacists' attempt to establish a socialist state was crushed, much of the party's revolutionary hopes faded as well. In the light of this, their accession to the Comintern may, as mentioned earlier, be understood as a last resort rather than an ideological progression. At the same time, SAP was growing in both popularity and influence in Sweden, while SSV/SKP's membership numbers declined. The party struggled to reach the masses and lacked the broad popular support that SAP had.

This uncertainty created a clear discrepancy between the party's sense of self and its actual political practice. On one hand, they maintained close relations with leading Bolsheviks, whom they had actively supported around the time of the October Revolution. These activities signaled a strong connection to the Russian Revolution and Bolshevik strategy. On the other hand, their party program remained fundamentally social democratic, albeit within a more radical and internationalist framework. This reflects SSV/SKP's fundamental contradiction: they sought to present themselves as revolutionaries affiliated with the Bolsheviks in an international context, but their political strategy in Sweden remained one which was driven by an attachment to an earlier agitational social democracy which hade not yet succumbed to the full disenchantment of parliamentary *realpolitik* and domestic administration, rather than by a fervent revolutionary commitment. Thus the party's inability to formulate an identity beyond disappointment with the development of SAP as a party "palatable" to the existing order, was not resolved until its submission to the principles dictated by Moscow. Yet at the same time, this transition from a movement of vague and diffuse ideational foundations to a disciplined party clad with a tight ideological straight-jacket effectively spelled the end for a left-wing socialist movement driven by the sentiments of 1917 in Sweden for many decades.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Swedish Labour Movement's Archives and Library, Stockholm

ARAB Stockholm, August Palm's archive, vol. 3, Hvad vil sosial-demokraterna? Föredrag I Malmö den 6 november 1881.

ARAB Stockholm, Otto Grimlund's Archive, vol 1., Dagens krönika. Enkla dagboksanteckningar från en intressant färd. (Chronicle of the day. Simple Diary Notes From an Interesting Journey).

ARAB Stockholm, Otto Grimlund's Archive, vol. 6., Ordning råder i Berlin. (Order Prevails in Berlin).

ARAB Stockholm, SKP (KI) collection, vol. 10. I kampens tecken. Förhandlingar och beslut vid Sverges kommunistiska partis (sektion av Kommunistiska Internationalen) sjätte kongress 22–24 nov. 1924. (In the Sign of Struggle. Negotiations and Decisions at the Sixth Congress of the Swedish Communist Party (Section of the Communist International) 22–24 November 1924.).

ARAB Stockholm, SSV collection, vol. 1, Berättelse över Socialdemokratiska Vänsterpartiets verksamhet 1917. (Report on the Activities of the Social Democratic Left Party in 1917). Fram förlag.

ARAB Stockholm, SSV collection, vol. 1, Protokoll fört vid Sverges socialdemokratiska vänsterpartis andra kongress i Stockholm 2-4 juni 1918. (Congress Protocol of the Swedish Social Democratic Left Party's Second Congress in Stockholm, June 2–4, 1918).

ARAB Stockholm, SSV collection, vol. 1, Protokoll fört vid Sverges socialdemokratiska vänsterpartis fjärde kongress och Sveriges kommunistiska partis första kongress i Viktoriasalen i Stockholm den 25–29 mars 1921. (Protocol of the Fourth Congress of the Swedish Social Democratic Left Party and the First Congress of the Swedish Communist Party in Viktoriasalen, Stockholm, March 25–29, 1921).

ARAB Stockholm, SSV collection, vol. 1, Protokoll fört vid Sverges socialdemokratiska vänsterpartis konstituerande kongress i Stockholm 13 – 16 maj 1917. (Protocol of the Sweden's Social Democratic Left Party's Constitutive Congress in Stockholm, 13–16 May, 1917).

ARAB Stockholm, SSV collection, vol. 1, Protokoll fört vid Sverges socialdemokratiska vänsterpartis tredje kongress i Stockholm 12–16 juni 1919. (Protocol of the Third Congress of Sweden's Social Democratic Left Party in Stockholm, 12-16 June 1919).

ARAB Stockholm, SSV collection, vol. 2, Ned med Vapnen! (Down with the Weapons!).

ARAB Stockholm, Zeth Höglund's Archive, vol. 3, Balabanova to Höglund and Ström March 14 1919.

