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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

FACULTY OF LAW, ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

School of Humanities

**Striking a Discordant Note: Protest Song and Working-Class
Political Culture in Germany, 1844-1933**

by

Mark Colin Rose

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF LAW, ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES

Doctor of Philosophy

STRIKING A DISCORDANT NOTE: PROTEST SONG AND WORKING-
CLASS POLITICAL CULTURE IN GERMANY, 1844-1933

by Mark Colin Rose

This thesis examines the role played by protest song in the development of the political culture of Germany's industrial working class between 1844 and 1933. Protest song was an integral component in the struggle of the German working class to achieve some measure of political and social equality in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Throughout this period, the working class found itself subjected to varying levels of political repression by the German authorities, and in order to promote their political views, industrial workers used the medium of song to protest against injustice.

The thesis seeks to determine the significance of protest song for the political development of the German industrial working class through an analysis of song lyrics. The study of working-class protest song lyrics has largely been the preserve of historians from the former German Democratic Republic, where scholarship was shaped by the unique political imperatives of history writing under the Communist regime. This thesis seeks to redress the historiographical imbalance that this approach engendered, arguing that protest song produced under the auspices of the Social Democrats was both a culturally valid and politically significant feature of German working-class political life, albeit one that offered a different ideological approach to that of the overtly revolutionary output of the Communist movement.

Additionally this thesis will acknowledge that working-class song was not merely used as an instrument of protest, but also as a medium to communicate political ideology. Protest song was an integral part of the cultural capital of the working class milieu, creating a distinct canon upon which German industrial workers drew in a variety of political, social and cultural situations. This study will engage with this canon in order to establish how the cultural practice of singing endowed working-class protest songs with an intrinsic political significance.

Contents

Contents	i	
List of Illustrations	iv	
Declaration of Authorship	v	
Acknowledgements	vi	
List of Abbreviations	vii	
Introduction	Striking a Discordant Note: Protest Song and Working-Class Political Culture, 1844-1933	1
	The Aims of this Thesis	4
	Songs and Associational Life	5
	Protest Song Historiography	9
	Definition of Terms	18
	Sources	20
	Methodological Approaches	21
	Chapter Structure	23
Chapter 1	The Role of Protest Song in Working-Class Political Culture	27
	The Relationship of Folk Song to Protest Song	27
	The Role of Protest Song	33
	Song as a Medium of Political Communication	41
	The Emotive Aspect of Protest Song	46
	The Effectiveness of Protest Song	49
	Conclusion	51
Chapter 2	Responding to the Challenge of Protest Song	53
	Protest Song after the Failure of the March Revolution	54
	The Anti-Socialist Law	56
	The Aftermath of the Anti-Socialist Law	60
	Censoring Songs and Songbooks	65
	Protest Song on the Streets	76
	Conclusion	80
Chapter 3	The Origins of Working-Class Protest Song, 1844-1878	83
	Protest Song prior to the French Revolution	84
	Songs of the <i>Vormärz</i>	85
	The First <i>Arbeiterlied</i>	88
	The March Revolution	94
	The Failure of the Revolution and its Aftermath	100
	Protest Song and the Workers' Political Parties	106
	The Onset of Illegality	115
	Conclusion	117

Chapter 4	Protest Song from the Anti-Socialist Law to the Eve of the First World War, 1878-1914	119
	Protest Song and the Anti-Socialist Law	120
	Song and the Legacy of the Anti-Socialist Law	122
	Internationalism	129
	‘Programme’ Songs	132
	Protest Song and Political Radicalisation	137
	Women and Protest Song	141
	Youth and Protest Song	144
	Song and Sporting Associations	148
	Song, Anti-militarism and the Approach of War	154
	Conclusion	155
Chapter 5	Protest Song in War and Revolution, 1914-1923	157
	Protest Song and the First World War, 1914-1918	158
	Protest Song and the Post-war Chaos, 1918-1923	169
	Youth and Protest Song	177
	1923 and the End of the Revolution	182
	Conclusion	184
Chapter 6	Protest Song in the Weimar Republic, 1924-1933	187
	1924: The Changing Nature of Political Violence	188
	The Middle Years of Weimar, 1925-1928	196
	Communist and Social Democratic Song Compared	198
	Song on the Streets: The emergence of Agitprop Theatre	201
	Social Fascism and <i>Blutmai</i> , 1928-1929	204
	The Economic Crisis and the Battle for the Streets, 1930-1933	207
	Protest Song and the Rise of Authoritarianism	212
	Sport, Women, Youth and Protest Song	217
	The End of the Weimar Republic	221
	Conclusion	222
Conclusion	Striking a Discordant Note	225
Appendix A	Full Song Texts	231
	<i>Das Leuna Lied</i>	231
	<i>Das Weberlied</i>	232
	<i>Robert-Blum Lied</i>	233
	<i>Die Arbeitsmänner</i>	234
	<i>Wacht auf, Verdammte dieser Erde</i>	235
	<i>Lied der Arbeiterinnen</i>	236
	<i>Bundeslied</i>	237
	<i>Es zog ein Rotgardist hinaus</i>	238
	<i>Der Rote Wedding</i>	239

Bibliography	241
Primary Sources - Archive Collections	241
Songbooks	241
Song Anthologies	245
Books	246
Newspapers and Periodicals	247
Musical Journals	247
Unpublished Primary Literature	247
Secondary Sources - Books	248
Chapters in Edited Volumes	260
Journal Articles	264
Bibliographies	266
Dissertations	266
Electronic Sources	266

List of Illustrations

Fig. 2.1	Extract from <i>Der Rote Front</i> , Vierte Auflage (Berlin:Jugend Verlag, 1928).	71
Fig. 2.2	Extract from <i>Der Rote Front</i> , Vierte Auflage (Berlin:Jugend Verlag, 1928).	72
Fig. 4.1	<i>Flügblatt</i> copy of the ,Streiklied 1903', as distributed on the streets	140
Fig. 4.2	Front Cover of the original 1894 first edition of <i>Der Freie Turner</i>	150
Fig. 4.3	Songbook of the <i>Arbeiter Radfahrerverein</i> , published around 1900	153
Fig. 6.1	<i>Haus und Hofpropaganda</i> in a typical Berlin <i>Mietsekaserne</i> , performed by the Agitprop troupe <i>Der Roter Wedding</i>	214

DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, MARK COLIN ROSE

declare that the thesis entitled:

Striking a Discordant Note: Protest Song and Working-Class Political Culture in Germany, 1844-1933

And the work presented in the thesis are both my own, and have been generated by me as the result of my own original research. I confirm that:

- this work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
- where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
- where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
- where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
- I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
- where the thesis is based on work done by myself or jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
- none of this work has been published before submission.

Signed:

Date:

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Mark

List of Abbreviations

ADAV	<i>Allgemeiner Deutscher Arbeitervereine</i> - General German Workers' Association
AdK	<i>Arbeiterliedarchiv des Akademie der Kunst</i> - Workers' Song Archive at the Acadamy of Art
DASB	<i>Deutscher Arbeiter Sängerbund</i> - German Workers' Singers' Association
DVP	<i>Deutsche Volkspartei</i> – German People's Party
FSJ	<i>Freien Sozialistischen Jugend</i> - Free Socialist Youth
KdA	<i>Kampfgemeinschaft der Arbeitsänger und Musiker</i> - Fighting Association of Workers' Singers and Musicians
KJVD	<i>Kommunistisches Jugendverband Deutschlands</i> – Communist Youth Association of Germany
KPD	<i>Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands</i> – Communist Party of Germany
KPO	<i>Kommunistische Partei-Opposition</i> – Communist Party Opposition
RJ	<i>Roter Jungfront</i> - Red Youth Front
RFB	<i>Roter Frontkämpferbund</i> – Red Front Fighters' League
RFMB	<i>Roter Frauen und Mädchen Bund</i> - Red Woman and Girl League
SAJ	<i>Sozialistische Arbeiter- Jugend</i> - Socialist Workers' Youth
SDAP	<i>Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei</i> - Social Democratic Workers' Party
SPD	<i>Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands</i> – Social Democratic Party of Germany
USPD	<i>Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands</i> – Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany

Introduction

Striking a Discordant Note: Protest Song and Working-Class Political Culture in Germany, 1844-1933

Protest song was an integral component in the struggle of the German working class to achieve some measure of political and social equality in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The significance of song in that struggle can best be described in the words of Willi Bleicher (1907-1981), who, as a prominent trade unionist and youth leader during the Weimar Republic, was a leading activist in that struggle:

The workers' songs at the time of the 1920s and the 1930s had a powerful influence on me. I can remember very well that we sang these songs at evening group meetings and whilst hiking. If only somehow, the meaning of these songs strengthened our will to live. I remember the song 'Who creates gold today, who hammers ore and stone'. It was the first time that I sang with enthusiasm. I was 16 years old at the time. The song affected me. It reflected my social environment at that time although it had originated 50 years before. We also sang the *Warsawjanka*. We sang these songs proudly, 30-40 young men. We were young metal workers at the time and the *Kleinbürger* gawked contemptuously. But we also met people who were sympathetic to these songs and that made us proud.¹

Echoing through this passage are all the major themes that have engaged scholars of labour, politics and identity in recent decades, most notably those of class, professional identity, gender and youth. Reading Bleicher's personal account of how political song impacted on everyday life, one is immediately struck by just how strongly he identified himself as a member of a separate and distinct working class. This is done both explicitly in the statement 'we were young metalworkers', and by the device of juxtaposing his identity and that of his fellow workers with those he refers to as 'contemptuously gawking *Kleinbürger*', the 'petit-bourgeoisie'. In taking this pride in his status as a worker, Bleicher is setting himself up in opposition to the views of held by the middle-class in society, as he unashamedly and proudly announces himself as a member of the working class milieu whilst using song to proclaim and reinforce that identity.²

¹ Karl Adamek, *Lieder der Arbeiterbewegung: Ein Liederbilderlesebuch* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Büchergilde Gutenberg, 1981), p. 15.

² Rainer Maria Lepsius, 'Parteiensystem und Sozialstruktur: Zum Problem der Demokratisierung der Deutschen Gesellschaft', in *Deutsche Parteien vor 1918*, ed. by Gerhard A. Ritter (Cologne: Kiepenheuer und Witsch, 1973), pp. 56-80. See also: Claus Christian Szejnmann, 'The Rise of the Nazi Party in the Working-Class Milieu of Saxony',

By proudly proclaiming himself as a worker, Bleicher is expounding his belief that the worker formed a new dynamic element in an industrialized Germany, and that through the power of his own labour, he would be able to effect a reordering of the existing socio-political structure of society in his favour. This notion of being a part of a wider and distinctly recognisable milieu also extends into Bleicher's description of himself as a metal worker: by actively and clearly stating his profession, Bleicher seeks both to enunciate his pride in that industry and to enhance the status of the manual worker within German society. In industrial Germany, metalworkers occupied a position of prominence, being considered part of the 'aristocracy' of skilled labour.

Bleicher is also quick to assert the power of his gender with his statement that 'we sang these songs proudly, 30-40 young men. We were young metal workers at the time'. This statement reflects the popular view that activist politics was largely man's work, a claim reinforced by the lyrics and images of the songs of the period, which promoted the notion of struggle in almost exclusively masculine language.³ The notion of 'hammering' stresses the nature of industrial work as an overtly masculine activity. Together with stressing the importance of masculinity, Bleicher also signifies the importance of youth to the political struggle. In such thinking, particularly in young Communists such as Bleicher, only the youth, freed from traditional patterns of thinking and what they saw as the inertia of the Social Democrat dominated organized labour movement, were deemed capable of supplying the necessary radicalism with which to overthrow the existing social order and to establish a society beneficial to the needs of the working man. Certainly this was the view of many songwriters and songbook editors after 1900, when the process of politicising working class youth through the establishment of youth singing groups and the printing of special youth orientated songbooks gathered pace, particularly as Germany encountered the increasing prospect of war.⁴

At the same time, Bleicher's text offers some insights into the emotional role of song. In acknowledging that it had had a 'powerful influence' on him, and admitting that he was 'affected by it', Bleicher suggests that song not only

in *The Rise of National Socialism and the Working Classes in Weimar Germany*, ed. by Conan Fischer (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1996), pp. 189-216.

³ Stefan Berger, *Social Democracy and the Working Class in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Germany* (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2000), p. 34.

⁴ For songbooks see the following at the Arbeiterlied Archiv, Akademie der Künste, Berlin (hereafter AdK). The following constitute the *Liederbucher vor 1945* section of the archive. AdK- A2, A3, A8, A9, A15, A16, A17, A21, A33, A34, A35, A44, A46, A51, A54, A55.

reinforced his political and ideological commitment, but his emotional commitment as well, by enhancing feelings of working-class solidarity and notions of a shared community. Such feelings came from a long-standing familiarity with an established canon of traditional workers' songs, which were an intrinsic part of the cultural capital of the wider working-class community.⁵ From these statements we can see that not only is Bleicher aware of the emotive nature of song, but that he also has an appreciation of its intangible qualities, as shown by his inability to accurately define it, a point he concedes with the observation 'if only somehow'.

In acknowledging that song had a direct relevance for his day-to-day life ('my social environment'), it is clear that Bleicher regarded protest song not as some peripheral leisure activity, but as an integral part of his everyday life, both as a working man, and a socialist. Bleicher's experiences offer us a sense that song was an integral part of the cultural capital of the working class milieu and it is this fascination with the 'everyday' application of song, how it was used, when it was used, and how its use reflected contemporary political events, that forms the central framework of this thesis.

Bleicher's testimony is representative of that of the politically active worker, having been a leading figure in the *Deutschen Metallarbeiter Verband* (German Metalworkers Association) and a prominent member of the *Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands* (Communist Party of Germany or KPD) until his outspoken criticism of its 'Stalinisation' precipitated his defection to the *Kommunistische Partei-Opposition* (KPO). Nor was Bleicher's enthusiasm for protest song a consequence of some romanticised memory of the interwar years, as his political activism had ensured that he suffered for his continuing faith in the socialist cause: Hitler's rise to power forced Bleicher emigrate, first to Switzerland and then to France, until an ill advised trip back to Germany led to his arrest by the Gestapo, and imprisonment for being a 'danger to state security'. Not freed from Buchenwald concentration camp until 1945, Bleicher returned to an active career in trade unionism after the war.

⁵ John Guillory, *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. xviii; See also: Pierre Bourdieu, 'Forms of Capital', in *The Handbook of Theory and Research in the Sociology of Education*, ed. by John G. Richardson (New York: Greenweed Press, 1983), pp. 241-258; Robert Morre, 'Capital', in *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*, ed. by Michael Grenfell (Stocksfield: Acumen Publishing, 2008), pp. 101-117 (pp. 103-109).

The Aims of this Thesis

This thesis examines the role played by protest song in the development of the political culture of Germany's industrial working classes between 1844 and 1933. Throughout this period, the working classes were subjected to varying levels of political repression by the German authorities, and in order to promote their political views, industrial workers used the medium of song to protest against the injustices heaped upon them. Protest song thus became an integral component in the struggle of the German working class, and was used to articulate the hopes and aspirations of this emerging political force in order to achieve some measure of political and social equality in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

A number of scholars of modern Germany have turned their attention to the political function of song and music in recent years. Bodek commends song as an efficient means of articulating socio-political concerns because he believes song lyrics lasts longer in the memory than political slogans, and that music gives political lyrics a 'rhythm and verve that the purely spoken word lacks'.⁶ James Brophy memorably refers to the use of political songs to protest against social misery as being expressions of 'sonic irreverence' against the Imperial authorities.⁷ Gilbert opines that 'music offers a unique window into the internal world of these [past] communities, offering insight into how they understood, interpreted and responded to their experiences at the time'.⁸ She argues that studying song allows us not only to document musical activity, but further, to record the social history of individuals and communities alike.⁹ By using song lyrics as its principal source, this study seeks to determine how workers responded to the social, political and economic conditions of the age in which they were created: particular songs provided a snapshot of workers' experiences, fears and aspirations, and examining how songs changed to suit different audiences or to convey different ideas allows us to map political changes in the wider world.

Working-class song was also used as a medium to communicate political ideology: as an integral part of the cultural capital of the working class milieu, German industrial workers created a distinct canon of working-class protest songs

⁶ Richard Bodek, 'Communist Music in the Streets: Politics and Perceptions in Berlin at the End of the Weimar Republic', in *Elections, Mass Politics and Social Change in Modern Germany*, ed. by Larry Eugene Jones and James Retallack (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 267-286 (pp. 275-276).

⁷ James M. Brophy, *Popular Culture and the Public Sphere in the Rhineland, 1800-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 54.

⁸ Shirli Gilbert, *Music in the Holocaust: Confronting Life in the Nazi Ghettos and Camps* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), p. 79.

⁹ Ibid., p. 79.

upon which they drew in a variety of political, social and cultural situations. They were embedded in, and indeed constitutive of, working-class social life. To achieve an understanding of this it will therefore be necessary to locate songs within the social, as well as the political and economic contexts in which they were created, performed and heard. Vernon Lidtke, arguably the leading Western historian of working-class protest song, has acknowledged that most scholarship has tended to concentrate on histories of formal working-class singing associations, reflecting a wider tendency in the labour movement to assume that one can write the history of the working class by writing the history of its formal organizations. This thesis seeks to eschew this approach, echoing Lidtke's own views on the subject:

...questions concerning the effectiveness of music in the life of the socialist labour movement can not be accurately answered until more is known about popular participation in singing *Arbeiterlieder* and about the impact of the songs on listeners. Information is readily available on the formal musical programmes of the branches of the *Arbeiter Sängerbund* (Workers Singing Association), and of other organisations, such as the *Agitprop Truppen* (Agitprop Troupes) and the *Jugendvereine* (Youth Associations). Although knowledge about these planned programmes is extremely valuable, it does not provide a complete account of the musical activity in the labour movement or among the working classes....What songs workers sang on the job or in the local *Gaststätte* is of primary significance for the social and cultural history of the German working class.¹⁰

Consequently, insofar as the source base allows, this thesis analyses those songs that were sung in the streets during demonstrations, on the picket lines, in pubs or in back-street meeting rooms, moving away from the former emphasis on organized workers' singing groups. The massed singing of political songs in a variety of social and political situations was both symbolic of, and constitutive of, a shared identity, and indicative of a commonality of purpose, particularly as the working class became increasingly politicised after 1900.

Song and Associational Life

A strong and varied associational life was a distinctive feature of working-class culture. Abrams defined working-class culture as 'a set of values, beliefs and attitudes held by this distinct socio-economic group'.¹¹ The previously dominant

¹⁰ Vernon Lidtke, 'Songs and Politics: An Exploratory Essay on *Arbeiterlieder* in the Weimar Republic', *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, 14 (1974), 253-273 (p. 273).

¹¹ Lynn Abrams, *Workers Culture in Imperial Germany: Leisure and Recreation in the Rhineland and Westphalia* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 3. For a regional analysis of the

view that German working-class culture was identical to the culture of the labour movement (and therefore that of the *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* – Social Democratic Party of Germany or SPD) has been subsequently challenged by scholarship that has argued that social democracy was but one working-class identity among many, and that political identity overlapped with religious, ethnic and/or regional identities to produce cultures - and therefore histories of culture - that were infinitely more complex.¹² Rainier Maria Lepsius termed groups that shared economic, regional and religious identities as ‘milieux’, whilst Claus-Christian Szejnmann expanded the utility of this term by arguing that areas which continued to possess strong, highly organized political networks and active leisure organizations as a part of their working class milieux were the most successful in resisting the appeal of Nazism.¹³

It is important to stress that workers’ singing was not a peripheral or marginal activity in Germany throughout this period as it formed an important part of everyday life, and established itself as a remarkably popular cultural activity: the main federation of organized workers’ singing groups would boast some 200,000 members by 1914, a figure that outstripped even the membership of the hugely popular sporting associations.¹⁴ The German workers’ predilection for collective activity was no historical accident, but rather a direct consequence of the economic and social changes wrought by Germany’s rapid industrialisation, particularly during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. As the German economy required more and more labour to maintain its industrial growth, workers were progressively drawn into the rapidly expanding towns and cities. Joining a club or association was a reaction to the anonymity of working-class life in a sprawling urban environment, allowed workers to forge a sense of common identity with those who also found themselves in a similar position.¹⁵ Associational life, particularly at a

organization of popular culture see also: Mary Nolan, *Social Democracy and Society: Working-Class Radicalism in Düsseldorf, 1890-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 134-45.

¹² Berger, *Social Democracy and the Working Class*, pp. 3-4.

¹³ Lepsius, ‘Parteiensystem und Sozialstruktur: Zum Problem der Demokratisierung der Deutschen Gesellschaft’, pp. 56-80; Szejnmann, ‘The Rise of the Nazi Party in the Working-Class Milieu of Saxony’, pp. 193-194.

¹⁴ Dieter Dowe, ‘The Workingmen’s Choral Movement in Germany before the First World War’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 13 (1978), 269-296 (p. 273).

¹⁵ Karen Ahlquist, ‘Men and Women of the Chorus: Music, Governance and Social Models in Nineteenth Century German Speaking Europe’, in *Chorus and Community*, ed. by Karen Ahlquist (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006), pp. 265-292 (p. 266); Thomas Nipperdey, ‘Verein als soziale Struktur im Späten 18. und frühen 19. Jahrhundert. Eine Fallstudie zur Modernisierung I’, in *Gesellschaft, Kultur, Theorie. Aufsätze zur neueren Geschichte*, ed. by Thomas Nipperdey (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1976), pp.

small scale and localised level, helped to ease the isolation that industrial workers felt living in a state where they were subjected to political and economic discrimination, as it promoted a sense of collective identity, of belonging, and offered an escape, albeit a temporary one, from the privations of an overcrowded and poverty stricken existence.

It was apparent that working-class political parties could rarely offer such opportunities for relief, outside of their electoral activities and occasional mass demonstrations.¹⁶ Not least due to their greater frequency, meetings of workers' singing groups offered far more opportunities than political party meetings for political debate and the airing of common grievances: these meetings were often held in the back room of a local tavern, with food and drink provided, thereby ensuring a more convivial atmosphere than that found at staid and often sparsely attended political meetings.¹⁷

Nevertheless, it has been argued that working-class cultural activities, such as singing, merely served to stabilize both *Wilhelmine* society, and in turn the dominant bourgeois culture, by dissipating socialist working-class revolutionary fervour. In his study of social democracy, Günther Roth argued that the working-class was systematically isolated from the dominant culture of bourgeois society by virtue of the political discrimination and judicial repression that it suffered. According to Roth, the resultant sense of isolation led the working-class to create its own socialist sub-culture, or a 'normative system of sub-societies', and that this separate world of social democratic leisure and cultural organizations in turn offered a haven away from authoritarian persecution, part of a process he called 'negative integration'.¹⁸

Subsequent scholarship has rejected this view, and has argued that a separate, distinctive working-class culture did indeed exist. Dick Geary argued that working-class singing groups were not merely imitating bourgeois culture, because many of its members were Social Democrats singing distinctly working-class protest songs. Geary further contended that the very existence of working-class and

174-205; Richard van Dülmen, *The Society of the Enlightenment: The Rise of the Middle Class: Culture and Enlightenment in Germany*, trans. by Anthony Williams (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), pp. 87-88.

¹⁶ Margaret Lavinia Anderson, *Practicing Democracy: Elections and Political Culture in Imperial Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Stanley Suval, *Electoral Politics in Wilhelmine Germany* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1985).

¹⁷ Dowe, 'The Workingmen's Choral Movement', p. 270.

¹⁸ Günther Roth, *The Social Democrats in Imperial Germany. A Study in Working Class Isolation and National Integration* (Totowa: The Bedminster Press, 1963); Nolan, *Social Democracy and Society*, pp. 142-145.

bourgeois singing groups meant that this distinct class identity was inevitably promoted and reinforced within wider society.¹⁹ Axel Körner's comparative study of the songs that emerged from the working class milieux of both France and Germany in the mid-late nineteenth century discusses whether the formation of purely working-class choral groups contributed to the construction of a distinct working-class identity. Körner cites the disagreements between workers' choral groups over the singing of protest songs in four-part harmonies, as opposed to the simpler two-part harmonies used in many early political songs, as critics viewed the former as an inherently bourgeois practice. This dispute is illustrative of the relationship between class-specific cultural practices and those that are able to cross class boundaries.²⁰ Lidtke though was unequivocal in his support of the view that working-class culture possessed its own distinct identity, noting that, for many workers, membership of a proletarian leisure or cultural association was, alongside family and profession, 'often one of the three main factors which defined a worker's social identity'.²¹ Lidtke also acknowledged the importance of song within this distinct working-class movement:

The labour movement existed within German society and could not help but draw on that culture. Music and song reflected the complexity of those relationships with just as much accuracy and subtlety as theoretical articles and parliamentary debates.²²

Lidtke further argued that working-class song occupied a contradictory position with regard to its use as a medium that sought to facilitate the integration of industrial workers into wider German society. According to his study, protest song simultaneously possessed both a 'socially polarising' and a 'socially integrative' function. Protest song, through its critical and inflammatory lyrics, signified the economic disparity between impoverished industrial workers and the richer sectors of society, and was used to disseminate a sense of this socio-economic disadvantage to a wider audience. Such songs inevitably polarised the

¹⁹ Dick Geary, 'Socialism and the German Labour Movement before 1914', in *Labour and Socialist Movements in Europe before 1914*, ed. by Dick Geary (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1989), pp. 101-136, (p. 131).

²⁰ Axel Körner, *Das Lied von einer anderen Welt: Kulturelle Praxis im französischen und deutschen Arbeitermilieu, 1840-1890*, Historische Studien 22 (Frankfurt-am-Main and New York: Campus Verlag, 1997), p. 115.

²¹ Vernon L. Lidtke, 'Die Kulturelle Bedeutung der Arbeitervereine', in *Der Wandel der Nahrungsgewohnheiten unter dem Einfluß der Industrialisierung*, ed. by Hans Jurgen Teuteberg and Günter Wiegmann (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972), pp. 132-158, (p. 146).

²² Vernon Lidtke, *The Alternative Culture: The Socialist Labour Movement in Imperial Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 133.

political arena, and stiffened the repressive attitude of the authorities, which in turn increased workers' sense of proletarian injustice still further.²³

At the same time as protest song served to marginalize workers within society, it also performed a 'socially integrative' role: Lidtke acknowledges that this was an altogether more subtle function, and that it took a number of forms. One of these was the use of existing popular melodies for new working-class protest songs, and the retention of a well-loved tune could be viewed as way of integrating protest song into the existing canon of reputable and socially acceptable songs. Lidtke also acknowledges that this could be a double-edged sword, as protest songs often ridiculed the sentiments expressed in the original song from which the melody had been appropriated.²⁴

Protest Song Historiography

The study of working-class protest song lyrics has hitherto been the preserve of historians from the former German Democratic Republic. This scholarship was, inevitably, shaped by the unique political imperatives of history writing under the Communist regime. As Dorpalen observed in 1985, 'historical studies are centrally directed in the DDR and reflect the official position of party and state'.²⁵ This thesis seeks to redress the historiographical imbalance that this approach engendered, to argue that protest song produced under the auspices of the Social Democrats was both a culturally valid and politically significant feature of German working-class political life, albeit one that offered a different ideological approach to that of the overtly revolutionary output of the Communist movement feted by the historiography of the GDR.

In the German Democratic Republic all historical scholarship was subject to strict official censorship and ideological control.²⁶ The entire process of research and publication was conducted under the close supervision of the East German state, and protest songs were especially subject to such restrictions, falling as they did under the remit of the canonical eight-volume *Geschichte der Deutschen*

²³ Lidtke, 'Songs and Politics', p. 257.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 257-258.

²⁵ Andreas Dorpalen, *German History in Marxist Perspective* (London: IB Tauris and Co. Ltd, 1985), p. 15.

²⁶ Siegfried Lokatis, *Der rote Faden: Kommunistische Parteigeschichte und Zensur unter Walter Ulbricht* (Cologne: Bohlau Verlag, 2003); Dorpalen, *German History in Marxist Perspective*. For a comparison of historical studies in the two Germanies see: Gunther Heydemann, *Geschichtswissenschaft im geteilten Deutschland : Entwicklungsgeschichte, Organisationsstruktur, Funktionen, Theorie- und Methodenprobleme in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und in der DDR* (Frankfurt am Main/Berne/Cirencester: Lang, 1980)

Arbeiterbewegung (History of the German Labour Movement), known as the GdA.²⁷ Created under the auspices of the *Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus* (IML), in close cooperation with the ruling *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* (Socialist Unity Party of Germany) or SED, this massive work embodied the guiding principles under which all aspects of East German labour history had to be written and published. The GdA contained the official history of the SED and its forerunner, the KPD, and conveyed a strong pro-Communist stance. This is confirmed both by what the GdA contains and what it omits: their working-class rivals the SPD are mentioned only inasmuch as they contribute to the pre-history of the KPD/SED, or where they are vilified as opponents of Communist interests, whilst the contribution of the Christian trade unions and anarcho-syndicalists to the history of the German labour movement are barely acknowledged.²⁸

East German scholars had to submit their work for repeated rounds of editorial discussion and amendment before their work could be accepted for publication.²⁹ Indeed, in contrast to the situation in the West, the role of the editor in the GDR was an overtly political one:

In contrast to the situation in capitalist countries... the publishing house has a political responsibility for the content of the publication as well as the author... Leading and editing colleagues are political functionaries that possess the right and duty to form their own opinion on essay publication for their publishing house and to take political responsibility for it.³⁰

²⁷ Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim Zentralkomitee der SED, ed., *Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung: Von den Anfängen der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung bis zum Ausgang des 19. Jahrhunderts*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1966); Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim Zentralkomitee der SED, ed., *Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung: Vom Ausgang des 19. Jahrhunderts bis 1917*, vol. 2 (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1966); Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim Zentralkomitee der SED, ed., *Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung: Von 1917 bis 1923*, vol. 3 (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1966); Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim Zentralkomitee der SED, ed., *Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung: Von 1924 bis Januar 1933*, vol. 4 (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1966); Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim Zentralkomitee der SED, ed., *Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung: Von Januar 1933 bis Mai 1945*, vol. 5 (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1966); Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim Zentralkomitee der SED, ed., *Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung: Von Mai 1945 bis 1949*, vol. 6 (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1966); Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim Zentralkomitee der SED, ed., *Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung: Von 1949 bis 1955*, vol. 7 (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1966); Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim Zentralkomitee der SED, ed., *Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung: Von 1955 bis Anfang 1963*, vol. 8 (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1966), (hereafter GdA).

²⁸ Lokatis, *Der rote Faden*, p. 9.

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 11-12.

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 21-22.

The remit of editors and the restrictions of state censorship upon printed material extended to all areas: even choir literature was subject to scrutiny by the censors to ensure it did not contravene ideological principles.³¹ Moreover, the operation of the state sanctioned publishing houses, and even the supply of paper was strictly regulated and controlled.³²

To understand this process of censorship it is necessary to ascertain just what role the East German state played in the production and publication of historical scholarship. The 1950 SED Party Congress called upon scholars to pay greater attention to the history of both the German and international labour movements, principally in order to give the state a historical legitimacy.³³ Now accorded an overt historical role, East German historians were encouraged to employ history as a weapon in the class struggle, recasting it along socialist not bourgeois-democratic lines. Additionally historians were actively required to counter non-Marxist historiography, principally that of West Germany, in order to reinforce the belief of the East German populace in the ‘victory of socialism’ and to legitimise the split in the German states.³⁴ Nor was this role confined to winning over the domestic population, for as the GdA opined, East German historians also had a role in attracting working-class converts to socialism from other lands, not least from her immediate western neighbour.³⁵

Marxist historiography is predicated on identifying recurring patterns in history – the discovery of the existence of which through scholastic endeavour proves the validity of the overall Marxist approach to history and elevates the discipline to that of a science. As a consequence of determining these discernible patterns of history, which of course are made to fit the overall Marxist teleology of class and class formation, Marxist historians believe that they alone are guided by ‘objective social reality’ as befits such a scientifically determined process. This, they argue, is in contrast to the ‘subjective and intuitive’ scholarship of bourgeois western historians whose scholarship is based on the recounting of unique and random events that lack any form of scientifically based predetermination.³⁶ As

³¹ Lokatis, *Der rote Faden*, p. 124.

³² For an overview of how tightly regulated history writing and publishing was in the DDR see: Simone Barck, Martina Langermann, Siegfried Lokatis, „*Jedes Buch ein Abenteuer*“: *Zensur-System und literarische Öffentlichkeiten in der DDR bis Ende der sechziger Jahre*, Zweite Auflage (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1998); Lokatis, *Der rote Faden*, esp. chapter 4.

³³ Dorpalen, *German History in Marxist Perspective*, p. 48.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 50-53.

³⁵ GdA, *Von den Anfängen der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung bis zum Ausgang des 19. Jahrhunderts*, vol. 1, p. 11.

³⁶ Dorpalen, *German History in Marxist Perspective*, p. 37.

such, Marxist scholarship is deemed to possess a scientific validity that not only makes it superior to bourgeois, non-Marxist scholarship, but that makes it uniquely suited to serve the needs of the East German state.

As the ‘workers and peasants’ state, the German Democratic Republic placed the industrial working class at the very heart of its historical scholarship. Indeed the historian was given an active role in the ongoing class struggle being fought by East Germany and its Communist allies, and was expected to write histories that provided answers to the social and political problems that this struggle engendered. Therefore, the nebulous, detached attitude and subjective scholarship of bourgeois historians was rejected, and Marxist scholars were expected to make their ideological position clear in their endeavours.³⁷ Thus ideological neutrality was not an option for the historian in East Germany, for not only did such an ‘unscientific’ approach deny the presence of objective truth, it prevented them from acknowledging the crucial importance of the working class in the struggle to achieve a true Communist state.³⁸ Thus, in the German Democratic Republic, the process of history, and the history writing it engendered, were inextricably linked, the social consequences of which were used to address questions pertaining to contemporary social and political events, thereby giving historiography an intrinsic political value.³⁹

The vast majority of the post-war scholarship about working-class protest song was undertaken in the German Democratic Republic, and as such it laboured under the physical and ideological imperatives that we have just outlined. Unsurprisingly, such scholarship selected songs that promoted the Communist message and served the political and social needs of the time, influenced by the prevailing temperature of its Cold War backdrop. Scholarship on protest song in East Germany was largely the preserve of the *Arbeiterliedarchiv des Akademie der Künste* (Workers’ Song Archive at the Academy of Art), located in East Berlin. As Robb notes, the scholarship that emerged from the *Arbeiterliedarchiv* undeniably sought to promote the *Aufbau* spirit of the East German Communist Party, and the desire to portray the construction of the GDR state in an overwhelmingly positive light influenced its choice of songs.⁴⁰ Again given the levels of state control this is not unexpected, but it does present an ideological picture skewed to the political

³⁷ Dorpalen, *German History in Marxist Perspective*, p. 46.

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 44-45.

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 46-47.

⁴⁰ David Robb, ‘The Reception of the Vormärz and 1848 Revolutionary Song in West Germany and the GDR’, in *Protest Song in East and West Germany Since the 1960’s*, ed. by David Robb (Rochester NY: Camden House, 2007), pp. 11-34 (p. 18).

viewpoint and social imperatives of the Communists. It is this that this thesis seeks to redress.

Nor were the Communists slow to use protest song to explain the past failures of the workers' movement; East German scholars sought to promote Communist songs as the only valid source of anti-Fascist resistance, marginalizing the efforts of the Social Democrats and repeating the charges of collusion with the forces of fascism that were so familiar in the final years of the Weimar Republic. Social Democratic songs were also accused of lacking revolutionary fervour, part of wider Communist efforts to place the blame for the failure of the working class to defeat Hitler squarely on the shoulders of their proletarian political rivals.

The research on protest song emanating from the *Arbeiterliedarchiv* is personified by the extensive scholarship of Inge Lammel, who directed the archive from 1954-1985.⁴¹ Her output reflected topics as varied as the songs of the

⁴¹ Inge Lammel, *Mit Gesang wird gekämpft: Lieder der Arbeiterbewegung* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1967); Inge Lammel, *Das Arbeiterlied* (Frankfurt am Main: Röderberg Verlag, 1973); Inge Lammel, 'Politisches Lied und Volkslied in der Gesangspraxis der Arbeiterklasse' in *Arbeiterklasse und Musik: Theoretische Position in der Deutschen Arbeiterklasse zur Musikkultur vor 1945*, ed. by Inge Lammel, Akademie der Künste der DDR, Arbeitsheft 15, (Leipzig: Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1975); Inge Lammel, *Kampfgefährte: Unser Lied* (Berlin: Verlag Tribune, 1978); Inge Lammel, *Arbeitermusikkultur in Deutschland, 1844-1945: Bilder und Dokumente* (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1984); Inge Lammel, *Hundert Jahre Arbeitermusikkultur in Deutschland: Aufsätze und Vorträge aus 40 Jahren, 1959-1998* (Teetz: Henrich and Henrich, 2002). Lammel also edited a series of thematic anthologies entitled 'Das Lied im Kampf Geboren': Inge Lammel, ed., *Lieder der Revolution von 1848, Das Lied im Kampf Geboren*, Heft 1, Deutsche Akademie der Künste (Leipzig: VEB Friedrich Hofmeister, 1957); Inge Lammel, ed., *Lieder des Agitprop-Truppen vor 1945, Das Lied im Kampf Geboren*, Heft 2, Deutsche Akademie der Künste (Leipzig: VEB Friedrich Hofmeister, 1959); Inge Lammel, ed., *Lieder zum 1. Mai, Das Lied im Kampf Geboren*, Heft 3, Deutsche Akademie der Künste (Leipzig: VEB Friedrich Hofmeister, 1959); Inge Lammel, ed., *Lieder gegen Faschismus und Krieg, Das Lied im Kampf Geboren*, Heft 4, Deutsche Akademie der Künste (Leipzig: VEB Friedrich Hofmeister, 1958); Inge Lammel, ed., *Lieder der Arbeiter-Jugend, Das Lied im Kampf Geboren*, Heft 5, Deutsche Akademie der Künste (Leipzig: VEB Friedrich Hofmeister, 1960); Inge Lammel, ed., *Lieder der Arbeiterkinder, Das Lied im Kampf Geboren*, Heft 6, Deutsche Akademie der Künste (Leipzig: VEB Friedrich Hofmeister, 1960); Inge Lammel, ed., *Lieder aus den faschistischen Konzentrationslagern, Das Lied im Kampf Geboren*, Heft 7, Deutsche Akademie der Künste (Leipzig: VEB Friedrich Hofmeister, 1962); Elfriede Berger and Inge Lammel, eds., *Lieder des Roten Frontkämpferbundes, Das Lied im Kampf Geboren*, Heft 8, Deutsche Akademie der Künste (Leipzig: VEB Friedrich Hofmeister, 1961); Inge Lammel, ed., *Lieder der Deutschen Turn und Sport Bewegung, Das Lied im Kampf Geboren*, Heft 9, Deutsche Akademie der Künste (Leipzig: VEB Friedrich Hofmeister, 1966); Inge Lammel, ed., *Lieder der Partei, Das Lied im Kampf Geboren*, Heft 10, Deutsche Akademie der Künste (Leipzig: VEB Friedrich Hofmeister, 1971). In addition to Lammel and the scholarship from the *Arbeiterliedarchiv des Akademie der Künste* (AdK), other notable GDR song historians include Wolfgang Steinitz. See in particular: Wolfgang Steinitz, *Deutsche Volkslieder demokratischen Charakters aus sechs Jahrhunderten*, Vol. 1 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1954); Wolfgang Steinitz, *Deutsche Volkslieder demokratischen Charakters aus sechs Jahrhunderten*, Vol. 2 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1962).

Revolution of 1848, the influence of international revolutionary music on Germany, and songs drawn from the concentration camps and the anti-fascist resistance. In close accord with the prescribed interests of the East German state Lammel also produced organizational histories of the workers' movement, histories of workers' choirs and singing associations, and concentrated on the influence of revolutionary songs imported from the Soviet Union.⁴² Although the *Arbeiterliedarchiv* as an individual institution was never an integral part of the SED directed historical apparatus, its scholarship nevertheless remained squarely within its historiographical guidelines. Indeed, by writing about working-class protest song as an integral part of the workers' fight against fascism, the Communist Party naturally took a great interest in the archive's output.⁴³ Writing an introduction to a retrospective overview of Lammel's work whilst leader of the *Arbeiterliedarchiv* which was published more than a decade after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Günter Benser, himself a former leading light of the East German historical establishment and the last director of the IML, acknowledges that her work was a product of the ideological and political conditions pertaining at the time:⁴⁴

Naturally these contributions to German workers' musical culture were written in the specific historical and social circumstances of the DDR, and therefore they have taken on its unmistakable and particular characteristics.⁴⁵

Lammel herself admits that much of her early scholarship may prove to be too 'ideological and exaggerated' for a modern readership, squarely attributing this to the political imperatives of the Cold War, particularly the fractious relationship between the two Germanys at this time. The necessity for each side to present themselves in the best possible light, both to their own population and to the wider world inevitably influenced historical scholarship as the two power blocs struggled for ideological supremacy. However, whilst she is content to acknowledge the influence of the state directed historical establishment and the pressure of the times, Lammel is unrepentant about the avowedly pro-Communist message

⁴² For an overview of Lammel's extensive scholarship see particularly: Lammel, *Hundert Jahre Arbeitermusikkultur in Deutschland: Aufsätze und Vorträge aus 40 Jahren*.