Published Sources

Andræ, C.G. (1998). *Revolt eller reform: Sverige inför revolutionerna i Europa 1917–1918.* (Revolt or Reform: Sweden and the European Revolutions of 1917–1918). Carlsson.

Aucante, Y. (2020). Paradoxes of Hegemony: Scandinavian Social Democracy and the State. In: Fulla, M., Lazar, M. (Eds.). *European Socialists and the State in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Avineri, S. (2019). *Karl Marx: Philosophy and Revolution.* Yale University Press.

Balabanoff, A. (1927). *Minnen och upplevelser.* (Memories and Experiences). Tiden.

Barber, J. (1981). *Soviet Historians in Crisis, 1928-1932.* Palgrave Macmillan.

Beecher, J. (2023). Charles Fourier and Fourierism. In: Van Der Linden, M. (Ed.). *The Cambridge History of Socialism.* Cambridge University Press.

Bengtsson, E. (2020). *Världens jämlikaste land?* (The Most Equal Country in the World?). Arkiv Förlag.

Bengtsson, E. (2021). The Evolution of Popular Politics in Nineteenth Century Sweden and the Road from Oligarchy to Democracy. *Lund Papers in Economic History*, no. 226.

Bensimon, F. (2023). The International Working Men's Association (1864–1876/7). In: Van Der Linden, M. (Ed.). *The Cambridge History of Socialism*. Cambridge University Press.

Berg, J.O. (2011). *På spaning efter en svensk modell: Idéer och vägval i arbetsgivarpolitiken 1897–1909.* (In Search of a Swedish Model: Ideas and Choices in Employer Policy 1897–1909). Berg Bild Rum & Färg Förlag.

Berg, N.J. (1982). *I kamp för socialismen: kortfattad framställning av det svenska kommunistiska partiets historia.* (In Struggle for Socialism: A Brief History of the Swedish Communist Party). Arbetarkultur.

Berger, S. (2020). Between Challenging the Authoritarian State and Democratising It: German Social Democracy, 1914–1945. In Fulla, M., & Lazar, M. (Eds.). *European Socialists and the State in the Twentieth and Twenty-first Centuries.* Palgrave Macmillan.

Berger, S., & Welskopp, T. (2022). Social Democracy in Germany. In: van der Linden, M. (Ed.). *The Cambridge History of Socialism: Volume II.* Cambridge University Press.

Bergman, M. (2010). *Constructing Communities: The Establishment and Demographic Development of Sawmill Communities in the Sundsvall District, 1850–1890.* PhD Thesis. Umeå University.

Berti, G. (1969). L'internazionale e il PCI. (The International and the PCI). *Studi Storici*, 10(2), pp. 423-425.

Björkegren, H. (1985). *Ryska posten: de ryska revolutionärerna i Norden 1906–1917.* (Russian Mail: The Russian revolutionaries in the Nordic Countries 1906-1917). Bonnier.

Björkman, J. (2020). *"Må de herrskande klasserna darra": Radikal retorik och reaktion i Stockholms press, 1848–1851.* ("Let the ruling classes tremble": Radical Rhetoric and Reaction in the Stockholm press, 1848–1851). Gidlunds.

Björlin, L. (1982/1983). Vänstersocialistiska riksdagsgruppen. *Meddelande från Arbetarrörelsens arkiv och bibliotek*, no. 24-25.

Björlin, L. (2001). Russisk guld i svensk kommunisme. In: Thing, M. (Ed.). *Guldet fra Moskva. Finansieringen af de nordiske kommunistpartier 1917–1990.* (The Gold from Moscow. The Financing of the Nordic Communist Parties 1917–1990). Forum.

Björlin, L. (2002). Kultur och politik. Kommunistiska frontorganisationer i Sverige. In: Blomqvist, H., Ekdahl, L. (Eds.). *Kommunismen – hot och löfte: arbetarrörelsen i skuggan av Sovjetunionen 1917–1991.* (Communism – Threat and Promise: The Labor Movement in the Shadow of the Soviet Union 1917–1991). Carlsson.

Björlin, L. (2005). Mellan bolsjevism och socialdemokrati. Den kommunistiska rörelsen i Sverige och Komintern. (Between Bolshevism and Social Democracy. The Communist Movement in Sweden and the Comintern). *Comintern Working Paper* 2005 (2).

Björlin, L. (2006). Om svensk och rysk kommunism. In: Gerdin, M., Östberg, K. (Eds.). *Hur rysk är den svenska kommunismen? Fyra bidrag om kommunism, nationalism och etnicitet.* (How Russian is the Swedish Communism? Four Contributions on Communism, Nationalism and Ethnicity). Södertörns högskola, Research Reports 2006:7.

Björlin, L., & Carlbäck, H. (1999). *Sverige i ryska arkiv: guide till ryska källor om svensk historia under 1900-talet.* (Sweden in Russian Archives: Guide to Russian Sources on Swedish History in the 20th Century). Riksarkivet.

Błesznowski, B., & Kuligowski, P. (2023) Road Not Taken? Inventing, Modernizing, and Renegotiating the Concept of Association in the 19th-century Socialism. *Journal of Political Ideologies,* pp. 1-20.

Blomqvist, H. (1989). *Den röda tråden.* (The Red Thread). Röda rummet.

Blomqvist, H. (2017). *Potatisrevolutionen och kvinnouppploppet på Södermalm 1917: ett historiskt reportage om hunger och demokrati.* (The Potato Revolution and the Women's Riots in Södermalm 1917: A Historical Reportage on Hunger and Democracy). Hjalmarson & Högberg.

Blomqvist, H. (2003). "Socialismus Asiaticus": bolsjevismen som orientaliskt hot för svenska socialdemokrater. In: Blomqvist, H., Ekdahl, L. (Eds.). *Kommunismen – hot och löfte: arbetarrörelsen i skuggan av Sovjetunionen 1917–1991.* (Communism – Threat and Promise: The Labor Movement in the Shadow of the Soviet Union 1917–1991). Carlsson.

Blomqvist, H. (2022). *Socialism in Yiddisch: The Jewish Labor Bund in Sweden.* Södertörn University.

Blyth M. (2001). The Transformation of the Swedish Model: Economic Ideas, Distributional Conflict, and Institutional Change. *World Politics.* 54(1), pp. 1-26.

Bolin, J. (2004). *Parti av ny typ? Skapandet av ett svenskt kommunistiskt parti 1917–1933.* (Party of a new type? The creation of a Swedish Communist Party 1917 – 1933). Stockholm University Press.

Bordiga, A. (2020). [1925]. Against Stalin and 'Socialism in One Country'. In: Basso, P. (Ed.). *The Science and Passion of Communism.* Brill.

Bushkovitch, P. (2011). *A Concise History of Russia.* Cambridge University Press.

Callaghan, J. (2022). The British Labour Party. In: van der Linden, M. (Ed.). *The Cambridge History of Socialism: Volume II.* Cambridge University Press.

Cherubini, D. (2017). G. E. Modigliani in the Zimmerwald Movement: 'War Against War' and the United States of Europe. In: Olmstead, J. (Eds.). *Reconsidering Peace and Patriotism during the First World War.* Palgrave Macmillan.

Csunderlik, P. (2022). Memory Politics Issues in Relation to the Hungarian Soviet Republic (1919). *Russian Studies.* HU, 2022(2), pp. 105-114.

Degras, J. (1971). *The Communist International 1919–1943 Documents. Volume II 1923–1928.* Routledge.

Di Donato, M & Fulla, M. (2023). Leftist Internationalisms in the History of the Twentieth Century in Di Donato, M., Fulla, M. (Eds.). *Leftist Internationalisms: A Transnational Political Theory.* Bloomsbury Academic.

Dogliani, P. (2016). The Fate of Socialist Internationalism. In: Sluga G, Clavin P. (Eds.). *Internationalisms: A Twentieth-Century History.* Cambridge University Press.

Dogliani, P. (2023). *A Political History of the International Union of Socialist Youth 1907-1917.* Palgrave Macmillan.

Dugstad Sanders, A.R. (2018). *Europe's Northern Resource Frontier: The political economy of resource nationalism in Sweden and Norway 1888-1936.* PhD Thesis. European University Institute.

Eijking, J. (2022). A "Priesthood of Knowledge": The International thought of Henri de Saint-Simon', *International Studies Quarterly* 66 (1), pp. 1-11.

Eley, G. (2002). *Forging Democracy: The Left and the Struggle for Democracy in Europe, 1850–2000.* Oxford University Press.