⁴³ Günter Benser, 'Geleitwort' in Lammel, *Hundert Jahre Arbeitermusikkultur in Deutschland: Aufsätze und Vorträge aus 40 Jahren*, pp. 6-11 (p. 10).

⁴⁴ For a balanced but not uncritical view of the DDR see: Günter Benser, *DDR: Gedenkt ihrer mit Nachsicht* (Berlin: Karl Dietz Verlag, 2000).

⁴⁵ Benser, 'Geleitwort' in Lammel, *Hundert Jahre Arbeitermusikkultur in Deutschland: Aufsätze und Vorträge aus 40 Jahren*, pp. 6-11 (p. 6).

inherent in her scholarship, as Benser confirms in his introduction to her collective works, noting that ‘that the sympathy of the author lies with the revolutionary music movement and its protagonists should surprise no-one’.⁴⁶

As the leading East German scholar, Lammel’s work typifies the approach of GDR historians: she was keen to stress the mobilising potential and ideological radicalism of Communist song, in contrast to what she saw as the more moderate, less radical songs produced by or on behalf of the Social Democrats.⁴⁷ This thesis seeks to redress this balance by studying protest song from both Communist and Social Democratic perspectives in order to present the wide variety of workers’ protest song and to ameliorate the worst excesses caused by the concentration on the Communist canon by scholars from the GDR. This will provide a more balanced study in which the radical/reformist paradigm can be explored without being stymied by Cold War historical and political imperatives. This study contends that reformism did not merely reflect a lack of political will for a proletarian revolution to the detriment of the industrial worker, as the Communist view would have it, but more that it represented a genuine, more moderate belief amongst Social Democrats that reform could be achieved through cooperation with the existing authorities, and that a revolution was not only unnecessary, but undesirable.

The basis of much of the post-war scholarship into working-class protest song was laid down in the research that took place around the time of the Nazi seizure of power in January 1933. Margarete Nespital’s contemporary study, published in 1932, attempted to estimate the political effectiveness of workers’ song, through a discussion of its cultural-political function and by undertaking a comprehensive survey of the development of working-class protest songs from those written to convey the misery of working life in the 1840s to the highly politicised output of the Weimar Republic.⁴⁸

The era of recrimination between Social Democrats and Communists that pervaded the immediate aftermath of the *Machtergreifung* influenced Hanns Eisler’s attempts to write a comprehensive history of the working-class musical

⁴⁶ Benser, ‘Geleitwort’ in Lammel, *Hundert Jahre Arbeitersmusikkultur in Deutschland: Aufsätze und Vorträge aus 40 Jahren*, pp. 6-11 (p. 7).

⁴⁷ Richard Bodek, *Proletarian Performance in Weimar Berlin: Agitprop, Chorus, and Brecht* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1997), p. 7.

⁴⁸ Margarete Nespital, *Das deutsche Proletariat in seinem Lied* (Rostock: Mecklenburgische Volkszeitung GmbH, 1932)

movement.⁴⁹ Eisler, an Austrian Jew who came from a politically active family joined the KPD after the First World War, was a noted composer of songs for the Communist movement working with choirs, Agitprop troupes and most notably, as a composer for the plays of Bertolt Brecht.⁵⁰ Eisler's history created many of the paradigms that influenced scholars on both side of the post-war ideological divide, though unsurprisingly these ideas proved most popular his fellow Communists.⁵¹

Eisler divided the history of working-class music into three distinct periods: the first, from the failed March Revolution of 1848-9 to the passing of the Anti-Socialist Law in 1878, represented what he called an 'heroic epoch', a period which ended after years of struggle and repression that had resulted in a canon of song in which workers' protest song was at its most radical.⁵² Eisler's next period extended from the lifting of the law in 1890 and the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. Through a concentration on organized workers' singing associations, a focus of virtually all studies of working-class song prior to this thesis, Eisler argues that workers' choirs became more preoccupied with the quality of their musical performance than espousing a proletarian political message. In this respect his use of the term *embourgeoisement*, classically Communist language to describe the adoption by the working class of middle class concerns and attitudes that he believed diverted them from the proletarian struggle for social, political and economic equality, found great resonance in the post-war scholarship of the GDR.⁵³ This political underpinning is again found in Eisler's analysis of the third period, 1918-1933, when he describes the split in the working class into Social Democrat and Communist camps. Eisler dismisses the SPD as 'petit-bourgeois', language that is redolent of Communist charges that the Social Democrats were 'social fascists', claims that poisoned relations irretrievably in the later years of the Weimar Republic.

GDR historians were certainly eager to concentrate their work around the historical paradigms Eisler introduced. Werner Kaden, in his study of the SPD-affiliated *Deutscher Arbeiter Sängerbund* (German Workers' Singers' Association), or DASB, argued that the reformism and opportunism of this body mirrored that of Social Democratic politics as a whole, and that the revolutionary

⁴⁹ Hanns Eisler, 'Geschichte der deutschen Arbeitermusikbewegung von 1848' in *Musik und Politik, Schriften 1924-1948*, ed. by Günter Mayer, *Gesammelte Werke*, series III, vol. 1, 2nd edition (Leipzig: Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1985).

⁵⁰ Christian Glanz, *Hanns Eisler: Werk und Leben* (Vienna: Steinbauer, 2008).

⁵¹ Bodek, *Proletarian Performance in Weimar Berlin*, p. 6.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁵³ Eisler, 'Geschichte der deutschen Arbeitermusikbewegung von 1848', p. 212.

potential of protest song was being subsumed by artistic concerns with performance and notions of cultural improvement.⁵⁴ Traude Ebert-Obermeier went further, advocating that the output of Social Democrat choirs matched the reformist attitude of the parliamentary party, which was generally felt to be at odds with the views of the ordinary worker at grassroots level.⁵⁵

Western scholarship, too, has largely concentrated on the arguments relating to the supposed reformist stance of the organized workers' singing movement. Dieter Dowe accepts that prior to the First World War the DASB had succumbed to embourgeoisement, and had as a consequence become depoliticised.⁵⁶ Hartman Wunderer, studying the DASB during the Weimar Republic also accepted that it adopted middle class conventions, preferring to concentrate on questions related to excellence of performance rather than political protest.⁵⁷ Van der Will and Burns, meanwhile, argue that the deteriorating political situation caused the workers' singing associations to become re-politicised.⁵⁸ Dieter Dowe's study remains one of the few which attempted to discuss why songs were important to those singing them, a theme taken up in the opening chapter of this thesis. Dowe's work has been influential in guiding more recent histories of non-German working-class singers, most notably Gareth Williams' excellent study of choral societies in Wales between 1840-1914, which raises interesting questions about the disparate nature of the political development of the working class of Europe's two foremost industrial powers.⁵⁹

Crucially it is through a concentration on songs that were known to have been sung on the streets that moves this study beyond the established scholarship

⁵⁴ Werner Kaden, 'Die Entwicklung der Arbeitsägerbewegung im Gau Chemnitz des Deutschen Arbeitsägerbundes von den Anfängen bis 1933' (PhD thesis, Berlin, 1965), p. 118-121; Werner Kaden, 'Ziele und Aufgaben des Laienmusizierens des Arbeiters' in *Arbeiterklasse und Musik: Theoretische Positionen in der deutschen Arbeiterklasse zur Musikkultur vor 1945* (Berlin: Akademie der Künste der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, 1974), pp. 51-65.

⁵⁵ Traude Ebert-Obermeier, 'Zur Herausbildung eines historisch-materialistischen Musikgeschichtsbildes' in *Arbeiterklasse und Musik: Theoretische Positionen*, pp. 15-16.

⁵⁶ Dowe, 'The Workingmen's Choral Movement in Germany before the First World War'; On the DASB in particular see: W.L. Guttmann, *Workers' Culture in Weimar Germany: Between Tradition and Commitment* (New York: Berg, 1990), pp. 155-176.

⁵⁷ Hartmann Wunderer, *Arbeitervereine und Arbeiterparteien: Kultur- und Massenorganisationen in der Arbeiterbewegung, 1890-1933* (Frankfurt/New York: Campus Verlag, 1980).

⁵⁸ Wilfried van der Will and Rob Burns, eds, *Arbeiterkulturbewegung in der Weimarer Republik. Eine historisch-theoretische Analyse der kulturellen Bestrebungen der sozialdemokratisch organisierten Arbeiterschaft* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Ullstein, 1982), pp. 109-116.

⁵⁹ Gareth Williams, *Valleys of Song: Music and Society in Wales, 1840-1914* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998).

on the workers' singing movement. Unlike the concerted scholarship that emerged from the GDR under the aegis of the *Arbeiterliedarchiv*, Western studies have been much more fragmentary and diverse. Such works have taken song lyrics as their source texts, an approach that this study will emulate. Foremost amongst Western scholars has been Vernon Lidtke, who studied the contents of Social Democratic songbooks to argue that the role of song during the period of the *Kaiserreich* changed from advocating outright political reforms to the consolidation of accepted political beliefs. Lidtke's view accords closely with that of this study, namely that with the establishment of the Weimar Republic the Social Democrats had finally achieved their political objectives through the establishment of a democratic parliamentary republic and the concomitant emancipation of the workers, and that as a consequence the SPD canon reflected these changes. However this study moves beyond Lidtke's preoccupation with the Social Democrats to include Communist songs in order to establish how each canon developed separately as well as what was common to both.

Richard Bodek criticises Lidtke for not discussing performance venues and audiences in his study of song, i.e. by not placing them in their social context on the streets.⁶⁰ Bodek's own work on Communist street singing in the Weimar Republic addressed some of these shortcomings by studying both lyrics and the social and political frameworks in which they were created and sung.⁶¹ However, by concentrating on the Weimar Republic his study is inherently limited in its historical scope and range of sources, and begs wider questions about song throughout the period 1844-1933 which this thesis seeks to explore further.

Definition of Terms

In a study concerned with the political song of the working class, a clearer definition of terms is needed from the outset. Any attempt to analyse the medium of song has to acknowledge that Germans in this period utilized a number of related, nearly co-terminus terms to signify forms of song that were understood as belonging specifically to the working class. The first of these, *Arbeiterlied* ('workers' song'), serves as 'an umbrella term to include all songs that favour the

⁶⁰ Bodek, 'Communist Music in the Streets', pp. 267-286.

⁶¹ See also: Richard Bodek, 'We are the Red Megaphone.' Political Music, Agitprop Theater, Everyday Life and Communist Politics during the Weimar Republic' (PhD thesis, Michigan, 1990); Richard Bodek 'Red Song: Social Democratic Music and Radicalism at the End of the Weimar Republic', *Central European History*, 28·2 (1995), 209-228.

labour movement, the working classes, and the socialist political tradition'.⁶² The term *Kampflied* ('literally 'struggle song') is used to denote the struggle of the German industrial working class to achieve political and social equality, and they often advocate a revolutionary solution. This is the distinction that I intend to follow in this study, not least because of its ability to distinguish between those songs that espouse revolutionary messages and those that advance reformist principles.

It would also be prescient at this point to acknowledge the contentious position of the term 'working class'. In this thesis, when discussing the working class I am referring to those urbanized industrial workers who moved into Germany's large towns and cities in order to provide labour for Germany's burgeoning industrial revolution. Class remains one of the most consistently challenged of historical concepts, and its one-time primacy as the category of choice in social history, has been undermined by those who stress the primacy of alternative concepts such as gender, ethnicity and race.⁶³ However my continued use of the term does not mean that the working class is a homogenous, monolithic entity: almost all scholarship continues to emphasize the many disparate elements that go to make up the working class: the unemployed, the semi-skilled, the unskilled, those on the periphery of society and so on. All of these categories can also be further sub-divided to examine differences in age, ethnicity and gender. Arguably however, in correctly acknowledging the existence of other legitimate poles of identity and social formation in the wake of the cultural turn in historical studies, scholars have over compensated for the previous dominance of class as a category of analysis by too readily excluding it from their range of analytical tools.

⁶² Lidtke, 'Songs and Politics', p. 254.

⁶³ Patrick Joyce, *Class* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 131-149; William H. Sewell Jr., 'How Classes are Made: Critical Reflections on E.P. Thompson's Theory of Working-class Formation', in *E.P. Thompson, Critical Perspectives*, ed. by Harvey J. Kaye and Keith McLelland (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), pp. 50-77; Gareth Steadman Jones, *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working Class History, 1832-1982* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Kathleen Canning, 'Gender and the Politics of Class Formation: Rethinking German Labor History', *American Historical Review*, 97.3 (1992), pp. 736-768; Kathleen Canning, *Languages of Labor and Gender: Female Factory Work in Germany, 1850-1914* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1996); Laura L. Frader, 'Dissent over Discourse: Labor History, Gender, and the Linguistic Turn', *History and Theory*, 34.3 (1995), pp. 213-230; Joan Scott, 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis', *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), pp. 28-46; John Belchem and Neville Kirk, eds, *Languages of Labour* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 1997); Geoff Eley and Keith Nield, 'Starting over: the Present, the Post-modern and the Moment of Social History', *Social History*, 20.3 (1995), 355-364.

Therefore, I believe that class still retains enough historical legitimacy to allow its use in the context that I have outlined here.

Sources

This polarisation of protest song historiography is also clearly reflected in the two very different approaches taken by the two main archives concerned with the study of working-class song that, even today, seem to reflect Cold War ideological thinking. The two principal archives, the *Arbeiterliedarchiv des Akademie der Künste* (Workers' Song Archive at the Academy of Art) in East Berlin, and the *Fritz Hüser Institut* (FHI) in Dortmund in the 'SPD heartland' of western Germany, maintain collections whose content demonstrate many features of the old suspicions that marked Communist and Social Democratic relations. As source bases, both institutions have inherent limitations largely arising from their adherence to a particular political worldview.

The principal archive for this work has been the *Arbeiterliedarchiv des Akademie der Künste* in Berlin, which contains an extensive collection of nineteenth and twentieth century songbooks. This archive also contains a collection of audio recordings, supplemented by general literature pertaining principally to Communist working-class song. This collection also features some of the legislation applied by the German authorities to contain the creation and performance of working-class protest song. Police reports and eyewitness accounts provide additional sources, and are particularly valuable in determining how working-class song was viewed by those singing it on the one hand, and by the authorities reacting to its message on the other.

In contrast, the principal West German archive, the *Fritz Hüser Institut*, possesses a collection that reflects the traditional pre-occupation of many scholars of the western world, with organizational histories of the labour movement and biographies of its leading personalities.⁶⁴ Additionally, much of the literature that

⁶⁴ Walter Fillies, *Die Arbeitsäckerbewegung* (Rostock: Mecklenburgische Volkszeitung GmbH, 1922); Otto Didam, *Die Volkschorbewegung: Festschrift des Gausängerfestes des DAS* (Leipzig: Pfingsten, 1925); Victor Noack, *Die Deutscher Arbeitsäckerbund, Entstehung, Kampf und Aufstieg* (Berlin: Verlag des Deutschen Arbeitsäckerbundes, 1931); Otto Rüb, 'Die chorischen Organisationen (Gesangvereine) der bürgerlichen Mittel- und Unterschicht im Raum Frankfurt am Main von 1800 bis zur Gegenwart' (MPhil, Frankfurt-am-Main, 1964); Kaden, 'Die Entwicklung der Arbeitsäckerbewegung im Gau Chemnitz'; Siegfried Flügel, 'Die Entwicklung des Arbeitergesangs in Raum Halle, Weissenfels und Zeitz zwischen 1890 und 1933' (PhD thesis, Halle, 1965); Kurt Thomas, *Arbeitergesang-Arbeitermusik: Traditionen der Arbeiterchöre und der Arbeitermusik im Bezirk Erfurt* (Weimar: Stadtmuseum Weimar, 1974); Mathais Knauer and Frank Wulf, 'Arbeiter-Volkslieder. Chöre und Kampflieder in der Weimarer Republik'. in *Jahrbuch*

has emerged from this institute is closely related to the Social Democratic Party itself, and is thus inherently sympathetic to its worldview.⁶⁵ The FHI collection consists largely of song sheets of an overwhelmingly apolitical character: these were songs that were sung as four-part choral works by organised singing associations. Single-part harmonic versions of these songs, as used 'on the streets' by massed ranks of working-class singers are notably absent. Much of the remaining literature relates to the post-1945 activities of West German singing associations, with a particular emphasis on choral performances of the great composers' works, reflecting earlier disputes between moderate and radical socialists as to the merits of song as a tool of aesthetic education and artistic achievement as opposed to one of political indoctrination.⁶⁶ This collecting policy echoes the historical criticism of the Social Democrats by the Communists that after 1890, Social Democratic song, and indeed the whole practice of organized workers' singing, was robbed by the SPD of its radicalism and potential to mobilise workers for revolutionary action.⁶⁷

Methodological Approaches

The development of working-class political culture can perhaps be best understood by the comparative examination of protest song lyrics over an extended period of time, in order to determine both changes and continuities. By examining the

Arbeiterbewegung, 2 vols, ed. by Claudio Pozzoli (Frankfurt-am-Main, [n.pub], 1974); Wunderer, *Arbeitervereine und Arbeiterparteien: Kultur- und Massenorganisation in der Arbeiterbewegung*; van der Will and Burns, *Arbeiterkulturbewegung in der Weimarer Republik*; Horst Frühauf, 'Die Thüringer Arbeitersängerbewegung von 1918 bis zu ihrer Auflösung im Jahre 1933', 2 vols (PhD thesis, Halle, 1984); Rainer Noltenius, 'Das Liedrepertoire von 9. Arbeiterchören des Ruhrgebiets 1898-1953', in *Illustrierte Geschichte der Arbeiterchöre*, ed. by Rainer Noltenius (Essen: Klartext Verlag, 1992); Dietmar Klenke, Peter Lilje and Franz Walter, eds., *Arbeitersänger und Volksbühnen in der Weimarer Republik* (Bonn: J.H.W. Dietz, 1992); Richard J. Evans, *Rethinking German History* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1987), p. 192.

⁶⁵ Related to working-class singing see: Noltenius, ed., *Illustrierte Geschichte der Arbeiterchöre*; Adamek, *Politisches Lied heute*; Uwe Hornauer, *Laienspiel und Massenchor* (Cologne: Prometh Verlag, 1985). Other FHI publications relating to working-class culture include: Jon Clark, *Bruno Schönlank und die Arbeitersprechchorbewegung* (Cologne: Prometh Verlag, 1984); Anita Overvien-Neuhaus, *Leben und Werk des Bergarbeiterdichters Otto Wohlgemuth* (Cologne: Prometh Verlag, 1986); Herbert Dieker, *Arbeitersport Im Spannungsfeld der Zwanziger Jahre. Sportpolitik und Alltagserfahrungen auf internationaler, deutscher und Berliner Ebene* (Essen: Klartext Verlag, 1990).

⁶⁶ For a good discussion of post-1945 German protest song see: Karl Adamek, *Politisches Lied heute: Zur Soziologie des Singens von Arbeiterliedern* (Essen: Klartext Verlag, 1987), pp. 55-67.

⁶⁷ Larissa Reissner, *Hamburg at the Barricades and other writings on Weimar Germany*, ed. and trans. by Richard Chappell (London: Pluto Press, 1977), pp.37-38; Bodek, *Proletarian Performance in Weimar Berlin*, p.6; Lammel, *Kampfgefährte: Unser Lied*, pp. 54-55.

substantial canon of working-class protest songs that built up prior to 1933, themselves an intrinsic part of the cultural capital of the workers' milieu, these texts can be analysed in order to determine just how the meanings and the usage of political song developed and changed over time.

To achieve this aim a comparative methodology has been adopted in this thesis. The substantial collection of songbooks held at the *Arbeiterliedarchiv* features many examples which had been printed in successive editions over extended periods of time: this permits comparisons to be made with books from previous years, allowing changes in content, and political tone to be noted. In addition to the changes in the nature and content of songs included and excluded in successive editions, the political tone of the editors' introduction is particularly useful for determining the changes in the political situation pertaining in Germany at the time when the book was being produced.⁶⁸

As part of the concentration on organizational history, research by both western scholars and those of the former GDR has centred on the radicalism, or lack thereof, of the DASB.⁶⁹ Whilst this thesis eschews this traditional emphasis on organized singing groups in favour of those songs known to have been sung on the streets, some of the paradigms established by this debate will be utilised to provide a framework for wider historiographical debate about the development of working-class protest song.⁷⁰ Foremost amongst these is the debate about how the political stance of the DASB reflected a wider concern within the labour movement about whether it should adopt a revolutionary or reformist position.

Such distinctions have been criticised by scholars as being too inflexible or simplistic in recent years.⁷¹ However, in the context of this study, the terms revolutionary and reformist retain a particular utility when they are narrowly focused on the messages contained in protest song lyrics. Although such blanket distinctions cannot possibly express the individual reaction of every industrial

⁶⁸ See the discussion on interpreting songbooks in: Gilbert, *Music in the Holocaust*, p. 79.

⁶⁹ Eisler, 'Geschichte der deutschen Musikbewegung von 1848', pp. 211-30; Kaden, 'Ziele und Aufgaben des Laienmusizierens des Arbeiters', pp. 51-65; Inge Lammel, 'Zur Rolle und Bedeutung des Arbeiterliedes', *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung*, 3 (1962), 726-742; Dowe, 'The Workingmen's Choral Movement in Germany', pp. 276-77; Lammel, *Das Arbeiterlied*, pp. 51-62; Wunderer, *Arbeitervereine und Arbeiterparteien*; van der Will and Burns, eds, *Arbeiterkulturbewegung in der Weimarer Republik.*, pp. 109-116.

⁷⁰ Eisler, 'Geschichte der deutschen Musikbewegung', pp. 211-230; Bodek, *Proletarian Performance in Weimar Berlin*, pp. 6-7.

⁷¹ Bodek, *Proletarian Performance in Weimar Berlin*, p. 8; Dick Geary, 'Radicalism and the Worker: Metalworkers and Revolution, 1914-1923', in *Society and Politics in Wilhelmine Germany*, ed. by Richard J. Evans (London: Croom Helm, 1978), 267-286.

worker when encountering protest song, nonetheless they are useful in creating a credible framework within which general working-class political principles and ideas can be detected and investigated in their historical context. Undoubtedly, within German society, there were workers who wanted revolution, and others, who believed that reform could be obtained without recourse to such drastic methods, and looked to the creation and maintenance of a system of democratic government as the best way to achieve the majority of their political, social and economic goals. This debate, exacerbated by differences within the labour movement about how it should react to the outbreak and subsequent conduct of the First World War, would eventually manifest themselves in the post-war splintering of the SPD into Independent Social Democrat (USPD) and Communist parties.

This thesis will argue that contrary to the predominant East German viewpoint, those songs that did not necessarily advocate proletarian revolution still retained both a political and a historical validity. Such songs could either imply a belief in reformism, or they may be seen as a wholly pragmatic response to the growing weight of political repression endured under successive regimes up until the establishment of the Weimar Republic. Ultimately this thesis seeks to use the political worldview expounded by both sides of the reformist/revolutionary debate in order to provide a methodological framework for the examination of protest song lyrics and what they signify for the political development of the working class. Therefore, reversing the view of Richard Bodek, this thesis is essentially predicated on the notion that the use of a reformist-revolutionary dichotomy illuminates more than it obscures.⁷²

Chapter Structure

This thesis is divided into six chapters. The first chapter discusses the role of protest song in the development of working-class political culture, with a particular emphasis on how and why it was used to express and communicate political ideas. It will focus on what methods were used to maximise song's effectiveness, and how it possessed potential to foster a collective sense of working-class identity. This in turn will lead to a discussion of the attitude adopted by the authorities, before concluding with a brief analysis of the emotive appeal of protest song.

The second chapter discusses how protest song remained subject to repression and subjugation by the authorities throughout the period under review. The potentially seditious nature of song made it a prime candidate for repressive

⁷² Bodek, *Proletarian Performance in Weimar Berlin*, p. 8

action by the authorities, and as this chapter will demonstrate, restrictions present in the latter stages of the nineteenth century were still in use in the latter days of Weimar. This chapter will also analyse the various forms that such repression took, ranging from the censorship of songbooks through to the forcible prohibition of singing particular songs on the streets.

The third chapter is the first of a quartet that discusses what was being sung, and by whom, and in addition, examines the social, economic and political events that shaped the production of working-class protest song during each respective era. The first of these chronological surveys takes 1844 as its starting point, as this date is usually associated with the appearance of the first industrial workers' protest song, namely Freiligrath's *Das Blutgericht* ('the Blood Court'). This chapter notes the transition from songs detailing the pride of the master artisan to those recounting the social misery engendered by the early stages of industrialisation. It discusses how the failure of the 1848-9 Revolution initially inhibited the further development of working-class protest song, before growing disillusionment with the Liberals and Bismarck's antagonism towards them resulted in a renaissance of interest by the early 1870s. The authorities efforts to curb what they perceived as the growing threat posed by working-class protest song concludes this chapter through a discussion of the increasing restrictions levied on singing workers up to 1878 and the passing of the *Sozialistengesetz* (Anti-Socialist Law).

The fourth chapter continues this analysis, beginning in 1878 with an overview of the repressive measures imposed under the provisions of the Anti-Socialist Law. It then considers developments in working-class political culture up to the outbreak of the First World War. This chapter discusses not only the practical effects of the law, but also how it continued to affect the creation and performance of songs even after it was allowed to lapse. It will examine the extent to which the last year of the Anti-Socialist Law can be said to have marked the radical highpoint of Social Democracy, and it questions whether the move to songs demanding specific social reforms was a pragmatic response to the continued threat of political repression, or, as Communist critics would argue, a capitulation to the authorities which inhibited the development of a more radical canon of working-class protest song. The chapter will also examine the impact that the politicisation of women, youth and sporting groups after 1900 had on the development of working-class protest song, before concluding with an analysis of how song was used to support Social Democratic campaigning against militarism and war.

The fifth chapter discusses the development of political song from 1914-1923, encompassing both the horror of the First World War and the tumult of the early years of the Weimar Republic. The focus of the first part is the First World War itself. It analyses how wartime censorship initially severely restricted the creation and dissemination of protest song, not least through the control of the content of official songbooks, and notes how growing working-class dissatisfaction with the privations engendered by the conflict resulted in the surreptitious appearance of songs that were scathingly critical of the military regime. The second part deals with the revolutionary upheaval of the immediate post-war years, with a particular emphasis on the split in the political organizations of the labour movement: this had a profound effect on the content of the songs produced by the Social Democrats and Communists, all of which was set against the backdrop of the violence and revolutionary upheaval that affected all sides of the political spectrum during this period.

The final chapter covers the period from 1924 until the Nazi seizure of power in January 1933. The start of this period marked the transition from large-scale revolutionary upheaval to more localised ‘clash violence’, and this development, accompanied by the rise of the so-called ‘Combat Leagues’ would have a decisive effect on the development of political protest song. This chapter will examine those songs that emerged from the battles for control of the streets, with a particular emphasis on how the growing ideological divide between the Communists and Social Democrats impacted on the radicalism of lyrics. It will conclude with an examination of those organisations, such as the Agitprop troupes, that took protest songs out on the streets, as part of a wider discussion as to how song informed and represented working-class opinions in the last days of the Weimar Republic.

Chapter 1

The Role of Protest Song in Working-class Political Culture

This chapter examines the role of protest song in the development of a working class political culture in Germany in the period from 1844-1933. This chapter is organised around a number of questions designed to explore the significance of protest song as a method of political communication.¹ The initial section explores the relationship of folk song to working-class political song, with particular regard to the debate over its suitability to communicate overtly political messages. Secondly, this chapter will discuss whether song could be used to promote a shared sense of working-class identity that would lead to the creation of a distinct political consciousness that would encourage workers to become politically active. The third section will discuss the practical aspects of how song was used in order to determine if it could be more effective than slogans or speeches as a means of conveying political messages. Song's ability to be composed and deployed contemporaneously with political events, or to be produced retrospectively, will also be investigated, as will the role of the printed media in allowing popular songs' widespread dissemination. This chapter will conclude with a discussion regarding the emotive aspect of working-class song. This will be illuminated by considering a number of personal testimonies and first-hand accounts which offer us insights into how political song impacted on the everyday lives of the ordinary worker, which will also be drawn upon to discuss just how effective song could be as a means of political communication.

1:1 The Relationship of Folk Song to Protest Song

Protest songs created to serve the political hopes and aspirations of Germany's industrial workers and the development of a distinct working-class political culture drew on a mixture of classical melodies, folk tunes and soldiers' songs. New politicised lyrics were added to existing well-known tunes that were then used to comment upon and ridicule contemporary political figures and events. The majority of early workers' protest songs developed out of the substantial existing

¹ Ute Frevert, 'Politische Kommunikation und ihre Medien', in *Sprachen des Politischen: Medien und Medialität in der Geschichte* ed. by Ute Frevert & Wolff Braungart (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), pp. 7-19.

canon of nineteenth century folk song, the development of which has been the subject of intensive historical study.²

The precise utility of folk song, and its suitability as a medium of protest in an industrialised age has been a prime concern of historians of the working class. Bohlman's study of the *Landschaftliche Volkslieder* series, which has recorded the historical development of folk songs from across the German speaking lands, argues that by concentrating on such themes as the idea of a German homeland, important historical and religious events, and tales relating to the lives of peasants and noblemen, traditional folk song did not, as a consequence of such emphases, possess any utility for the modern industrial worker:³ As Bohlman noted:

[in the songs created both before and after the First World War] there are no songs about cities and their problems, among the occupational songs, there is no hint of the oppressive role of industry.⁴

The journalist and prominent contemporary Social Democratic politician Emanuel Wurm (1857-1920) agreed that traditional folk song lacked political sentiments and offered little appreciation of the grim reality of working-class life. However, whilst acknowledging this fact, Wurm, writing just before the outbreak of the First World War, argued that it was this very apolitical character, with its emphasis on such themes as love and beauty that endowed it with a tangible role to play in the everyday life of the industrial worker:

It is on political authority, not artistic grounds, that it is recommended that folk songs should not be sung in workers' circles. Certainly the heart of the worker beats stronger for love, spring, tales of wandering and beauty [the main themes of most folk-songs], and he will never forego such songs to obtain its prize. A worker knows of the joy that

² See the 44 volume series, *Landschaftliche Volkslieder*, published between 1924-1972 by the *Deutsches Volksliedarchiv* in Freiburg. This series is referenced in: Otto Holzapfel, *Das Deutsche Volksliedarchiv Freiburg im Breisgau: Studien zur Volksliedforschung*, vol.3 (Berne: Peter Lang, 1989). In addition see the scholarship of Wolfgang Steinitz, codified in: Wolfgang Steinitz, *Deutsche Volkslieder demokratischen Charakters aus sechs Jahrhunderten*, Vol. 1 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1954); Wolfgang Steinitz, *Deutsche Volkslieder demokratischen Charakters aus sechs Jahrhunderten*, Vol. 2 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1962). See also: Wolfgang Steinitz, 'Arbeiterlied und Arbeiterkultur', *Beiträge zur Musikwissenschaft*, 6 (1964), 277-288; Kurt Thomas, 'Arbeiterlied-Volkslied-Arbeitervolkslied: Eine Studie zur Problematik des folklorisierten Arbeiterliedes', *Beiträge zur Musikwissenschaft*, 13 (1971), 83-88.

³ Philip V. Bohlman, 'Landscape, Region, Nation, Reich: German Folk Song in the Nexus of National Identity', in *Music and German National Identity*, ed. by Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 2002), pp. 105-127.

⁴ Bohlman, 'Landscape, Region, Nation, Reich', pp. 119-120.

life offers as proclaimed in [folk]-song, and as consequence he thinks of his joyless present, that forces him to adopt a harder front, that leaves no time to enjoy what is apparently granted to all people on earth.⁵

Wurm's view that folk songs provided relief from the unremitting drudgery and grim poverty of industrial life endowed them with a practical, everyday significance, if not an explicit political role. The idea of folk song providing relief from the daily grind of the workers' struggle for social and political equality was also taken up by Anton Schauder in his article *Das Volkslied und die Gesangvereine* (Folk song and the Singing Association), which also appeared shortly before the First World War:

Mankind can not go back again to the simple relationship of previous centuries, but love and joy, desire and sorrow, the struggle and longing for peace and good fortune in life still inspires humanity today.⁶

However, Schauder's acceptance of the continuing utility of folk song was tempered by his acknowledgement of the changes that Germany's rapid nineteenth-century industrialisation had wrought between employers and workers. No longer a 'simple relationship', principally due to the ongoing realisation within the working class that they did indeed possess political strength because of the need for labour in an industrial society, Schauder was one of a number of pre-First World War working-class commentators who realized the need for a new generation of folksong, acknowledging the greater politicisation of more and more sectors of the working class such as youth and women in the first decade of the twentieth century.

Commentators increasingly took up the idea that new *Volkslieder* would have to be written that combined folk song themes with a more strident, overtly political message, one that more rigorously reflected what they perceived to be the political realities of working-class life. Writing in the DASB journal during the early part of the First World War the music journalist Max Menzer cited the privations and suffering caused by the fighting as a just reason to ensure that new

⁵ Inge Lammel, 'Politisches Lied und Volkslied in der Gesangspraxis der Arbeiterklasse' in *Arbeiterklasse und Musik: Theoretische Position in der Deutscher Arbeiterklasse zur Musikkultur vor 1945*, ed. by Inge Lammel, Akademie der Künste der DDR, Arbeitsheft 15, (Leipzig: Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1975), pp. 35-36.

⁶ Article quoted in: Lammel, 'Politisches Lied und Volkslied in der Gesangspraxis der Arbeiterklasse', p. 36.

Volkslieder continued to be produced. According to Menzer in his article, 'The Lament over the Folksong', those contemporary political events that reflected the strife and impoverishment of working-class life should repeatedly provide the catalyst for new compositions, arguing strongly that 'the *Volkslied* must always be born anew, again and again, out of the soul of the time'.⁷

Despite such ongoing support for the folk song and a belief in its continued utility in working-class political life, others argued that the increasingly oppressive nature of state-worker relations, marked by a proliferation in the number of strikes and industrial disputes, militated against the suitability and continuing use of the *Volkslied* as a mainstream political weapon. Hermann Duncker (1874-1960), a leading Social Democrat Party functionary and publicist of the political working-class choir movement, was a leading proponent of the belief that all new compositions should become 'class songs' (*Klassenlieder*), through the adoption of more contemporary and hard-hitting lyrics, lyrics that he believed would better reflect the current working-class political feeling. Writing at the turn of the century, Duncker summarized his proposal thus:

What the proletariat carry in their hearts, let us sing that: pride and manly courage before the powerful forces of the present, joy of battle and hopes of victory... The *Volkslied* must become a true *Freiheitslied* ('freedom song').⁸

Duncker's vision is replete with martial language, using military metaphors and notions of 'battle' and 'victory' to equate the class struggle with a military-type campaign. To that end, Duncker's reference to 'pride and manly courage' emphasises the traditionally masculine values of military service. Similarly, Emanuel Wurm also agreed that the traditional *Volkslied* lacked the necessary intensity to articulate working-class political hopes and aspirations:

The worker should not be allowed to flee into a world without struggle. Their songs should and must speak of the oppression in the life of the worker, of the fight against the depressing, joy-destroying present against a humane and beautifully free future. This tendency must run through workers' song to show the life of the working people. The *Volkslied* of our day is the *Arbeiterlied*.⁹

⁷ Max Menzer, 'Die Klage um das Volklied', *DAS Zeitung, Berlin*, 15 November 1915, p. 2.

⁸ Hanns Eisler, *Einiges über des Verhalten der Arbeiter Sänger und Musiker in Deutschland in Sinn und Form*, Sonderheft Hanns Eisler (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1964), p. 147.

⁹ Lammel, 'Politisches Lied und Volkslied in der Gesangspraxis der Arbeiterklasse', p. 37.

Thus, Duncker's view that a new type of *Volkslied* more suited to the modern industrial age was needed is unequivocal. The Leipzig workers' choir conductor Otto Didam echoed the views of Duncker and Wurm, arguing in 1925 that the poor social, political and economic conditions confronting the industrial worker meant that the preoccupation of traditional folk songs with concepts such as love and the beauty of nature were no longer adequate to communicate the political feelings of the working class:

The workers' movement has none of its own *Volkslieder* in the original sense. The ground on which the heartfelt, contemplative *Volkslied* could grow does not exist anymore. The *Volkslied* of the working class is the *Kampflied*.¹⁰

For Didam, the pace of German industrialization and the difficulties that this process had inflicted on the working class rendered the contemplative folk song obsolete, and therefore new, harder edged, politically charged songs were now necessary. The idea of the overtly political song, personified by the term *Kampflied* ('song of struggle') as being more suitable to articulate and express working-class political thoughts and opinions gained great currency, particularly amongst those musicians and thinkers influenced by Marxism. Hanns Eisler (1898-1962) a prominent composer of working-class protest songs during the 1920-30s, as well as being a member of the German Communist Party, was foremost in adopting such a viewpoint:

The modern industrial proletariat lives in such complicated work relationships that the naïve art of the *Volkslied* does not suffice any longer to describe them. The peculiar position of the industrial proletariat in modern life is actually expressed in no single *Volkslied*. The proletariat had created something useful for its class aims, the *Kampflied*. The *Kampflied* is the real *Volkslied* of the proletariat.¹¹

Eisler is thus categorical in his assertion that the *Volkslied* was no longer suitable to address workers' concerns in the modern industrial age.

In the mid-to-late twentieth century, the relationship of the *Volkslied* to the *Arbeiterlied*, in particular debates as to its political utility became a central historiographical theme, particularly amongst historians in the German Democratic Republic. A leading protagonist in this debate was Inge Lammel, head of the *Arbeiterliedarchiv* at the *Akademie der Künste* from 1954-1985. As a Marxist

¹⁰ Otto Didam, *Die Volkschorbewegung: Festschrift des Gausängerfestes des DAS* (Leipzig: Pfingsten, 1925), pp. 21-22.

¹¹ Eisler, *Einiges über des Verhalten der Arbeiter Sänger*, p. 147.

historian Lammel argued that pre-industrial *Volkslieder* (broadly speaking those composed before the revolutionary events of 1848) were too politically ‘neutral’ in character to adequately express the social and political demands of a working class that was being subjected to the massive stresses of rapid industrialization and urbanization. Lammel also believed that folksong had had a damaging effect upon the political development of the working class, arguing that by singing *Volkslieder*, workers were being actively distracted from their ‘duty’ of prosecuting the day-to-day political battle (*Tageskampf*).¹² Lammel based this argument on the relative lack of *Arbeiterlieder* (and conversely the preponderance of *Volkslieder*) in the songbooks of the mid-to-late nineteenth century.¹³

Seen from her Marxist perspective, Lammel cites the favouring of *Volkslieder* over *Arbeiterlieder* in these songbooks as evidence of a lack of revolutionary fervour on the part of those commissioning and composing working-class songs during this period.¹⁴ However, as political song was repeatedly subjected to widespread police censorship and songs were proscribed and editors imprisoned on a regular basis, accusations of a lack of revolutionary spirit should really be tempered by a pragmatic assessment of the political realities of day-to-day working-class life. Moreover, it should be acknowledged that where reformist thinking was intentionally expressed in political song this did not render it politically invalid as Communist critics claim: rather such songs are representative of the diverse, heterogeneous political nature of the working class.

This heterogeneity found expression in the content of working-class songbooks. The continued popularity of folk songs amongst industrial workers meant that the majority of songbooks that appeared prior to the outbreak of the First World War, most of which were published under the auspices of the Social Democrats, continued to include many *Volkslieder* alongside the political *Arbeiterlieder*.¹⁵ However in songbooks published on behalf of the newly-formed

¹² Lammel, ‘Politisches Lied und Volkslied in der Gesangspraxis der Arbeiterklasse’, p. 35.

¹³ For songbooks see the following at the Arbeiterlied Archiv, Akademie der Künste, Berlin (hereafter AdK): AdK- A2, A3, A8, A9, A15, A16, A17, A21, A33, A34, A35, A44, A46, A51, A54, A55. See also: Margarete Nespital, *Das deutsche Proletariat in seinem Lied* (Rostock: Mecklenburgische Volkszeitung GmbH, 1932)

¹⁴ Lammel, ‘Politisches Lied und Volkslied in der Gesangspraxis der Arbeiterklasse’, p. 35.

¹⁵ In particular see the following at the Fritz Hüser Institut, (hereafter FHI), Dortmund:

FHI - 303 Series, Volkschör Hörde papers

FHI - 304 Series, Volkschör Oespel-Kley papers.

For a parallel, though regionally limited study see also: Rainer Noltenius, ‘Das Liedrepertoire von 9.Arbeiterchören des Ruhrgebiets 1898-1953’, in *Illustrierte Geschichte der Arbeiterchöre*, ed. by Rainer Noltenius (Essen: Klartext Verlag, 1992), pp. 140-46.