Eley, G. (2017). Marxism and Socialist Revolution. In: Pons, S., Smith S.A. (Eds.). *The Cambridge History of Communism.* Cambridge University Press.

Elmgren, A. (2015). The Socialist Soviet Republic of Scandinavia. *Ajalooline Ajakiri,* 3 (153), pp. 287-326.

Ewins, K. (2017). Swedish Communism in Print, 1917–45. *Twentieth Century Communism,* 12 (12), pp. 200-234.

Fletcher, R. (1987). The Life and Work of Eduard Bernstein. In: Fletcher, R (Ed.). *From Bernstein to Brandt: A Short History of German Social Democracy.* Edward Arnold.

Frängsmyr, T. (2002). *Svensk idéhistoria: Bildning och vetenskap under tusen år. Del II 1809–2000.* (Swedish History of Ideas: Education and Science Over a Thousand years. Part II 1809–2000). Natur & Kultur.

Fulla, M. (2020). Using the State to Democratise it. Introduction to Part I. In: Fulla, M., Lazar, M. (Eds.). *European Socialists and the State in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries.* Palgrave Macmillan.

Grimlund, O. (1979). 'Na perevale'. In: G. N. Golikov et al. (Eds.). *Vospominaniia o Vladimire Il'iche Lenine,* vol. 5. (Memoirs of Vladimir Il'ich Lenin). Political Publishing House.

Gustafson Olsson, A. (2013). "Swedes and Swedish Americans, to 1870" in Baker, E.R. (Ed.). *Immigrants in American History: Arrival, Adaptation, and Integration. Volume I: 1600–1870.* Bloomsbury.

Harrison, M. (2017). Foundations of the Soviet Command Economy 1917–1941. In: Pons, S., Smith S.A. (Eds.). *The Cambridge History of Communism.* Cambridge University Press.

Hentilä, S. (1979). *Den svenska arbetarklassen och reformismens genombrott inom SAP före 1914: arbetarklassens ställning, strategi och ideologi.* (The Swedish Working Class andthe Breakthrough of Reformism in SAP Before 1914: the Working Class' Position, Strategy and Ideology). Forssan Kirjapaino Oy.

Hermansson, J. (1984). *Kommunism på svenska?: SKP/VPK:s idéutveckling efter Komintern.* (Communism – the Swedish Way?: The Ideological Development of SKP/VPK since the Comintern). Almqvist & Wiksell International.

Hillis, F. (2021). *Utopia's Discontents: Russian Émigrés and the Quest for Freedom, 1830–1930s.* Oxford University Press.

Hirdman, Y. (1979). *Vi bygger landet: den svenska arbetarrörelsens historia från Per Götrek till Olof Palme.* (We Build the Country: The History of the Swedish Labor Movement from Per Götrek to Olof Palme). Pogo Press.

Hobsbawm, E. (1962). *The Age of Revolution: 1789–1848.* Vintage Books.

Hobsbawm, E. (1975). *The Age of Capital: 1848–1875.* Weidenfeld & Nicolson.

Hobsbawm, E. (1987). *The Age of Empire: 1875–1914.* Weidenfeld & Nicolson.

Hobsbawm, E. (1994). *The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914–1991.* Vintage Books.

Horkheimer, M. & Adorno, T.W. (1998) [1947]. *Dialectic of Enlightenment.* Verso Books.

Howell, M. C., & Prevenier, W. (2001). *From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods.* Cornell University Press.

Hägglund, J. (2023). *Demokratins stridslinjer: Carl Lindhagen och politikens omvandling, 1896–1923.* (The Battle Lines of Democracy: Carl Lindhagen and the Transformation of Politics 1896–1923). Södertörn Doctoral Dissertations.

Höglund, Z. (1920). *Branting som bolsjevikdödare. (Branting as a Bolshevik Killer).* Fram förlag.

Höglund, Z. (1951). *Härliga tider. (Good Times).* Tiden.

Höglund, Z. (1953). *Minnen i fackelsken 2 Från Branting till Lenin: 1912 – 1916.* (Memories in Torchlight 2 From Branting to Lenin: 1912 – 1916). Tiden.