Communist party in the immediate aftermath of the War *Volkslieder* were pointedly omitted: indeed Communists actively derided non-Communist workers' songbooks for including folk songs, which they believed to be 'frivolous'. In Communist eyes, the continuing presence of *Volkslieder* illustrated the passivity and timidity of Social Democracy and its willingness to be distracted from the serious business of the day-to-day political struggle.¹⁶

Even whilst this debate over the utility of *Volkslieder* for communicating political messages raged on, folk songs continued to have an influence on the structure of new politically charged songs. Many *Volkslieder* supplied melodies, or were parodied, or adopted wholesale married to new politically charged lyrics: familiarity with these tunes allowed them to be easily assimilated and disseminated to as wide an audience as possible. Thus the continued influence of old themes and melodies when applied to new political situations would become a central theme in the production of new working-class songs, and the continuity and change that this process engendered, and the significance of each, will be addressed in subsequent chapters of this study.

1.2: The Role of Protest Song

Many people, be they individuals or labour organizations, deployed political song in the name of the German working class so as to express and communicate socialist thoughts and ideas to a workforce being subjected to the stresses and privations of urban industrial life. As subsequent chapters will demonstrate the originators of such songs were manifold: bourgeois *Vormärz* poets enthused by the 'ideas of 1848', numerous anonymous workers, choir leaders and composers engaged by the burgeoning labour movement's own organizations, all contributed songs that expressed their own particular vision of the workers' future.

Many early *Arbeiterlieder* were written in order to foster unity amongst what was a highly heterogenous and multi-faceted working class that was being politicised as a consequence of the social and political pressures that accompanied Germany's rapid industrialization.¹⁷ As a result of this politicisation, a process that noticeably accelerated in the early years of the twentieth century, songwriters hoped to develop the concept of 'proletarian unity' and use it to develop a purely

¹⁶ Lammel, 'Politisches Lied und Volkslied in der Gesangspraxis der Arbeiterklasse', p. 35.

¹⁷ Tom Kemp, *Industrialization in Nineteenth-century Europe*, 2nd edn. (London/New York, Longman, 1985), pp. 78-113; Peter N. Stearns, 'Rise of Strikes: The Limits of Labour Protest' in *The Industrial Revolution and Work in Nineteenth-century Europe*, ed. by Leonard R. Berlanstein (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 127-147.

working-class sense of identity, one that was stressed as being unique and distinctive from anything that has previously existed in German society. From this sense of shared identity and commonality of political purpose, songwriters sought to foster the idea that German industrial workers possessed tangible political power, namely the might of its labour, which it could use to wring concessions from the authorities. As a consequence of this recognition, songwriters and composers tasked proletarian song with creating a political awareness within the working class, a process subsequently referred to as a 'consciousness building' function, a device that was intended to empower the working class and to stimulate the expression of distinctly proletarian political hopes and ideas for a restructuring of German society. Although the political message itself may have varied between composers, working-class political songs were written both as exhortations to political action and to recognize and assimilate experiences arising from the struggle for equality.¹⁸

Singing had been used as a means of strengthening a unified sense of German identity even before German unification, a development that was often at the expense of existing multiple regional identities.¹⁹ In 1862 the nationalist *Deutscher Sängerbund* (German Singers' League) was formed, and its founding charter expressed the desire that 'through the unifying power of German song, [the movement] hopes to preserve and enhance the German national consciousness and a feeling of solidarity among German tribes'.²⁰ These same basic principles would be adopted by those socialist singing associations which were established shortly thereafter, although of course nationalist desires were replaced by an emphasis on the fight to achieve equitable social, economic and political conditions for the working class. The capacity of political song to unite people of like-minded views was expressed by contemporary observers such as the workers' poet Manfred

¹⁸ Arno Kapp, 'Die politische Funktion der Arbeitersänger unter dem Sozialistengesetz' – unpublished, undated manuscript – quoted in Lammel, 'Politisches Lied und Volkslied in der Gesangspraxis der Arbeiterklasse', p. 26; Hermann Duncker, 'Kunstlerische Kultur', *Lieder-Gemeinschaft*, Berlin, 8 May 1904; Hermann Duncker, 'Kritik der Kritik', *Lieder-Gemeinschaft*, Berlin, 11 July 1905; Hanns Eisler, 'Die Erbauer einer neuen Musikkultur' in *Musik und Politik: Schriften, 1924-1948*, ed. by Günter Mayer, Gesammelte Werke, series III, vol. 1, (Leipzig: VEB Deutsche Verlag für Musik, 1973), pp. 149-178, (p. 161); Inge Lammel, 'Zur Rolle und Bedeutung des Arbeiterliedes', *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung*, 3 (1962), 726-742.

¹⁹ Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter, 'Germans as the People of Music: Genealogy of an Identity', in *Music and German National Identity*, pp. 1-35 (p. 10).

²⁰ Leo Kastenburg, *Jahrbuch der deutschen Musikorganisationen 1931* (Berlin: Max Hesse, 1931), p. 19; Applegate and Potter, 'Germans as the People of Music', p. 17.

Wittich (1851-1902). Writing in the inaugural edition of the music periodical *Lieder Gemeinschaft* in 1899, Wittich opined that:

Nothing brings the hearts and minds of a great mass of people together more ardently and powerfully than unison singing.... by a large crowd of people being filled with one and the same emotion and conviction.²¹

This extract intimates that working-class unity was not created simply by the lyrics and their ideological content, but by the shared act of singing itself. Also noteworthy here is the expression of the emotive element in singing, a somewhat less tangible but nonetheless most important feature of the shared working class singing experience. Gert Hagelweide suggested that massed working-class choirs were particularly effective in creating 'an immediate state of shared feeling between the author/message and his/its hearer'.²² Dieter Dowe argued that the massed singing of the first verse of Jakob Audorf's *Arbeiter-Marseillaise* by delegates at the end of every Social Democratic Party conference was both a symbolic gesture, set as it was to the melody of the highly contentious French revolutionary song *La Marseillaise*, a tune that often raised the ire of the German authorities, and simultaneously 'an expression of the fusion of the individual with the larger community'.²³

The ability of political song to unify such like-minded people in pursuit of a common cause created a sense of shared identity, and through being included within a wider collective listeners and singers alike were fortified in the battle for working-class political and social equality. When faced with political opponents on the streets, the working class drew strength from the sense of collective identity that, amongst other things, the shared experience of group singing had created for them. In their study of turn of the century Cologne, Günter Bers and Michael Klöcker noted that workers in the city often drew 'strength, courage and confidence' from the massed singing of songs, noting the predilection of those workers out on the streets for Audorf's *Arbeiter Marseillaise*.²⁴ As Gilbert notes, political song demonstrated an ability to 'outline a common foe and to provide

²¹ Manfred Wittich, 'Vom Volkslied zum Kunstgesang', *Lieder-Gemeinschaft*, 1, 1899.

²² Gert Hagelweide, *Das publizistische Erscheinungsbild des Menschen im kommunistischen Lied* (Bremen: [n.pub.], 1968), p. 269.

²³ Dieter Dowe, 'The Workingmen's Choral Movement in Germany before the First World War', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 13 (1978), 269-296 (p. 284).

²⁴ Günter Bers and Michael Klöcker, *Die sozialdemokratische Arbeiterbewegung in Kölner Raum, 1890-1895* (Wentorf bei Hamburg: [n.pub.], 1976), p. 28, p. 107, p. 324, p. 357.

voice to a commitment to resistance'.²⁵ This can be illustrated by the actions of Willi Bleicher, the author of the quote with which this thesis opened, whose political activities eventually resulted in his being sent to a Nazi concentration camp. Whilst he was imprisoned, the young metal worker and his fellow socialist prisoners continually used song to cheer themselves up, singing and even humming covertly in his cell as a gesture of resistance.²⁶

Songwriters and those who commissioned them actively sought to promote the idea that the working-class was not without weapons in the class struggle, i.e. that they actually possessed tangible political power in a rapidly industrializing and expanding German economy, namely the strength of their own labour. The act of recognizing such power has been described by those influenced by Marxist theories as the creation of a distinct working-class political 'consciousness'.²⁷ In her comprehensive study of working-class political song conducted in the early-1930s Margarete Nespital suggested that this process was a necessary prerequisite to achieving any measure of political 'liberation' ('*Befreiung*'). Nespital observed further that 'without such consciousness, the proletarian *Kampflied* would not be possible: the content of such songs determined the stance of the worker, gave the struggle its unique character and expressed its fundamental meaning'.²⁸

Nespital argued that singing strengthened workers' political resolve, both to defend their common social and political interests and to advocate tangible change:

The songs of the labour movement were....weapons in the battle of the workers against oppressive societal conditions, and the workers used them to strengthen themselves. Workers' songs were composed with the conviction that social change was a necessity, and as such contributed to the formation and maintenance of the will to actively participate in this change.²⁹

Song was thus not a peripheral issue of marginal importance, but an integral part of the struggle for working-class political equality.

Subsequent historians, too, have sought to link the concepts of a distinct proletarian identity and the development of a political consciousness, regarding

²⁵ Shirli Gilbert, *Music in the Holocaust: Confronting Life in the Nazi Ghettos and Camps* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), pp. 116-117.

²⁶ Inge Lammel, *Arbeiter-musikkultur in Deutschland, 1844-1945: Bilder und Dokumente* (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1984), p. 7.

²⁷ Hanns Eisler, 'Geschichte der deutschen Arbeitermusikbewegung von 1848' in *Musik und Politik, Schriften 1924-1948*, ed. by Günter Mayer, *Gesammelte Werke*, series III, vol. 1, 2nd edition (Leipzig: Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1985)

²⁸ Nespital, *Das deutsche Proletariat in seinem Lied*, p. 95.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

them as necessary prerequisites for social change. Werner Fuhr unequivocally argued that the function of political song was to foster a sense of class solidarity. Expanding on this viewpoint, one indelibly influenced by classical Marxist theory, Fuhr sought to distinguish the proletarian songs of the class-struggle (*Kampflieder*) from the critical political songs of the bourgeoisie (*Vortraglieder*), arguing that the singing of the former, with their emphasis on class solidarity, made the working man a mouthpiece for his entire class. According to Fuhr, this distinction firmly established the idea that working-class identity was a distinctive one, and as such sought to posit the idea that a working class with a real stake in the political life of the nation posed a credible alternative to the existing political structure of bourgeois-capitalist society.³⁰

Lammel, in typically Marxist terms, attributes political song, whether sung in massed ranks in a formal setting or in an ad hoc street demonstration, with the ability to build political consciousness and to foster working-class solidarity.³¹ As a consequence of this ‘consciousness building’ role, Lammel also ascribes the *Kampflied* an agitational role that could be used to encourage and verbalize dissatisfaction with the existing political regime and to mobilize the working class into taking political action to achieve social change.³² Gilbert agrees, stating that song was ‘a medium for the discussion and documentation of social disparity to promote causes, encourage active resistance and rouse defiance’.³³

Protest song undoubtedly played a prominent role in the establishment and expansion of the first working-class political organisations. Following the formation of the first working-class political parties in 1869, song was swiftly adopted to publicize the tasks and aims of the nascent labour movement and to advertise the party to potential new members.³⁴ Hermann Duncker, (1874-1960), an SPD politician and trade union functionary and an ardent publicist of the political choir movement, was a leading proponent of the notion that song should be used to improve the material conditions of the working class in pre-war Germany as part of a wider programme of political and social reform. Duncker was

³⁰ Werner Fuhr, *Proletarische Musik in Deutschland 1928-1933* (Göttingen: Rupprecht and Rupprecht, 1977), p. 201.

³¹ Lammel, ‘Politisches Lied und Volkslied in der Gesangspraxis der Arbeiterklasse’, p. 27.

³² Inge Lammel, *Das Arbeiterlied* (Frankfurt am Main: Röderberg Verlag, 1973), p. 11.

³³ Gilbert, *Music in the Holocaust*, pp. 3-4.

³⁴ Lammel, *Das Arbeiterlied*, p. 40; Lüdtke notes that the Nazis were using song for the very same ends sixty years later: Vernon L. Lüdtke, ‘Songs and Nazis: Political Music and Social Change in Twentieth-Century Germany’, in *Essays on Culture and Society in Modern Germany*, ed. by Gary Stark (Arlington: Texas A&M University Press, 1982), pp. 167-200 (p. 168).

unequivocal about ascribing this role to song, advocating that ‘the political songs of the workingmen’s choral societies were to be the battle-hymns of the class conscious workers’ army: the choirs were to be the trailblazers and pioneers.....that will accompany the advent of socialism’.³⁵

The first choral societies established exclusively for the working-class appeared during the 1860s, many of them created from the choral sections of the *Arbeiterbildungsvereine* (Workers’ Educational Associations or WEA). These gradually developed until working-class choir singing became the most popular pastime in the country by the eve of the First World War. This popularity eventually led to the creation of the DASB as the umbrella organisation for most of this fledgling working-class singing associations, an organisation that was affiliated to, but not part of, the Social Democratic Party. The DASB acknowledged its responsibility to stir political consciousnesses but soon found itself enmeshed in a wider debate, namely that political song should be used as a tool of political education, with its prime role being the ideological instruction of the working class in order to imbue them with socialist principles. With this role in mind, the DASB saw itself in unequivocal terms as being ‘one arm of the great fighting army of the workers’ party. Our weapon is the battle-hymn of the massed choirs, the freedom song, the song of political commitment [to socialism]’.³⁶

However, the notion that working-class singing associations should concentrate solely on ideological instruction was not universally accepted within their own ranks. To some choir leaders and composers, the role of workers’ singing was one of aesthetic education, in order to ‘improve’ the cultural range and outlook of the ordinary worker. This reflected the desire of many leading figures in the labour movement to educate the working class, as ideas of humanistic improvement took precedence over notions of political utility. Certainly members of early working-class singing associations believed that working-class political songs possessed this predominantly aesthetic function. One of these, Emil Sauerteig, the chairman and founder of the *Allgemeine Arbeitersängerbund* (General Workers Singing League) in Gotha, spoke of his rationale for establishing this workers’ singing association. Speaking in October 1876 at the *Gothaer Vereinigungsparteitag*, the day that the two previously separate leading social democratic parties decided to join forces, Sauerteig explicitly outlined what he believed the prime function of working-class singing to be:

³⁵ Dowe, ‘The Workingmen’s Choral Movement in Germany’, p. 270.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 274-285.

It is the beautiful task of singing societies, to brighten up the struggle of humanity for freedom, equality and brotherliness, through the harmony of singing.³⁷

Crucially there is no mention of the political role of working-class singing, reinforcing criticisms from GDR scholars that choirs were becoming more concerned with the artistic excellence of their performance, rather than trying to convey a clear political message.³⁸ Many protest songs were sung both in the choir hall and on the streets, albeit in different harmonies, and any perceived dilution of their revolutionary message was anathema to those who sought to maintain working-class ideological radicalism. Those who opposed the view that working-class political song should perform a purely educative function also believed that this emphasis on ‘performance’ reduced both the listener and the singer to the role of passive recipients. As a result, such critics believed that the political potential of working-class singing was inevitably submerged and its revolutionary message squandered by being ‘mitigated in applause’.³⁹

Others believed that the singing associations could perform both roles without any inherent contradictions, offering both ideological instruction and aesthetic education. The Leipzig choir leader and conductor Otto Didam agreed that workers’ singing could perform both tasks, using the *Kampflied* on the streets to promote the workers’ cause on the one hand, and the medium of formalized choir singing to master the great choral works to achieve a ‘true understanding of music’ on the other.⁴⁰ Hermann Duncker also attempted to find more common ground: he believed that massed choirs and street singing were both forms of communication that were equally capable of rousing working-class political consciousness because they were both produced by working class singers, a body that he described as ‘a large army of freedom fighters’, and thus shared similar hopes and aspirations for the future.⁴¹ Adamek agreed, noting the importance of working-class singing associations as an educational tool for imparting musical knowledge, and as a source of political songs that were a ‘confession of faith’ in

³⁷ Kurt Thomas, ed., *Arbeitergesang-Arbeitermusik: Traditionen der Arbeiterchöre und der Arbeitermusik im Bezirk Erfurt* (Weimar: Stadtmuseum Weimar, 1974), pp. 10-11.

³⁸ Lammel, ‘Politisches Lied und Volkslied in der Gesangspraxis der Arbeiterklasse’, p. 28; Duncker, ‘Kritik der Kritik’, *Lieder-Gemeinschaft*.

³⁹ Lammel, ‘Politisches Lied und Volkslied in der Gesangspraxis der Arbeiterklasse’, p. 28.

⁴⁰ Didam, *Die Volkschorbewegung*, p. 23.

⁴¹ Duncker, ‘Kritik der Kritik’, *Lieder-Gemeinschaft*

socialist ideas and principles, and that they served to inspire workers to defend their own class interests.⁴²

Eisler believed that *Kampflieder* could act both as a means of raising political consciousness and as a means of teaching the right methods in the working-class struggle against its political opponents. Yet he also acknowledged that working class song had a further quality, in that it also provided ‘rest and enjoyment’, but cautioned that this should not ‘distract us from the class struggle, but to refresh us for it’.⁴³ Amongst recent scholars, Dick Geary echoed such thoughts regarding the output of working-class singing associations, arguing that they retained a prime political role because of that fact that they were unequivocally workers’ organisations, populated by workers, and as such political songs with a political message were integral to their output.⁴⁴ Indeed, particularly during the Weimar Republic, working-class songs were indelibly harnessed to unfolding political events.

The growing menace of fascism, which became acute with the social and political effects of the worldwide economic crisis in the period following the Wall Street Crash of October 1929, underscored a general hardening of attitudes in both Social Democratic and Communist politics. As subsequent chapters will show, this led to the production of working-class songs that employed ever more martial and direct language, a move that was presaged by the establishment of the *Kampfgemeinschaft der Arbeitsänger und Musiker* (Fighting Association of Workers’ Singers and Musicians) or KdA in 1931.⁴⁵ Primarily the work of those composers and singers opposed to the moderate course of the *Deutscher Arbeiter Sängerbund* (DASB) and critical of the latter organisation’s seeming passivity in the face of the growing threat of fascism and war, those behind the establishment of the KdA sought to give the *Kampflied* a new emphasis to equip this form of song to face these new threats:

It is the task of the *Kampfgemeinschaft* to re-awake the best fighting tradition of working-class singers, to form them into a weapon in the service of the revolutionary struggle for freedom. New forms and methods of work must be established in combination with other proletarian cultural organizations. We must carry the new *Kampflieder*

⁴² Karl Adamek, *Lieder der Arbeiterbewegung: Ein Liederbilderlesebuch* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Büchergilde Gutenberg, 1981), p. 15.

⁴³ Eisler, *Einiges über des Verhalten der Arbeiter Sänger und Musiker*, p. 139.

⁴⁴ Dick Geary, ‘Socialism and the German Labour Movement before 1914’, in *Labour and Socialist Movements in Europe before 1914*, ed. by Dick Geary (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1989), pp. 101-136, (p. 131).

⁴⁵ Lammel, ‘Politisches Lied und Volkslied in der Gesangspraxis der Arbeiterklasse’ p. 33.

of the proletariat onto the streets, into the factories and the stamping grounds, into homes and into the country. Our song must become mass song, every singing worker a cryer in the dispute against the order of hunger and misery, against cultural gagging and oppression.⁴⁶

The message of the KdA was clear, and in the run-up to the Nazi seizure of power song was given a key role in resisting Nazism. It is interesting to note from the last few lines of this extract that the political role of song had seemingly come full circle: as seen earlier in Wilhelmine Germany, the working class of 1932 were gripped by economic despair, political powerlessness and continuing repression. Unlike earlier times however, now, not only were the working class firmly in the grip of the Great Depression, but their songs were engaged in a battle that they proved unable to win.

1.3: Song as a Medium of Political Communication

As working-class songbooks began to appear in increasing numbers in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, their editorial prefaces and introductions often offered a rationale for the political use of song. As early as 1848, Friedrich Hecker, a democratic *Vormärz* politician, prefaced a famous collection of political songs with this analysis of why he believed song was such an effective tool of political communication:

The political song was the indestructible property of the individual. One learns a song for the first time, one sings it in the thunderous jubilation and excitement of the moment, but in the still hours, in which one reflects and daydreams, and during walks and hikes, the political song hums softly in the heart.... and a person becomes political.⁴⁷

Hecker thus claimed that song had a two-fold quality which enabled it to be used as an effective means of political communication: firstly, that it has an initial impact on being heard initially, particularly when the listener is part of a mass audience and secondly, the ability of a melody to be twinned with a memorable lyric allows the song, and by extension the political message that it carries, to be lodged in the memory and to be recalled in quieter, more reflective moments, in essence a process of internalization. Indeed, Hecker's observation about the suitability of song to impart political opinions have been echoed in more recent times by James

⁴⁶ Hanns Eisler, 'Aus der Revolution zur 1. Arbeiterkonferenz der KdAS 1931', *Kampfmusik, Berlin*, 1-5 (June 1931), p. 8.

⁴⁷ Friedrich Hecker, 'Das Politische Lied', in *Neue Bilder für das Deutsche Volk*, ed. by Karl Heinrich Schnauffer (Rheinfelden: F. Hollinger, 1848), [n.pag.].

Brophy, who noted that ‘when carried by a melody, political ideas make a lasting impression’.⁴⁸

Lammel also agreed that political song possesses an advantage over the spoken word, arguing that the mass dissemination of political ideas in song form had a greater effectiveness in delivering messages to a wider audience than could be reached by a political speech.⁴⁹ Richard Bodek adopts a similar stance, arguing that song lyrics lasted longer in the memory than slogans, whilst their melodies served to ‘underscore the explicit meaning of the phrases, providing them with a rhythm and verve that they would otherwise lack.⁵⁰

Hanns Eisler applauded the ability of working-class song to be produced contemporaneously with the political event with which it was concerned: to Eisler, this immediacy, in contrast to those songs regarded more as expressions of art which invited more detailed contemplation, gave the *Arbeiterlied* its impact and made it an effective medium with which to communicate political thoughts. Eisler suggested that the impact of an *Arbeiterlied* was further enhanced by the clarity of its lyrics, which he also believed had to be ‘purposeful and revolutionary’, and he assigned the primary political role to the words, whilst crediting the melody with the task of merely reinforcing the ideological content of the lyrics by appealing to the listeners’ emotions, in the hope of strengthening their resolve for the political battle.⁵¹ In March 1932 the *Illustrierte Rote Post*, a popular German Communist Party organ, echoed some of Eisler’s ideas, noting that the primary features of a successful and effective *Kampflied* should be its great comprehensibility’, in order to facilitate understanding, and an ‘energetic, precise lyrical style.’ According to the writer, this ability was especially prescient as it sought to convey the seriousness of the political situation facing Germany at this time.⁵²

However whilst working-class song possessed many advantages as a method of political communication, it inevitably also suffered a number of drawbacks. Lyrics needed to be kept simple and concise in order to achieve the desired impact. Potentially such brevity could restrict the efficacy of the message whilst conversely, overly complex lyrics would obscure the intended political message

⁴⁸ James M. Brophy *Popular Culture and the Public Sphere in the Rhineland, 1800-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 55.

⁴⁹ Lammel, ‘Politisches Lied und Volkslied in der Gesangspraxis der Arbeiterklasse’, p. 27.

⁵⁰ Richard Bodek, ‘Communist Music in the Streets: Politics and Perceptions in Berlin at the End of the Weimar Republic’, in *Elections, Mass Politics and Social Change in Modern Germany*, ed. by Larry Eugene Jones and James Retallack (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 267-286 (pp. 275-276).

⁵¹ Lammel, *Das Arbeiterlied*, pp. 17-18.

⁵² *Illustrierte Red Post*, Nr.11, March 1932, p. 5.

and thus compromise the song's effectiveness on the streets.⁵³ The *Kampflied* demanded easy comprehensibility to reinforce understanding. Its lyrics had to be precise in order to better facilitate its political message.⁵⁴ The use of existing, popular melodies to convey a political message facilitated political song's swift adoption and dissemination to the widest possible audience and this would be a common feature throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This parody process as it was known was not restricted to the working class, for it was also an approach later used successfully by the Nazis.⁵⁵

The use of well-known melodies for new working-class songs was reflected in the layout of most songbooks that printed the words without accompanying music, but noted the name of the well-known melody in smaller text below the song-title. In general, these melodies were taken from post-1848 German *Volkslieder*, whose 'energetic and fighting character' made them more amenable to their adoption as conveyors of dynamic political message, rather than the older, more staid tunes.⁵⁶

As subsequent chapters will demonstrate in greater detail, *Kampflieder* with new lyrics were produced contemporaneously with unfolding political events. Alternatively existing songs could be altered, through changing lyrics or adding verses. As a consequence, the political song should not be counted as being definitively locked: rather it proved itself to be an eminently adaptable method of political communication. Songs could appear, disappear and then reappear, sometimes even in unaltered form, to suit differing historical situations, underlining their ongoing fluidity and adaptability.⁵⁷ One of the most well known of these was the *Robert Blum Lied*, written to commemorate a popular hero of the failed 1848 March Revolution.⁵⁸ This song remained hugely popular with the working class, and it would be orally transmitted for some 75 years before being formally committed to print for the first time in 1923. Since 1920 the song had received a new lease of life when it was adapted to praise the memory of the recently

⁵³ Bodek, 'Communist Music in the Streets: Politics and Perceptions in Berlin at the End of the Weimar Republic', pp. 275-276.

⁵⁴ Lammel, 'Politisches Lied und Volkslied in der Gesangspraxis der Arbeiterklasse', p. 28.

⁵⁵ Lidtke, 'Songs and Nazis', p. 174; Michael H. Kater and Albert Riethmüller, eds., *Music and Nazism: Art under Tyranny, 1933-1945* (Laaber: Laaber Verlag, 2003), p. 9.

⁵⁶ Lammel, *Das Arbeiterlied*, p. 19.

⁵⁷ Lammel, *Das Arbeiterlied*, p. 51.

⁵⁸ Wolfgang Steinitz, 'Das Lied von Robert Blum', *Deutsches Jahrbuch für Volkskunde*, 4 (1958), 9-40.

murdered heroes of the early Communist Party, Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg.⁵⁹

The ability of song lyrics to be set down in print facilitated widespread dissemination: this development, concomitant with the increase in working-class literacy, increased their effectiveness as a medium of political communication.⁶⁰ From the Early Modern period, peddlars and other travellers had brought the news to the far-flung towns and villages of Germany presented in the form of song, either by the production of rudimentary song sheets (*Flugblattlieder*), or by singing the news in communal public spaces (*Zeitungssingen*).⁶¹ Indeed these *Flugblätter* were to remain a popular means of publicizing working-class songs right into the Weimar Republic: typically costing only 3-4 *pfennigs*, they would appear on the streets and on the picket lines with great swiftness.

The continuing growth of print culture provided ordinary workers with access to political ideas and messages.⁶² Working-class newspapers and periodicals proved to be an essential and effective method of introducing, publicizing and disseminating political working-class songs, whilst songbooks representing every facet of working-class associational life proliferated across the land from the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Indeed the publication of a new workers' songbook was a notable event, and as such they were often announced in working-class newspapers and periodicals. One such publication, *Die Rote Fahne* ('The Red Flag'), proudly announced the imminent arrival of the *Neues Kampfliederbuch* in 1925, and in a substantial article eulogized this new songbook and the importance of its influence on the working class:

This collection contains political songs, not just those with political slogans, but those with the deepest, universal feelings and passions – solidarity, class antagonism and a firm unshakeable belief in the idea of future revolution. Every worker should own this book.⁶³

⁵⁹ Lammel, *Das Arbeiterlied*, p. 221.

⁶⁰ James J. Sheehan, *German History, 1770-1866* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp. 153-160.

⁶¹ Wolfgang Braunert, *Bankelsang-Texte-Bilder-Kommentare* (Stuttgart: [n. pub.], 1985), p. 393. See also Rolf W. Brednich, *Liedpublizistik im Flugblatt des 15. bis 17. Jahrhunderts* (Baden-Baden: Valentin Koerner, 1973).

⁶² Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd edn. (London/New York: Verso, 1991), pp. 37-46; Joseph A. Dane, *The Myth of Print Culture. Essays on Evidence, Textuality and Bibliographical Method* (Notre Dame, IND: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008); Sheehan, *German History*, p. 153; Applegate and Potter, 'Germans as the People of Music', pp. 5-6.

⁶³ *Die Rote Fahne*, 13 September 1925. The songbook in question was: *Rot Front: Neues Kampfliederbuch* (Berlin: Vereinigung Internationale Verlagsanstalten, 1925).

However supportive they were of using song as a method of communicating working-class ideas, those responsible for producing workers' songbooks were not isolated from the political reality that faced the German worker. Police repression resulted in increased levels of legal actions against editors and publishers, action that was sanctioned at the highest levels of society. For example, in October 1881 the editor of a Socialist newspaper in Posen was arrested for publishing the lyrics to Georg Herwegh's '*Bundeslied*', a song more popularly referred to as '*Bet und Arbeit*' ('Pray and work'). The unfortunate editor was branded an 'agitator' and indicted for 'inciting the population to Socialist revolution', a decision ratified by von Puttkammer, the Interior Minister in Berlin.⁶⁴

Such repressive measures did inevitably have a tangible effect on the content of published song collections, many of which were either produced or officially sanctioned by socialist labour organizations. As a consequence of this repression, from 1908 the editors of the many long running songbook series tended to either water down or omit overt political remarks from their introductions, usually replacing them with benign discussions of musical structure.⁶⁵ Indeed many pre-First World War songbooks, printed by or on behalf of Social Democratic groups and associations, would see their form and content remain wholly unaltered from this point right through to the mid-1920s.⁶⁶ However, songbooks printed after the First World War by their Communist opponents were not so reticent in promoting unashamedly political messages and this inevitably brought publishers and editors into conflict with the authorities, and increasingly from the late-1920s, censors demanded the removal of songs they deemed to be seditious.⁶⁷

To make their point about being denied free speech within a democratic system that they were sworn to overthrow, Communist songbooks often pointedly printed pages with just the title and musical staves of songs that had been prohibited by state officials, with blank spaces where the lyrics should have been.⁶⁸ At the base of each such page was the notation '*Text vom Reichsgericht der deutschen Republik verboten*' (Text prohibited by the High Court off the German Republic). For example, the fourth edition of the well established and hugely

⁶⁴ AdK, H8, Akte des Reichsministerium des Innerns, 1881, Nr.13, 572/2, Dokument 62: Letter from Regierung Ortsteilung in Posen to Innern Minister von Puttkammer, (6529/81T), 4 October 1881.

⁶⁵ AdK- A2, A3, A8, A9, A15, A16, A17, A21, A33, A34, A35, A44, A46, A51, A54, A55.

⁶⁶ AdK, A8 series, produced under variations of the title '*Jugend Liederbuch*' from 1911-1929 by the *Arbeitende Jugend Vereine Deutschlands*.

⁶⁷ AdK – A34 Series - *Red Front: Das Liederbuch mit Noten*

⁶⁸ See Chapter 2, pp. 72-74.

popular Communist *Rot Front* ('Red Front') songbook, published in 1928, featured no less than four songs that had been dealt with in this way, even though they had been printed in full in previous editions published barely two years earlier.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, however frustrated they may have been, songbook editors kept faith with the ability of song to be deployed in a political cause, and continued to extol its virtues: the foreword written to accompany the 1928 edition of the *Rot Front* songbook remained unequivocal in its praise of the political utility of song, describing the *Kampflied* as 'the most important method of expressing a revolutionary will'.⁷⁰

1.4: The Emotive Aspect of Protest Song

It is axiomatic among contemporary musicologists that the acts of both singing and listening to music possess an emotive quality that necessitates extending any attempt to examine the phenomenon of political song beyond the rational explication of ideological scripts into the less tangible field of emotion. Studies of emotion and music have predominantly concentrated on western art music, and as such have attracted the attention of a number of psychologists.⁷¹ Prominent amongst these is John Sloboda, who persuasively argues that psychological interest in the emotive power of song should be no great surprise, as emotion is first and foremost a psychological concept, given its 'mentalist' nature and relation to behaviour.⁷² Therefore, viewed from his psychological perspective, Sloboda offers this appraisal of the emotive nature of music:

The reason that most of us take part in musical activity, be it composing, performing or listening, is that music is capable of arousing in us deep and significant emotions.....the most important psychological fact about music, [is] that it carries emotional significance or meaning.⁷³

In addition, the link between music and emotion has also resulted in scholarship drawn from such diverse disciplines as anthropology, philosophy and

⁶⁹ AdK, A34c, *Red Front: Das Liederbuch mit Noten*, (Berlin: Verlag Junge Garde, 1928)

⁷⁰ AdK, A34c, *Red Front: Das Liederbuch mit Noten*, (Berlin: Verlag Junge Garde, 1928), p. 3.

⁷¹ Patrik N. Juslin and John A. Sloboda, *Music and Emotion: Theory and Research* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.7.

⁷² Jenefer Robinson, *Deeper than Reason: Emotion and its Role in Literature, Music and Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005)

⁷³ John A. Sloboda, *The Musical Mind: The Cognitive Psychology of Music* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp. 1-3.

musicology.⁷⁴ Such studies often discuss just how difficult it can be to describe just how music and song acts upon both producer and listener alike: the musicologist Martin Clayton states, ‘verbalizing intense musical experiences is as difficult, and perhaps as futile, as verbalizing other moments of emotional intensity’.⁷⁵

Historians too have acknowledged the emotional appeal of political song:

James Brophy, in his work on popular culture in the Rhineland in the nineteenth-century, is convinced that ‘song possessed an uncanny ability to grip people’s minds and souls’.⁷⁶ For the historian, the intangibility of what makes song politically useful has meant that developing a suitable methodology adequately to explain its appeal remains a difficult undertaking. With this in mind, perhaps the best way of attempting to discover just how song appealed to the working class, and how useful it was to its composers and sponsors as a method of disseminating political messages is to consult workers’ personal testimonies. Lammel acknowledges that whilst the political exploitation of song by the Nazis has been the subject of considerable scholarship, there have been few attempts to research the effectiveness of political song in shaping workers’ views.⁷⁷ In more recent years, the work of sociologist and song historian Karl Adamek stands out as one of the few examples that attempt to link workers’ actual experiences with an analysis of the protest songs that accompanied them.⁷⁸ The following accounts, most of which come from prominent members of labour organizations from the Weimar period, are few in number, but they do offer us an insight into the effect of political song, and its relative importance in the everyday life of the urban industrial worker.

Karl Barthel (1907-1974) was a Dresden metalworker, and like Willi Bleicher, a member of the *Deutschen Metallarbeiter Verband*. Barthel was also an active member of Communist youth organisations, joining the *Kommunistisches Jugendverband Deutschlands* (KJVD) during 1923 when the hyperinflation crisis was approaching its peak. Barthel had been first exposed to political influence in the immediate aftermath of the First World War. There he describes attending his

⁷⁴ Judith Becker, ‘Anthropological Perspectives on Music and Emotion’, in *Music and Emotion*, pp. 135-160. Also from the same collection see: Stephen Davies, ‘Philosophical Perspectives on Music’s Expressiveness’, pp. 23-44 and Nicholas Cook and Nicola Dibben, ‘Musical Approaches to Emotion’, pp. 45-70.

⁷⁵ Martin Clayton, ‘Comparing Music, Comparing Musicology’, in *The Cultural Study of Music: A Critical Introduction*, ed. by Martin Clayton, Trevor Herbert and Richard Middleton (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 57-68 (p. 62).

⁷⁶ Brophy, *Popular Culture and the Public Sphere in the Rhineland*, p. 55.

⁷⁷ Such works include: Kater and Riethmüller, eds., *Music and Nazism: Art under Tyranny*; Pamela M. Potter, *Most German of the Arts: Musicology and Society from the Weimar Republic to the End of Hitler’s Reich* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998)

⁷⁸ Adamek, *Politisches Lied heute*, pp. 14-67.

first political meeting, the main theme of which was the rejection of future wars and the influence of the recent revolution in Russia:

The evening ended with the general singing of the song *Brüder zur Sonne, zur Freiheit*. I was personally unacquainted with this song. On the way home I repeated the last lines and their deep sense gripped my enthusiasm.⁷⁹

This song, *Brüder zur Sonne, zur Freiheit* ('Brothers, to the sun, to freedom!'), had been very popular amongst revolutionary workers in Tsarist Russia before being first brought to Germany by the well-known conductor Herman Scherchen following his release from a Russian prisoner-of-war camp in 1917. Barthel, who was, by his own admission, politically ambivalent before this encounter, was clearly very affected by this event, and subsequently became active in the German Communist Party (KPD). He would go on to become the youngest parliamentary representative in the Thuringian *Landtag* in December 1929. After the accession to power of Hitler and the Nazis, Barthel was arrested and imprisoned in 1933, surviving the war despite a lengthy period in Buchenwald concentration camp.

The metalworker Adam Scharrer expressed similar sentiments, having heard the popular political song *Wir sind die Proletariat* ('We are the proletariat') for the first time at a political meeting called to discuss the increasing unemployment and poverty of the late Weimar period. According to Scharrer, after hearing this song, 'a flame was lit within me', and he credits this experience as having prepared him for his impending dismissal as the metalworking industry drastically began to contract.⁸⁰ Similarly Rudolf Krizek, the general secretary of the Austrian Metalworkers, Miners and Energy Workers Union wrote of the effect that listening to the song *Der Arbeiter von Wien* ('The Worker of Vienna') had upon him:

[it gave] a strong feeling of a sense of belonging. At demonstrations and meetings it strengthened my feelings of self-confidence and solidarity, and those of my like-minded friends.⁸¹

As well as acknowledging such familiar themes as shared identity and strengthening class solidarity, these accounts clearly demonstrate the emotional responses engendered by workers' engagement with political song. As well as

⁷⁹ Karl Barthel, *Rot färbt sich der Morgen: Erinnerungen* (Rudolfstadt: Greifenverlag, 1958), p. 21.

⁸⁰ Adam Scharrer, 'Heimat: Landstraße', in *Wir sind die rote garde: Sozialistische Literatur 1914-1935*, Erster Band, ed. by Edith Zenker (Frankfurt-Main: [n.pub.], 1974), pp. 245-265 (p. 261).

⁸¹ Adamek, *Lieder der Arbeiterbewegung*, p. 177.

being experienced on an individual basis, this emotional intensity was also keenly felt at those political meetings and demonstrations at which massed working-class choirs appeared. Such gatherings would often involve huge numbers of singers: the Rhineland Regional Choir Festival held in Essen in 1905 saw no less than 2000 singers entertaining some 20,000 workers.⁸² The sheer scale of these festivals had a powerful effect on the audiences, transmitting the strength and vitality of the labour movement through the power of massed voices and lyrics that promised a better future.⁸³

As these examples demonstrate, the emotional effect of song, rather than merely its utility as a means of political communication, struck a chord with the real life experiences of ordinary workers. Not all workers were political radicals or fervent political activists, so for these people, listening to or singing political songs performed by massed ranks of workers appealed to their emotions. This stirring of powerful feelings offers irrefutable evidence that the function of political song is not solely to develop a well defined sense of political consciousness.⁸⁴

1.5: The Effectiveness of Protest Song

The Berlin metal worker Herbert Kleye believed that a long-standing familiarity with workers' songs from childhood was the key to their effectiveness:

It would have been inconceivable that my father sat on his shoemakers stool without singing. He sang everything possible, though naturally interspersed with workers' songs whilst his hammer struck in time with the music. We children learnt all these songs from this and we sang along to them at all the [socialist] festivals.⁸⁵

Kleye believed that through the very act of growing up within a socialist milieu, he had internalized distinct working-class cultural habits and attitudes. In other words, Kleye viewed singing as part of a wider working class 'cultural capital'.⁸⁶ As subsequent chapters will outline in greater detail, many popular political songs

⁸² Dowe, 'The Workingmen's Choral Movement in Germany', p. 285.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 285.

⁸⁴ Adamek, *Lieder der Arbeiterbewegung*, p. 21.

⁸⁵ Inge Lammel, *Hundert Jahre Arbeitermusikkultur in Deutschland: Aufsätze und Vorträge aus 40 Jahren, 1959-1998* (Teetz: Henrich and Henrich, 2002), p. 39.

⁸⁶ John Guillory, *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. xviii; See also: Pierre Bourdieu, 'Forms of Capital', in *The Handbook of Theory and Research in the Sociology of Education*, ed. by John G. Richardson (New York: Greenweed Press, 1983), pp. 241-258; Robert Morre, 'Capital', in *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*, ed. by Michael Grenfell (Stocksfield: Acumen Publishing, 2008), pp. 101-117 (pp. 103-109).

were based on melodies already familiar to many working-class families. Those seeking to promote their political viewpoints believed that such familiarity underscored songs' ability to effectively disseminate political messages and ideas. Nevertheless it would be too simplistic to deduce songs' efficacy as a medium of communicating political messages from the mere fact of people's familiarity with them.