Höglund, Z., Sköld, H., & Ström, F. (1914). *Det befästa fattighuset: antimilitaristisk och socialistisk handbok.* (The Established Poorhouse: An Anti-Militarist and Socialist Handbook). Fram förlag.

Jansson, T. (1985). *Adertonhundratalets associationer: forskning och problem kring ett sprängfyllt tomrum eller sammanslutningsprinciper och föreningsformer mellan två samhällsformationer c:a 1800–1870.* (Nineteenth-century Associations: Research and Problems Concerning an Explosive Vacuum or Principles and Forms of Organization Between two Social Formations circa 1800–1870). Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis.

Jennings, J. (2023). Saint-Simon and Saint-Simonism. In: Van Der Linden, M. (Ed.). *The Cambridge History of Socialism.* Cambridge University Press.

Johnson, C.H. (2023). Etienne Cabet and the Icarian Movement in France and the United States. In: Van Der Linden, M. (Ed.). *The Cambridge History of Socialism.* Cambridge University Press.

Jones, M. (2016). *Founding Weimar.* Cambridge University Press.

Jonsson, K. (2017). *Fångna i begreppen? Revolution, tid och politik i svensk socialistisk press 1917 – 1924* (Trapped in the concepts? Revolution, time and politics in the Swedish socialist press 1917 – 1924). Elanders.

Kan, A. (1999). Lenin, Branting och Höglund: Vad visste man inom svensk arbetarvänster om bolsjevikerna före Lenins sista Stockholmsbesök? (Lenin, Branting and Höglund: What Did the Swedish Labor Left Know About the Bolsheviks Before Lenin's Last Visit to Stockholm?). *Scandia: Tidskrift för historisk forskning*, 65 (1), pp. 97-111.

Kan, A. (2005). *Hemmabolsjevikerna: den svenska socialdemokratin, ryska bolsjeviker och mensjeviker under världskriget och revolutionen 1914 – 1920.* (Home Bolsheviks: Swedish Social Democracy, Russian Bolsheviks and Mensheviks during the World War and the Revolutionary Years 1914 – 1920). Carlsson.

King, F. (2015). Dilemmas Of a 'Democratic Peace': World War One, the Zimmerwald Manifesto and the Russian Revolution. *Socialist History*, (48), pp. 8-33.

Klockare, S. (1967). *Svenska revolution 1917–1918.* (The Swedish Revolution 1917–1918). Prisma.

Kokk, E. (2001). Program för Sveriges socialdemokratiska arbetareparti 1911. (Program for the Swedish Social Democratic Workers' Party 1911). In: Misgeld, K. (Ed.). *Socialdemokratins program 1897–1990.* (The Social Democratic Programs 1897–1990). Arbetarrörelsens arkiv och bibliotek.

Lane, D. (2021). VI Lenin's Theory of Socialist Revolution. *Critical Sociology,* 47(3), pp. 455-473.

Lazitch, B & Drachkovitch, M.M. (1973). *Biographical Dictionary of the Comintern: New, Revised and Expanded Edition.* Hoover Institution Press.

Leander, P. (2021). *Lenins kostym: de svenska socialisterna och ryska revolutionen.* (Lenin's Costume: The Swedish Socialists and the Russian Revolution). Carlsson.

Lewin, L. (1988). *Ideology and Strategy: A Century of Swedish Politics.* Cambridge University Press.

Lieven, D. (2015). *The End of Tsarist Russia: The March to World War I and Revolution.* Penguin Books.

Lih, T.L. (2017). Bolshevik Roots of International Communism. In: In: Pons, S., Smith S.A. (Eds.). *The Cambridge History of Communism.* Cambridge University Press.

Linderborg, Å. (2001). *Socialdemokraterna skriver historia: Historieskrivning som ideologisk maktresurs 1892–2000* (The Social Democrats write history: History writing as an ideological power resource 1892–2000). Atlas.

Lindhagen, C. (1917). *Vad vill det nya partiet?* (What Do the New Party Want?). Folkets förlag.

Lindström, R. (1950). *Axel Danielsson.* Folket i Bilds förlag.

Lukács, G. (1972). *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics.* The MIT Press.

Marklund, C., & Hellenes, A. M. (2023). The Diplomat and the Entrepreneur: Olof Aschberg – Converter of Capital, Trader in Trust. *Diplomatica*, 5 (2), pp. 248-262.