Lammel notes the extensive measures taken by the authorities to control the production and transmission of working-class political songs, indicated by plethora of police and judicial sources, as evidence of the 'consciousness building' function of working-class song and thus of its effectiveness. Lammel stated that the unease of the political authorities engendered by these efforts towards building a proletarian revolutionary consciousness was heightened by lurid newspaper reports of workers' demonstrations, which contributed readily to increasing bourgeois anxiety about the revolutionary potential of the working class.⁸⁷ In 1903, for example, 4000 workers took to the streets, marching and singing through the centre of Düsseldorf, the Social Democrat *Volkszeitung* noting with some glee that 'many a bourgeois made a bewildered face as he saw the lively Reds parade by like a brigade of soldiers'.⁸⁸ The Imperial authorities would continue to play on the fear of a socialist revolution in order to maintain their own privileged position.

In attempting to assess the impact of protest song on Germany's industrial workers we can perhaps make some judgement by investigating their popularity in purely numerical terms. One of the most popular of the pre-war socialist sporting association songbooks, *Der Freie Turner* ('The Free Gymnast'), consistently sold 30,000 examples annually prior to the First World War, peaking at a high of 40,000 copies each year during 1911-13. However, the effect of war and the economic chaos that resulted had a deleterious effect on songbook demand: sales of the 1919 and 1920 editions were reduced to 20,000 copies per year. This decline can be attributed to war losses, the post-war economic chaos, and an ongoing dissatisfaction with Social Democratic political thinking, all of which had also resulted in a move towards Communist songs. Alongside such factors, the role of rampant inflation and the consequent devaluation of the German currency meant that post-war songbooks became disproportionately expensive, and this too had a contributory effect on the downturn in sales. However, as the Weimar Republic achieved a measure of stabilisation, however precarious, sales of working-class

⁸⁷ Lammel, *Hundert Jahre Arbeitermusikkultur in Deutschland*, pp. 6-7.

⁸⁸ *Düsseldörfer Volkszeitung*, 2 May 1902, p. 2.

songbooks recovered so that by the middle of the 1920s the most popular examples consistently sold 50,000 examples annually.⁸⁹ Arguably however, these figures remain substantial enough to indicate songs' fundamental efficacy as a means of communicating political ideas and values, even if a conclusive measure of that efficacy cannot be definitively established.

Perhaps the best assessment of the importance of protest song comes the testimony of those who were actively engaged in the frontline day-to-day political battle. The thoughts of the prominent Social Democratic politician Paul Löbe, President of the Reichstag, when speaking at the national workers' singing festival in Hanover in 1928, offer this assessment of the effectiveness of song during the political upheavals of the later Weimar years:

I am in a political struggle, from Tilsit in the Rhine province, from Kiel to Regensburg, from Cologne to my own Silesian home: but in every place that I go, the battle is already half won through the workers' *Kampflieder*.... Go forth with your singing, increase your strength and your power.⁹⁰

Löbe's analysis is clear enough, underlining the view that protest song did indeed have a central role to play in the political struggle, in this case resisting the challenges from both the political left and right which faced the Social Democrats in the later years of the Weimar Republic.

Conclusion

Song offered the working class an effective means of communicating political thoughts and ideas, whilst also acting as a conduit for the expression of their hopes and aspirations for a more just society. Song contributed to the creation of a working-class identity, one that was distinct from those that already existed within German society: this utility, it was hoped, would serve to create and promote a sense of 'class consciousness', a political awareness that would encourage the proletariat to organize themselves and rise up in defiance of the existing social order.

Although song written to espouse purely working-class political concerns was a relatively new phenomenon, there was some debate as to exactly how much these new creations should draw upon the existing canon of German folk song. Whilst many observers argued as to the suitability of such 'pre-industrial' forms of

⁸⁹ AdK, A8d, *Jugend Liederbuch*, (Berlin: Arbeiterjugend Verlag, 1928)

⁹⁰ *Deutscher Arbeiter Sängerbund*, 15 July 1928, p. 122.

song to adequately express the concerns of the contemporary industrial working class, proletarian songs' continuing heavy reliance on folk tunes ensured that the two forms remained interconnected.

Song, as an adaptable means of conveying political messages, was utilized to plant political ideas into the minds of both singer and listener alike: lyrics were designed to be easily comprehensible, to facilitate the transmission of their political message. Often existing, well-known tunes were used to create new political songs, both to assist dissemination and to encourage their popularity. Songs could be adopted from previous historical events, or written spontaneously to mark contemporary situations and such was their utility, songs could be made and remade to suit changing political requirements. Song lyrics could be easily publicized through the network of working-class newspapers and periodicals, whilst relatively cheap and easily available proletarian songbooks proliferated.

Song possessed an intrinsic ability to convey significance and meaning, and to foster strong emotional responses, which meant that it was particularly effective at conveying political ideas. Even when such ideas were not fully understood, the participants and audiences present when massed ranks of singers were on hand could not fail to be impressed by the power and conviction of their songs. This ability to be absorbed additionally on an emotional level, whilst often difficult to rationalize, offered song an extra quality over and above that of the spoken word.

Finally, song's effectiveness can perhaps only be adequately measured by the reaction of its working-class audience, as expressed in their personal accounts. In the absence of sufficient numbers of these, commentators have looked at other factors such as the scale of police and judicial repression that singing engendered or the number of songbooks published, to try and gauge its political effectiveness. However tentatively, it is reasonable to say that working-class song did demonstrate a clear ability to express the political ideas, hopes and aspirations of the industrial German proletariat.

Chapter 2

Responding to the Challenge of Working-Class Protest Song

This chapter discusses how the working class used song to protest against the social, economic and political injustices that accompanied everyday life in Germany. It attempts to clarify the extent of the threat that workers' protest song posed to those in positions of power at local, regional and national levels, as well as to their political opponents, and to outline what measures the authorities took to combat songs' revolutionary potential.

This chapter begins by looking at the increasingly repressive legislation that followed the failure of the 1848 Revolution to effect fundamental social change in Germany: such repression would reach greater levels of intensity in the wake of German unification under the chancellorship of Bismarck in 1871. It will demonstrate how the imperial authorities viewed political song as a threat to national stability even before the wide-ranging anti-socialist legislation enshrined in the provisions of the Anti-Socialist Law introduced in 1878. The initial section will conclude with an analysis of how working-class song adapted to this period of illegality, briefly outlining the measures taken by songwriters and distributors to ensure that song could remain a credible political force despite such heightened levels of repression.

The chapter will then discuss how the authorities responded to the threat posed by a reinvigorated socialist political movement once the Anti-Socialist Law had been allowed to lapse, resulting in a progressively more hostile attitude towards industrial workers right up to the outbreak of the First World War. This section will also detail the challenge posed by the celebration of 1st May, in which politicized singing was a key element in framing workers' demands for economic and political concessions. As the workers' movement continued to gather strength, particularly after 1900, the authorities extended their repression to include the censoring of songbooks and the prohibition of certain songs from street demonstrations. Finally therefore, this chapter will detail how the way such repressive measures would remain a contested element of political life in both the Wilhelmine and Weimar eras, one that would remain unresolved right up until the Nazi seizure of power in January 1933.

2.1: Protest Song after the Failure of the March Revolution

In the years following the failure of the 1848 March Revolution, the singing or playing of songs that expressed sympathies with the unfulfilled political and social aspirations of the workers continued to be stringently punished.¹ These measures were part of a wider crackdown by the authorities against any expressions of liberal or republican dissent, although as Sheehan noted, the forms reaction took ‘varied from state to state in intensity, scope and spirit’.² For example, in July 1852 a shepherd, Michel Breuer, was arrested for playing the *Hecker Lied* (‘Hecker Song’) from a hilltop in the Moselle valley on the day King Friedrich Wilhelm IV was due to pass through the area. The Hecker Song was a popular composition written in praise of the workers’ revolutionary hero Friedrich Hecker, and the shepherd’s action, deemed to have been a ‘manoeuvre of a party’ by state officials, resulted in his deportation, which was a not untypical punishment for this offence.³ The region in which Breuer lived, Bernkastel, had offered armed resistance to the Prussian Army during the Revolution, so the shepherd’s action was seen as having been doubly provocative. Brophy attributes the severity of the officials’ response to them having taken the view that ‘by playing a signature melody of the democratic revolution of 1848-49, [Breuer had] intended to subvert the public mood, stir up oppositional sentiments, and most importantly, to insult the King’.⁴ This example demonstrates what would be typical grounds for police and judicial action throughout the entire period under investigation, although in the years of the Weimar Republic, the figure of the king as the focus of hate and resentment would be taken by government ministers, usually those from the Social Democratic Party.

From the earliest days of Bismarck’s new Germany, the Prussian state prosecutor Tessendorf took a keen interest in campaigning against working-class political songs. Often referred to as a *Sozialistenfresser* (‘socialist eater’) by the leading Social Democrat August Bebel due to his unremitting hostility to socialism, Tessendorf wrote the following criticism of a song that he had found on a *Flugblatt* on the streets at a workers’ festival in the Königshöhe area of Berlin on 17 November 1873:

¹ James J. Sheehan, *German History, 1770-1866* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp. 716-717.

² Sheehan, *German History*, p. 717.

³ James M. Brophy *Popular Culture and the Public Sphere in the Rhineland, 1800-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 57.

⁴ Brophy, *Popular Culture and the Public Sphere*, p. 54.

As I read this song, I thought I had been transported to Paris at the time of the Commune. I intend to take action against the composer and distributor of this ‘blood song’ and to punish them by the strongest measures allowed to me under the decree.⁵

The allusion to the Paris Commune is particularly noteworthy, revealing as it did the authorities’ preoccupation with the fear that Germany would suffer a socialist revolution of its own. From the early-1870s, many towns and cities increasingly introduced measures that legislated against the singing of political songs: laws were introduced that pre-dated the implementation of the Anti-Socialist Law by five years. In Berlin in 1873, a law was enacted that heavily proscribed the singing and distribution of working-class political songs: this act was entitled the *Königliches Polizeiakte gegen Sozialdemokratische Lieder, Couplets, Lustspiele, Theaterstücke und Schauspieler* (Imperial Police Act against Social Democratic Songs, Couplets, Comic Songs, Theatrical Plays and Actors), and under its provisions many political songs were banned, and fines and terms of imprisonment levied on singers, songbook editors and printers alike.⁶ Similarly in Hamburg the threat posed by revolutionary songs had also induced the authorities there to take more concerted action: in 1873 a law entitled *Der Hamburger Verordnung für Straßenmusikanten* (‘Hamburg Decree for Street Musicians’) was enacted. Its stated intention was to prohibit street singers and street musicians from performing any song deemed to be capable of ‘causing injury to public decency’, a definition that was intentionally vague in order to allow the police the greatest possible room for interpretation: this in turn offered them the greatest degree of latitude in the range and application of punitive measures.⁷

The censors also targeted printed songbooks in addition to hand-produced *Flugblätter*. Johann Most’s *Proletarier Liederbuch* (‘Proletarian Songbook’), which was first published in 1872, soon attracted the attention of the Berlin police authorities for its contravention of Section 130 of the *Strafgesetzbuch* (StGB), Germany’s criminal law code. The censors objected to five songs from this collection, branding them a ‘danger to the state for possessing a provocative

⁵ Inge Lammel, *Arbeitermusikkultur in Deutschland, 1844-1945* (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1984), p. 55.

⁶ Karl Adamek, *Politisches Lied heute: Zur Soziologie des Singens von Arbeiterliedern* (Essen: Klartext Verlag, 1987), p. 31.

⁷ ‘Der Hamburger Verordnung für Straßenmusikanten’ – see: Rolf Wilhelm Brednich and others, *Handbuch des Volkliedes*, Band 1 (Munich: [n.pub], 1973), p. 581.

character'. As a consequence of these objections the collection was eventually banned under the terms of a local police act.⁸

2.2: The Anti-Socialist Law

Soon however, and as a direct consequence of Chancellor Bismarck's long-standing hostility to socialism, this localized repression would be strengthened by the introduction of the Anti-Socialist Law.⁹ To Bismarck, the Social Democratic Party presented a dangerous threat to the stability of the fledgling German nation-state. Bismarck's desire to crush Social Democracy was based upon four fundamental principles: firstly, as republicans, socialists posed a direct threat to the monarchy; their 'internationalist' outlook was viewed as being synonymous with offering comfort to Germany's enemies; they sought a fundamental economic re-ordering of society which was at odds with the principles of the ruling Junker elite; and as atheists they undermined the prevailing religious order of society.¹⁰ With these objections in mind, and following a number of failed attempts on the Kaiser's life, Bismarck had been able to use dubious notions of socialist involvement as a pretext to calling a snap election in July 1878. The result of this vote indicated a shift to the political right as Bismarck's political allies increased their support, largely at the expense of the liberal parties: the defeat of the liberals in turn weakened the Social Democrats' parliamentary position, and ultimately resulted in Bismarck being able to enact his anti-socialist legislation in October 1878.¹¹

Under the provisions of the Anti-Socialist Law, all organisations 'that seek by means of Social Democratic, Socialistic or Communistic activities to overthrow the existing political and social order', and all associations 'in which Social Democratic, Socialistic or Communistic activities aimed at overthrowing the existing political and social order find expression in a manner endangering the peace and in particular the harmony of the classes in the population' were prohibited.¹² The passing of this law meant that a whole range of socialist political activities were banned or subjected to strict police censorship. Despite the passing of the *Sozialistengesetz*, the Social Democratic Party was permitted to continue to

⁸ Acta Königlichen Polizei-Präsidium-Berlin, No.1206, 1872, p. 13.

⁹ The 'Gesetz gegen die gemeingefährlichen Bestrebungen der Sozialdemokratie', or the Anti-Socialist Law, was passed on 19th October 1878 and came into force two days later. It was renewed on 4th May 1880, 12th May 1884, 2nd April 1886 and 17th February 1888.

¹⁰ Wolfgang Pack, *Das parlamentarische Ringen um das Sozialistengesetz Bismarcks 1878-1890* (Düsseldorf: [n.pub.], 1961), p. 8.

¹¹ Vernon L. Lidtke, *The Outlawed Party: Social Democracy in Germany, 1878-1890* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 73-74.

¹² *Reichsgesetzblatt* (1878), Nr. 34, p. 351.

participate in regional and national elections, although their electoral activities were subjected to police action, ranging from localized harassment to outright repression.¹³

Undoubtedly, the Anti-Socialist Law had a devastating effect on the organizational infrastructure of the Social Democratic Party. However, despite strict police censorship, socialists were permitted to gather in various kinds of clubs, notably choral societies, gymnastic groups and other gatherings that were deemed to be 'innocent entertainment associations', as long as the authorities were satisfied that no tangible political purpose was evident.¹⁴ As socialist political meetings were effectively banned, working-class singing associations, through the singing of protest songs, became even more important in terms of keeping political considerations at the forefront of workers' everyday thinking. Such activities served to reinforce ties of comradeship and working-class identity at a time when social democracy was under such an assault.¹⁵ Nevertheless, not all workers were politically active, and some of these associations contented themselves by performing a distinctly non-political function, their meetings acting merely as the social hub for the local workers' community. Indeed, research has established that overtly political songs formed only a part of the repertoire of many working-class singing associations.¹⁶ This diversity in the propensity of individual workers to engage in political activism was mirrored in the differing levels of radicalism found in individual towns and cities across Germany.¹⁷

Whilst singing associations were not subjected to the wide ranging ban that had affected many other working-class leisure associations, all were kept under constant police surveillance. By 1888 the *Sozialistengesetz* had been used to forcibly dissolve 108 Social Democratic leisure organizations, a figure which included a number of singing associations that the authorities suspected had been

¹³ Lüdtke, *The Outlawed Party*, p. 100.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 100.

¹⁵ Dieter Dowe, 'The Workingmen's Choral Movement in Germany before the First World War', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 13 (1978), 269-296 (pp. 272-273, 288-289).

¹⁶ See Kurt Thomas, *Arbeitergesang-Arbeitermusik: Traditionen der Arbeiterchöre und der Arbeitermusik im Bezirk Erfurt* (Weimar: Stadtmuseum Weimar, 1974); Rainer Noltenius, 'Das Liedrepertoire von 9. Arbeiterchören des Ruhrgebiets 1898-1953', in *Illustrierte Geschichte der Arbeiterchöre*, ed. by Rainer Noltenius (Essen: Klartext Verlag, 1992); Dietmar Klenke, Peter Lilje and Franz Walter, eds., *Arbeitersänger und Volksbühnen in der Weimarer Republik* (Bonn: J.H.W. Dietz, 1992).

¹⁷ For a comparative study of radicalism levels in Germany centred on a study of Düsseldorf, see: Mary Nolan, *Social Democracy and Society: Working-class Radicalism in Düsseldorf 1890-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

engaged in political work.¹⁸ Singing associations were therefore banned in many of Germany's principal towns and cities, including Altona, Augsburg, Bayreuth, Berlin, Breslau, Dortmund, Frankfurt-am-Main, Gotha, Hamburg, Kiel, Lübeck, Magdeburg, Mainz, Stuttgart and Wiesbaden. In the first year of the *Sozialistengesetz* alone, no less than 40 singing associations were forced to close their doors.¹⁹ In human terms too, more than 900 Social Democrats were deported under the provisions of the Anti-Socialist legislation, whilst 1,500 people were sentenced to prison terms totalling 1,000 years.²⁰

In particular the authorities feared the democratic nature of these singing associations, and this feature of the organized singing movement assumed great importance both for their members and the authorities alike.²¹ It provided experience of working-class participation in democratic politics that the authorities found potentially disturbing:

In the choral societies all decisions, democratically arrived at, were the results of general votes of all members; in a sense this gave the choral societies political implications unwelcome to the authorities. The fact that large and efficient organisations could function successfully by democratic methods suggested a criticism of the authoritarianism by which Central European states were controlled. At the same time, the regular meetings of large bodies of men and women could very easily, in the eyes of governments and police, cloak other less innocuous purposes, so that the German and Austrian choral societies were hemmed in by police regulations.²²

In a state that legislated both against greater democracy and the spread of socialism, the potential of organized working-class associational life to destabilise the existing social balance was a key reason for the constant efforts by the authorities to repress any democratic tendencies.

Such levels of official suspicion meant that membership of working-class singing associations carried a number of potential drawbacks: if a worker's membership became widely known, this could result in difficulties with employers or local government officials. Meeting places were either highly difficult to find or

¹⁸ Dieter Fricke, *Die Deutsche Arbeiterbewegung, 1869-1914: Ein Handbuch über ihre Organisation und Tätigkeit im Klassenkampf* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1976), p. 130. See the tables relating to banned political and workers organizations (pp. 130-132), and banned education, singing and entertainment associations, pp. 132-134.

¹⁹ Thomas, *Arbeitergesang-Arbeitermusik*, p. 14.

²⁰ Werner Thönen, *The Emancipation of Women: The Rise and Decline of the Women's Movement in German Social Democracy, 1863-1933* (London: Pluto Press, 1973), p. 39.

²¹ Brophy, *Popular Culture and the Public Sphere*, p. 5.

²² Henry Raynor, *Music and Society since 1815* (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1976), pp. 90-91.

were frequently changed, as local officials prevailed upon innkeepers to reject requests from working-class singing associations to hold meetings in their establishments.²³ Many working-class singers continued to live a precarious existence, caught between notional legality and the ever-present threat of arbitrary police repression. As a consequence of the restrictions of the *Sozialistengesetz*, some working-class singing associations consciously decided not to involve themselves in political activity, whilst others, notably those based in Kassel, Gelsenkirchen and Frankenthal, chose to do so.²⁴ Such political activity would usually take the form of political meetings disguised as singing evenings, where local or national political issues of concern were debated, with the odd song was thrown in to fool the casual observer.

The restrictions introduced by the *Sozialistengesetz* meant the printing of songbooks and song sheets had to be moved abroad, most notably to Switzerland, whilst in Germany the authorities used their new powers to close down printworks: in the first decade that the *Sozialistengesetz* was in force, no less than 1,299 printers deemed to be aiding the socialist cause were closed down. However, even those songs produced outside Germany attracted attention under the wide-ranging provisions of the Anti-Socialist Law. In a letter from the regional government in Posen, dated 4 October 1881, to the Minister of the Interior, von Puttkammer in Berlin, the local state prosecutor noted how the Polish magazine *Przedswit* had been banned, and its editor Stanislaw Mendelssohn branded an ‘agitator’ under the provisions of the Anti-Socialist Law. Mendelssohn’s crime had been to publish Herwegh’s *Bet’ und Arbeit* in the 15 August edition, and despite publishing from the safety of Geneva, he was banned from entering Germany for ‘inciting the population to social revolution’.²⁵

²³ Thomas, *Arbeitergesang-Arbeitermusik*, pp 14-18.

²⁴ Victor Noack, *Die Deutscher Arbeitersängerbund, Entstehung, Kampf und Aufstieg* (Berlin: Verlag des Deutschen Arbeitersängerbundes, 1931), pp. 72-83; Siegfried Flügel, ‘Die Entwicklung des Arbeitergesangs im Raum Halle, Weissenfels und Zeitz zwischen 1890 und 1933’ (PhD Thesis, Halle, 1965), pp. 16-20; Werner Kaden, ‘Die Entwicklung der Arbeitersängerbewegung im Gau Chemnitz des Deutschen Arbeitersängerbundes von den Anfängen bis 1933’ (PhD Thesis, East Berlin, 1965), p. 51.

²⁵ AdK, H8, Dok. 62, Letter from Regierung Ortsteilung Posen, 4 October 1881, (6529/81T): Akte des Reichsministerium des Innens, 1881, Nr.13, 572/2, *Die auf Grund des Gesetzes gegen die gemeingefährlichen Bestreben des Sozialdemokratie erlassen Verbote*, Band 3, März 1880 – Februar 1887.

2.3: The Aftermath of the Anti-Socialist Law

Finally, after twelve years, and as a result of pressure from the recently enthroned Kaiser, Wilhelm II, the *Sozialistengesetz* was not renewed in January 1890, although it would not formally lapse until the following October.²⁶ Not unnaturally the Socialists reacted to this development with joy, and as a consequence, they were eager to demonstrate their newly legalized status on the streets. In this endeavour, working-class song once again demonstrated its utility for expressing proletarian feelings, though as this extract from a Berlin police report dating from 9th April 1890 demonstrates, the authorities continued to be wary of the effect it could have on the wider population:

It can be seen as being a sign of the times, that on Sunday afternoon on the Tempelhof Road, civilians and military personnel alike marched along, all singing a social democratic song. There in the middle of Tempelhof Field, they made themselves comfortable and very little happened for a time. Then from all directions the refrain '*Das Sind die Arbeitsmänner*' rang out clearly, as singers crossed over to the other side of the road. Social democratic workers ought to refrain from their attempts at agitation, using the recklessness of young soldiers, who agree in a moment of youthful insolence, hardly without thinking of the consequences such 'fun' could have for them.²⁷

This police account clearly demonstrates the authorities' belief that soldiers were being led astray and that they were being taken advantage of as they relaxed, the inference being that in moments of quiet reflection their military training and devotion to the Kaiser would distance them from any thought of solidarity with the civilian working class. However, as this account demonstrates, ordinary soldiers drawn from similar working-class backgrounds to these civilian singers could sympathise with the feelings expressed by such songs. Consequently, however much the authorities tried to play down the extent of socialist thinking in the wider population, working-class song continued to be utilized more and more as an effective way of disseminating socialist ideas, and of expressing proletarian hopes for a more equitable stake in society.

Even during the period of illegality the international socialist movement had not been idle. At the 1889 International Workers Congress, the so-called Second International, held in Paris, a resolution had been adopted to declare 1st May as the

²⁶ Lidtke, *The Outlawed Party*, p. 296.

²⁷ Königliches Polizeiakte gegen Sozialdemokratische Lieder, Couplets, Lustspiele, Theaterstücke und Schauspieler, Königliches Polizeipräsidium 1873 bis 1896, in Adamek, *Politisches Lied heute*, p. 31.

‘International Day of Labour’.²⁸ Workers were encouraged to take the day off and celebrate their growing economic strength. In addition to this celebratory aspect, which was marked by the creation of a whole canon of new songs specifically written in praise of 1st May, workers were also encouraged to use the day to agitate for tangible reforms, most notably for a restricted working day.²⁹ Ottolie Baader, a leading female SPD activist, was a witness to the first such May Day workers’ celebration in Berlin:

The first of May 1890 was a Thursday. One saw groups of working families up and dressed, out and about, early in the morning. How was this possible? On a working day the proletariat dared not to work, to reduce the industrialists’ profits. They dared to celebrate a day that was not approved as a day of celebration by the church or the state. . . Freed from the oppression of the *Sozialistengesetz*, the working populace of Germany rejoiced on this day. . . And as I wondered amongst my beloved people on the way to Grünau, it was moving for us all as we heard our well loved Marseillaise sounding from a barrel organ. . . Only those who know that, until the repeal of the *Sozialistengesetz* our songs were banned, our songbooks and printed songsheets were banished into secrecy, will understand our joy at the barrel organ man’s playing.³⁰

Baader’s account goes on to recall the enthusiastic singing of many working-class political songs, most notably those written by the *Vormärz* poets such as Heinrich Heine and Ferdinand Freiligrath. In an emotive account, admittedly coloured by her status as a prominent Social Democrat, Baader viewed the success of the day as a redemption for the years of socialist activity lost to the ban, and suggested that it brought fresh resolve and ‘fighting courage’ to the struggle for social and political equality within both Germany and the wider world.

The very act of celebrating 1st May each year thereafter, which often fell on a working day, invited retribution from both police and employers alike, with the latter in particular not being enamoured about losing a day’s production. In response to the upcoming May Day celebrations of 1908, the directors of the committee of the *Verband der Baugeschäfte vom Berlin* (Association of Berlin Building Businesses) issued the following recommendations to their members:

²⁸ Inge Lammel, *Das Arbeiterlied* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Röderberg, 1973), p. 226.

²⁹ Inge Lammel, ed., *Lieder zum 1. Mai, Das Lied im Kampf Geboren*, Heft 3, Deutsche Akademie der Künste (Leipzig: VEB Friedrich Hofmeister, 1959)

³⁰ Ottolie Baader, *Ein steiniger Weg: Lebenserinnerrungen* (Stuttgart: [n.pub.], 1921), pp. 180-182.

All those employees who celebrate 1st May are to be released immediately, and not re-employed until Thursday 7th May. In order that they cannot be taken on by other employers, and to ensure the effectiveness of this measure, no new hirings at all must take place between 1-6 May.³¹

This statement highlighted the employers' attempts to construct a united front against the rising tide of the organized working class. This circular also outlined the political attitude of those business leaders directly affected by the workers' decision not to work on 1st May; it stated that the celebrations should be seen as 'a particular provocation on behalf of the workers', and lamented the workers' lack of gratitude for employment at a time when jobs were scarce. This document further entreated employers to treat 1st May as a purely political rather than an economic matter, and further accused those who failed to do so of being guilty of a 'deplorable indifference towards the interests' of their class'.³² This underlines the importance of 1st May as a political challenge posed by the working class to the existing social order. Indeed, the building business leaders were not alone in taking a firm stance against their workers: in the week following 1st May 1908, the Association of German Timber Businesses similarly resolved to 'release' their workers for breach of contract, circulating an undertaking that each individual member of the association was required to sign and return, in an attempt to ensure a united front against what they viewed as the unjustified actions of their workers.³³

The attitudes of the authorities and employers alike thus remained hostile to a working class, which, despite the depredations of the Anti-Socialist Law, had seen its political arm, the Social Democratic Party, massively increase its levels of support during the period of illegality. However this could not be translated into a commensurate increase in political representation.³⁴ At the 1890 election, the first freely contested since the lapsing of the *Sozialistengesetz*, the SPD nearly doubled its vote, although due to the continuing structural inequalities present in the German voting system, the number of seats they obtained remained only a fraction

³¹ AdK H21 - Akten des Königlichen Polizei-Präsidium zu Berlin, No.315, Achtstundenbewegung in Deutschland und der International Festtag den 1.Mai 1908-1909, P. 45 – Rundschreiben Nr. 2, Kartell der Arbeitgeberverbände Baugewerbe Gross-Berlin (Verband der Baugeschäfte von Berlin des Vororten, April 1908).

³² AdK H21 - Akten des Königlichen Polizei-Präsidium zu Berlin, No.315, P. 45

³³ AdK H21 – Notice entitled 'Feier des 1.Mai mit sofortigen Entlassung zu ahnden', Auf Grund der Beschlüsse der General-Versammlungen des Arbeitgeber-Schutzverbandes für das Deutsche Holzgewerbe in Dessau (3.August 1906) und in Hildesheim (3.August 1907).

³⁴ For a comprehensive study of the reality of *Kaiserreich* electoral practices see: Margaret Lavinia Anderson, *Practicing Democracy: Elections and Political Culture in Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

of those gained by parties with a similar share of the vote.³⁵ Although the SPD increased its percentage share of the vote from 10.1% in the 1887 election to 19.7% three years later, the number of seats gained rose only from 11 to 35. In contrast, in the 1890 election the Centre Party had gained 106 seats from a 18.6% vote share, whilst the Progressive Liberals gained 76 seats from an 18% share.³⁶

Nevertheless, unnerved by this growth in support for social democracy, the German authorities continued actively to repress working-class singers and their associations. This repression took many forms, ranging from arbitrary police raids and localized punitive measures against individual socialists and their activities, through to more formalized trials undertaken against prominent political figures.³⁷ As a consequence of this action, many working-class associations in the years leading up to the First World War feared that they would be classed as a 'political organization' by the Imperial authorities. This period saw an increase in working-class political tension, which manifested itself in heightened levels of industrial unrest. As a consequence many associations, including those dedicated to working-class singing, had to express a decidedly non-political character in order to avoid police censure. To be classed a 'political organization' meant they would be legally compelled to present a full membership list to the authorities, which could lead to repercussions at work and petty harassment by local officials for those workers revealed as members, whilst another consequence would be that the police would have to attend all the meetings of the society in question.³⁸

Such a fate befell the Berlin branch of the '*Freie Jugendorganisation Deutschlands*' (German Free Youth Organization) in October 1909. Right from its foundation a couple of years earlier, this youth organization had embraced political song: however, despite protesting its 'strictest neutrality in all political and religious questions', and stressing that it was merely preparing young people for the 'trade union struggle' against recalcitrant employers, the police used the presence of under-18s in what they deemed to be a political organization as a pretext to have it closed down.³⁹ This decision was taken in accordance with the provisions of the *Preußische Verordnung über das Versammlungs- und Vereinsrecht* (Prussian Decree about Assembly and Association Rights), which was

³⁵ Edgar Feuchtwanger, *Imperial Germany, 1850-1918* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 201-202.

³⁶ Feuchtwanger, *Imperial Germany, 1850-1918*, p. 202.

³⁷ Susanne Miller and Heinrich Potthof, *A History of German Social Democracy from 1848 to the Present* (Leamington Spa: Berg Publishers, 1986), p. 45.

³⁸ Dowe, 'The Workingmen's Choral Movement in Germany', p. 278.

³⁹ Fricke, *Die Deutsche Arbeiterbewegung*, pp. 333-361.

first enacted in March 1850. Article §17 of this law stated that ‘anyone not yet 18 years old is not permitted to be a member of a political association, or to take part in political meetings’.⁴⁰ By simply declaring the Berlin youth organization to be a political association, this brought the 1850 decree into play, giving the police a legal pretext for such political repression. A judiciary sympathetic to the police view resulted in the Berlin organization having its authorisation to act as a legal organization withdrawn, effectively ensuring its enforced dissolution. Similar fates befell other branches of the *Freie Jugendorganisation* in Halle (November 1910), Cologne (February 1911) and Stuttgart (June 1914), a process that was only halted by the outbreak of the First World War.⁴¹

By 1914, working-class disaffection was centred not only on proletarian political and economic inequality, but also on the seeming inevitability of war, something that would undoubtedly involve the large-scale conscription of workers to augment the peacetime army. As Chapter Four will discuss in detail, protest songs were deployed to express anti-war sentiments, but in a society where militarism pervaded all aspects of official life, such expressions of discontent were stringently punished. Anyone expressing anti-war sentiments soon attracted the attention of the authorities, as this extract from the memoirs of the writer Albert Daudistel (1890-1955) clearly demonstrates. Here Daudistel recounts the story of a friend, an anti-war activist already known to the authorities and who was preparing to flee the country, who, on the day the First World War broke out, went out to gauge the mood amongst his working-class friends:

Sunday morning was gloomy. The political heavens had been eclipsed. Heinrich had prepared all that was necessary for his departure this coming night. Then, mistrustfully, he made his way to ‘The Pit Nag’ inn, to test the views there. Soon a group of noisy miners, all young comrades, sat around their rich friend. Heinrich told them. Everyone listened intently. Outside church bells sounded in incessant celebration. A moment of reverent calm swept through the landlord’s parlour. Suddenly, Heinrich’s voice rang out ardently, and all the miners sang together as one like a church choir. With excessive enthusiasm, throats that had been corroded by coal inserted the refrain ‘*Das sind die Arbeitsmänner, das Proletariat*’ into the *Deutschlandlied* [the German national anthem], being sung out on the street. Hardly had the *Arbeiterlied* died away then someone rushed into the landlord’s parlour from outside: ‘War, war has broken out!'

⁴⁰ *Reichsgesetzblatt*, Berlin 1908, Nr.18, p. 155. See also Fricke, *Die Deutsche Arbeiterbewegung*, p. 341.

⁴¹ Fricke, *Die Deutsche Arbeiterbewegung*, p. 360.

But as everyone went to head out, the security police came in and arrested Heinrich.⁴²

Daudistel's own reluctance to wage war would later see him share the fate of his young friend. In the Autumn of 1915 Daudistel was convicted of mutiny, and after a court martial he was sentenced to ten years in a military prison, a sentence quashed after Germany's defeat in November 1918. Subsequently Daudistel would go on to become a member of the short-lived Bavarian Republic government in April-May 1919.

2.4: Censoring Songs and Songbooks

As well as being directed against working-class associations and individuals, police repression was also directed at individual songs and songbooks. This would be a feature of both the Wilhelmine Empire and the Weimar Republic: indeed one of the most interesting continuities is that songbooks were being censored in a similar manner both in the aftermath of the Anti-Socialist Law and during the turbulent final years of the Weimar Republic. Working-class political songs remained a constant target of police attention throughout and the authorities often espoused similar reasons for their prohibition, usually considering them to constitute a direct danger to the well being of the state.

Political protest was often materially aided by the ways in which the working class formulated new oppositional songs, for as Chapter One discussed, many proletarian political protest songs were set to existing well-known melodies. These melodies were often appropriated from simple folk tunes, whilst a large number were also taken from such popular nationalistic favourites as *Die Wacht am Rhein* ('The watch on the Rhine'). This utilization of existing melodies meant that in the event of an unannounced police visit, singers could switch to singing the more benign 'approved' lyrics.⁴³ In his study of working-class singing associations in the Erfurt region, the historian Kurt Thomas noted that this political agitation centred on songs that mainly attacked the police state, the dominance of capitalism and its influence on the police and judiciary, and those that highlighted the persecution of Germany's industrial workers.⁴⁴

⁴² Albert Daudistel, 'Mit Gott für Kaiser und Vaterland', in *Proletarische Lebensläufe. Autobiografische Dokumente zur Entstehung der zweiten Kultur in Deutschland*, Band II, 1914-1915, ed. by Wolfgang Emmerich (Reinbek: [n.pub.], 1979), pp. 98-100.

See also Adamek, *Politisches Lied heute*, p. 36.

⁴³ Dowe, 'The Workingmen's Choral Movement in Germany', p. 276

⁴⁴ Thomas, *Arbeitergesang-Arbeitermusik*, p. 18.

The police took great interest in those songs that they deemed seditious. In 1897 a police report noted how songs such as *Die Rote Fahne* ('The Red Flag') and Georg Herwegh's *Aufruf* ('Appeal'), that were contained in a song collection published by Alex Hoffmann Verlag in Berlin's *Blumenstraße*, had had their lyrics crossed through with a thick black pencil by the police censors: this report also noted the efforts of the authorities to ensure that any further distribution of this songbook was strictly prohibited.⁴⁵ On occasion the police acted on the spot: Victor Noack described how, in a police raid on a meeting of the Osnabrück Workers' Singing Association in 1911, officers demanded the censoring of songbooks there and then, ripping the *Marseillaise* out of their songbooks in front of the bemused singers. The police sought to justify their actions by stating that the song's seditious message constituted a 'danger to the state', a familiar and oft-repeated justification for such action.⁴⁶ Indeed the *Marseillaise* was a song to which the German authorities would remain particularly sensitive, which was perhaps unsurprising, given its revolutionary connotations and direct association with French republicanism and proletarian revolution. The anti-French neurosis of nineteenth century German nationalism manifested itself in the equating of anything French with the potential for sedition.⁴⁷

Another songbook that attracted the interest of the authorities was the *Arbeiter Liederbuch für Massen-Gesang* (Workers' Songbook for Mass Singing), which was first published in Dortmund in 1910. After the first edition had already appeared on the streets, the Wilhelmine authorities took exception to its content and decided to ban it. On the 12 August the state court in Dortmund ordered that the last two verses of the *Arbeiter Marseillaise* be struck through, so as to render them unreadable, whilst Emil Luckhardt's version of the *Internationale* was to be crossed out entirely. All unsold copies were destroyed along with the printing plates to prevent further reproduction. Following this action, the state court in Berlin decreed that Herwegh's *Bundeslied* and the first three verses were also to be removed from any future editions.⁴⁸

In an attempt to pacify the authorities, the chastened editors of the *Arbeiter Liederbuch für Massen-Gesang* issued a new edition that incorporated the changes

⁴⁵ AdK, H7: Akte des Polizei-Präsidium Berlin 1893-1913, Akte der Abteilung VII – Sozialdemokratische Lieder, Couplets, Lichtspiele, Theaterstücke und Schauspieler.

⁴⁶ Noack, *Die Deutscher Arbeitersängerbund*, p. 74.

⁴⁷ Michael Jeismann, *Das Vaterland und der Feinde: Studien zum nationalen Feindbegriff und Selbstverständnis in Deutschland und Frankreich, 1792-1918* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1992)

⁴⁸ Lammel, *Arbeitermusikkultur in Deutschland*, p. 55.

demanded by the judicial authorities in both Dortmund and Berlin. In place of those stricken songs two songs which utilized the tune of the *Marseillaise* but whose lyrics were less contentious, namely Max Kegel's *Weihnachts Marseillaise* ('Christmas Marseillaise') and a stirring *Reichstagswahl Lied* ('Parliamentary Voting Song'). The continued use of the *Marseillaise*'s melody was a deliberate attempt to circumvent the ban, at least by maintaining the previous songs' link to a melody that was known to be directly associated with revolution. Additionally, Luckhardt's contentious version of the *Internationale* was replaced by a much more moderate one written by Franz Diederich some years earlier: the first line of this new song was used as the title, but '*Die Internationale*' was added in small print in parentheses directly after it. Suitably appeased, the Dortmund authorities allowed the revised version to be printed, although it was Luckhardt's version of this latter song, distributed covertly in areas where it had been repressed, and quite legally elsewhere, that really captured the imagination of workers throughout Germany.⁴⁹ This example shows not only the wariness the authorities showed when dealing with the *Marseillaise*, but that instances of repression varied in scale and intensity according to the particular political outlook of the individual states.

The singing of the *Internationale* was to remain a contentious activity right into the latter years of the Weimar Republic. The Communist newspaper *Die Rote Fahne* reported on a number of incidents that concerned the singing of this French revolutionary song. In January 1930 the paper reported on the trial of 26 workers from Leipzig who had been arrested the previous October for singing the *Internationale* during a mass demonstration against the banning of the Communist workers' paramilitary defence organization, the *Roter Frontkämpferbund* ('Red Front Fighters' League').⁵⁰ The Nazis were not reticent either in employing songs and melodies previously associated wholly with socialists and communists in their quest to broaden their appeal to the working class, and the *Internationale* was a prime target. By 1930, a Nazi version of this working-class standard was in circulation, entitled the *Hitlernationale*:⁵¹

⁴⁹ Lammel, *Arbeitermusikkultur in Deutschland*, p. 55.

⁵⁰ *Die Rote Fahne*, 18 January 1930

⁵¹ Vernon L. Lidtke, 'Songs and Nazis: Political Music and Social Change in Twentieth-Century Germany', in *Essays on Culture and Society in Modern Germany*, ed. by Gary Stark (Arlington: Texas A&M University Press, 1982), pp. 167-200 (pp. 173-174).

2.4.1 Hitlernationale

Auf, Hitlerleute, schließt die Reihen,
Zum Rassenkampf sind wir bereit.
Mit unserem Blut wollen wir das
Banner weihen,
Zum Zeichen einer neuen Zeit.
Auf rotem Grund im weißen Felde,
Weht unser schwarzes Hakenkreuz.
Schon jubeln Siegessignale,
Schon bricht der Morgen hell herein.
Der nationale Sozialismus
Wird Deutschlands Zukunft sein.⁵²

*Arise Hitler men, close ranks,
We are ready for the racial struggle.
With our blood we consecrate the
banner,
The symbol of a new era.
On its red and white background,
Shines our black swastika bright.
Victory sounds are heard all over,
As the morning light breaks through;
National Socialism
Is the future of Germany.*

This song displays both the mass appeal and the exclusionary elements that are key tenets of Nazi ideology. An analysis of the lyrics of the *Hitlernationale* shows here how the ideology of racial struggle was intrinsically linked with the idea that Nazism offered a new beginning for Germany, portrayed by the natural metaphor that ‘morning light breaks through’, a powerful message in a country torn by political and economic strife at this time. The construction of this new Nazi order centred on the idea of a *Volksgemeinschaft* (National Community), was predicated on the notion that only racially pure Germans could be members of it, thereby excluding those deemed racially inferior, thus this new dawn would exclude Jews, Socialists and Communists. In the same way that Socialist and Communist songs would refer constantly to their red flags and banners in their lyrics, the *Hitlernationale* prominently features the colours and symbols of Nazism, promoting the swastika in a prominent manner.

Appropriating working-class songs such as the *Internationale* for their own political ends had a direct effect on the streets, as the Nazi composer Hans Bajer noted with obvious delight when giving this account of a march by the SA into working-class district of north Berlin one Sunday afternoon in 1930:

When the storm troopers broke into song, singing the ‘*Hitlernationale*’, residents threw open their windows, misled momentarily by the familiar tune. Realizing quickly that Nazis were trying to appropriate the melody of their revolutionary anthem, the socialist residents countered by singing the refrain from the original text ‘*Völker hört die Signale! Auf zum letzten Gefecht*’ (‘Comrades, listen to the Signal! Onward, to the final battle!’), while others pelted

⁵² Paul Arendt, ed., *Deutschland erwache! ‘Das kleine Nazi Liederbuch’*, 5th edn., (Sulzbach-Oberpfalz: [n.pub.], 1932), p. 16.

the storm troopers with bits of debris. Police promptly moved in to prevent serious trouble.⁵³

Bajer's account proves once more that song played a central role in the battle for control of the streets.

It was not just the streets that became the focus for working-class agitation. In an action organised by the popular Communist youth association *Die Jungpioniere* (Young Pioneers) during the summer of 1930, a Berlin school was deluged with flyers featuring the *Internationale*. As they sang the German national anthem, some of the workers' children struck up the *Internationale*, an action which resulted in ten of them being thrown out of the school with immediate effect. Outside the situation degenerated further, as protesting workers joined their children in a mass demonstration. The police responded by arresting five children, and according to the *Rote Fahne*, they also attacked a column of demonstrating children with their rubber batons.⁵⁴

However, such was the currency of violence at this stage of the Weimar Republic that it was not only the police that working class singers had to fear. Under the headline 'Mistaken publican shoots a worker and seriously wounds his brother', the *Rote Fahne* reported an incident at 26 Rottbusser Street, a Berlin restaurant run by one Hermann Gottschall:

They were a group of four or five workers, two with a mandolin and a guitar. They sang a few songs. About 5 o'clock one of them mischievously asked the other guests if anyone objected to them playing the *Internationale*. No-one had anything against this. On the contrary, a number of them joined in. The landlord was asked to switch off the radio, but he refused. One of the guests said to him 'We are all proletarians. You also live off of our money'. By this time the landlord, Gottschall (28) had a revolver in his hand, and without exchanging words with anyone he shot at the workers three times, one after the other. The third shot killed Hans Reitzug (20), whilst another severely wounded his brother Adolf (26). After escaping into his living room, Gottschall held the angry customers at bay with his revolver for more than five minutes, before the police arrived to overpower and arrest him.⁵⁵

This account underlines the importance that political song held for many people and the depth of the emotional response it could provoke. Song was not a

⁵³ Hans Bajer, 'Ruhmesblätter in der Geschichte des SA-Liedes', Part 2, *Die Musik* 29 (January 1937), p. 264.

⁵⁴ *Die Rote Fahne*, 12 August 1930

⁵⁵ *Die Rote Fahne*, 27 January 1931

peripheral activity or pastime, but an intrinsic component of everyday life. Singing songs that were important to a worker's political views and beliefs were seen as being directly constitutive of their social identity.

During the years of the Weimar Republic, police action usually fell most strongly upon the heads of the Communists. Successive governments feared a Soviet style revolution in Germany and moved stringently and decisively against Communist elements. For their part the Communists created songs with lyrics that were highly critical of the Social Democrats' position in government at both national and state level, and their compositions openly advocated outright political revolution. Although the political climate was not so repressive as to force the performance of such songs underground, as was the case before 1918, nevertheless the police progressively increased their powers to prevent songs being sung to which they took exception. One of the first Communist songbooks to attract the attention of the authorities was the *Arbeiterliederbuch* ('Workers' Songbook'), published by the *Kommunistische Jugendverband Deutschlands* (German Youth Association) in 1926.⁵⁶ In an exchange of letters between the Berlin police and the Prussian state court, the authorities noted how they considered a number of songs to be 'insulting to the republican form of the state', whilst other songs were roundly condemned for directly advocating 'class struggle'.⁵⁷ In this case copies of the offending songbook were confiscated from the printer, who in turn was prosecuted for his part, although exact details of his sentence are not given.

By 1928 some Communist songs were being removed from new songbooks, despite them having been present in previous editions. The fourth edition of the *Rote Front* ('Red Front') songbook had songs such as the *Warschawjanka*, *Avanti Popolo* and *Brüder zur Sonne zur Freiheit* banned from inclusion in the fourth edition, published in 1928, although they had been present in the preceding two editions published in 1925-26. The pages relating to these songs were left in place, together with the relevant musical notation, but the lyrics were pointedly omitted.

⁵⁶ AdK, A16a, Der Kommunistische Jugendverband Deutschlands, *Arbeiterliederbuch*, Dritte Auflage (Berlin: Verlag Junge Garde, 1926).

⁵⁷ AdK, H17, Dok. 2, Letter from Polizeipräsidium Berlin to Oberstaatsanwalt Gleiwitz, 17 March 1926, (IIIA 832/26): AdK, H17, Dok.3, Letter from Polizeipräsident, Abteilung IA, to Herr Generalstaatsanwalt, Landgericht I, Berlin, 9 April 1926, (Tgb. Nr. 1184 IA 1 26): AdK, H17, Dok. 3, Letter from Polizeipräsident Gleiwitz to Oberreichsanwalt, Leipzig, 5 May 1926, (Tgb. Nr. IIIa 1533).

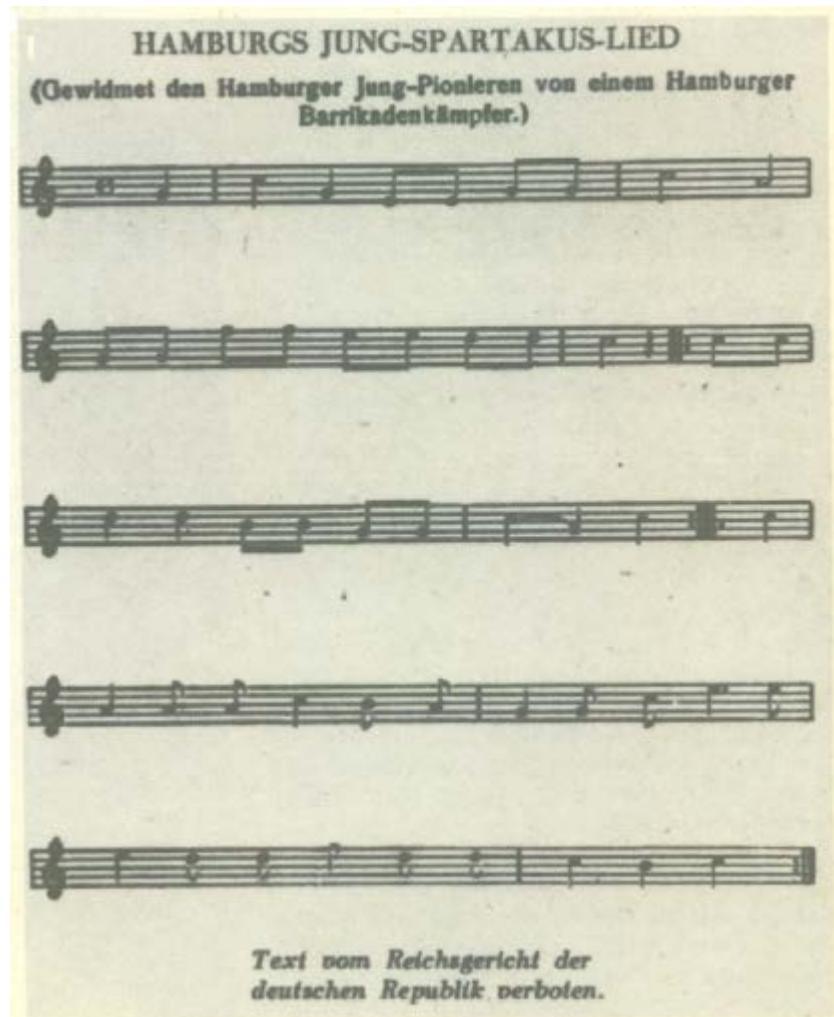


Fig. 2.1: Extract from *Der Rote Front*, Vierte Auflage (Berlin: Jugend Verlag, 1928). This clearly shows the empty space occupied in previous editions by the lyrics to this proletarian protest song, Hamburg's Jung Spartakus Lied.

These pages were then marked with the statement '*Text vom Reichsgericht der deutschen Republik verboten*' (text prohibited by the state court of the German republic), just so that the songbook editors could make a political point about their censorship.⁵⁸ To circumvent this ban, many singers wrote the lyrics in themselves, although this ran the risk of police confiscation if they were caught having done so.

⁵⁸ AdK, A142, *Der Rote Front*, Vierte Auflage (Berlin: Verlag Junge Garde, 1928)

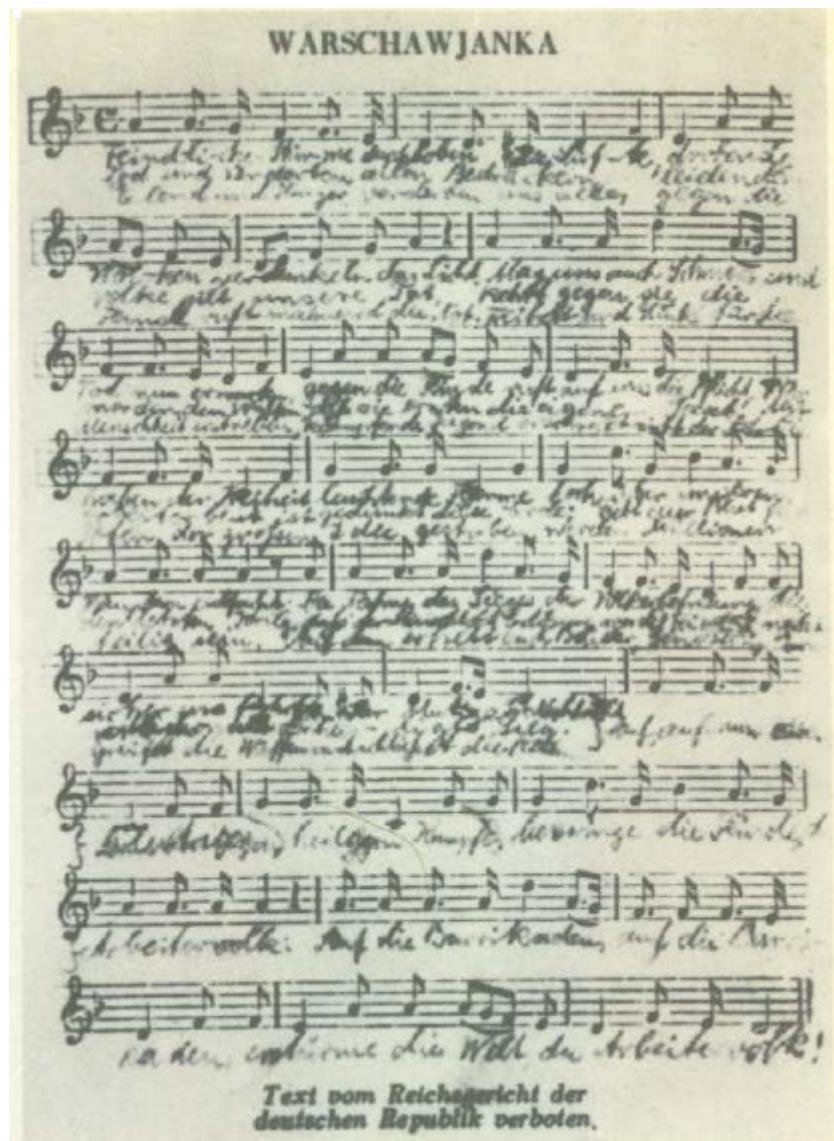


Fig. 2.2: Extract from *Der Rote Front*, Vierte Auflage (Berlin: Jugend Verlag, 1928). This shows how the text ban has been circumvented by the lyrics (probably taken from the previous edition of this book) being added in by hand.

The Communist press in particular contained numerous accounts of party members being arrested for having dared to sing songs critical of the existing political regime. In January 1928 the *Rote Fahne* reported a case from Pirna, in which a Communist youth leader and member of the *Jung Spartakus Bund* (Young Spartakus Association), Winkler, was arrested and imprisoned for singing a protest song. Under the indignant headline 'three weeks in jail because of a song', the paper noted how the police had detained Winkler for singing a song in which the

refrain threatened taking revenge for workers' blood that had been spilt in fighting with the state's security forces.⁵⁹

Sentencing a Communist to a term of imprisonment was all part of the political game being played out between radical working-class groups and the judicial authorities. The imprisonment of Richard Szappals, a young communist worker, for singing the line '*Euer Sohn ist von der Schupo erschossen*' (your son was shot by the security police), taken from *Das Leuna Lied* ('The Leuna Song'), during a street demonstration in central Berlin in April 1930 was a notable departure from the established pattern of merely fining such miscreants for such an offence.⁶⁰ The authorities had realized that the inevitable fine would be paid by either the Communist party itself, or by one of its related organizations, as had become the norm by this time. Determined to stop this practice, and in an effort to make the individual directly liable for his actions, the court sentenced Szappals to one week in prison. Railing at this development, the *Rote Fahne* sarcastically denounced the authorities' disproportionate response to this 'crime' and at the same time called upon workers to redouble their efforts to provide assistance to their imprisoned comrades in the form of collecting 'defence funds' through their workers' assistance organization, *Die Rote Hilfe* ('Red Help').⁶¹

The *Leuna Lied* itself became one of the most heavily proscribed songs of the Weimar Republic. Originally written at the time of the so-called 'March Action of 1921', the line to which the police had taken exception in the Szappals' case had originally made reference to the *Stahlhelm*. This organization, known more formally as the *Stahlhelm, Bund der Frontsoldaten* ('Steel Helmet, League of Frontline Soldiers'), was a nationalistic paramilitary style association, largely composed of former soldiers with strong right-wing anti-republican sympathies. Formed in Magdeburg in 1918, its members supported the anti-socialist measures taken by the government with the aid of the *Freikorps*. By 1930 it had more than 500,000 members, making it the largest paramilitary association in Weimar Germany.

⁵⁹ *Die Rote Fahne*, Nr. 3, 4 January 1928, p. 2; See also: Werner Kaden, *Signale des Aufbruchs: Musik im Spiegel der Roten Fahne* (Berlin: Verlag Neue Musik, 1988), p. 279. (Dokument D73).

⁶⁰ Wolfgang Steinitz, 'Das Leuna Lied: Zur Geschichte und Wesen des Arbeitervolksliedes', *Deutsches Jahrbuch für Volkskunde*, 7 (1961), 3-52; Inge Lammel, ed., *Lieder der Partei, Das Lied im Kampf Geboren*, Heft 10, Deutsche Akademie der Künste (Leipzig: VEB Friedrich Hofmeister, 1971).

⁶¹ *Die Rote Fahne*, Nr. 92, 18 April 1930, p. 3; Kaden, *Signale des Aufbruchs*, p. 286. (Dokument D78).

The *Leuna Lied* itself stemmed from the story of the striking workers' defeat at the large chemical works at Leuna during March 1921 at the hands of the Reich Security Police (*Schutzpolizei*, more commonly known as the *Schupo*). At this time, civil disturbances between armed bands of workers and the government and its security forces still raged throughout the land. On 16 March 1921 the Social Democrat security chief, Horsing, announced that police would enter the mining district of Mansfeld to restore calm and to disarm the workers. The Communist organ the *Rote Fahne* appealed two days later that 'every worker should defy the law, and take arms where he can find them'.⁶² The workers at Leuna heeded Communist calls for a strike and barricaded themselves into the factory. However calls for a wider general strike were not heeded, with the Social Democrats and the trade unions denouncing this Communist backed uprising in forthright terms. What became known as the 'March Action' was relentlessly overcome through sheer weight of arms, and the Leuna factory was the last to fall to the security forces on 29 March, with 34 workers having been killed defending it. The police arrested the remaining 1500 participants, though as a result of their actions, the workers of Leuna became heroes to the Communist cause, with the *Leuna Lied* appearing shortly thereafter in their honour:

2.4.2 Das Leuna Lied

Verse 1

Bei Leuna sind viele gefallen,
Bei Leuna floß Arbeiterblut.
Da haben zwei Rotgardisten,
Einander die Treue geschwör'n.

In Leuna many fell,
In Leuna, workers' blood flowed.
There, two red guards
Swore loyalty to one another.

Verse 2

Sie schworen einander die Treue,
Denn sie hatten einander so lieb,
„Sollt' einer von uns beiden fallen,
Schreibt der andre der Mutter 'nen
Brief.“⁶³

They swore loyalty to one another,
For they had such love for one another,
'Should one of us fall,
*The other will write his mother a
letter'.*

Implicit in *Das Leuna Lied* is the idea of youth as the motive force behind the desired proletarian revolution. The recruitment of young people was essential to the Communists for this reason, whilst for their part many youths sought the excitement and dynamism of street level agitation, particularly as the economic climate had left large swathes of them unemployed. The identification of the young workers as 'red guards' reflects their membership of the wider Communist

⁶² *Die Rote Fahne*, 18 March 1921, p. 1.

⁶³ AdK, A33, *Frontkämpfer Liedbuch* (Berlin: Rot Front Verlag, 1927).

movement, whilst the lyrics' promotion of ideas of loyalty and mutual love, and their agreement to write to each others' mother represents not only their comradeship as fellow Communists, but as soldiers engaged in the heat of a deadly battle.

Verse 4

Und als nun die Schlacht war zu Ende,
Und sie kehrten zurück ins Quartier,
Da hatt' sich so vieles verändert,
Er nahm einen Bleistift und schrieb auf
Papier.

*And as now the battle was at an end,
And they returned to their barracks,
There so much had changed,
He took a pencil and wrote on paper.*

Verse 5

Und er schrieb mit zitternden Händen,
Er schrieb es mit tränendem Blick:
„Euer Sohn ist vom 'Stahlhelm'
erschossen,
Lieg bei Leuna, kehrt nimmer
zurück“.

*He wrote with a shaking hand,
He wrote it with watering eyes,
'Your son has been shot by the
'Steelhelmets'
He lies at Leuna, he is not coming
back.*

The death of one of the Communists triggers the promise to write a letter to his mother. The understanding and encouragement that their mothers had shown to the two young workers as they set out for the battle symbolizes the idea of a mother's sacrifice: in Communist circles mothers would be key in providing support to the young men the Communists hoped to engage in the necessary fighting in order to achieve their desired goal of a Soviet-style proletarian revolution. In his letter to his friend's mother the surviving man clearly identifies the culprits as the nationalist *Stahlhelm* militia, the Communists sworn enemy in the class struggle, underlining the centrality of class warfare in the Leuna dispute.

Verse 6

O „Stahlhelm“, dir schwören wir
Rache
Für vergossenes Arbeiterblut!
Es kommen die Zeiten der Rache,
Dann bezahlt ihr's mit eigenem Blut.⁶⁴

*O, 'Steelhelmets', we swear revenge on
you,
For spilt workers' blood!
The times of revenge are coming,
Then you will pay with your own blood.*

The final verse swears revenge against the *Stahlhelm* militia, and the deaths of the workers at the hands of the nationalists at Leuna provided great motivation for the Communist violence on the streets of the Weimar Republic thereafter as they sought retribution.⁶⁵ The *Leuna Lied* was written to honour their dead comrades and often sung on the streets: its melody was taken from an old familiar soldiers'

⁶⁴ Lammel, *Lieder der Partei*, pp. 17-18; Steinitz, 'Das Leuna Lied', pp. 3-52.

⁶⁵ Eve Rosenhaft, *Beating the Fascists?; The German Communists and Political Violence, 1929-1933* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

song, and such was its ubiquity and adaptability that the sociologist and music historian Karl Adamek discovered no less than 52 different versions, all with different place names, and each honouring workers' resistance to the state and its security forces at different locations and at different times throughout Germany.⁶⁶

2.5: Protest Song on the Streets

The streets were the location where working-class political song posed the most direct challenge to the authority and resolve of the authorities. Not unnaturally such action was prevalent during times of national crisis, particularly during the various insurrections and uprisings that took place in the years following the end of the First World War, and in the last troubled years of the Weimar Republic, although instances of localized repression occurred everywhere throughout this period. As socialists and communists demonstrated on the streets in support of their political beliefs, the authorities did not hesitate to repress songs and those singing them, often on the vaguest of pretexts. Indeed, obtaining agreement on precisely what was and was not acceptable was an ongoing process, and one that had not been satisfactorily resolved by the time of the Nazi seizure of power in January 1933.

At the forefront of many of the street demonstrations in the Weimar Republic were the Communist Party. The Communist workers' paramilitary defence organization, the *Roten Frontkämpfverbund* or RFB, had been responsible for creating a whole raft of political protest songs since its formation in July 1924. The confrontational nature of their lyrics meant many of these songs invited police action whenever they were sung in small gatherings or during mass demonstrations, until finally the RFB itself was banned following the bloody events of May 1929. In this so-called *Blutmai* (Bloody May), Communist demonstrations in Berlin resulted in several days of fighting as the police battled to restore order. The SPD police president Zorgiebel ordered the police to open fire, and thirty civilians were killed.⁶⁷ These events resulted in the RFB being banned, initially only in Prussia, then in the rest of Germany shortly thereafter. The *Rote Fahne*, the Communist newspaper that had been so active in criticising the police's handling of street protests was itself banned from 2-23rd May as a consequence of this insurrection.

⁶⁶ Adamek, *Politisches Lied heute*, p. 131.

⁶⁷ Chris Bowlby, 'Blutmai 1929: Police, Parties and Proletarians in a Berlin Confrontation', *The Historical Journal*, 29.1 (1986), 137-158.

This ban triggered an immediate response from the Communists, leading to the formation of the *Kampfbund gegen das RFB Verbot* ('Fighting Association against the RFB Ban'). Many Agitprop troupes had been subjected to the same ban, but many later re-emerged under new names during the summer. One of the most well known, the *Roten Raketen* ('Red Rockets'), had previously travelled throughout Germany disseminating Communist ideas, and it was reformed as '*Alarm*' to continue its work in concert with the Communist Party (KPD) as part of the *Kampfbund gegen das RFB Verbot*. Its performances in the Ruhr and Rhine areas were received enthusiastically by the workers, but they were often broken up by the police wielding batons and shouting 'this meeting is dissolved'. In response the crowd often sang the *Internationale* as a protest against the police's action. With their official performances often prohibited, '*Alarm*' resorted to playing to 'closed membership conferences' (a ploy which ensured that they remained within the law) in order to circumvent the ban.⁶⁸

Songs sung on the streets continued to draw police repression down on to the heads of singers, and in Prussia especially by the autumn of 1930, the police had begun to formalize and strengthen their responses. The police resolved to disperse any future parades and demonstrations where prohibited material was being sung as a response to the demonstrators' standard tactic of waiting until officers left the scene before they would begin to sing banned agitational songs.⁶⁹ This resulted in an immediate increase in police repression against working-class political songs, a development that led the *Rote Fahne* to ask its readers to send details of such incidents to Arthur Golke (1886-1937), a KPD member of the Prussian parliament. Golke had become known for his attempts to obtain a definitive list of banned songs from the police, as Communist singers had complained to him that marches were being dissolved for singing songs such as *Brüder zur Sonne zur Freiheit* ('Brothers, to the Sun, to Freedom'), and the *Internationale*, which were regarded as labour movement classics, and which were regularly and freely sung by their rival Social Democrats.⁷⁰ On 10 October Golke wrote a letter to the Berlin police,

⁶⁸ Inge Lammel, ed., *Lieder der Agitprop-Truppen vor 1945, Das Lied im Kampf Geboren*, Heft 2, Deutsche Akademie der Künste (Leipzig: VEB Friedrich Hofmeister, 1959), p. 57.

⁶⁹ Institut der Marxist Leninism (hereafter IML), St22/169, letter from Polizei Präsident, Abteilung IA, Tgb Nr. 1313 IA 3a.30, 23 October 1930 as quoted in Richard Bodek, 'Communist Music in the Streets: Politics and Perceptions in Berlin at the end of the Weimar Republic', in *Elections, Mass Politics and Social Change in Modern Germany*, ed. by Larry Eugene Jones and James Retallack (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 267-286 (p. 280).

⁷⁰ Bodek, 'Communist Music in the Streets', p. 281.

which he admitted failed to elicit any reply.⁷¹ On their own initiative, the *Rote Fahne* then sent a reporter to the Berlin police headquarters to determine precisely what songs were banned: although the relevant officer was not available, a member of the political police responded to the reporters' enquiry by stating that no list of banned songs actually existed, but that the decision was left to the discretion of the individual police commander on the scene.⁷²

Meanwhile police attitudes continued to harden still further, not least with regard to the conduct of their own men. An internal police memorandum dated 3 November 1930 remonstrated with officers for failing to take sufficiently tough action against those demonstrators caught singing banned songs. The memorandum stated that in future such activity would result in the immediate dissolution of the demonstration and the arrest of the offending singers, who would then be turned over to the political police. This memorandum also contained a few examples of what songs were deemed to be legally unacceptable, as well as a commitment to providing a definitive list of such songs in the near future.⁷³ This list never appeared, and the situation was complicated yet further by a belated, and yet remarkably vague reply to Golke's long-standing request for clarity:

In response to your letter of 10 October 1930, the singing of songs at demonstrations which you mentioned depends solely upon the lyrics. It is well known that they change, so that the texts of the 'same song' often differ. When the wording of the songs breaks criminal law, it is the duty of the police to intercede. It is left to the singers to consider in advance and carefully whether they are breaking the law.⁷⁴

What this letter does not concede is that individual policemen often decided on an individual basis which songs should be suppressed.

In December another Communist politician, the Reichstag deputy Fritz Löwenthal also wrote to the police asking why his party had not been furnished with a definitive list of banned songs, whereas the Nazis had been provided with a list of songs that they were banned from singing.⁷⁵ Löwenthal also complained that

⁷¹ IML, St22/169, letter from Arthur Golke to the Commander of the Berlin Schutzpolizei, 10 October 1930. Cited also in Bodek, 'Communist Music in the Streets', p. 281; Inge Lammel, *Hundert Jahre Arbeitermusikkultur in Deutschland: Aufsätze und Vorträge aus 40 Jahren, 1959-1998* (Teetz: Henrich and Henrich, 2002), p. 87.

⁷² Bodek, 'Communist Music in the Streets', p. 281.

⁷³ Internal Berlin police memorandum, dated 3 November 1930, reproduced in Lammel, *Arbeitermusikkultur in Deutschland*, p. 87.

⁷⁴ IML, St22/169, letter from Berlin police president (Division IA) to Arthur Golke, 11 November 1930, cited in Bodek, 'Communist Music in the Streets', p. 283.

⁷⁵ IML, St22/169, letter from Fritz Löwenthal to the Berlin police president, 2 December 1930, cited in Bodek, 'Communist Music in the Streets', p. 283.

the police very often did not wait to see which version of a song was about to be sung, pointing out that they adopted an aggressive posture even if an 'acceptable' lyrical version was about to be sung. Löwenthal's plea that the police should definitively advise them just what was acceptable in terms of political songs, which laws were being broken, and just how the police arrived at their decisions apparently went unanswered.⁷⁶ What these examples do demonstrate is that the treatment of National Socialists and Social Democrats differed from that of the Communists, who continued to be treated disproportionately harshly.

Communist frustration at this lack of information regarding banned songs was demonstrated in the verdict of a court case that came a couple of weeks after Löwenthal's abortive request for clarity. The previous August eleven youths, who had accompanied the KPD-affiliated Worker's Sport Club of Köpenick on a march, were arrested for singing the *Propellerlied* ('Propeller Song'). This group chose to replace the standard lyric 'We soar in spite of hate and scorn' with 'We soar in spite of Severing's prohibition! Red Front'. The police officer in charge of monitoring the march objected to this lyric, believing it to be a public expression of support for the outlawed RFB, for which the unfortunate singers were promptly arrested. The police also deemed the singers' actions as being a deliberate and public call to defy the law, in contravention of Article 4 Z.1 of the Law for the Protection of the Republic. At their subsequent trial the singers' claims to innocence were ignored by the court, who took the view that as members of the *Kommunistische Jugendverband Deutschlands* (Communist Youth Association of Germany), the very fact of this membership proved that they supported the sentiments that they had expressed in the song. Six of the youths were sentenced to three months in prison, three received only two weeks, whilst the remaining pair were released without further censure. This case underlines how difficult it was for Communist singers to judge what was acceptable, and it also demonstrated the power of the individual police commander on the scene. Finally the courts' verdict reinforced the close identification they made in a political context between the singer and the song.⁷⁷

This lack of clarity, which could be argued was a deliberate reflection of the political biases of the police and judiciary, was to plague the singing of working-class political songs right up to the Nazi assumption of power in January 1933. Just four days before Hitler took power, the working-class newspaper *Die Welt am*

⁷⁶ Bodek, 'Communist Music in the Streets', p. 283.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 284.

Abend wrote to the police headquarters in Berlin on behalf of its readership once again seeking clarity on what political songs were acceptable to the authorities. The letter stated that upon receiving clarification on this issue, it would, in turn, publish this in order to inform its readers at this time of national crisis. The newsmen's letter also requested to know whether the practice of singing new texts to old melodies was the offending move, or whether it was the contentious melody that invited police action. The appeal ended with a statement that there was considerable unease amongst the working class due to the practice of leaving the decision to the individual police commander on the spot: this they argued resulted in songs being permitted in one area, whilst being banned in another nearby.⁷⁸ However, even at this late stage of the life of the Weimar Republic, it was not only the working class and their supporters who remained confused. The police president in Königsberg wrote a letter to his superiors in Berlin on the same day as the newspapers' letter appeared, asking if they could provide him with a list of songs sung by the radical organizations of both the left (and most interestingly) of the right, as they themselves had doubts as to which songs were now forbidden following the lifting of the Law for the Protection of the Republic.⁷⁹ If the authorities were confused, what chance did the singers have to make sense of the prevailing situation?

Conclusion

The seriousness of the threat that working-class political song was perceived to pose to the state can be gauged by the reactions of the authorities throughout the period from the 1848 March Revolution to the Nazi seizure of power in January 1933. Throughout this period the singing of political protest songs was closely regulated, from the violent reaction to any forms of oral working-class dissent in the aftermath of the events of 1848-49, through the birth pangs of a newly unified German state to the run-up to the First World War. After the return to a notional peace, song remained an important element in the various strikes and civil disturbances that bedevilled the early years of the Weimar Republic and whilst these events gave birth to new songs, the authorities were swift to repress their political potential for destabilizing their particular vision of society.

⁷⁸ Letter from *Die Welt am Abend* to the Berlin police president, 26 January 1933, reproduced in Lammel, *Arbeitermusikkultur in Deutschland*, p. 202.

⁷⁹ Letter from the Königsberg police president to the Landpolizei Amt, 26 January 1933, reproduced in Lammel, *Arbeitermusikkultur in Deutschland*, p. 202.

Songs were one of the most heavily proscribed methods of political communication, and legislation to constrain their effectiveness was in place even before the enactment of the all-encompassing Anti-Socialist Law. This had the effect of driving protest song underground, and of stripping workers' singing associations of any overt political role. Even when ostensibly legal following the ending of the restrictions of the Anti-Socialist Law in 1890, working-class protest songs still remained subject to ad hoc and often localized instances of harassment and repression, as the authorities grew increasingly fearful of the increased political support for Social Democracy.

The workers' willingness to celebrate 1st May, which was promoted as the 'International Day of Labour', brought them into direct confrontation with employers' associations, who were encouraged to view their actions as a political challenge to the stability of society, rather than purely as an economic inconvenience. By making this distinction, independent working-class action, accompanied by the singing of protest songs, became a powerful force for potential social change, a proposition that caused great anxiety to the authorities.

Songs and songbooks were an important focusing point for censorship and police action. Songbooks were constantly scrutinized, and songs removed or rewritten to suit individual judicial decisions. However, it was out on the streets where the police displayed the most obvious examples of their repressive methods: demonstrations were broken up and singers arrested. Communist supporters in particular complained that no definitive list of prohibited songs existed, nor could the reasons for their prohibition be explained in anything other than vague terms, often leaving the decision to the attitudes of the local police commander on the spot. This state of affairs remained unchanged right up to the Nazi seizure of power, when a new and terrifyingly effective form of brutal repression brought the curtain down on working-class songs and singers alike.

Chapter 3

The Origins of Working-Class Protest Song, 1844-1878

This chapter discusses in greater detail the emergence of working-class political song, concentrating on the period following the appearance of the first widely acknowledged example of a proletarian protest song in 1844. To illustrate the development of political song, key compositions have been chosen and subjected to close scrutiny in order to ascertain their importance in the creation of a recognisable canon of *Arbeiterlieder* (workers' songs). Unsurprisingly, a comprehensive survey of all the politically-inflected proletarian songs of this period lies beyond the scope of this chapter: instead it will concentrate on those songs that were crucial to the creation and development of a canon that served the political goals of the emerging German working class in the latter half of the nineteenth-century.

This chapter will start with a brief exposition of the role of song in bringing the political news to the citizens of Germany in the early modern period. This discussion will demonstrate how travellers and street singers introduced political song into the everyday lives of ordinary citizens. Subsequently it will outline how Germans received news of the French Revolution through itinerant singers, and how revolutionary political ideas were taken up through the adoption of French songs. The second section will concentrate on songs that became popular during the *Vormärz* era. It will interrogate popular compositions that slowly began to criticize the desperate social and political conditions of mid-century German industrial workers. This gradual recognition in song would result in a multitude of songs that were composed at first to support, and then to commemorate, the failed March Revolution of 1848-49.

Attention will then turn to the post-revolution period, noting how working-class singers struggled to produce and disseminate songs in a repressive environment. It will then consider how the newly created working-class political parties in the 1860s employed the medium of protest song to serve their ideological needs. This chapter will conclude in 1878, just as the revolutionary nature of working-class political song began actively to attract extensive repressive measures from the authorities, a development which would eventually result in the passing of the Anti-Socialist Law.

3.1: Protest Song prior to the French Revolution

Whilst the precise point at which the rapid pace of German industrialization created an urban industrial working class is debatable, most historians credit Ferdinand Freiligrath's *Das Blutgericht*, which first appeared in 1844, as being the first widely known example of a song which could be said to express distinctly proletarian sentiments and ideas.¹ However, the use of song to convey popular political concerns and ideas was not a mid-nineteenth century development. Ever since the Early Modern period, song had been used to convey political news and information: peddlers and tradesmen conveyed tales of war and the activities of the ruling elites to the wider population in song form, by singing the news in public spaces (*Zeitungssingen*) or by distributing descriptive songs on rudimentary flyers (*Flugblätterlieder*).² In many cases these songs were set to well-known folk melodies, this familiarity aiding both their initial reception by the immediate audience and facilitating their onward transmission within the wider population. Franz Wilhelm Ditfurth's research into the German folksongs of the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) discovered 130 such flyers that he categorized as 'historical-political folksongs'.³ Tales of the exploits of unpopular lords and local princes invited expressions of popular criticism and derision, prompting the appearance of songs with satirical or disrespectful lyrics for consumption by ordinary citizens. As a consequence, this early form of politically aware, socially critical song presaged the *Arbeiterlieder* and *Kampflieder* of the early twentieth century working class.

Research into German folksongs has noted how popular this form of political communication had become during the eighteenth-century, particularly following the revolutionary upheavals in France after 1789.⁴ It was through songs and proclamations that the German population-at-large received the first news of the

¹ Karl Adamek, *Lieder der Arbeiterbewegung: Ein Liederlesebuch* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Büchergilde Gutenberg, 1981), p. 23; Inge Lammel, *Hundert Jahre Arbeitermusikkultur in Deutschland: Aufsätze und Vorträge aus 40 Jahren, 1959-1998* (Teetz: Henrich and Henrich, 2002), p. 179; Margarete Nesipal, *Das deutsche Proletariat in seinem Lied* (Rostock: Mecklenburgische Volkszeitung GmbH, 1932), pp. 12-13.

² Wolfgang Braunert, *Bankelsang-Texte-Bilder-Kommentare* (Stuttgart: [n. pub.], 1985), p. 393. See also Rolf W. Brednich, *Liedpublizistik im Flugblatt des 15. bis 17. Jahrhunderts* (Baden-Baden: Valentin Koerner, 1973).

³ Franz Wilhelm Ditfurth, *Die historisch-politischen Volkslieder des Dreißigjährigen Krieges. Aus fliegenden Blättern, sonstigen Druckwerken und handschriftlichen Quellen gesammelt und nebst den Singweisen zusammengestellt* [1888] (Leipzig: [n. pub.], 1972).

⁴ See especially: Wolfgang Steinitz, *Deutscher Volklieder demokratischen Charakters aus sechs Jahrhunderten*, Band 1 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1954); Wolfgang Steinitz, *Deutscher Volklieder demokratischen Charakters aus sechs Jahrhunderten*, Band 2 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1962); Dietmar Sauermann, *Historische Volkslieder des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts. Ein Beitrag zur Volksliedforschung und zum Problem der volkstümlichen Geschichtsbetrachtung* (Münster: [n. pub.], 1968).

French Revolution, acquainting them with the revolutionary theories of ‘liberty, equality and fraternity’. In France itself song had been a key feature in proclaiming and disseminating revolutionary ideas, with an estimated 2,300 politically motivated songs appearing between 1789 and 1794 alone.⁵ French Revolutionary demands for constitutional government and participatory citizenship struck a chord with a German audience, both labourers and bourgeois alike, who sought to achieve similar political reforms in their own lands.

French revolutionary songs such as *Ça Ira* and particularly, the *Marseillaise*, were taken up across the German-speaking lands, and particularly from the early nineteenth century, became integral elements in a growing canon of songs dubbed *Freiheitslieder* (freedom songs) by state officials, who were becoming increasingly alarmed at their rapid dissemination and their potential to destabilize society.⁶ In his study of French revolutionary songs in the Rhineland, James Brophy noted how singers increasingly used *Freiheitslieder* to ‘provoke the authorities and disturb public order’.⁷ Of such songs, the *Marseillaise* in particular gained a great significance amongst the working class, becoming one of the most widely suppressed tunes prior to the First World War.⁸ As subsequent chapters will demonstrate, the tune of the *Marseillaise* would form the basis of many new proletarian protest songs through the process of ‘parody’, the practice of setting politicised lyrics to well-known melodies.⁹

3.2: Songs of the *Vormärz*

In the period following the 1830 July Revolution in Paris, which saw the overthrow of the Bourbon king Charles X, *Freiheitslieder* were increasingly used throughout Germany to express critical and oppositional attitudes towards the authoritarian political system. One of the most popular was *Die Gedanken sind Frei* (Thoughts

⁵ James M. Brophy *Popular Culture and the Public Sphere in the Rhineland, 1800-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 57.

On the use of song in the French Revolution see Adelheid Coy, *Die Musik der Französischen Revolution. Zur Funktionsbestimmung von Lied und Hymne* (Munich: [n. pub.], 1978); Laura Mason, *Singing the French Revolution: Popular Culture and Politics, 1787-1799* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996).

⁶ Brophy, *Popular Culture and the Public Sphere in the Rhineland*, p. 59.

⁷ Ibid., p. 59.

⁸ Victor Noack, *Die Deutscher Arbeitersängerbund, Entstehung, Kampf und Aufstieg* (Berlin: Verlag des Deutschen Arbeitersängerbundes, 1931), p. 74.

Many tunes used the tune of the *Marseillaise* to produce new songs for the German workers. Amongst the best known are: ‘Volkerfrühlingslied’ by Wurm, ‘Arbeitermarseillaise II’ by Greulich, ‘Sozialdemokratisches Bundeslied’ by Karl Wieser, ‘Bundeslied der Schmiede’ by Audorf and the ‘Kommunistische Marseillaise’ by Budjonny.