Mazower, M. (2012). *Governing the World: The History of an Idea.* Penguin Books.

McDermott, K., & Agnew, J. (1996). *The Comintern: A History of International Communism From Lenin to Stalin.* Macmillan.

McLellan, (1979). Marxism after Marx: An Introduction. Palgrave Macmillan.

McLellan, D. (1980). *The Thought of Karl Marx.* Macmillan.

Meidal, B. (1982) *Från profet till folktribun. Strindberg och Strindbergsfejden 1910–1912.* (From Prophet to Tribune. Strindberg and the Strindberg Feud 1910–1912. Tiden.

Merridale, C. (2017). *Lenin on the Train.* Metropolitan Books.

Meynell, H. (1960). The Stockholm Conference of 1917. *International Review of Social History*, 5(1), pp. 1-25.

Miller, R.W. (1991). Social and Political Theory: Class, State, Revolution. In: Carver, T. (Ed.). The Cambridge Companion to Marx. Cambridge University Press.

Misgeld, K. (2001). *Socialdemokratins program: 1897 till 1990.* (The Social Democratic Program: 1897 to 1990). Arbetarrörelsens arkiv och bibliotek.

Musto, M. (2014). *Workers Unite!: The International 150 Years Later.* Bloomsbury Academic.

Myklebost, K. A., Nielsen, J. P., & Rogatchevski, A. (2020). *The Russian Revolutions of 1917: The Northern Impact and Beyond.* Academic Studies Press.

Möller, T. (2015). *Sveriges politiska historia: strid och samverkan under tvåhundra år.* (Sweden's Political History: Struggle and Cooperation during Two Hundred Years). Studentlitteratur.

N.a. (1873). *Statistiska centralbyråns underdåniga berättelse rörande riksdagsmannavalen år 1872.* (The Humble Report of the Central Bureau of Statistics Regarding the Parliamentary Elections of 1872). P.A. Norstedt & söner.

Newman, J.P. (2017). Revolution and Counterrevolution in Europe 1917–1923. In: Pons, S., Smith S.A. (Eds.). *The Cambridge History of Communism.* Cambridge University Press.

Palm, A. (1932). [1881]. *Hvad vil Sosial-Demokraterna? Föredrag i Malmö den 6 november 1881.* (What do the Social Democrats Want? Lecture in Malmö on November 6, 1881). Tiden

Patenaude, B.M. (2017) Trotsky and Trotskyism. In: Pons, S., Smith S.A. (Eds.). *The Cambridge History of Communism.* Cambridge University Press.

Pons, S. (2014). *The Global Revolution: A History of International Communism 1917–1991.* Oxford.

Pons, S. (2024). *The Rise and Fall of the Italian Communist Party. I comunisti italiani e gli altri: A Transnational History.* Stanford University Press.

Rabinowitch, A. (1987). The Evolution of Local Soviets in Petrograd, November 1917–June 1918: The Case of the First City District Soviet. *Slavic Review*, 46 (1), pp. 20-37.

Raleigh, D.J. (2006). The Russian Civil War, 1917–1922. In: Grigor Suny, R. (Ed.). *The Cambridge History of Russia: Volume III the Twentieth Century.* Cambridge University Press.

Rapini, A. (2012). I «cinque giganti» e la genesi del welfare state in Europa tra le due guerre. *Storicamente.* 8(8), pp. 1-11.

Salvadori, M. (1979). *Karl Kautsky and the Socialist Revolution, 1880–1938*. Verso Books.

Schmidt, V. (1996). *Kommunismens rötter i första världskrigets historiska rum: en undersökning kring arbetarrörelsens historiska misslyckande* (The Roots of Communism in the Historical Space of World War I: A Study on the Historical Failure of the Labour Movement). Brutus Östlings Bokförlag Symposion.

Schwarzmantel, J. (2014). *The Routledge Guidebook to Gramsci's Prison Notebooks*. Routledge.

Schüllerqvist, B. (1992). *Från kosackval till kohandel: SAP:s väg till makten.* (The Rise to Power of the Swedish Social Democrats: Organizational Changes in the Swedish Labor Movement 1928 – 1933). Tiden.

Service, R. (2017). Lenin as a Historical Personality. In: Pons, S., Smith S.A. (Eds.). *The Cambridge History of Communism.* Cambridge University Press.

Smith, S.A. (2004). Petrograd in 1917: The View From Below. In: Wade, R.A. (Ed.). *Revolutionary Russia: New Approaches to the Russian Revolution of 1917.* Routledge.

Smith, S.A. (2006). The Revolutions of 1917–1918. In: Grigor Suny, R. (Ed.). *The Cambridge History of Russia: Volume III the Twentieth Century.* Cambridge University Press.

Sperber, J. (2013). Karl Marx the German. *German History*, 31 (3).

Steinberg, M. D. (2006). Russia's Fin de Siècle, 1900–1914. In: Grigor Suny, R. (Ed.). *The Cambridge History of Russia: Volume III the Twentieth Century.* Cambridge University Press.

Stråth, B. (2005). De förenade rikena Sverige och Norge 1814–1905. (The United Kingdoms of Sweden and Norway 1814–1905). *RIG-Kulturhistorisk tidskrift,* 88 (2), pp. 65-79.

Studer, B. (2017). Communism as Existential Choice. In: Pons, S., Smith S.A. (Eds.). *The Cambridge History of Communism.* Cambridge University Press.

Taber, M. (2023). *Reform, Revolution, and Opportunism. Debates in the Second International (1900–1910).* Haymarket Books.

Thies, C.G. (2002). A Pragmatic Guide to Qualitative Historical Analysis in the Study of International Relations. *International Studies Perspectives*, 3(4).

Tosstorf, R. (2022). The Second International Reconstituted: The Labour and Socialist International, 1923–1940. In: van der Linden M. (Ed.). *The Cambridge History of Socialism. The Cambridge History of Socialism.* Cambridge University Press.

Traverso, E. (2021). *Revolution: An Intellectual History.* Verso Books.

Tudor, H. & J.M. Tudor. (1988). *Marxism and Social Democracy: The Revisionist Debate 1896–1898.* Cambridge University Press.

Ulam, A.B. (1976). *Ideologies and Illusions: Revolutionary Thought from Herzen to Solzhenitsyn.* Harvard University Press.

van der Linden, M. (2022). Introduction to Volume II. In: van der Linden, M. (Ed.). *The Cambridge History of Socialism: Volume II.* Cambridge University Press.

Venuti, L. (Ed.). (2018). *Rethinking translation: Discourse, subjectivity, ideology* (Vol. 2). Routledge.

Voigt, S. (2020). "From Marxism to "Agenda 2010": German Social Democratic Notions of the State from Its Founding until Today." In Fulla, M., & Lazar, M. (Eds.). *European Socialists and the State in the Twentieth and Twenty-first Centuries.* Palgrave Macmillan.

von Hagen, M. (2006). The First World War, 1914–1918. In: Grigor Suny, R. (Ed.). *The Cambridge History of Russia: Volume III the Twentieth Century.* Cambridge University Press.

Västberg, M. (1951). *Kata Dalström.* Folket i Bilds förlag.

Wade, R.A. (2017). The Russian Revolution and Civil War. In: Pons, S., Smith S.A. (Eds.). *The Cambridge History of Communism.* Cambridge University Press.

Weitz, E.D. (2017). German Communism. In: Pons, S., Smith S.A. (Eds.). *The Cambridge History of Communism.* Cambridge University Press.

Wolikow, S. (2017). The Comintern as a World Network. In: Pons, S., Smith S.A. (Eds.). *The Cambridge History of Communism.* Cambridge University Press.

Yurov, Y. (1967). *Путешествие по ленинской адресной книжке Источник.* (A Journey Through Lenin's Address Book). Издательство политической литературы.

Žižek, S. (2000). From History and Class Consciousness to the Dialectic of Enlightenment... and Back. *New German Critique*, 81, pp. 107-123.

Östberg, K. (1990). *Byråkrati och reformism: en studie av svensk socialdemokratis politiska och sociala integrering fram till första världskriget.* (Bureaucracy and Reformism: A Study of the Political and Social integration of Swedish Social Democracy up to the First World War). Arkiv förlag.

Östberg, K. (2021). *Folk i rörelse: vår demokratis historia.* (People in Motion: the History of our Democracy). Ordfront.

Östberg, K. (2024). *The Rise and Fall of Swedish Social Democracy.* Verso Books.