⁹ Vernon Lidtke, ‘Songs and Politics: An Exploratory Essay on Arbeiterlieder in the Weimar Republic’, *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, 14 (1974), 253-273 (p. 257).

are free), had originally appeared as a market flyer in the 1780s, but the increasing levels of police censorship made this particular song, celebrating as it did the inviolability of free thought, a particular favourite in this period:¹⁰

3.2.1 Die Gedanken sind frei

Die Gedanken sind frei, Wer kann sie erraten? Sie fliehen vorbei, Wie nächtliche Schatten; Kein Mensch kann sie wissen, Kein Kerker verschließen; Wer weiß was es sei? Die Gedanken sind frei. ¹¹	<i>Thoughts are free Who can guess them? They fly on by Like night shadows, No person can know them, No jail can lock them up; Who knows what they are? Thoughts are free.</i>
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The sentiment of *Die Gedanken sind frei* is clear: however much the authorities sought to impose restrictions on overt political dissent, every person has their own thoughts retained in the secrecy of their own mind, and these could be nurtured in secret until such time as they were able to be expressed freely.

The Polish Uprising of 1830-31, following on from the events in Paris the previous year, led to popular uprisings in many German cities, whilst the spectacular success of the Hambach Festival (27-30 May 1832) in the Palatinate, stimulated an explosion in the number of *Freiheitslieder* across Germany.¹² This Festival, a political gathering of some 30,000 people disguised as a county fair, was organized by liberals and democrats and featured a programme of twelve songs that were critical of the regime, including the *Marseillaise*. It was also notable as the venue for the first stirrings of a German republican movement: indeed, such was its impact that the term ‘Hambach songs’ quickly became interchangeable with ‘*Freiheitslieder*’.¹³ One of the most popular of these newly emergent protest songs was the virulently anti-aristocratic *Fürsten zum Land Hinaus*, which expressed a strong hatred for dynastic privilege and advocated the expulsion of Germany’s dynastic rulers.¹⁴ The structure of this song, a series of two-line stanzas each directed against individual ruling houses, lent itself particularly well to local modification to express localized viewpoints, an attribute that would become an intrinsic feature of many subsequent protest songs. However, the contentious

¹⁰ Brophy, *Popular Culture and the Public Sphere in the Rhineland*, p. 78.

¹¹ *Königsberger Arbeiterliederbuch* (Königsberg: [n.p.], 1848)

¹² Brophy, *Popular Culture and the Public Sphere in the Rhineland*, p. 83.

¹³ Johann Georg August Wirth, *Das Nationalfest der Deutschen zu Hambach, Book I*, 1832 (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2010); Brophy, *Popular Culture and the Public Sphere in the Rhineland*, p. 83.

¹⁴ Brophy, *Popular Culture and the Public Sphere in the Rhineland*, p. 79.

nature of its lyrics meant that it could only be published abroad, principally in France, prior to being smuggled across the Rhine into Germany.¹⁵ This practice would continue during periods of repression right through until 1945.

This rise in the number of *Freiheitslieder* increasingly began to concern the authorities. The popularity of Hambach, and the number of protest songs that were produced as a consequence, led directly to the German National Convention adopting a resolution that further restricted freedom of speech on 28 June 1832. A Bavarian military report from the Palatinate, dating from May 1833, noted with disapproval that 'for some time now young people are increasingly singing *Freiheitslieder* in the streets, and that such songs are also sung in groups in taverns'.¹⁶ German state authorities had already clamped down on incidences of political dissent, particularly those expressed in the form of song. In Hesse during the 1820s, state officials drove out fairground hurdy-gurdy men for playing songs about Karl Sand (1795-1820), a Bavarian theology student who became a martyr to the liberal democratic cause by assassinating the prominent playwright and nationalist critic August von Kotzebue in Mannheim in March 1819.¹⁷ The success of the Hambach Festival had galvanized the authorities into taking more concerted action.¹⁸ A whole raft of laws were passed that strengthened press censorship still further, outlawed certain political symbols and effectively prohibited political assemblies, resulting in the construction of 'a police apparatus that made suspicion, surveillance and censorship watchwords of the [Vormärz] era'.¹⁹

One of the earliest songs that found favour with the emerging industrial working class was *Das Lied von Burgermeister Tschech* (The Song of Mayor Tschech), a song that commemorated Tschech's failed attempt to assassinate the Prussian king Friedrich Wilhelm IV.²⁰ Using folk humour to achieve widespread popularity, it was particularly notable both for its expression of disrespect for the king and its studied indifference as to his fate. On 26 July 1844 in Berlin, Tschech

¹⁵ This song appeared in this book printed in Paris: Gerhard, ed., *Liederbuch. Eine Sammlung Volkslieder* (Paris: [n.pub.], 1835)

¹⁶ Kirchenheim Brigadier report, 29 May 1833, Landesarchiv Speyer (hereafter LAS), Best. H1 Nr. 1036., Nr. 24, quoted in Brophy, *Popular Culture and the Public Sphere in the Rhineland*, p. 97.

¹⁷ George S. Williamson, 'What killed August von Kotzebue? The Temptations of Virtue and the Political Theology of German Nationalism, 1789-1819', *Journal of Modern History*, 72-3 (2000), 890-943, (p. 915).

¹⁸ Brophy, *Popular Culture and the Public Sphere in the Rhineland*, p. 79.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

²⁰ AdK, A51, *Sozialdemokratisches Liederbuch: Sammlung revolutionärer Gesänge* (London: German Printing and Publishing Co., 1889).

fired two shots at the king's carriage, but missed and was immediately arrested. Initially the attempt engendered widespread sympathy for the king from a shocked population, but their mood soon changed when Tschech was not pardoned as expected, but quickly and secretly executed on the king's orders. *Das Lied vom Bürgermeister Tschech* appeared shortly thereafter, probably written by the noted Berlin wit Adolf Glassbrenner. No less than eleven different versions appeared, ranging from one to nineteen stanzas. This version lamented Tschech's poor aim, sarcastically ridiculing his efforts at murdering the king:

3.2.2 Das Lied vom Bürgermeister Tschech

Hatt' wohl je ein Mensch so'n Pech

Did a person ever have such rotten luck

Wie der Bürgermeister Tschech,
Dass er diesen dicken Mann
Auf zwei Schritt nicht treffen kann!

*As the Mayor Tschech,
That he could not hit from two paces
This fat man!*

Wir kamen so bei einem Haar
Um unser edles Königspaar
Hieraus nun Jedermann ersicht:
Trau keinem Bürgermeister nicht!²¹

*We came within a hair's breadth
Of losing our precious royal pair
From this let every man be instructed
No mayor should be trusted!*

Although *Das Lied vom Bürgermeister Tschech* proved to be very popular amongst the ordinary citizens of Vormärz Germany, being caught singing or whistling the tune could result in a two-year prison sentence. Indeed evidence that Tschech's song had been sung by some of the defendants in the 1847 Berlin Communist trials had helped to secure their conviction.²² This confirms that political song had gained notoriety with the authorities as a medium of dissent that would invite even greater levels of official repression from this point forward.

3.3: The First *Arbeiterlied*

As the nineteenth century progressed, the growing pace of German industrialization began to affect traditional relations between workers and their employers. Nowhere was this more in evidence than in the textile industry, where the methods of industrialized production placed increasing demands on home based textile weavers. This system of home based weaving, known as 'putting out', yielded less and less payment for increased amounts of work, as the traditional craft of weaving became subject to industrial methods of production. Eventually, unable to feed their families, on 4 June 1844 weavers in the town of Langenbielau

²¹ Steinitz, *Deutsche Volkslieder*, II, pp. 120-146.

²² Brophy, *Popular Culture and the Public Sphere in the Rhineland*, p. 54.

rose up in revolt against the textile barons Dierig and Zwanziger and their exploitative working methods, whilst another group did likewise in nearby Peterswaldau. The military suppressed the revolt and killed many participants, whilst others were arrested.²³

The Weavers' Revolt was notable for the spontaneous appearance of a song amongst the group of rebels on the very eve of the revolt, underlined by the speed of its composition and by the fact that it names the two textile barons Zwanziger and Dierig in its extemporized lyrics. Composed anonymously on the spot, this song was called *Das Blutgericht* ('The Blood Court'), and was set to the well known folk tune *Es liegt ein Schloß in Österreich* ('There is a castle in Austria') in order to facilitate its dissemination to the widest possible audience. One of the best known examples of the *Spottlied* genre, a term which can be literally translated as a 'mocking song', songs such as *Das Blutgericht* were spontaneously created to criticise and publicize significant political events. *Das Blutgericht* swiftly came to the attention of the authorities when the lyrics, printed on an extemporized flyer, were found in the possession of one of the arrested weavers, Wilhelm Maeder.²⁴ Indeed, as evidence of the speed of its composition, Franz Mehring (1846-1919), a prominent Marxist newspaper editor and politician, noted that the Peterswaldau weavers had sung the song many times prior to storming Zwanziger's house.²⁵

Prior to the appearance of *Das Blutgericht*, workers' songbooks had been produced not by industrial workers but by *Handwerker-* and *Arbeitervereine* (Craftsmen and Workers Associations), bodies composed of skilled artisans and trade craftsmen. Indeed one of the very first songbooks to be entitled an *Arbeiterliederbuch* (Workers' Songbook) was published by the *Königsberg Arbeiterverein* in 1848, following closely on the heels of songbooks produced under the auspices of the Berlin *Handwerker-Verein* in 1844, 1847 and 1848.²⁶ These *Handwerker*-inspired songbooks reflected the pride that craftsmen had for their trade. These men, in contrast to those workers dispossessed by the mechanisation process inherent in industrialization, did not see themselves as being oppressed or living in a state of wage slavery, as these anonymous song lyrics taken from the 1848 *Königsberg Arbeitervereine* songbook clearly demonstrate:

²³ Adamek, *Lieder der Arbeiterbewegung*, p. 24.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 24.

²⁵ Franz Mehring, *Geschichte der deutschen Sozialdemokratie*, Band 1 (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1960), p. 227.

²⁶ Lammel, *Hundert Jahre Arbeitermusikkultur in Deutschland*, p. 182; Nesipal, *Das deutsche Proletariat in seinem Lied*, pp. 14-16.

3.3.1 Anonymous Handwerkerlied

Wir schaffen frei in unserem Beruf,
Bewußt, das Gott uns nicht zu Sklaven
schuf.²⁷

*We work freely in our jobs,
Conscious that God did not make us
slaves*

In contrast to the tradition of these *Handwerker* songs, the sentiment of artisanal pride is notably absent in *Das Blutgericht*, and is replaced by a description of the misery of the workers' living and working conditions and expressing clearly a sense of their despair and hopelessness:

3.3.2 Das Blutgericht

Nun denke man sich diese Not
und Elend dieser Armen;
zu Hause keinen Bissen Brot
ist das nicht zum Erbarmen?

*Now one must think,
of the need and misery of these poor:
who have no bread to eat at home,
is that not to be pitied?*

This despair is evident, stating unequivocally that the process of industrialisation had pushed the weavers to the very edge of existence and left them unable to feed their families, whilst the mill bosses remained unconcerned with their plight.

Eventually no less than 25 verses of *Das Blutgericht* would appear, and the song quickly found itself in print a year after the revolt in Wilhelm Wolff's 'Das Elend und Aufruhr in Schlesien' (Misery and Revolt in Silesia), which was published in Darmstadt.²⁸ In Silesia the authorities ruthlessly suppressed the song, preventing its publication and sentencing those caught singing it to terms of imprisonment.²⁹ Thereafter it survived by oral transmission through several generations, only reaching a mass audience when it was finally included in German songbooks in the 1920s.³⁰ Nevertheless, despite it being one of the first songs to express criticism of working conditions so trenchantly, *Das Blutgericht* did not indicate any practical solutions to the workers' desperate situation, nor did it offer any programme for the working class to take concerted action to improve their circumstances. Critically at this time, Germany lacked any national trade union or political party with which to press for those social reforms necessary to improve workers' living and working conditions.

²⁷ Königsberg Arbeitervereine, *Arbeiterlieder* (Königsberg: Königsberg Arbeitervereine, 1848), pp. 3-4 in Nesipal, *Das deutsche Proletariat in seinem Lied*, p. 17.

²⁸ Wilhelm Wolff, *Das Elend und der Aufruhr*, in *Aus Schlesien, Preußen und dem Reich: Ausgewählte Schriften*, ed. by Wilhelm Wolff (Berlin: [n.pub.], 1985).

²⁹ Nesipal, *Das deutsche Proletariat in seinem Lied*, p. 13.

³⁰ Inge Lammel, *Das Arbeiterlied* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Röderberg, 1973), p. 219.

However the workers were not alone in their desire for social and political change, as critical political songs and *Freiheitslieder* alike became increasingly popular with both bourgeois liberals and radical democrats. A feature of the 1840s was the increasing use of literary poems, written by the great freedom poets of the *Vormärz*, as the basis of songs that expressed sympathy with the poverty and misery of the German worker, and which by 1847 had become sufficient in number to form a distinct genre.³¹ In his analysis of German literary history, Peter Stein noted that this development meant that ‘poetry for the first time took on a practical, agitative function in the form of song, which had a mobilizing effect on the political revolution’.³²

These lyrical poets were responsible for producing many of the most popular and long-lived workers’ songs, and included works drawn from such notable figures as Ferdinand Freiligrath, Georg Herwegh, Heinrich Heine, Georg Weerth and Heinrich Hoffmann von Fallersleben. Von Fallersleben (1798-1874), arguably the foremost poet of his generation and most notable as the composer of *Das Lied der Deutschen*, distributed a collection of political songs satirically titled *Unpolitische Lieder* (‘Unpolitical Songs’) in July 1840. Critical of the *Vormärz* authorities, von Fallersleben made his collection attractive to a working-class audience by setting his poems to familiar melodies, which gave them a consciously popular feel.³³ Georg Weerth (1822-1856), a writer and poet, had spent three years from 1843 in Bradford as the representative of a textile company, a position that enabled him to study the impact of the Industrial Revolution on the British working class. Drawing on his experience of the British Chartist movement, Weerth composed songs such as Lancashire Loos that drew parallels between British and German industrial workers.³⁴ Returning to Germany, Weerth’s experiences in northern England sharpened the tone of his subsequent work, which condemned the abject poverty and social destitution that characterized workers’ lives in *Vormärz* Germany.

Arguably the most important of the *Vormärz* songs with regard to the future development of working-class protest song was *Das Weberlied* (‘The Weavers’

³¹ Brophy, *Popular Culture and the Public Sphere in the Rhineland*, p. 86.

³² Peter Stein, ‘Vormärz’ in *Deutsche Literaturgeschichte: Von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. by Wolfgang Beutin and others (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1994), p. 250.

³³ Jost Hermand, ‘On the History of the Deutschlandlied’ in *Music and German National Identity*, ed. by Celia Applegate and Pamela M. Potter (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2002), pp. 251-268 (p. 253).

³⁴ AdK, A51, *Sozialdemokratisches Liederbuch: Sammlung revolutionärer Gesänge* (London: German Printing and Publishing Co., 1889), pp. 49-50.

Song'). Again it expressed the misery of workers' conditions in unequivocal terms. This song was the work of the journalist and romantic poet Heinrich Heine, (1797-1856), and it appeared in 1844 to mark the plight of the Silesian Weavers.³⁵

3.3.3 Das Weberlied

Verse 1

Im düsten Auge keine Träne,
Sie sitzen am Webstuhl und fletschen
die Zähne,
Deutschland, wir weben dein
Leichtentuch,
Wir weben hinein den dreifachen Fluch
Wir weben, wir weben!

*In sombre eyes no tears,
Grinding their teeth, they sit at
weaving:
'O Germany, we weave your shroud,
We're weaving a threefold curse in it –
We're weaving, we're weaving!*

Verse 3

Ein Fluch dem König, dem König der
Reichen,
Den unser Elend nicht konnte
erweichen,
Der den letzten Groschen von uns
erpreßt,
Und uns wie Hunde erschießen lässt –
Wir weben, wir weben!

*A curse on the king, on the king of the
rich,
Who hardens his heart at our
supplication,
Who wrings the last penny out of our
hides
And lets us be shot like dogs besides –
We're weaving, we're weaving!*

Verse 4

Ein Fluch den falschen Vaterlande

Wo nur gedeihen Schmach und
Schande
Wo jede Blume früh geknickt
Wo Fäulnis und Moder den Wurm
erquickt,
Wir weben, wir weben!

*A curse on this false fatherland,
teeming
With nothing but shame and dirty
scheming,
Where every flower is crushed in a day,
Where worms are regaled on rot and
decay –
We're weaving, we're weaving!*

Das Weberlied introduced a new element into *Vormärz* political songs as its lyrics eschewed the conventional view that factory owners were solely responsible for the exploitation of workers, and instead it assigned overarching responsibility for the weavers' plight to the German political system as a whole, exemplified by the reference to cursing the king in verse 3 and the notion of a 'false fatherland' in verse four. The weavers believed that they were not part of the nation, and in addition to this exclusion they were being ruthlessly exploited by the elites.

³⁵ Heinrich Heine, *The Complete Poems of Heinrich Heine: A Modern English Version*, ed. by Hal Draper (Boston: Suhrkamp/Insel Publishers, 1982).

Verse 5

Das Schiffchen fliegt, der Webstuhl kracht, Wir weben emsig Tag und Nacht – Altdeutschland, wir weben dein Leichtentuch, Wir weben hinein den dreifachen Fluch Wir weben, wir weben!	<i>The shuttle flies, the loom creaks loud,</i> <i>Night and day we weave your shroud –</i> <i>Old Germany, we weave your shroud,</i> <i>We're weaving a threefold curse in it.</i> <i>We're weaving, we're weaving</i>
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In the final verse, the line ‘Old Germany at your shroud we sit’ highlights Heine’s strong desire for political change. Moreover, this verse expresses Heine’s belief that only the workers themselves could drive political change through their own efforts. This sentiment would become an increasingly popular one over the next quarter of a century.

Das Weberlied first appeared on 10 June 1844 in the pages of Karl Marx’s *Vorwärts*, a short-lived weekly Communist newspaper that was published in Paris during 1844-1845. Thereafter it was published as an illustrated *Flugblatt*, 50,000 copies being printed and sold in the areas where the Weavers’ Revolt had taken place. In 1846 repression from the authorities forced the song to undergo a name change, becoming *Die schlesischen Webern* (The Silesian Weavers), but its undiminished popularity saw the Prussian Supreme Court move to ban it, citing its ‘rebellious tone’. One worker who attempted an impromptu recital of the poem in Berlin was summarily arrested and sentenced to a term of imprisonment.³⁶

In *Vormärz* Germany, political song had demonstrated an ability to bind previously diverse social elements together for a common purpose. As James Brophy remarked:

The communicative force of songs for both popular and bourgeois political life should not be underestimated. Whether with extemporized words (and thus forever lost) or with set lyrics either committed to memory or read from a newly purchased song sheet, songs lent political culture a necessary communitarian and festive dimension. Given the central importance of music and singing for bourgeois and plebeian lives, one should not view song as a supplemental theme of political culture. On the contrary, ... politicized popular songs in this time period permeated bourgeois and plebeian milieux... The everyday ubiquity of politicized singing blurred the borders of the political nation in *Vormärz* Germany.³⁷

³⁶ Brophy, *Popular Culture and the Public Sphere in the Rhineland*, p. 101.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 104.

Together with the spontaneous and often anonymous songs of the ordinary worker, the songs of the *Vormärz* poets would lead the political protests as liberals, democrats and workers alike took to the streets of Germany.

3.4: The March Revolution

At this juncture it is worth considering the state of development of the putative industrial working-class whose size and strength at this time should not be overstated. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, German speaking central Europe remained a predominantly agricultural region, and it was not until the 1830's and the establishment of small-scale industry in Saxony, the Ruhr and Upper Silesia that a new type of worker, the 'wage labourer' emerged.³⁸ On the eve of the March 1848 Revolution, two-thirds of the population of Germany, and almost four-fifths of that of Prussia, were still employed in agriculture,³⁹ whilst industry was still largely conducted on a relatively small scale. Prussia had less than 1,000 steam engines, the future giant *Krupp* metalworking concern employed only 140 workers, whilst the *Borsig* works in Berlin was exceptional in employing over a thousand men.⁴⁰

The proletarian participants in the March 1848 Revolution included artisans who had been unable to maintain an independent living due to the effects of industrialisation, itinerant journeymen denied the possibility of becoming master artisans, workers in small industrial factories which were more akin in size to modern day workshops, unskilled workers and labourers and finally, those whom Karl Marx would refer to as the '*Lumpenproletariat*', people who lived a rootless, neglected and occasionally criminal existence on the fringes of society.⁴¹

Across Germany the working day was invariably long, averaging between 13-16 hours in the 1840s, and the working week often included Sunday working. Insurance against the privations of old age, injury or sickness was practically non-existent, whilst Prussian legislation implemented to prevent the use of children under nine as a source of labour in mines and factories, though introduced as early as 1839, was not rigorously enforced until the 1870s. The oppressive and degrading living conditions of pre-1848 Germany, which included overcrowded housing,

³⁸ Stefan Berger, *Social Democracy and the Working Class in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Germany* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2000), p. 23.

³⁹ Rudolph Stadelmann, *Social and Political History of the German 1848 Revolution*, trans by James G. Chastain (Athens OH: Ohio University Press, 1970), p. 24.

⁴⁰ Rüdiger Hachtmann, *Berlin 1848. Eine Politik und Gesellschaftsgeschichte der Revolution* (Bonn: J.H.W. Dietz, 1997), p. 78.

⁴¹ Stadelmann, *Social and Political History of the German 1848 Revolution*, p. 159.

poor sanitation and a diet that barely reached subsistence levels attracted many social commentators to the workers' plight.⁴²

Such conditions amongst the poorest workers inevitably resulted in growing discontent, leading to a series of riots and disturbances that often centred on demands for a fair price for bread. Non-artisanal workers and journeyman who had been robbed of work opportunities by factory methods and mechanisation occasionally resorted to machine breaking from the mid-1820s, a process known as *Fabrikmeuten*. These collective protests ranged from hurling abuse at factory owners and oppressive landlords to more direct action, such as the burning down of homes and factories. Though such protests were characterised as being 'sporadic and localized' and lacking in formal organization, the depth of feeling they expressed can be deduced from their usually violent nature.⁴³ Finally, a succession of harvest failures and progressively worsening unemployment crises during the mid-1840s culminated in a series of hunger riots, as peasants, labourers, farmers and factory workers took their frustrations about their desperate plight out onto the streets.⁴⁴

The events of the 1848 Revolution in Germany would prove to be crucial to the development of distinctly working-class protest songs. Although the alliance between the liberal bourgeoisie and the workers would prove to be a fleeting one, the revolutionary events of 1848-1849 would provide the inspiration for a veritable raft of songs written by and about the working class in support of their fight for political freedom and social equality. Indeed, the revolution was notable both for the sheer volume of songs and for the diversity of their creation. Songs penned by the great literary poets were created alongside numerous revolutionary *Spottlieder* and *Barrikadenlieder*, as the bourgeoisie and worker together manned the barricades. In contrast to the literary songs, *Spottlieder* and *Barrikadenlieder* were spontaneous compositions, often written by anonymous workers and set to familiar melodies to make them more accessible to a wider audience. The lyrics of these informal songs, memorably described by the folk musician and historian David

⁴² Hans Jurgen Teuteberg and Günter Wiegelmann, eds., *Der Wandel der Nahrungsgewohnheiten unter dem Einfluß der Industrialisierung*, (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972), pp. 71-72.

⁴³ Berger, *Social Democracy and the Working Class*, pp. 25-28.

⁴⁴ Manfred Gailus, 'Food Riots in Germany in the Late 1840s', *Past and Present*, 145 (1994) 157-193. See also Hans-Joachim Hahn, *The 1848 Revolutions' in German Speaking Europe* (London: Pearson Education, 2000).

Robb as being ‘bawdry street balladry,’⁴⁵ were generally highly satirical and scathing in their criticism of the king and his ministers, and these improvised compositions were often used to call unengaged sectors of the population to the barricades.⁴⁶

Songs were created to reflect every stage of the revolution, and ultimately to lament its failure. Songs appeared that enthused about the aims of the workers’ uprising; others were more programmatic and outlined the revolutionaries’ demands. Yet more reflected specific events from around Germany such as strikes and more localized actions, whilst others feted revolutionary heroes or mourned victims of the fighting.⁴⁷ Nevertheless however diverse their message, all of these songs proposed fundamental political and social change.

The ability of song to be deployed contemporaneously with unfolding political events is clearly demonstrated by the case of *Schwarz-Rot-Gold*, a song composed by Ferdinand Freiligrath (1810-1876). Another leading *Vormärz* poet, Freiligrath’s composition reflected the desire of both workers and the liberal bourgeoisie to achieve a unified Germany as *Schwarz-Rot-Gold* represented the colours of the flag of a single German Republic. Written on 17 March 1848, on the very eve of revolutionary events in Berlin, Freiligrath’s lyrics were swiftly set to music by Robert Schumann, so that by 4 April the song was being distributed and performed throughout the country.

3.4.1 Schwarz-Rot-Gold

Pulver ist Schwarz, ist Schwarz,
Blut ist rot, ist rot,
Golden flackert die Flamme! Die
Flamme!⁴⁸

*Powder is black, is black,
Blood is red, is red,
Gold flickers the flames, the flames!*

The martial nature of *Schwarz-Rot-Gold* is evident in its lyrics, and the refrain to each verse, with its images of gunpowder, blood and flame, reflected the highly charged atmosphere of the street fighting of the revolutionary period. A subsequent verse outlined one of the revolutionaries’ key demands, namely gaining control of the judicial apparatus, which is symbolised here by the raising of the Republican flag. Control of the judiciary, which in turn controlled the police and other militia

⁴⁵ David Robb, ed., *Protest Song in East and West Germany since the 1960’s* (Rochester NY: Camden House, 2007), p. 2.

⁴⁶ Lammel, *Das Arbeiterlied*, p. 32.

⁴⁷ Wolfgang Steinitz, ‘Das Lied von Robert Blum’, *Deutsches Jahrbuch für Volkskunde*, 4 (1958), 9-40.

⁴⁸ AdK, A3, Arbeiter Sängerbund, *Liederbuch* (Berlin: Verlag Julius Meyer, 1915).

forces would see an end to the repression suffered by many sections of society including the working class:

Die eine deutsche Republik, die musst du noch erfliegen, Musst jeden Strick and Galgenstrick dreifarbig noch besiegen! ⁴⁹	<i>You, German Republic, must yet fly Every rope and gallows must be won over by the three colours</i>
---	--

In his analysis of the legacy of songs from the *Vormärz* and 1848, David Robb characterises songs such as Freiligrath's *Schwarz-Rot-Gold* as representing the initial euphoria of the Revolution.⁵⁰ This euphoria would not last long.

It was important to get these new songs out to the biggest possible audience to maximise their influence. The revolutionary poet August Braß was an active participation in revolutionary events and when he later became editor of the *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* he published a range of popular *Flugblätter* under the series title '*Lieder, die man auf der Straße singt*' ('Songs that one sings on the street'), and these proved very popular with a working-class audience.⁵¹ Other leading liberal lyricists such as Herwegh were also prominent in utilizing illustrated *Flugblätter* to enable their work to reach the broadest possible audience.⁵²

Whilst the works of the *Vormärz* poets were widely published from the outbreak of the Revolution, very few *Spott-* and *Barrikadenlieder* found their way into printed songbooks and anthologies, principally because their inflammatory lyrics made editors and publishers wary of police censorship.⁵³ Often these anonymous songs were created 'for the moment', and being linked with specific political events limited their future usefulness. Many *Spott-* and *Barrikadenlieder* were distributed on printed *Flugblätter*, whilst others were transmitted orally and became lost over time or only found their way into print early in the twentieth century, when interest in working-class songs exploded.

One of the most popular of these anonymous songs was the *Robert-Blum-Lied*, ('Song of Robert Blum') that first appeared on the streets in 1848 but was not committed to print until 1923.⁵⁴ Blum was a popular left-wing democrat and

⁴⁹ Lammel, *Das Arbeiterlied*, p. 40.

⁵⁰ Robb, ed., *Protest Song in East and West Germany*, p. 12.

⁵¹ Lammel, *Das Arbeiterlied*, p. 31.

⁵² Georg Herwegh, *Herwegh's Werke: Gedichte eines Lebendigen* (Berlin: Deutsches Verlagshaus Bong, 1909), p. 122.

⁵³ Lammel, *Das Arbeiterlied*, p. 32.

⁵⁴ The Robert-Blum-Lied first appeared in printed in *Unser Lied* (Leipzig: Proletarier Jugend Verlag, 1923).

travelled as a Viennese delegate to the revolutionary Frankfurt Parliament in October 1848. Involved in the fighting, Blum was arrested and shot by the authorities on the Briggenua (not at the Brandenburg Gate as the song suggests) on 9 November 1848.⁵⁵ The song lyrics give a somewhat stylised, slightly naïve account of the bravery and nobility ascribed to Blum at the time of his death and it was central to the construction of a heroic myth that was used to sustain the working class during times of repression:

3.4.2 Robert-Blum Lied

Verse 1

Ja, frühmorgens zwischen vier und
fünfen,
Da öffnet sich das Brandenburger Tor,
Die Händ' am Rücken festgebunden
Tritt Robert Blum mit festem Schritt
hervor.

*Yes early morning, between four and
five,
The Brandenburg Gate opens,
Hands tied behind his back,
Robert Blum, strides forward with firm
steps*

Verse 2

Die schweren Ketten rasseln an seinen
Händen,
Sein treuer Freund, der ihm zur Seite
steht,
Der Henkersknecht steht in der Mitte,
Er liest ihm jetzt sein Todesurteil vor.

*The heavy chains rattle on his hands,
His faithful friend stands by his side,
The hangman's servant stands in the
middle,
He reads him his death sentence.*

Verse 5

Der erste Schuß traf ihn in seine
Schläfe,
Der zweite in sein treues Herz-
So starb der erste Freiheitskämpfer,
der erste Freiheitskämpfer Robert
Blum.⁵⁶

*The first shot struck him in his temple,
the second in his true heart,
So died the first freedom fighter,
the first freedom fighter, Robert Blum'*

As a hero of the Revolution, Blum's popularity with the ordinary worker as 'the first freedom fighter' ensured that this song was widely disseminated throughout Germany. Tales of his martyrdom, expressed through the singing of this song extended to many subsequent generations of German workers, and those executed by the authorities were often referred to as having been 'shot like Robert Blum'.⁵⁷

Another song popular with a working-class audience that praised a leading figure of the revolution was *Das Heckerlied* ('Hecker's Song'). Written by Julius

⁵⁵ Inge Lammel, *Kampfgefährte: Unser Lied* (Berlin: Verlag Tribune, 1978), pp. 27-29; Lammel, *Das Arbeiterlied*, p. 221.

⁵⁶ Inge Lammel, ed., *Lieder der Revolution von 1848, Das Lied im Kampf Geboren*, Heft 1, Deutsche Akademie der Künste (Leipzig: VEB Friedrich Hofmeister, 1957), pp. 15-16; Wolfgang Steinitz, 'Das Lied von Robert Blum', *Deutsches Jahrbuch für Volkskunde*, 4 (1958), 9-40.

⁵⁷ Lammel, *Kampfgefährte: Unser Lied*, p. 28.

Schwanz and set to the well-known melody *Aus Feuer wird der Geist geschaffen* ('The spirit was created out of fire'), Friedrich Hecker was one of the most popular democratic political figures in Baden. In April 1848 Hecker helped organize a 'freedom train' that travelled to Konstanz, whereupon a mass rally in support of revolutionary events was held. Intending to travel on to the capital of Baden, Karlsruhe, Hecker and his supporters were thwarted by government troops, forcing him to flee the country. Nevertheless his popularity remained undimmed, as the opening verse, which is typical of the whole tone of the song demonstrates:

3.4.3 Das Heckerlied

Es klingt ein Name, stolz und prächtig, im ganzen Deutschen Vaterland; Und jedes Herz erzittert mächtig, Wenn dieser Name is genannt Ihr kennt ihm wohl, den edlen Mann; Es lebe Hecker! Stoßet an! ⁵⁸	<i>A name it rings, proudly and grandly, Throughout the German fatherland;</i> <i>And it makes every heart tremble, When this name is told You surely know it, this noble man; Hecker lives! A toast!</i>
---	--

The same motifs of pride and hero worship appear throughout this song, echoing the sentiments found in the *Robert Blum Lied*.

In addition to those songs that outlined revolutionary demands as typified by Freiligrath's *Schwarz-Rot-Gold*, and those compositions in praise of revolutionary victims and heroes such as Blum and Hecker, events that were of direct importance in furthering the political development of the working class were also a feature of songs produced under the aegis of the 1848 Revolution. *Der Bruderbund* (The Society of Brothers) was one of the earliest *Streiklieder* (strike songs), a form of political protest that would gain great popularity in the early twentieth century: with lyrics penned by Julius Jaffe and set to the familiar, and somewhat ironically chosen tune *Ein freies Leben führen wir* ('We lead a free life'), *Der Bruderbund* appeared at the time of the great printers' strike which had been declared on 1 August 1848, the printers having founded the first German trade union association two months previously. Although ultimately defeated, principally due to their isolation, the striking printers and their song gained widespread popularity:

3.4.4 Der Bruderbund

So stehen wir voll Ernst und Kraft Ein Bruder für den andern, So wollen wir gewissenhaft Dem Ziel entgegenwandern.	<i>We stand so full of intent and strength, One brother for another, So we want conscientiously To move towards our goal.</i>
---	--

⁵⁸ AdK, A33, *Frontkämpfer Liederbuch* (Berlin: Rot Front Verlag, 1927).

Wir stehen fest und wanken nicht,
Wir wissen, was wir wollen;
Wir stehen, bis die Schranke bricht,
Der uns hat trennen sollen.

*We stand firm and waver not,
We know what we want,
We stand until the barrier breaks,
That seeks to divide us.*

The initial verse echoes familiar calls from other working-class songs of the period for unity and the need for workers to band together. The call to stand together and to stand fast underlined a view that was gaining increasing popularity within the working class, namely that only by overcoming their differences ('breaking the barrier') and joining together could industrial workers achieve the political and social reforms they desperately sought. Such calls testified to the growing feeling of dissatisfaction with the existing social order: indeed, in characterising the range of songs that emerged out of the revolutionary events of 1848-49, the folksong specialists Mossman and Jones argued that these new compositions were written in 'a spontaneous spirit of democracy, rebellion and disrespect for authority'.⁵⁹

3.5: The Failure of the Revolution and its Aftermath

Despite the alliance of the liberal bourgeoisie and workers on the barricades, the revolution failed to deliver tangible social reforms for the working class. Once the German states agreed to introduce constitutions, most liberals believed that the revolution should not be pursued further, and apart from a few radical democrats who favoured both social reform and a republican form of government the resulting loss of impetus allowed government forces to regain the initiative. The capture of the Rastatt fortress in July 1849 effectively signalled the end of the rebellion and following this defeat, all democratic and workers' organizations established in the wake of the Revolution were ruthlessly eliminated by troops and the police in order to suppress any future revolutionary potential.⁶⁰

The failure of the Revolution and the subsequent authoritarian crackdown upon democratic and working-class activities resulted in what Robb has termed 'a reversion to timidity'.⁶¹ In practical terms this meant adopting language that did not actively criticise the authorities in direct terms: this new strategy can be seen in songs such as *Das Badische Wiegenlied* ('the Baden Cradle Song') written by the revolutionary journalist and writer Ludwig Pfau (1821-1894) to commemorate the

⁵⁹ Barbara James and Walter Mossman, 1848: *Flugblätterlieder und Dokumente einer zerbrochenen Revolution* (Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1983), p. 156.

⁶⁰ Berger, *Social Democracy and the Working Class*, pp. 40-42.

⁶¹ Robb, ed., *Protest Song in East and West Germany*, pp. 11-12.

short-lived democratic government in Baden.⁶² This song uses the metaphor of sleep to reflect Germany's return to the condition of an undemocratic police state. Pfau fled to Switzerland initially, and then to exile on France to escape arrest in the post-revolution crackdown.⁶³ The authorities moved swiftly to dismember those democratic groups and workers' organizations that had sprung up as a consequence of this short period of political freedom.⁶⁴ Thus the first great workers' organization, *Die Arbeiterverbrüderung*, led by the typesetter Stephan Born, was banned and its members imprisoned.⁶⁵ Those workers who had been politically active during the uprising now found themselves under surveillance by the police and subjected to periodic bouts of harassment. Many members of the *Bund der Kommunisten*, which as we have seen provided a number of important working-class songs, were arrested and sentenced to lengthy jail sentences as a result of the Cologne Communist trials of 1852.

Robb argues that political protest song at this time was being engulfed by the 'melancholy of German misery ('*deutsche Misere*'), which he defines as 'Germany's continuing inability to shape her own democratic destiny'.⁶⁶ Recognition of this sentiment, which is understandable due to the disappointment arising from the failure of the revolution, should be viewed in conjunction with the ever-present fear of arrest and imprisonment at the hands of the vengeful authorities. From this point onwards the workers would have to look to their own efforts to achieve any measure of political emancipation, whilst the practical effect of increasing police repression forced protest song underground. Examination of the song canon in the AdK reveals that no songbooks critical of the regime appeared after the revolution was suppressed until the first examples appeared that accompanied the rise of the first workers' political parties.⁶⁷ In the five years after the defeat of the revolution, one million people left Germany, mostly for America, and as a consequence many *Auswandererlieder* appeared in songbooks.⁶⁸ Only songs passed down orally, or composed locally and spontaneously continued the undercurrent of protest, although the failure of most to make their way into print

⁶² Das Badisches Wiegenlied first appeared in the *Stuttgarter 'Eulenspiel'*, 8 December 1849.

⁶³ Ludwig Pfau, *Ausgewählte Werke*, ed. by Rainer Moritz (Tübingen: Silberburg Verlag, 1993), p. 87.

⁶⁴ Berger, *Social Democracy and the Working Class*, pp. 40-42.

⁶⁵ Nespital, *Das deutsche Proletariat in seinem Lied*, p. 14.

⁶⁶ Robb, ed., *Protest Song in East and West Germany*, pp. 11-16.

⁶⁷ AdK- A2, A3, A8, A9, A15, A16, A17, A21, A33, A34, A35, A44, A46, A51, A54, A55 – These constitute the *Liederbucher vor 1945* section of the archive.

⁶⁸ Robb, ed., *Protest Song in East and West Germany*, p. 16.

have meant that few survived for posterity. The aftermath of the Revolution would not be the only occasion that the working class withdrew from direct confrontation with the authorities to avoid the worst excesses of repression, though such pragmatism should not be taken as evidence of a loss of or a lack of political conviction.

The failure of the revolution did not only affect the workers but their supporters too. A disillusioned Ferdinand Freiligrath marked the first anniversary of 18 March with a new song, *Reveille*, which denounced what he saw as the ‘treachery’ of the bourgeoisie, and in its stirring refrain identified the need for a new ‘total’ revolution, one that would be led by the workers themselves. Increasingly, workers’ protest songs would centre upon red flags and banners, this colour being intrinsically linked to socialism:

3.5.1 *Reveille*

Die neue Rebellion!	<i>The new rebellion!</i>
Die ganze Rebellion!	<i>The total rebellion!</i>
Marsch, marsch!	<i>March, march!</i>
Marsch, marsch!	<i>March, march!</i>
Marsch – wär’s zum Tod!	<i>March, even if it would be until death!</i>
Und uns’re Fahn’ ist rot!	<i>And our flag is red!</i>

The constant repetition of ‘march’ in the lyrics signifies the indelibly martial tone of *Reveille*, symbolising the need and preparedness of working-class organizations to take up arms to achieve their political aims. This willingness and expectation on the part of the representatives of organized labour to take up arms unnerved the authorities more and more, and as such invited ever-greater repressive measures.

Such songs of defiance were not the sole preserve of the *Vormärz* poets: following the failure of the revolution ordinary workers recognized that the proletariat possessed power in the form of labour with which it could shape its own destiny and effect political change for its own benefit. Moreover the post-revolutionary schism with the bourgeois liberals had convinced the workers that they alone could fight effectively for their own class interests: this recognition of their own power often found expression in songs titled ‘*Aufruf*’ (‘Appeal’), which often used the metaphor of ‘awakening’ to denote that the working class did indeed possess latent power. Foremost amongst those who expressed these sentiments were members of the short-lived *Bund der Kommunisten* (1847-1852) based in London: one of their number, the shoemaker Heinrich Bauer, composed his ‘*Aufruf*’ to the tune of the *Marseillaise* in 1849:

3.5.2 Heinrich Bauer's Aufruf!

Auf, Proletarier, Arbeitsleute!
 Auf, die ihr wirket Tag und Nacht!
 Die Stunde schlägt, sie ruft zum
 Streite:
 Auf Brüder, mutig in den Schlacht.

Up, proletariat, workers!
Up, those who work day and night
The hour strikes, to call to the conflict
Up brother, courage in battle.

In this short extract, several themes that would become important features of future working-class protest songs such as the idea of achieving political aims through battle (what would later be identified by Marxists as 'class-struggle'), and of the need for workers to band together are readily apparent. Another *Aufruf* of this period, penned by the tailor Johann Christian Lüchow is notable for the use of the term 'fourth estate' to describe the working class:

3.5.3 J-C Lüchow's Aufruf!

Es ist erwacht der vierte Stand,
 Der nützlichste im Staat,
 Denn wer ernährt das ganze Land?
 Das Proletariat!⁶⁹

The fourth estate has awoken,
The most useful in the land,
For who feeds the whole country?
The proletariat!

By describing the working class as the 'fourth estate', Lüchow's *Aufruf* ascribes the workers a separate, distinct identity of their own. He also points out that the workers do have a crucial role in feeding the nation, implying that this power is something they could use to their advantage in their efforts to achieve tangible social, economic and political reforms.

A federal law passed in July 1854 effectively sought to prevent workers' societies from undertaking any activities that pursued 'political, socialist or communist aims'.⁷⁰ Though it soon lapsed, its lasting effect was to restrict many workers' societies from engaging in any form of political activity.⁷¹ A secondary effect of such restrictions meant that many workers' education societies were formed under the aegis of existing liberal organizations, a move that would nurture growth in working-class interest in singing. Between 1859-1864, no less than 225 workers' education societies sprang up under the auspices of the liberal

⁶⁹ Konigsberger Arbeiterliederbuch (Konigsberg: [n.p.], 1848)

⁷⁰ Karl Biker, *Die deutschen Arbeiterbildungsvereine, 1840-1870* (Berlin: [n.pub.], 1973), pp. 19-20.

⁷¹ James Garratt, *Music, Culture and Social Reform in the Age of Wagner* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 202.

Nationalverein, and later the Prussian *Fortschrittspartei* (Progressive Party), and the vast majority of these societies featured singing groups.⁷²

Having been deprived of a means of expressing their political views in public many workers looked to these working-class singing associations as a means of banding together to work for their common interests.⁷³ Associational life was seen as a means of expressing a distinctly working-class identity, and many such associations (*Vereine*) sprang up across Germany, covering a diverse range of sporting, social, reading and most popular of all, singing activities. In addition to the political message expressed in the lyrics of their songs, the very act of forming and running these associations can be said to have contributed actively to the politicization of their members. The performance of tasks such as forming committees, writing programmes, controlling membership lists and electing officials mirrored developments in the wider political world. Such actions were often the workers first, albeit relatively localized and small-scale introduction to the organization and employment of political power, and would develop skills that would later prove useful when the workers established their own distinct political parties.⁷⁴

The first choral societies established exclusively for the working class appeared during the early 1860s, such as that formed in Leipzig in 1862.⁷⁵ Many were created from the choral sections of the *Arbeiterbildungsvereine* (Workers' Educational Associations) or WEA.⁷⁶ Societies such as those that appeared in

⁷² Andreas Biefang, 'Massenbasis des Liberalismus? Der Deutsche Nationalverein und die Vereine der Arbeiter, Turner, Schützen und Sänger', in 'Heil deutschem Wort und Sang!' *Nationalidentität und Gesangskultur in der deutschen Geschichte*, ed. by Friedhelm Brusniak and Dietmar Klenke (Augsburg: Wißner Verlag, 1995), pp. 23-38.

⁷³ Karen Ahlquist 'Men and Women of the Chorus: Music, Governance and Social Models in Nineteenth Century German Speaking Europe', in *Chorus and Community*, ed. by Karen Ahlquist (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006), pp. 265-292 (p. 266). See also: Thomas Nipperdey, 'Verein als soziale Struktur im Späten 18. und frühen 19. Jahrhundert. Eine Fallstudie zur Modernisierung I' in *Gesellschaft, Kultur, Theorie. Aufsätze zur neueren Geschichte*, ed. by Thomas Nipperdey (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1976), pp. 174-205; Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, *Geselligkeit und Demokratie: Vereine und Zivile Gesellschaft im Transnationalen Vergleich, 1750-1914* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2003).

⁷⁴ Richard Van Dülmen, *The Society of the Enlightenment: The Rise of the Middle Class and Enlightenment Culture in Germany*, trans. by Anthony Williams (New York: St. Martins Press, 1992), pp. 87-88; David Blackbourn, *The Long Nineteenth Century: A History of Germany, 1780-1918* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 212.

⁷⁵ Garratt, *Music, Culture and Social Reform*, p. 203.

⁷⁶ On the development of working-class choral societies see: Walter Fillies, *Die Arbeitersängerbewegung* (Rostock: Mecklenburgische Volkszeitung GmbH, 1922); Otto Didam, *Die Volkschorbewegung: Festschrift des Gausängertfestes des DAS* (Leipzig: Pfingsten, 1925); Noack, *Die Deutscher Arbeitersängerbund, Entstehung, Kampf und Aufstieg*; Otto Rüb, 'Die chorischen Organisationen (Gesangvereine) der bürgerlichen

Hamburg and Leipzig during the mid-1840s had originally been formed as adjuncts to liberal bourgeois groups and were subsequently gradually transformed or taken over by their working-class members.⁷⁷ The *Arbeiterbildungsvereine* were mainly composed of artisans, journeymen and skilled factory workers operating under middle-class leadership. This liberal bourgeois influence stressed respectability and considered the education of the worker to be their main aim: crucially these associations did not include any unskilled or ‘lumpen’ elements, and were definitely not intended to act as vehicles for the collective political advancement of the workers as a class.⁷⁸ In his study of the workers’ choral group established within the Hamburg *Arbeiterbildungsverein*, Garratt noted that their concert repertoire centred not on workers’ songs but on popular classics and well known patriotic songs:

[It can be seen that] such programmes are indicative of the broader values shaping workers’ education societies in this period: the notion that cultivation entailed the assimilation of middle-class tastes and values, and by extension, the belief that education societies engendered social harmony by breaking down class barriers.⁷⁹

Nor was this an isolated case: the repertoire of the choral group of the Berlin *Handwerkerverein* (Artisan’s Society) also concentrated on the singing of famous choral works.⁸⁰ With such an outlook, until the emergence of working-class political parties in the late 1860s, it is not surprising that this and other workers’ choral groups were hardly the breeding grounds for working-class radicalism claimed by Communist observers such as Hanns Eisler.⁸¹ Eisler sought to project

Mittel- und Unterschicht im Raum Frankfurt am Main von 1800 bis zur Gegenwart’ (MPhil, Frankfurt-am-Main, 1964); Werner Kaden, ‘Die Entwicklung der Arbeitersängerbewegung im Gau Chemnitz des Deutschen Arbeitersängerbundes von den Anfängen bis 1933’ (PhD thesis, Berlin, 1965); Kurt Thomas, *Arbeitergesang-Arbeitermusik: Traditionen der Arbeiterchöre und der Arbeitermusik im Bezirk Erfurt* (Weimar: Stadtmuseum Weimar, 1974); Mathais Knauer and Frank Wulf, ‘Arbeiter-Volkslieder. Chöre und Kampflieder in der Weimarer Republik’, in *Jahrbuch Arbeiterbewegung*, 2 vols, ed. by Claudio Pozzoli (Frankfurt-am-Main, [n.pub], 1974); Wilfried van der Will and Rob Burns, eds, *Arbeiterkulturbewegung in der Weimarer Republik. Eine historisch-theoretische Analyse der kulturellen Bestrebungen der sozialdemokratisch organisierten Arbeiterschaft* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Ullstein, 1982).

⁷⁷ Arno Kapp, *Vom Gesang der Handwerksgesellen zum ersten deutschen Arbeitergesangverein unter Bebel* (Halle: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 1950), pp. 18-20; Biker, *Die deutschen Arbeiterbildungsvereine*, pp. 31-37.

⁷⁸ Garratt, *Music, Culture and Social Reform*, pp. 199-205;

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 199.

⁸⁰ Kapp, *Vom Gesang der Handwerksgesellen*, p. 20.

⁸¹ Hanns Eisler, ‘Geschichte der deutschen Arbeitermusikbewegung von 1848’ in *Musik und Politik, Schriften 1924-1948*, ed. by Günter Mayer, *Gesammelte Werke*, series III, vol. 1, 2nd edition (Leipzig: Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1985), p. 212.

notions of the class struggle endemic to the 1920-30s back onto this earlier time in order to reinforce the teleology of Marxist theories of class consciousness and class formation, and to provide a sense of historical continuity that, like much theoretically driven Marxist scholarship, was based on interpretations that were largely illusory.⁸²

However this symmetry between liberals and the working class did not last, as their respective political views progressively began to diverge and polarise as the process of German industrialization and urbanization gathered pace. Workers had become progressively disillusioned with the liberal industrial bourgeoisie, principally due to the latter's fundamental opposition to the proletarian idea of state intervention and class solidarity, which they argued ran contrary to liberal policies of *laissez faire* and individualism. This sparked a renewed interest in independent working-class politics and a return to the popular ideas of 1848: full male suffrage, the setting up of co-operative societies, political freedom and social reform.⁸³ Now progressively estranged from the liberals on the question of how to achieve social and political reform, many workers demonstrated a renewed interest in independent working-class politics, which would ultimately result in the creation of the first representative working-class political parties. This, in turn, would provide the impetus for the creation of a whole new genre of working-class political songs, which would actively promote these new parties and transmit their political programmes to a wider audience.

3.6: Protest Song and the Workers' Political Parties

In May 1863 the *Allgemeiner Deutscher Arbeitervereine* (General German Workers' Association) or ADAV was formed under the presidency of Ferdinand Lassalle. Lassalle founded the ADAV in the hope that the as yet unformed German state would adopt a liberal-democratic constitution, which he believed would provide the best opportunity for workers' political concerns to be heard. The ADAV favoured universal male suffrage and the establishment of state-run producer-worker co-operatives, the latter in the hope that state control would be more beneficial to the working class in terms of higher wages and better living conditions than bourgeois led capitalism.

⁸² Garrat, *Music, Culture and Social Reform*, p. 198.

⁸³ Berger, *Social Democracy and the Working Class*, pp. 44-45.

As this new political force sought to establish itself, it inspired the composition of new songs that were used to promote the aims and objectives of the ADAV. To achieve this aim, massed workers' choirs performed stirring songs at party rallies and conferences, using the passion and vitality of their performances to inspire new recruits and imbue them with the socialist ethos, whilst political songs were also sung at smaller meetings and ad hoc gatherings.⁸⁴ Two of the most popular songs to emerge in parallel with this nascent political party were Georg Herwegh's '*Bundeslied*', and Jakob Audorf's '*Arbeiter Marseillaise*'.⁸⁵

Herwegh's '*Bundeslied*', also popularly known through its first few words as *Bet' und Arbeit* ('Pray and Work'), is generally acknowledged as being the first political song that emerged out of the organised labour movement. Herwegh, a university-educated innkeepers' son, had been directly requested by Ferdinand Lassalle to write a song that would win new converts to his emerging working-class party.⁸⁶ Therefore the *Bundeslied* represents a generation of songs that echo the thoughts of the educated leadership, rather than being expressions of the grassroots thinking of the rank and file worker. However, it is logical to assume that despite the difference in perspective both Lassalle and Herwegh, who corresponded in great detail about the lyrics of the *Bundeslied*, forged a song that they believed would appeal to a working class suffering great distress during Germany's rapid industrialization process. The song dispenses with the 'wailing and complaining' that characterized earlier lyrical accounts of working-class social conditions, such as that found in Heine's *Weberlied*, and built on the idea that workers did possess something of value with which to bargain in the political arena, namely the power of their labour.⁸⁷

3.6.1 Bundeslied (Bet' und Arbeit)

Verse 1

Bet' und arbeit! Ruft die Welt,
Bete kurz, denn Zeit ist Geld,
An die Türe pocht die Not,
Bete kurz! Denn Zeit ist Brot.⁸⁸

*Pray and work! Cries the world,
Pray quickly, for time is money,
Need knocks at the door,
Pray quickly, for time is bread.*

⁸⁴ Dieter Dowe, 'The Workingmen's Choral Movement in Germany before the First World War, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 13 (1978), 269-296 (p. 274/280).

⁸⁵ Nesipal, *Das deutsche Proletariat in seinem Lied*, pp. 27-29.

⁸⁶ Nesipal, *Das deutsche Proletariat in seinem Lied*, pp. 29-32; Adamek, *Lieder der Arbeiterbewegung*, p. 22.

⁸⁷ Adamek, *Lieder der Arbeiterbewegung*, p. 25.

⁸⁸ Nesipal, *Das deutsche Proletariat in seinem Lied*, pp. 129-130.

The first verse alludes to the intrusion of industrial working practices into everyday life, suggesting that the tempo of industrialization reduced the life of the worker to just working and sleeping, leaving little time for prayer (and by extension anything that would improve his quality of life. It further suggests that in order to feed his family, the worker had to suffer this regime out of necessity rather than through choice.). The idea that the worker works day and night without seeing the rewards of his labours is a central theme of many working-class political songs of the 1860-1870s.

Verse 5

Alles ist dein Werk! O sprich,
Alles, aber nichts für dich!
Und von allem nur allein
Die du schmied'st, die Kette dein!

*Everything is your work, O say,
But nothing is for you!
And the only thing of yours,
Are the chains you yourself forged*

The fifth verse of the *Bundeslied* emphasised the view that the worker received no reward for his efforts, arguing that only he, by becoming aware of his plight, could rectify the situation and break free of it. This suggests that any thoughts of the working-class expecting assistance from other quarters of society (e.g. the Liberals) were now firmly a thing of the past.

Verse 10

Mann der Arbeit, aufgewacht!
Und erkenne deine Macht!
Alle Räder stehen still,
Wenn dein starker Arm es will!

*Working man, awake!
And recognize your power!
All wheels stand still,
If your strong arm wishes it.*

Verse 10 takes that self-recognition a stage further, calling on the worker to recognize the power of his labour, expressed through the lyric that he could bring the ‘wheels’ of industry to a standstill through strikes and withdrawal of labour, thus emphasizing his growing importance in a rapidly industrialising nation.⁸⁹ Also this verse expresses the inherently masculine nature of industrial work, equating as it does the strength of industrial workers’ power with the metaphor of a ‘strong arm’. This reflects the fact that the struggle for political equality remained almost exclusively a male preserve, despite the presence of large numbers of women in industry.

In contrast to the contemporary creation of the *Bundeslied*, the original *Marseillaise* had become well known across Germany in the early nineteenth century when it was sung by Napoleonic troops marching into battle. Originally

⁸⁹ Adamek, *Lieder der Arbeiterbewegung*, p. 24.

written by Joseph Rouget de Lisle, a French army officer stationed at Strasbourg shortly after the outbreak of war with Austria in April 1792, the *Marseillaise* was intended to act as a battle cry to inspire French troops it was subsequently adopted by revolutionaries in Marseille and brought with them to Paris in mid-summer:⁹⁰ In Germany it would be appropriated by a working class who found a resonance in its calls to defeat tyranny when applying this sentiment to their own repressive and authoritarian regime.

3.6.2 Marseillaise

Allons enfants de la patrie!
Le jour de gloire est arrivé;
Contre nous de la tyrannie
L'étandard sanglant est levé.
Entendez-vous dans les campagnes
Mugir ces féroces soldats?
Ils viennent jusque dans vos bras
Egorger vos fils, vos compagnes!

Chorus:

Aux armes, citoyens, formez vos
bataillons,
Marchez, marchez, qu'un sang
Impur abreuve nos sillons.

Forward children of the homeland!
The day of glory is upon us;
Against us, the bloody standard
Of tyranny is raised.
Do you hear those ferocious soldiers
Bellowing in the fields?
They come into your very midst
To slaughter your sons, your wives!

To arms, citizens, form your battalions,
March on, march on, that
*Impure blood will water our furrows!*⁹¹

This original French rendering of the *Marseillaise* would be unusual as a political song text in that, unlike most other popular workers' songs, it had only one definitive version once a seventh verse, the so-called verse of the children, was added in the Autumn of 1792. Thereafter there were no alternate versions, only parodies, although its melody would be appropriated many times to create new songs both in Germany and elsewhere.⁹² Symptomatic of its enduring popularity, Theodor Hagen wrote of his admiration for the radical nature of the *Marseillaise* and was unequivocal in his belief that this song could stimulate a population to revolutionary action.⁹³

It was music that quickened the first step towards the liberation of the human will. It was music that enabled the French to storm the Bastille, and to tear down the bulwark of prejudices which the old world had constructed... I do not know for how long the French Revolution will endure, but am certain of one thing: that the people will never demand

⁹⁰ See Mason, *Singing the French Revolution*, pp. 94-96, for the English translation of lyrics and the French original.

⁹¹ Mason, *Singing the French Revolution*, p. 94.

⁹² Ibid., pp. 98-99.

⁹³ Garratt, *Music, Culture and Social Reform*, p. 80.

the fulfilment of one of its rights without having previously struck up the *Marseillaise*.⁹⁴

Whilst in its native France the *Marseillaise* was deployed in support of both nationalist and republican political ideals, in Germany it acted as an international working-class symbol of freedom and class revolt. This political utility demonstrates how the same song can be used in distinct historical settings to articulate quite different political concerns and to reinforce separate identities.⁹⁵ The most prominent German version of the *Marseillaise*, known as the *Arbeiter Marseillaise* ('The Workers' *Marseillaise*'), was the work of a young Hamburg metalworker Jakob Audorf (1834-1898), and was written to mark the founding of the ADAV. From the outset, Audorf's *Arbeiter Marseillaise* was to become one of the most popular and enduring working-class political songs:⁹⁶

3.6.3 Arbeiter Marseillaise

Wohlan, wer Recht und Wahrheit
achtet,
zu unsrer Fahne steh' allzuhauf!
Wenn auch die Lüg uns noch
umnachtet,

Bald steigt der Morgen hell herauf!
Ein schwerer Kampf ist's den wir
wagen,
Zahllos ist unsrer Feinde Schar.
Doch ob wie Flammen die Gefahr

Nicht zählen wir den Feind,
Nicht die Gefahren all!
Der kühnen Bahn nun folgen wir,
Die uns geführt Lasalle!

*Onward you, who respect right and
freedom,
All of you gather round our flag,
Even though lies surround us with
darkness,*

*Our bright dawn will soon be arriving,
It's a grave battle that we dare,
Countless the bands of our foes,
And should danger envelop us like
flames,*

*We discount the enemy,
And all perils,
We follow the heroic path,
Where Lasalle was leading us.*

These initial verses talk of the current darkness (i.e. the repressive nature of German society) being lifted by the coming of dawn – the use of metaphors involving natural light were very popular literary devices in many workers' songs. These verses also acknowledge that the path of political emancipation would not be easy, faced as they were with the full repressive apparatus of the German state. The lyrics of the *Arbeiter Marseillaise* went on to outline the ADAV's stance on the nature of future working-class political action, namely their wish to gain power

⁹⁴ Theodor Hagen, *Civilisation und Musik* (Straubenhärdt: Antiquariat Verlag Zimmermann, 1988), pp. 51-52.

⁹⁵ Mason, *Singing the French Revolution*, p. 99.

⁹⁶ Bettina Hitzer, *Schlüssel zweier Welten. Politisches Lied und Gedicht von Arbeitern und Bürgern, 1848-1875* (Bonn: Bonn Historisches Forschungszentrum, 2001), p. 21.

through electoral participation, which required co-operating with those parties not hostile to socialism, and demanding equality of rights and a fairer voting system.⁹⁷ This belief was expressed in the opening lines of the fifth verse; ‘Up then, you comrades of conviction, strengthen today that new alliance’ and those of the third verse which stated ‘a free right to vote is our target, and in that we will be victorious’. Indeed Emanuel Wurm, a fellow working-class song composer and noted socialist journalist, and himself a contemporary of Audorf, commented upon hearing the *Arbeiter Marseillaise* for the first time that he believed it was ‘a true programme song’, one that clearly laid out the ADAV’s political goals.⁹⁸ Indeed Wurm would be inspired to write his own song, *Das Völkerfrühlingslied* (‘The People’s Spring Song’) set to the tune of the *Marseillaise*. Other versions that did likewise included those produced to agitate to for specific social reforms such as ‘The Eight Hour *Marseillaise*’, which called for an eight hour limit to the working day, and a Prussian voting rights *Marseillaise*, whilst the Communists and even sporting organizations would later produce their own derivatives.⁹⁹ Rather more whimsical was the appearance of a *Marseillaise* produced in honour of Christmas!¹⁰⁰ Whatever their intended aim or expected audience, all of these versions served to ensure that the melody was handed down through many generations, a fact proven by its continued presence in many workers’ songbooks and collections.¹⁰¹

However as working-class parties appeared during the 1860s, it should be borne in mind that the *Allgemeiner Deutscher Arbeitervereine* did not hold a monopoly on the formation of workers’ political views. Whilst the ADAV remained committed to the Lassallean view that the working class could only gain access to political power by working with the institutions of the existing state, this idea was anathema to workers influenced by Marxism. Strongly influenced by the contemporary thinking of Marx and Engels, the *Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei* (Social Democratic Workers’ Party) or SDAP was formed at Eisenach in August 1869. Originally founded as the Saxon People’s Party in 1866 as part of the anti-Prussian liberal-democratic movement by August Bebel and

⁹⁷ Adamek, *Lieder der Arbeiterbewegung*, p. 28.

⁹⁸ Nespital, *Das deutsche Proletariat in seinem Lied*, p. 35.

⁹⁹ See chapter 5 for more on programme songs, pp. xx–xx.

¹⁰⁰ Inge Lammel, ‘Politisches Lied und Volkslied in der Gesangspraxis der Arbeiterklasse’ in *Arbeiterklasse und Musik: Theoretische Position in der Deutschen Arbeiterklasse zur Musikkultur vor 1945*, ed. by Inge Lammel, Akademie der Künste der DDR, Arbeitsheft 15, (Leipzig: Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1975), pp. 46–47.

¹⁰¹ AdK- A2, A3, A8, A9, A15, A16, A17, A21, A33, A34, A35, A44, A46, A51, A54, A55.

Wilhelm Liebknecht, the SDAP differed principally from the ADAV view of the democratic state as a potential ally, with which it could work to obtain incremental social reforms, (the ‘reformist position’), in favour of an approach that advocated the revolutionary overthrow of the existing capitalist order, rejecting any notion of co-operation with middle-class parties (the ‘revolutionary’ position).

Songs such as the *Arbeiter Marseillaise* were highly popular with supporters of both parties, but they were not always accepted unquestionably. Members of the SAPD, with its emphasis on collegiate decision-making, objected to the naming of the ADAV president Ferdinand Lassalle in the *Arbeiter Marseillaise*’s refrain, believing the lines ‘we follow in the train of the bold Lassalle who led us’ to be evidence of a personality cult. Thus members of the SAPD began to substitute the refrain lines with others that echoed Freiligrath’s *Reveille* and which adopted an altogether more martial tone:¹⁰²

Marsch, marsch, marsch, marsch,
Und sei’s zum Tod,
Denn unsere Fahn’ ist rot!

March, march, march, march,
And let it be until death,
For our flag is red!

However it should not be imagined that Audorf’s original version, inspired by his admiration for the reformist ADAV, was lacking in radical intent. Numerous lines in the *Arbeitermarseillaise* express a martial element: in particular the lyric ‘the enemy we hate deeply’ acknowledged that a hard fight ‘(schweren Kampf)’ would have to be undertaken against numerous enemies (‘zahllosen Feinden’).

During the 1870s those Social Democrats committed to pursuing a revolutionary course were increasingly active in writing and distributing new songs. One of the most popular of these was *Die Arbeitsmänner* (The Working Men), also known by its opening few words as *Wer schafft das Gold zutage* (‘Who brings the Gold to the Surface’), written by Johannes Most whilst he was imprisoned in Vienna during 1870. Subsequently expelled from Austria, Most went to Leipzig where he arranged to self-publish a pamphlet entitled *Sechs Proletarian Lieder* (Six Proletarian Songs), in which *Die Arbeitsmänner* was included.

Nesipal noted that the lyrics of *Die Arbeitsmänner* conveyed a stronger sense of radicalism and revolution, an achievement she ascribes to Most’s ability to impart a greater ‘richness of expression’, and this can be seen in contrast to the examples quoted earlier.¹⁰³ The song appeared at the time of the Franco-Prussian War and the concomitant efforts to establish a unified German state: thus the

¹⁰² *Sozialdemokratische Lieder und Deklamationen* (Zurich: [n.p.], 1874)

¹⁰³ Nesipal, *Das deutsche Proletariat in seinem Lied*, p. 43.

unashamedly revolutionary nature of its lyrics invited attention from the authorities at a time of national mobilisation and upheaval, and despite its ongoing popularity, *Die Arbeitsmänner* would achieve the dubious distinction of being one of the most widely censored songs right up to the outbreak of the First World War.¹⁰⁴ Its basic concept is to draw attention to the importance of the working class as the motive power of the industrialization process, and to highlight the inequity of the situation that sees them performing the work whilst factory owners reap all the benefits:

3.6.4 Die Arbeitsmänner (Wer schafft das Gold zutage?)

Wer schafft das Gold zutage?
Wer hämmert Erz und Stein?
Wer webet Tuch und Seide?
Wer bauet Korn und Wein?
Wer gibt den Reichen all ihr Brot
Und lebt dabei in bitterer Not?

Das sind die Arbeitsmänner,
Das Proletariat!

*Who brings the gold to the surface?
Who hammers ore and stone?
Who weaves cloth and silk?
Who grows grain and wine?
Who gives the rich all their bread?
And lives the same time in bitter need?*

*The working men do,
The proletariat!*

However, the message is not a new one, being essentially the same as that found in Herwegh's *Bundeslied*, and like previous working-class protest songs, the lyrics of *Die Arbeitsmänner* stress the basic inequality of workers denied political rights and living in dire poverty as virtual slaves to the whims of their capitalist employers:¹⁰⁵

Wer war von je geknechtet
Von der Tyrannenbrut?
Wer mußte für sie kämpfen
Und opfern oft sein Blut?
O Volk, erkenn' daß du es bist,
Das immerfort betrogen ist!
Wacht auf, ihr Arbeitsmänner!
Auf Proletariat!

Ihr habt die Macht in Händen,
Wenn ihr nur einig seid
Drum haltet fast zusammen
Dann seid ihr bald befreit.
Drängt Sturmschritt vorwärts in den
Streit,
Wenn auch der Feind Kartätschen
speit!
Dann siegt, ihr Arbeitsmänner,
Das Proletariat!¹⁰⁶

*Who has been eternally enslaved,
by the tyrant's brood,
Who had to fight for them,
And often sacrifice his blood?
O people, recognise that you are they
that are continually deceived,
Wake up, you working men!
Proletariat, arise!*

*You have the power in your hands,
If only you are united,
Therefore, hold fast together,
Then you are soon free.
Press forwards into the quarrel at the
double,
Even if the enemy spews grapeshot!
Then victory, you working men!
The proletariat!*

¹⁰⁴ Lammel, *Kampfgefährte: Unser Lied*, p. 37.

¹⁰⁵ Nesipal, *Das deutsche Proletariat in seinem Lied*, p. 43; Lidtke, 'Songs and Politics', p. 257.

¹⁰⁶ Karl Adamek, *Politisches Lied heute: Zur Soziologie des Singens von Arbeiterliedern* (Essen: Klartext Verlag, 1987), pp. 25-26; Adamek, *Lieder der Arbeiterbewegung*, p. 106.

Additionally, *Die Arbeitsmänner* echoes the familiar call for workers to ‘awake’, reminding those singing and hearing the song that the workers possessed the power in their own hands with which to change their social conditions.

The founding of the *Internationaler Arbeiterassoziation*, known also as the First International, in London in 1864 proved to be a focal point for those who believed that proletarian revolution should not be constrained within national borders. This idea of ‘internationalism’ gained great currency in Germany during the early 1870s as attention was focused on neighbouring France due to the Franco-Prussian War and the brief success of the Paris Commune.¹⁰⁷ The latter event, which saw the world’s first socialist government briefly established in Paris between 18 March and 28 May 1871, proved to be a popular topic for many German protest songs that enthused over the whole idea of a proletarian government.¹⁰⁸ Once it had been bloodily suppressed, the defeated participants in the Paris Commune were mourned and eulogized in many German songs, the most popular of which was Max Kegel’s *Die Parisier Commune*. Kegel was a noted workers’ poet, and his composition would initially appear, like so many other spontaneously composed songs, only on a *Flugblatt*, before being formally published for the first time in a small songbook in Dresden during 1872.¹⁰⁹ The defeat of the Paris Commune would also inspire the writing of one of the most well-known proletarian political protest songs, *Die Internationale*, in June 1871, but this would not be widely circulated in Germany until it was first translated into German in 1888.

If songs in praise of the Paris Commune had unnerved the already anxious German authorities, those that were actively critical of German involvement in the Franco-Prussian War pushed their tolerance of revolutionary working-class songs to the limit. Socialist belief in anti-militarism and proletarian internationalism, as expressed in the idea that workers of all nations should stand together as brothers rather than fight each other at the instigation of capitalist governments, found stark expression in the song *Ich bin Soldat, doch bin es nicht gerne* (‘I am a soldier, but I am not one gladly’), which became known as the *Demokratisches Soldatenlied* (‘Democratic Soldier’s Song’):

¹⁰⁷ Olivier Lissagaray Prosper, *History of the Paris Commune of 1871* (St. Petersburg, FL: Red & Black Publishers, 2007)

¹⁰⁸ For a selection of such songs see: AdK, A21, Vereinigung der Freien Organisation Deutschlands, *Lieder für die Arbeitende Jugend* (Berlin: Mar Peters, 1907).

¹⁰⁹ Gustav Linke, *Zeitgemäße Volklieder und Gedichte* (Dresden: Gustav Linke, 1872).

3.6.5 Demokratisches Soldatenlied

Ihr Brüder all', ob Deutsche, ob Franzosen, Ob Ungarn, Dänen, ob von Niederland, Ob grün, ob blau, ob weiß die Hosen,	<i>You, brothers all, whether German, whether French Whether Hungarian, Danes, whether from the Netherlands Whether your trousers are green, blue or white,</i>
Gebt euch statt Blei zum Gruß die Bruderhand! Auf, laßt zur Heimat zurückmarschieren, Von den Tyrannen unser Volk befrei'n: Denn nur Tyrannen müssen Kriege führen, Soldat der Freiheit will ich gerne sein! ¹¹⁰	<i>Greet each other not with lead but with the brotherly hand Up, leave and march home, Free our people from tyranny, For only tyranny leads to war <i>I want to be a soldier of freedom!</i></i>

Appearing in 1870 during the build up to the Franco-Prussian War, the *Demokratisches Soldatenlied* quickly became highly popular. Understandably however, the idea it expressed that all men were brothers was clearly at odds with the attempts of the German government to foster popular support for a war with France. Thus *Ich bin Soldat...* was banned from the outset, and those caught singing it were immediately sentenced to lengthy terms of imprisonment. The increasingly revolutionary tone of working-class songs began to actively concern the government of the newly constituted Germany, and this would presage greater repressive measures against singers, songwriters and songbook publishers alike.

3.7: Protest Song and the Onset of Illegality

Socialism prospered during the industrial boom of the late nineteenth century as workers used the economic power of their labour in attempts to wring concessions on pay and working conditions out of their employers. In an effort to achieve their demands, the number of industrial strikes reached a peak of 362 in 1872, but the rapid economic expansion was jeopardized by a deep slump starting in 1873 that further exacerbated growing political and social tensions.¹¹¹ These tensions were reflected in the creation and distribution of an increasing number of songs that advocated a revolutionary restructuring of the political order to the benefit of the working class, a development that attracted ever greater levels of police

¹¹⁰ AdK, A51, *Sozialdemokratisches Liederbuch: Sammlung revolutionärer Gesänge* (London: German Printing and Publishing Co., 1889).

¹¹¹ Edgar Feuchtwanger, *Imperial Germany, 1850-1918* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 70-72.

surveillance and repression, albeit initially on a localized and invariably ad hoc basis.

As the 1870s progressed, the authorities increasingly began to take co-ordinated action against what they perceived to be the ‘danger’ that politically motivated working-class song posed to the stability of German society. In Hamburg in 1873 a law was passed that prohibited street singers from performing any song deemed to be capable of ‘causing injury to public decency’, a charge that was suitably vague that allowed it to be harshly enforced by the Hamburg police.¹¹² Thirty years after the appearance of the first true workers’ song *Das Blutgericht*, with its heartfelt condemnation of ‘the blood court’, the legal system of Germany was now starting to bring its full weight to bear on a method of political protest that had gained sufficient strength over the intervening period to be seen by those in authority as a credible threat to the stability of German society.

In the decade before 1878, most songbooks printed within Germany that looked to support the political ambitions of the growing urban industrial proletariat were unequivocal in their condemnation of the injustices being suffered by the working class under the Wilhelmine regime. Collections such as Max Kegel’s *Freie Lieder: Gesammelte Gedichte*, (‘Free Songs: Collected Poems’), which appeared in 1877, included songs in praise of the defeated Paris Commune and made calls for the working class to vote for the emerging Socialist parties as the only genuine ‘representatives of the poor’.¹¹³ This collection also featured newly composed songs that demonstrated the continuing utility of the ideas of 1848: songs such as the *Märzblüthen* (Bloody March) and *Die Todten von 1848*, (‘The dead of 1848’) eulogized the fallen heroes of the failed March Revolution. The lyrics of many songs in *Freie Lieder* displayed an overtly martial tone, with numerous references to fighting and bloody battles. Typical of these was the song *Wohl Sieg* (‘Welfare Victory’), which noted the need for ‘weapons in the bloody battle’ in the campaign to obtain welfare reforms and social justice for the working-class.¹¹⁴ Being possessed of such unequivocally inflammatory language throughout, songbooks such as *Freie Lieder* posed a defiant challenge to the increasingly nervous German authorities.

¹¹² ‘Der Hamburger Verordnung für Straßenmusikanten’ – see: Rolf Wilhelm Brednich and others, *Handbuch des Volkliedes*, Band 1 (Munich: [n.pub], 1973), p. 581.

¹¹³ AdK, A8, *Freie Lieder: Gesammelte Gedichte* (Chemnitz: Genossenschafts Buchdruckerei, 1878). The song, ‘Weckruf zur Reichstagswahl’ (‘Call to the Reichstag vote’) ended with the line ‘den Vertreter der Armen zu wählen’, pp. 36-37.

¹¹⁴ AdK, A8, *Freie Lieder: Gesammelte Gedichte* (Chemnitz: Genossenschafts Buchdruckerei, 1878), p. 83.

Those songs produced in support of working-class political aims during the 1860-70s have been described by some historians, principally those of the former East Germany, as forming part of ‘the golden age of social democracy’.¹¹⁵ This concept draws a distinction between those songs that emphasized ‘struggle’ and unequivocally advocated the necessity for a proletarian revolution, and those that supported working within the existing political structure to achieve incremental social reforms. As subsequent chapters will discuss in greater detail, advocates of this view, as a consequence of their Communist patronage, have suggested that the latter approach inevitably led to a loss of revolutionary fervour that was reflected in the lyrical content of working-class protest song. However such changes reflected the diverse strains of socialism, both radical and reformist, that possessed an equally claim to validity.

Conclusion

Song had long been a useful medium of communicating thoughts, news and opinions to a wide audience. Early-modern traditions of communal public singing, the production and dissemination of song-sheets, and the valuable communication networks provided by peddlers and other itinerant travellers, all combined with steadily improving levels of public literacy to allow the formation and spread of political thought and ideas. These networks allowed the first news of the French Revolution, itself a major source of politically motivated songs, to reach the German speaking lands. The message of liberty and equality expressed in these freedom songs (*Freiheitslieder*) struck a chord with many impoverished Germans, though the authorities remained adept at swiftly suppressing any forms of dissent they believed threatened to destabilize society. Gradually, with the consistent crop failures and economic hardships of the 1840s these protests began to take a more tangible form: bread riots increased in intensity and in 1844 weavers in Silesia rose up against their employers to protest against inhumane working and living-conditions. It was during this time that the first true workers’ songs (*Arbeiterlieder*) appeared, but although these songs described the poverty and misery of the life of the German worker, they did not offer any solutions, revolutionary or otherwise, to their problems.

¹¹⁵ Eisler, ‘Geschichte der deutschen Arbeitermusikbewegung von 1848’, pp. 211-230; Lammel, *Das Arbeiterlied*, p. 46.

The 1848 Revolutions that swept the German speaking lands in Europe saw a temporary alliance between liberals and workers, promising a unified republic and tangible social reforms. However the ultimate failure of the uprising led to an ever-widening split between the workers and Liberals, a process that eventually lead to the right-wing of Liberalism becoming hostile to workers' demands for equality and social justice, especially in the wake of German unification and the rise of Bismarck as a national figure after 1871.

Nevertheless the hopes engendered by the revolution resulted in a large canon of literary songs being produced to support workers' demands, many of which were the work of the great *Vormärz* workers' poets. However these were not the only source of political songs: anonymous workers produced many songs 'on the spot' to describe political events, and these *Spottlieder*, printed on cheap flysheets (*Flugblätter*) were widely distributed. However as most *Spottlieder* were used to describe specific events (rather than advocating specific long-term societal change as the literary songs did), the makeshift nature of their production and transmission, combined with their aggressive lyrics which meant few songbook editors were willing to publish them for fear of censorship, only a few survived for later publication. Additionally the failure of the Revolution resulted in the composition of many songs that eulogized those who had been killed or forced to flee to escape repression.

Disillusionment with Liberal attitudes to working-class emancipation, concomitant with a growing recognition of the power of their own labour in what was a rapidly industrializing society, led the working class to form their own political organizations. Alongside these new parties and trades unions, numerous working-class singing associations were formed. All of this stimulated the creation of new political songs to encourage the development of these emerging political parties. These early songs emphasized the element of struggle as the political representatives of the working class sought to establish themselves in a society increasingly hostile to socialism. Growing ever more fearful of the prospect of a proletarian revolution, the authorities began to increase the amount of legislation opposing the creation and performance of working-class political protest song. The very fact that songs were being surveyed, monitored and banned by the authorities underlined just how much of a threat politicised singing was deemed to pose, and this growing awareness would eventually culminate in the passing of the Anti-Socialist Law in 1878.

Chapter 4

Protest Song from the Anti-Socialist Law to the Eve of the First World War, 1878-1914

This chapter discusses the development of political working-class song during the period from 1878, when the Anti-Socialist Law was enacted, until 1914, when Europe was plunged into the First World War. It demonstrates how the growing political strength of the burgeoning working class, contained in a society which denied it effective representation and continued exclusion from power, influenced the form and content of the songs of this period, and what impact changing socio-political conditions had upon the directions working class song took. It will argue that that political song lost its revolutionary lustre after 1890, in favour of a new emphasis on reformism, a policy that eschewed the idea of an outright political revolution in favour of working with the existing political regime in order to achieve political reform. This political philosophy manifested itself in the composition of songs that directly agitated for specific reforms, most notably for equal voting rights and a restricted working day.

The four decades prior to the First World War also saw the rise of the labour movement, whose political parties and trade unions were supported by a whole range of leisure and self-help societies. The growing strength of working-class political organisation made itself increasingly felt in the decade before the outbreak of the First World War, when strikes, lock-outs and labour disputes were on the increase.¹ After the turn of the century many more sectors of the working class had become politicised, and as a consequence, the singing of political songs underwent a massive expansion to encompass women, youth, and sporting and leisure associations, all groups that had never previously used song to express their political sentiments. This chapter will seek to examine the canon of songs that arose from this process in order to understand what political messages they were used to convey.²

¹ Peter N. Stearns, 'The Rise of Strikes: The Limits of Labour Protest', in *The Industrial Revolution and Work in Nineteenth-century Europe*, ed. by Leonard R. Berlanstein (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 127-147.

² Ute Frevert, 'Politische Kommunikation und ihre Medien', in *Sprachen des Politischen: Medien und Medialität in der Geschichte* ed. by Ute Frevert & Wolff Braungart (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), pp. 7-19.

4.1: Protest Song and the Anti-Socialist Law

Following years of increasing repression, outlined at the end of the preceding chapter, Bismarck's attempts to declare the Social Democrats as enemies of the state finally came to fruition with the passing of the *Sozialistengesetz* or Anti-Socialist Law. Under the terms of this law, first enacted in October 1878, all organisations 'that seek by means of Social Democratic, Socialistic or Communistic activities to overthrow the existing political and social order', and all associations 'in which Social Democratic, Socialistic or Communistic activities aimed at overthrowing the existing political and social order find expression in a manner endangering the peace and in particular the harmony of the classes in the population' were prohibited.³ The *Sozialistengesetz* was carefully worded so as to allow the authorities the greatest possible latitude with which to enforce it.⁴ This law only permitted the Social Democratic Party to take part in regional and national elections, giving the parliamentary faction in the Reichstag a disproportionate degree of influence and control: this development accorded primacy to the views of those who sought to use the electoral process as a means of achieving social and political reform, rather than those who believed that such gains could only result from a proletarian revolution.⁵

One of the consequences of this draconian and wide-ranging legislation was that many Social Democratic workers' organizations, including choral groups, were peremptorily banned.⁶ This proscription was extended to socialist newspapers and periodicals and led directly to the curtailment of songbook publishing. Many of these, though not always actually published by the Social Democratic party itself, were strongly in agreement with their political aims. In the first ten years of the law, 1,299 printers alone were sanctioned for printing material deemed a danger to the state.⁷ To forestall further police action against songbook editors and publishers, the publication of social democratic songbooks was moved abroad,

³ *Reichsgesetzblatt* (1878), Nr. 34, p. 351.