Digital Sources

Cornell, P. (1967-1969.). *A Peter (Per) Götrek.* Svenskt Biografiskt Lexikon, vol. 17, p. 685. Retrieved 22 December 2024 from: https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sbl/Presentation.aspx?id=13467&forceOrdinarySite=true

Engels, F., & Marx, K. (1848). *The Communist Manifesto.* International Publishers, p. 28. Also available via Marxist Internet Archive. Retrieved 27 January from: https://www.marxists.org/archive/rosdolsky/1965/workers.htm

First Congress of the Communist International: Delegates. Marxist Internet Archive. Retrieved 4 February 2025 from: https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/1st-congress/delegates.htm

Grass, M. (n.d.). '*Socialismen är en makt som ingen kommer förbi' Internationellt i Hjalmar Brantings arkiv.* ('Socialism Is a Power That No One Can overcome' . International in Hjalmar Branting's Archives). Arbetarrörelsens arkiv och bibliotek, p. 1. Retrieved 12 January 2025 from: https://www.arbark.se/pdf_wrd/vik/vik15.pdf

Grimlund, O. (n.d.). *Na perevale.* The Lenin Project. Retrieved 6 October 2024 from: https://lenin.rhga.ru/upload.pdf

Grimlund, O. (1965). *Oral history interview with Otto Grimlund 1965.* Unknown interviewer. Digital Library Collection, Columbia University. Retrieved 14 October 2024 from: https://dlc.library.columbia.edu/time_based_media/10.7916/d8-vw5n-4023.

Kollontai, A. (1920). *International Women's Day.* Marxist Internet Archive. Retrieved 10 January 2025 from https://www.marxists.org/archive/kollonta/1920/womens-day.htm

Lenin, V.I. (1920). *Terms of Admission into Communist International.* Marxist Internet Archive. Retrieved 12 December 2024 from: https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1920/jul/x01.htm

Lenin, V.I. (1917). *The Stockholm Conference.* Marxist Internet Archive. Retrieved 14 January 2025 from https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/sep/08b.htm

Lenin, V.I. (1917). *The Tasks of the Proletariat in the Present Revolution.* Marxist Internet Archive. Retrieved 12 January 2025 from: https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/apr/04.htm

Lenin, V.I. (1917). *To: The Bureau of the Central Committee Abroad.* Correspondence from Lenin sent from Helsingfors to Stockholm on Augusti 17 (30) 1917. Marxist Internet Archive. Retrieved 19 December 2024 from: https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/aug/17bcca.htm

Lenin, V.I. (1902). *What Is To Be Done?* Marxist Internet Archive. Retrieved 10 January 2025 from https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1901/witbd/

Luxemburg, R. (1919). *Order Prevails in Berlin*. Marxist Internet Archive. Retrieved 27 January 2025 from: https://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1919/01/14.htm

Publishing Office of the Communist International, America. (1921). The Second Congress of the Communist International: Proceedings of Petrograd Session of July 17th, and of Moscow Sessions of July 19th – August 7th, 1920. Marxist Internet Archive. Retrieved 12 December 2024 from: https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/2nd-congress/1-Second%20Congress%20of%20CI-1920.pdf

Resolution on the Zimmerwald Association. Marxist Internet Archive. Retrieved 4 February 2025 from: https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/1st-congress/zimmerwald-resolution.htm

Stalin, J.V. (1924). *Concerning the International Situation.* Marxist Internet Archive. Retrieved 8 February 2025 through: https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1924/09/20.htm

Swedish Labour Movement Archives and Library (ARAB), August Palm's archive, volume 3, as well as in digital format through the following link, retrieved 26 December 2024, https://www.arbark.se/dokument/temp/palm-hvad-vil-sosial-demokraterna.pdf

The Communist International. (1919). Manifesto of the Communist International. Chicago Arbeiter Zeitung Publishing Company. Marxist Internet Archive. Retrieved 27 January 2025 from: https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/1st-congress/3-Manifesto%20and%20Governing%20Rules-CI-1919.pdf

The Second Congress of the Communist International: Proceedings of Petrograd Session of July 17th, and of Moscow Sessions of July 19th – August 7th, 1920. Publishing Office of the Communist International, America 1921, pp. Marxist Internet Archive. Retrieved 12 December 2024 from: https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/2nd-congress/1-Second%20Congress%20of%20CI-1920.pdf