⁴ The 'Gesetz gegen die gemeingefährlichen Bestrebungen der Sozialdemokratie', or the Anti-Socialist Law, was passed on 19th October 1878 and came into force two days later. It was renewed on 4th May 1880, 12th May 1884, 2nd April 1886 and 17th February 1888.

⁵ Susanne Miller and Heinrich Pothof, *A History of German Social Democracy from 1848 to the Present* (Leamington Spa: Berg Publishers, 1986), pp. 33-37.

⁶ Antoinette Hellkühl, *Empor zur Licht. Arbeitergesangvereine im westfälischen Ruhrgebiet, 1878-1914* (Stuttgart and Witten: B. Marohl, 1983), pp. 25-33; Axel Körner, *Das Lied von einer anderen Welt: Kulturelle Praxis im französischen und deutschen Arbeitermilieu, 1840-1890*, Historische Studien 22 (Frankfurt-am-Main and New York: Campus Verlag, 1997), p. 99; James Garratt, *Music, Culture and Social Reform in the Age of Wagner* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 198.

⁷ Dieter Fricke, *Die Deutsche Arbeiterbewegung, 1869-1914: Ein Handbuch über ihre Organisation und Tätigkeit im Klassenkampf* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1976), p. 130.

initially to Switzerland, and later, as the threat of police repression against composers and editors became more acute, to London. These books would then be smuggled back into Germany alongside other Social Democratic periodicals by a system of secret couriers known as the *Rote Feldpost* ('red fieldpost'), in one of the most obvious challenges to the strictures of the Anti-Socialist Law.⁸

The provisions of the Anti-Socialist Law forced many leading Social Democrats into exile abroad, which in turn resulted in the relocation of many socialist newspapers and periodicals.⁹ In the case of song, many of the most prominent songbook publishers established themselves in the relative safety of France and Switzerland. This geographical distancing allowed socialists to continue to print songbooks that attacked the Kaiser and his regime in explicitly revolutionary tones without immediate fear of retribution.¹⁰ This aggressive policy can be illustrated by examining the content of the *Sozialdemokratisches Liederbuch-Sammlungsrevolutionärer Gesänge* ('Social Democratic Songbook – A Collection of Revolutionary Songs'), which was published in London in 1889, during the last year of the Anti-Socialist Law.¹¹ As its title suggests, this book contained songs that were revolutionary in tone, many actively attacking the 'tyrannical' Kaiser and his ministers, whilst others openly referred to Germany as a police state. Other songs were equally unequivocal in their calls for a proletarian revolution, advocating the establishment of a 'red republic', whilst the two popular songs that symbolized the banned political activities of the two main working-class parties that we encountered in the previous chapter, Herwegh's '*Bundeslied*', and Audorf's '*Arbeiter Marseillaise*' also featured prominently.¹²

⁸ Vernon L. Littke, *The Outlawed Party: Social Democracy in Germany, 1878-1890* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 93-97. During the last two years of the Anti-Socialist Law this service smuggled 11,000 copies of the Social Democratic newspaper *Sozialdemokrat* into Germany.

⁹ *Reichsgesetzblatt* (1878), Nr. 34, p. 351.

¹⁰ Margarete Nespital, *Das deutsche Proletariat in seinem Lied* (Rostock: Mecklenburgische Volkszeitung GmbH, 1932), pp. 47-49.

¹¹ AdK, A51, *Sozialdemokratisches Liederbuch – Sammlung revolutionärer Gesänge*, Elfte unveränderte Auflage, (London: German Printing and Publishing Co., 1889) and AdK, A51b, *Sozialdemokratisches Liederbuch – Sammlung revolutionärer Gesänge*, Zwölfta Auflage, (London: German Printing and Publishing Co., 1889).

¹² AdK, A51b, *Sozialdemokratisches Liederbuch*, Elfte Auflage, included the following prominent political songs:

Nr.3 – *Arbeiter Marseillaise*

Nr.4 – *Bundeslied*

Nr.6 – *Lied der Bürgermeister Tschech*

Nr.9 – *Die Arbeitsmänner*

Nr.10 – *Bet und Arbeit*

Nr.11 – *Wir sind die Petroleure*

Many of these songs would be banned in subsequent editions of this songbook.

In his memoirs, the leading Social Democrat August Bebel noted the popularity of these revolutionary songs amongst the exiled leadership of his party in Zurich during the 1880s. Most notable of these were *Das Lied vom Bürgermeister Tschech*, which, as discussed previously, praised an assassination attempt on the King of Prussia in 1844, and *Das Lied der Petroleure* ('The Petrol Song').¹³ Bebel had referred to this song in a speech to the Reichstag, describing how 'the burning fuel of Social Democracy would be understood as a symbol of political enlightenment', a powerful sentiment that further enraged the hostile political forces already ranged against working-class political parties.¹⁴

4.2: Song and the Legacy of the Anti-Socialist Law

Despite opposition from Bismarck, the Anti-Socialist Law was allowed to lapse in 1890. Now legalized once again, the Socialist parties were free to renew their activities, and one consequence of their years in the political wilderness was the adoption of a political programme that drew upon, at least in part, the radical ideas of Marxist theory. This was achieved when the newly renamed *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* (SPD) adopted its Erfurt Programme in 1891.¹⁵ This two-part programme combined long-term radical Marxist ideological goals with a programme of short-term demands for social reforms intended to improve the conditions of the working class.¹⁶

However the radical element of the Erfurt Programme was quickly challenged by a number of party intellectuals: foremost amongst these was Eduard Bernstein, who rejected both the economic determinism of Marx inherent in the Erfurt Programme, and, more fundamentally, the need for a proletarian revolution. Instead Bernstein advocated co-operation with like-minded sections of the bourgeoisie to achieve incremental social and political reforms, a policy termed 'revisionism'. In the more liberal southern German states, SPD politicians such as Ludwig Frank were not content to sit back and wait for a proletarian revolution to achieve reforms that would benefit the working class. As a consequence Frank defied the national party leadership to collaborate with the liberals and vote in support of the regional budget. A number of Social Democrats believed such collaboration would build goodwill with those other parties sympathetic to

¹³ AdK, A51b, *Sozialdemokratisches Liederbuch*, Zwölfte Auflage, pp. 17-19.

¹⁴ August Bebel, *Aus meinem Leben*, 2. Auflage, Band III (Stuttgart: [n.p.ub.], 1911), p. 95.

¹⁵ Lüdtke, *The Outlawed Party*, pp. 335-338.

¹⁶ Fricke, *Die Deutsche Arbeiterbewegung*, pp. 172-174; See also: Lothar Berthold and Ernst Diehl, *Vom Kommunistischen Manifest zum Programm des Sozialismus* (Berlin: [n.pub.], 1964), p. 82-88.

moderate socialism, thereby fostering greater co-operation that would gradually permit the achievement of social reform to the benefit of the working class, an approach known appropriately enough as ‘reformism’.¹⁷

To assess the nature of the immediate changes wrought on existing songbooks by the lapsing of the anti-socialist legislation, we can examine the 1890 edition of the ‘*Sozialdemokratisches Liederbuch – Sammlungsrevolutionärer Gesänge*’, a later edition of the songbook referred to above. Despite the Anti-Socialist Law having already lapsed in February, publication of the 1890 songbook moved back to Switzerland from London, rather than returning immediately to Germany, as the editors remained wary of police repression. Additionally over 20% of the content of the 1889 book was simply removed from the new edition by its editors due to the inflammatory nature of their lyrics. Indeed, some of these omissions were quite pointed, as they affected songs that had achieved widespread popularity. For example, the *Sozialdemokratisches Bundeslied*, ‘*Willkommen ihr, der Freiheit Söhne*’ (‘Welcome, you sons of freedom’) was one of the songs conspicuous by its absence, despite it having been the very first song in the 1889 songbook. Its lyrics unequivocally called for the establishment of a ‘red republic’, the colour of socialism, and freedom from tyranny:

4.2.1 Sozialdemokratisches Bundeslied

Tod jeder Tyrannie!	<i>Death to every tyranny</i>
Die Arbeit werde frei!	<i>Work will be free</i>
Es keim und blüh zum Völkerglück,	<i>It awakes and blooms to peoples good fortune:</i>
Die rothe Republik! ¹⁸	<i>The red republic!</i>

Such explicitly revolutionary lyrics, equating the Imperial regime with tyranny, now sat uneasily with a barely re-legalised socialist movement seeking to avoid the levying of further damaging legislation upon them. Another song, *Das Lied vom Bürgermeister Tschech* (‘The Song of Mayor Tschech’) was, not unsurprisingly, also left out of the 1890 edition: the presence of such a song would hardly have sat well with Wilhelm II just as he had allowed the Anti-Socialist Law to expire.¹⁹ Other songs omitted from the new edition included *Lied der Verfolgten* (the Song of the Persecuted), which advocated the hanging of the nobility ‘for the dream of a

¹⁷ Dick Geary, ‘Socialism and the German Labour Movement before 1914’, in *Labour and Socialist Movements in Europe before 1914*, ed. by Dick Geary (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1989), pp. 101-136, (p. 129).

¹⁸ AdK, A51, *Sozialdemokratisches Liederbuch – Sammlung revolutionärer Gesänge*, Elfte unveränderte Auflage, (London: German Printing and Publishing Co., 1889), pp. 5-6.

¹⁹ See Chapter 3, pp. 87-88.

new Republic' and ended each verse with the unequivocal refrain 'Out, out. Revolution, revolution, revolution!', and a song entitled *Ermahnung* ('Admonition'), which stated quite candidly that 'the hungry will never know the value of the law in a police state'.²⁰ In other collections, songs such as *Bet' und Arbeit* (Georg Herwegh's '*Bundeslied*') and *Wer Schafft das Gold zutage*, both stalwarts of the nascent working-class political movement, also gradually disappeared.²¹

The view that, following the lapsing of the Anti-Socialist Law, most officially published or sanctioned song collections had their political content watered down, can be assessed by examining the content of Max Kegel's *Sozialdemokratisches Liederbuch*, ('Social Democratic Songbook').²² This publication, the official songbook of the Social Democratic Party, first appeared just before the pivotal Erfurt Party Day in October 1891, at which as we previously noted, the Social Democratic party's new political programme was unveiled.²³ Hardly as big as a postcard, it contained many well-known songs from the nascent workers' movement. Its editor, Max Kegel, (1850-1902) was born in poverty in Dresden, but went on to enjoy a successful career in journalism. Kegel's own thoughts about the utility of his new songbook were expressed in the prologue:

Our songs were banned, and graveyard silence covered the land.
The reactionaries held down freedom with an iron hand.
Yet now we who remain in the silent struggle, overcome the powerful
enemy.
Now should ring out anew, the swaying songs of the storm.
They should echo through the world,
And wake a free family,
They should ring out as a slogan,
In the battle for truth and right.²⁴

²⁰ AdK, A51, *Sozialdemokratisches Liederbuch*, Elfte unveränderte Auflage, pp. 59-82. See also Nesipal, *Das deutsche Proletariat in seinem Lied*, p. 89.

²¹ Nesipal, *Das deutsche Proletariat in seinem Lied*, pp. 129-130; Inge Lammel, *Kampfgefährte: Unser Lied* (Berlin: Verlag Tribune, 1978), p. 37;

²² AdK, A54c, *Sozialdemokratisches Liederbuch*, Dritte Auflage (Stuttgart: JHW Dietz, 1891)

²³ AdK, A54c, Max Kegel, *Sozialdemokratisches Liederbuch*, Dritte Auflage (Stuttgart: JHW Dietz, 1891); AdK, A54f, Max Kegel, *Sozialdemokratisches Liederbuch*, Vierte Auflage (Stuttgart: JHW Dietz, 1891); AdK, A54g, Max Kegel, *Sozialdemokratisches Liederbuch*, Fünfte Auflage (Stuttgart: JHW Dietz, 1893); AdK, A54h, Max Kegel, *Sozialdemokratisches Liederbuch*, Sechste Auflage (Stuttgart: JHW Dietz, 1894); AdK, A54a, Max Kegel, *Sozialdemokratisches Liederbuch*, Achte Auflage (Stuttgart: JHW Dietz, 1897).

²⁴ AdK, A54f, Kegel, *Sozialdemokratisches Liederbuch*, Vierte Auflage, p. iii.

Massively popular, Kegel's *Sozialdemokratisches Liederbuch* would be printed in no less than three editions in its first year alone, and, as Nesipal observed, 'it was the first party songbook of which political opponents took note'²⁵. Contemporary observers had also attested to its huge popularity, with the music journalist Hanno Ernst noting that '[this songbook] has an extraordinary distribution and is to be found in the hands of most party comrades'.²⁶ Ernst went on to describe how the songbook was an essential companion at party meetings, May Day celebrations and other workers' festivals.²⁷ The content of this songbook would remain remarkably consistent throughout eight editions over a period of six years, with more than 60 of the book's 70 songs remaining unchanged throughout this period.

However, the popularity of Kegel's *Sozialdemokratisches Liederbuch* and the stability of its content would see it become symbolic of the view that the lifting of the Anti-Socialist Law heralded the end of Social Democracy's wholehearted commitment to political revolution.²⁸ This perception, of a lack of revolutionary commitment, would become a key criticism of Social Democracy following the establishment of the Communist Party at the end of 1918 because many of the songs sung after the First World War stemmed from this earlier period and would be cited by GDR scholars looking to justify the Communist worldview of their state.²⁹

However, it is clear that the content of Kegel's 1891 songbook signalled a change in political emphasis: the explicitly revolutionary tone of working-class songs from the 1880s (when the party was effectively banned from political activism under the terms of the Anti-Socialist Law) was indeed absent, and the content had reverted to a more benign, less politicised canon of earlier labour movement songs.³⁰ Nine out of ten songs found in the 1871 Eisenach Party songbook were reproduced in Kegel's work, and all of these were drawn from the *Vormärz* workers' poets' movement from around the time of the failed revolution of 1848-49. Such songs reflected bourgeois hopes of freedom by using nebulous

²⁵ Nesipal, *Das deutsche Proletariat in seinem Lied*, p. 50.

²⁶ Hanno Ernst, 'Sozialdemokratische Lieder' in *Didascalia*, special edition of the Frankfurter Journal, Nr.230, 1895. See also J.B. Mehler, *Die Sozialdemokratische Poesie*, Augsburg, 1894.

²⁷ Ernst, 'Sozialdemokratische Lieder'

²⁸ Lammel, *Kampfgefährte: Unser Lied*, p. 43.

²⁹ Inge Lammel, *Das Arbeiterlied* (Frankfurt am Main: Röderberg Verlag, 1973), p. 55.

³⁰ AdK, A54f, Kegel, *Sozialdemokratisches Liederbuch*, compared with AdK, A54g, Kegel, *Sozialdemokratisches Liederbuch*

metaphors and poetic allegory rather than politically charged lyrics.³¹ Dowe agrees that songbooks were politically neutralised after the Anti-Socialist Law lapsed:

In considering the songs sung after the expiration of the anti-socialist legislation it will be found that, taking the whole breadth of the repertoire into account, the words were very far indeed from being hymns to revolution and class warfare.³²

Although it appeared simultaneously with the adoption of the Erfurt Programme, its content reflected just how little influence Marxism had on the everyday thinking of those who sought to influence grass roots opinion, namely songwriters, lyricists and, perhaps more pertinently in an age of police repression, songbook editors.

Of the remaining content, only a few new party songs appeared. Of these, a number spoke of the significance of 1st May as a day of working-class protest.³³ This idea had first been promulgated at the International Workers' Congress in Paris in 1889, and in Germany the Social Democrats would increasingly use the 1st May both as a day to celebrate workers' culture, and as a platform on which to promote workers' issues such as the introduction of a maximum eight-hour working day.³⁴ Critics, drawn mainly from the radical left wing of the party, viewed these efforts by the Social Democratic leadership to 'divert' the focus of working-class protest into supporting reformist issues as evidence that the revolutionary potential of early proletarian protest song had been wasted.³⁵

This caution could be considered a pragmatic response to a hostile society, and has usually been interpreted by GDR historians as evidence that many of the songs produced after 1890 lacked 'revolutionary fervour'. Foremost amongst such critics, Inge Lammel contends that post-1890 working-class songs eschewed the previous emphasis on the continuing struggle of the worker against repression and tyranny, in favour of advocating reformist demands, thus causing working-class song to lose much of its value as a weapon that could convince people of the need to achieve fundamental social change through a political revolution.³⁶

Indeed, songbooks produced in the period directly after the expiration of the anti-socialist legislation certainly reflect a desire on the part of workers to achieve socialism through secret universal suffrage rather than any concentration upon

³¹ Nespital, *Das Arbeiterlied*, p. 89.

³² Dowe, 'The Workingmen's Choral Movement in Germany', p. 285.

³³ Inge Lammel, ed., *Lieder zum 1.Mai, Das Lied im Kampf Geboren*, Heft 3, Deutsche Akademie der Künste (Leipzig: VEB Friedrich Hofmeister, 1959)

³⁴ Lüdtke, *The Outlawed Party*, p. 302.

³⁵ Lammel, *Das Arbeiterlied*, p. 46.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 46.

ideas of outright Marxist revolution.³⁷ However this is not necessarily as straightforward a situation as it appears to be at first glance: despite the lapsing of the Anti-Socialist Law, many song-books continued to be censored or banned, and workers' song, whether sung in formal groups or in ad hoc gatherings on the street were still subject to police interference and repression. Thus songbook editors had to be wary of censorship and police surveillance, and this was reflected in the contents of collections produced from 1890 onwards.³⁸ Nor should it be forgotten however that the content of songbooks was not synonymous with the entirety of what the working class was actually singing: the restrictions on what songs could be printed without attracting the red ink of the censors, or a visit by the police to the responsible publishing house, and the existence of the spontaneous and often short-lived *Spottlied*, with its many regional variations, ensured that the canon of working-class protest song remained both fluid and patchily recorded.

It is also interesting to note exactly which songs replaced the more outspoken examples outlined above and to note in what terms they couched their political messages. In demanding the granting of equal rights to the working class rather than advocating proletarian revolution, these newly introduced songs often portrayed their political messages in metaphors of spring and new awakening, with titles such as *Moderne Frühlingsdenken*, ('Modern Thoughts of Spring').³⁹ Other songbooks reintroduced songs such as Heine's *Weberlied*, that predated the formation of working-class political parties, whose lyrics restricting themselves to acting as social commentaries on workers' misery and poverty, but which did not advocate any political solution to their plight, for example the necessity for a proletarian revolution:⁴⁰

...these political songs contained not one hint of definite demand or objective but expressed only very general hopes and longings for (social) liberty, equality and fraternity – those earlier bourgeois ideals forgotten by the bourgeoisie since 1848 – and for truth, justice, proletarian solidarity and unity.. Symbol and metaphor, as in such associative pairs as spring/the dawn of a new era, light/freedom,

³⁷ Dowe, 'The Workingmen's Choral Movement in Germany', pp. 285-286.

³⁸ Edgar Feuchtwanger, *Imperial Germany 1850-1918* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 110.

³⁹ AdK, A51c, *Sozialdemokratisches Liederbuch – Sammlung revolutionärer Gesänge*, Dreizehnte unveränderte Auflage, (London: German Printing and Publishing Co., 1890), pp. 81-84.

⁴⁰ AdK, A51c, *Sozialdemokratisches Liederbuch – Sammlung revolutionärer Gesänge*, Dreizehnte unveränderte Auflage, (London: German Printing and Publishing Co., 1890), pp. 81-84, compared with AdK, A51d, *Sozialdemokratisches Liederbuch – Sammlung revolutionärer Gesänge*, Dreizehnte unveränderte Auflage, (London: German Printing and Publishing Co., 1888).

See Heinrich Heine's 'Weberlied' in *Vorwärts*, 10 June, 1844.

night/oppression, abounded. Often man's lack of freedom contrasted with the freedom to be found in nature.⁴¹

Such songs contained an element of utopian emancipatory yearning that still seemed divorced from the harsh political realities and discriminatory practices that were an intrinsic part of everyday working-class life. However, a retreat to these, more politically neutral songs can be best explained as a pragmatic response to the ever-greater threat of repression by authorities that were growing increasingly intolerant of dissent expressed in song form. In the aftermath of the Anti-Socialist Law, with Social Democracy re-legalised and increasing its political powerbase, such advances were not to be jeopardized likely through ill-advised outbursts of anti-government rhetoric.

Unwilling to risk any moves that might prompt official retaliation, songbook editors, particularly after the turn of the century, tended to be wary of adding new songs if they were in any way contentious, or more pertinently if they believed that the authorities may deem them to be so. The fact that the content of many Social Democratic songbooks remained essentially unchanged until the First World War suggests that the editors had found a formula that enabled them to work within the restrictions of state censorship, rather than solely being the consequence of adopting reformist policies. Communist critics may lament the paucity of new overtly political songs in this immediate pre-war period, but given the readiness of the authorities to unleash repressive measures, pragmatism and self-preservation were always going to be more realistic in the battle for day-to-day political survival than an unswerving commitment to political radicalism.

What is clear is that 1890-91 marked a definite cleavage in the content of working-class songbooks, and that a process of de-radicalization did occur. However it must be remembered that those censored or banned songs did not simply disappear, but they simply moved underground, to be sung covertly in secret meetings, or overtly at mass demonstrations where singers faced arrest and punishment. More pertinently, banned songs remained lodged in peoples' minds, and were transmitted orally and intra-generationally across the whole country. Additionally it must be remembered that a great number of songs were never committed to songbooks anyway. Many anonymous and often short-lived songs continued to appear throughout the Wilhelmine era, and these continued to be as radical and hard-hitting as any song that had gone before.

⁴¹ Dowe, 'The Workingmen's Choral Movement in Germany', p.287.

4.3: Internationalism

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, working-class songbooks also began to include a number of songs that were trans-national in origin, reflecting the similar struggles of workers and peoples of other nations to achieve freedom and social equality. Whatever the specific nature of the workers' freedom movement in individual countries, these songs reflected a common message, namely the necessity of proletarian struggle to achieve political emancipation, one that had an international validity.⁴² Songs drawn from France, Russia and Poland, amongst others, were swiftly translated into German and added to the burgeoning canon of working-class songs.

Arguably the most famous songs of foreign origin came from France, which produced both the *Marseillaise* and the *Internationale*, the former in particular going on to heavily influence many subsequent German compositions.⁴³ The lyrics of this second key French composition, the *Internationale*, were written by the French radical Eugène Pottier as a response to the violent overthrow of the Paris Commune. Pottier had been an active participant in the Commune that existed from March-May 1871, and he wrote the lyrics that were set to music by the Belgian composer Pierre Degeyter in 1888.⁴⁴ The *Internationale* emerged from a competition sponsored by a *goguette*, one of the urban wine bars frequented by the working class in France in the mid-nineteenth century.⁴⁵ This song remained relatively unknown in Germany until May 1902, when the first German translation was published in the music periodical *Lieder-Gemeinschaft* ('Community of Songs'). The *Internationale* soon proved to be extremely popular with workers and lyricists alike, and various versions appeared that matched new German lyrics with Degeyter's original melody.⁴⁶

The revolutionary movements in other European countries also provided a rich source of songs: one of the most famous of these, *Bandiera Rosso*, ('The Red Flag') came from Italy. Written by Carlo Tuzzi in 1908, and set to the tune of two

⁴² Lammel. *Das Arbeiterlied*, p. 41.

⁴³ The *Marseillaise* was previously discussed in Chapter 3, pp. 108-110.

⁴⁴ *Deutscher Arbeiter Sängerzeitung*, 15 February 1914, p. 8. There was considerable debate about the identity of the composer. See particularly: Frantisek Gel, *Internationale und Marseillaise: Lieder, die Geschichte Machten* (Prague: Artia, 1954), pp. 185-192.

⁴⁵ Körner, *Das Lied von einer anderen Welt*, pp. 70-71.

⁴⁶ Inge Lammel, 'Politisches Lied und Volkslied in der Gesangspraxis der Arbeiterklasse' in *Arbeiterklasse und Musik: Theoretische Position in der Deutschen Arbeiterklasse zur Musikkultur vor 1945*, ed. by Inge Lammel, Akademie der Künste der DDR, Arbeitsheft 15, (Leipzig: Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1975), pp. 41-43.

See also 'Wacht auf, Verdammte dieser Erde' (Arise you damned of this earth') by Emil Luckhardt in Appendix A.

folksongs from Lombardy woven together, this song, also known by the Italian translation of the first two words, *Avanti Popolo*, would gain great popularity and would appear in a multiplicity of versions.

4.3.1 Bandiera Rosso (*Avanti Popolo*)

Vorwärts Volk, zum Gegenangriff
Die rote Fahne, die rote Fahne,
Vorwärts Volk, zum Gegenangriff
Die rote Fahne wird triumphieren.

Die rote Fahne wird triumphieren,
Die rote Fahne wird triumphieren,
Die rote Fahne wird triumphieren,
Es lebe der Kommunismus und die
Freiheit

*Forward people, to the counterattack,
The red flag, the red flag.
Forward people, to the counterattack,
The red flag will triumph.*

*The red flag will triumph,
The red flag will triumph,
The red flag will triumph,
Communism and freedom lives.*

Avanti Popolo is notable both for its lyrical simplicity and for its promotion of the red flag as the international symbol of world socialism. It also uses the effective device of repetition to hammer home its triumphal message.

Russia too proved to be a rich source of songs for oppressed groups as social tensions rose in response to the inequality and misery of the Tsar's regime. Notable among these Russian songs were *Brüder zur Sonne, zur Freiheit* ('Brothers, to the sun, to freedom'), written by the Russian political dissident Leonid Radin whilst he was in prison during 1897, shortly before he was exiled to Siberia and *Unsterbliche Opfer* ('Immortal Victims').⁴⁷ Although already popular in Germany before the turn of the century, *Unsterbliche Opfer* received renewed impetus when it was widely used to honour the suffering of the victims of the revolutionary events in Russia in 1905 and later in 1917. The lyrics also acknowledges a belief in the inevitability of the day when the working class would achieve power as evident in the line 'you fought and died for coming rights', whilst at the same time lamenting the lost potential of those who had already died for the cause of political emancipation:

4.3.2 Unsterbliche Opfer

Unsterbliche Opfer, ihr sanket dahin,
Wir stehen und weinen,
Voll Schmerz Herz und Sinn.
Ihr kämpftet und starbet für
kommendes Recht,

*Immortal victims, you sank in there,
We stand and cry,
Our hearts and senses full of pain,
You fought and died for coming rights,*

⁴⁷ Inge Lammel, ed., *Lieder der Partei, Das Lied im Kampf Geboren*, Heft 10, Deutsche Akademie der Künste (Leipzig: VEB Friedrich Hofmeister, 1971), pp. 17-18.

Wir aber, wir trauern, der Zukunft
Geschlecht.⁴⁸

*We however, we mourn the future
family.*

A number of political protest songs also came from Poland, a country that had been progressively dismembered by Austria, Prussia and Russia by 1795. During the nineteenth century the Polish lands had endured considerable revolutionary upheaval as various groups sought to reconstitute their nation. Songs of Polish origin were especially popular with German songbook editors and compilers as the nineteenth century drew to a close. Notable among these were the *Warshawjanka*, which was written by a Polish poet Waclaw Swiecicki on his return from Siberian exile in 1883, and popularly sung in the workers' demonstrations on the streets of Warsaw on 2 March 1885, and *Die Rote Fahne* ('The Red Flag'), which was also written by a Polish revolutionary poet, Boleslaw Czerwienski, and dated from 1881.⁴⁹ Whatever their origins, all of these songs gained widespread popularity throughout Germany and featured in most pre-war socialist songbooks. The success of the Russian Revolution in 1917 would result in a similar influx of foreign songs into the working-class canon in the years after the First World War.

Alongside the existing songs of the labour movement, anonymous *Spottlieder* and songs drawn from foreign struggles for political equality, German songwriters continued to produce *Arbeiterlieder* of their own. One such song was Max Kegel's *Sozialistenmarsch*, which appeared in 1891 shortly after the lapsing of the Anti-Socialist Law. Originally sung in a four-part harmony by workers' choirs, the *Sozialistenmarsch* was one of a number of such songs adapted to a single part harmony for massed singing on the streets. A stalwart of pre-war songbooks it quickly became an enduring favourite of the Social Democratic Party.⁵⁰

4.3.3 Sozialistenmarsch

Auf, Sozialisten, schließt die Reihen!
Die Trommel ruft, die Banner wehen.
Es gilt, die Arbeit zu befreien,
Es gilt, der Freiheit Aufersteh'n!
Der Erde Glück, der Sonne Pracht,

*Rise Socialists, close ranks!
The drum calls, the banner flutters.
It's essential to free work
It's essential for freedom to rise again
The earth's good fortune, the
splendour of the sun*

⁴⁸ Lammel, *Das Arbeiterlied*, pp. 120-21.

⁴⁹ Lammel, *Das Arbeiterlied*, pp. 109-10; Lammel, ed., *Lieder der Partei*, pp. 11-14; Lammel, *Das Arbeiterlied*, pp. 111-12.

⁵⁰ Der *Sozialistenmarsch* first appeared in print in: AdK, A54a, Max Kegel, *Sozialdemokratisches Liederbuch*, Achte Auflage (Stuttgart: JHW Dietz, 1897).

Des Geistes Licht, der Wissens Macht,	<i>The light of the spirit, the power of knowledge</i>
Dem ganzen Volke sei's gegeben!	<i>That is to be for all the people!</i>
Das ist das Ziel, das wir streben!	<i>That is the aim that we strive for!</i>
Refrain:	
Das ist der Arbeit heil'ger Krieg!	<i>That is the work of the holy war!</i>
Mit uns das Volk, Mit uns der Sieg! ⁵¹	<i>With us, the people, with us victory!</i>

The *Sozialistenmarsch* features many motifs and images familiar to previous songs of the Socialist movement; the call for workers to ‘rise and close ranks’ once more echoes previous calls for unity, an essential prerequisite for achieving political reform. This call to take part in the struggle is once again expressed in unashamedly martial terms, with lyrics equating the demands of the workers’ emancipatory struggle with the imagery and symbolism of an actual battlefield, where the ranks are brought together by the beat of drums beneath a flying standard. These continuities demonstrate the cohesion and consistency of a now established protest song canon. Nevertheless the *Sozialistenmarsch* also boasts some new features, most notably an expression of commitment to the achievement of working-class political equality and social freedom given in religious terms, as characterized by references to a ‘holy war’ in the refrain. Given the secular nature of the organized labour movement this is a notable departure, though female workers continued to maintain high levels of church attendance despite encountering hostility and derision from male family members.

4.4: ‘Programme’ Songs

As well as publicizing specific working-class political events such as massed strikes, working-class song increasingly began to turn its attention to the achievement of specific proletarian political reforms. These ‘programme’ songs, which generally advocated current Social Democratic political demands, were mostly centred on calls for equitable voting rights (notably in undemocratic Prussia), and for a maximum eight-hour working day. Prussia was one of many states that severely restricted its voting franchise to favour the wealthy and privileged, and to discriminate against the working class, whose power and potential for revolution they continued to fear.⁵²

⁵¹ Lammel, ed., *Lieder der Partei*, pp. 24-25.

⁵² Roger Chickering, *Imperial Germany and the Great War, 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 4-7; Margaret Lavinia Anderson, *Practicing Democracy: Elections and Political Culture in Imperial Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

Stark evidence of the political impotence of the working class can be illustrated by the election results to the Prussian State parliament (*Landtag*) in 1903: the Social Democrat Party won 18.79% of the popular vote, comparing favourably with the 19.39% obtained by their Conservative opponents. However whilst the Conservatives gained 143 out of the 443 seats, the vicissitudes of the Prussian three-class electoral franchise system denied the socialists even a single seat.⁵³ The elections to the same body in 1910 saw hundreds of thousands of workers take to the streets in protest, calling for the introduction of meaningful voting reform: in the working-class districts of Moabit and Wedding street fighting between workers and police left many dead and hundreds injured. In order to highlight this patent inequality, and as a medium of communicating working-class demands for reform, *Der Preussische Wahlrechtsmarseillaise* (the ‘Prussian Voting-Rights Marseillaise’) was composed and distributed on flyers to the demonstrators on the streets. This song was subsequently incorporated in working-class songbooks, first appearing in *Das Arbeiterliederbuch für Massengesang* (‘The Workers’ Songbook for Mass singing’) in 1910.⁵⁴

Song was also used to support claims for a maximum eight-hour working day. A number of songs were composed, but the most well known of these was the *Acht-Stunden Marseillaise* (the ‘eight-hour *Marseillaise*’), which, as its title suggests, was another German proletarian protest song set to the tune of the French *Marseillaise*.⁵⁵ With lyrics written by the journalist and typesetter Ernst Klaar, the *Acht-Stunden Marseillaise* first appeared in print in Max Kegel’s *Sozialdemokratisches Liederbuch* in 1891, although it had been composed two years earlier, shortly after the decision of the 1889 International Workers Congress to declare the 1st May as the International Day of Labour.⁵⁶ This Congress had also encouraged the working-class across Europe to agitate for a restricted working day, a demand summed up in the *Acht-Stunden Marseillaise*’s chorus:

⁵³ Helga Grebing, *History of the German Labour Movement: A Survey*, revised edn. (Leamington Spa: Berg Publishers Ltd, 1985), p. 73.

⁵⁴ *Das Arbeiterliederbuch für Massengesang* (Berlin: [n.pub.], 1910)

⁵⁵ ‘Acht-Stunden Marseillaise’ in AdK, A2, Arthur Galch, *Deutsches Buchdrucker Liederbuch* (Leipzig: Radelli and Hille, 1894), pp. 196-97. For some of the others see: Inge Lammel, ed., *Lieder zum 1. Mai, Das Lied im Kampf Geboren*, Heft 3, Deutsche Akademie der Künste (Leipzig: VEB Friedrich Hofmeister, 1959), especially ‘Wir wollen den Achtstundentag’, pp. 14-15 and ‘Der Achtstundentag’, pp. 19-21.

⁵⁶ Lammel, *Das Arbeiterlied*, p. 226; See also: Lammel, ed., *Lieder zum 1. Mai*, p. 1.

4.4.1 Acht Stunden Marseillaise

Acht stunden sind genug!	<i>Eight hours are enough!</i>
Acht stunden, keine mehr!	<i>Eight hours, no more!</i>
Dort liegt das Ziel!	<i>There lies the goal</i>
Jetzt schaffen wir zu viel! ⁵⁷	<i>Now we do too much!</i>

The demands contained in the lyrics of the *Acht Stunden Marseillaise* are clear and unequivocal, making them highly effective mediums with which to communicate programmatic demands.

Nevertheless, despite this move in official songbooks towards a general espousing of reformist political policies, songs continued to appear after 1890 that described the bitter social misery of workers and their families. However due to their inflammatory lyrics, which usually contained bitter denunciations of the government authorities, these songs could not be found in published songbooks: instead they would be distributed by *Flugblätter* or passed on by word of mouth, often appearing in many different regional variations or adapted to portray local prominent figures.⁵⁸ A prime example of one such song, *Das Löbtau Lied* ('The Löbtau Song') was an emotional rendering of the plight of workers' families who had suffered as a result of a dispute in July 1898 between building workers and their employers over calls for a reduction of the working day from ten to eight hours: this dispute had turned to violence, and many men, the majority of whom were family breadwinners, had been imprisoned, plunging their families into severe hardship.⁵⁹ An anonymous fellow Dresden building worker composed this emotional song, setting it to a well-known folk melody, and it was widely distributed on flyers throughout Germany, where its emotive lyrics and sentimental melody elucidated great sympathy for the plight of those families now missing their breadwinners.

Another example of these radical songs, *Des Arbeitsmannes Los* ('The Working Man's Lot') also appeared just prior to the turn of the century. This song was also written anonymously, and set to a sentimental folk melody it found widespread popularity, mostly through oral transmission. *Des Arbeitsmannes Los* railed against the inequities of the capitalist system and attacked the ongoing oppression of the working class, but it was notable for the resigned tone of the

⁵⁷ AdK, A2¹, *Ausgewählte Lieder über die Buchdruckerkunst und ihre Angehörigen von 76 Berufsgenossen nebst einen allgemeinen Teile* (Leipzig: Radelli & Hille, 1894), pp. 196-97.

⁵⁸ Lammel, *Das Arbeiterlied*, p. 47; Lammel, *Kampfgefährte: Unser Lied*, pp. 44-46.

⁵⁹ Lammel, *Das Arbeiterlied*, pp. 126-27.

closing verse, which, whilst sympathising with their plight, failed to offer workers any concrete solutions as to how to escape the misery of their situation.⁶⁰

4.4.2 Des Arbeitmannes Los

Den ganzen Tag im Arbeitsraum
Beim Rasseln der Maschinen,
Bei schlechter Luft, zum Atmen kaum,
Muß er dem Geldsack dienen.
Die ganzen Kräfte setzt er ein,
Obgleich er krank vom
Schwindsuchtskeim.
Und wird vom Schaffen er auch fast
erblind't,
Zuhause es hungern ja sein Weib, sein
Kind.
Da plötzlich, herzzerreißend tönt ein
Schrei,

Die Kameraden eilen schnell herbei!
Zerrissen und zerstückelt liegt er da –
Er kam den Rädern der Maschin' zu
nah.
Ein Achselzucken vom Fabrikherrn
bloß-
Das ist des Arbeitmannes Los!⁶¹

*The whole day in the work room,
With the rattle of the machinery,
In bad air, hardly fit for breathing, he
must serve the moneybag.
He uses his entire strength,
Although he is sick from the germ of
tuberculosis.
And is also nearly blind from his work*

At home, his wife and child hunger.

*Then suddenly, a heartrending cry
sounds,*

*Comrades hurry quickly over here!
Torn and dismembered, he lies there,
He came too close to the wheels of the
machine,
Just a shrug of the shoulders from the
factory boss,
That is the lot of the working man.*

Des Arbeitmannes Los leaves the listener in no doubt about the physically debilitating nature of factory work; the excessive length of the day is made clear from the outset, the noise and foul atmosphere are noted in references to the ‘rattle of machinery’ and ‘bad air’, which results in instances of poor health, manifested in references to sickness, tuberculosis and blindness. The second verse starkly illustrates the great numbers of industrial accidents that blighted the daily lives of many factory workers, noting caustically the sense of expendability felt by the working man combined with the indifference of their employers to the possibility of injury or even death. At times of high unemployment factory owners were able to replace maimed or dead workers easily, heightening the indifference on their side and the anger and resentment on the part of the workforce.

Critics of the Social Democratic Party’s reformist tendencies were not reticent when denigrating the party for its lack of commitment towards the idea of a proletarian revolution. One such critic, Erich Mühsam (1878-1934), a radical lyricist with a penchant for satire who was active on the German political cabaret circuit in the early years of the twentieth century, believed that the SPD’s policy of working within the existing political system to achieve reform was a betrayal of

⁶⁰ Lammel, *Das Arbeiterlied*, p. 47: Lammel, *Kampfgefährte: Unser Lied*, p. 46.

⁶¹ Lammel, *Kampfgefährte: Unser Lied*, pp. 128-29.

Marxist principles. As a consequence of this belief he wrote a satirical song ‘*Der Revoluzzer*’ (‘The Revolutionary’), which tells the story of a street lamp cleaner who takes part in a revolution but does not want his street lamps broken by his fellow revolutionaries. This was a thinly veiled criticism of the institutionalized nature of Social Democracy, who, its critics such as Mühsam believed, would not risk its carefully constructed party organization for the unknown outcome of a full-scale political revolution.⁶²

4.4.3 **Der Revoluzzer**

Verse 1

War einmal ein Revoluzzer,
Im Zivilstand Lampenputzer,
Ging in Revoluzzerschritt,
Mit den Revoluzzern mit.

*Once upon a time there was a
revolutionary,
In civil life, a lamp cleaner,
Went along in revolutionary steps,
With the revolutionaries.*

The first verse suggests that on the surface the lamp cleaner is a willing revolutionary at the outset.

Verse 5

Aber unser Revoluzzer
Schrie ‘Ich bin der Lampenputzer’
Dieses guten Leuchtelichts
Bitte, Bitte, tut ihm nichts!

*But our phoney revolutionary,
Cried ‘I am the lamp cleaner’.
This good lamp,
Please, please don’t hurt it!*

Verse 5 refers to what the lamp cleaner sees as the unnecessary destruction of his lamps – Mühsam uses this device as a metaphor for the Social Democrats belief in restraint, organization and due process. Taken together with the stance of the lamp cleaner in the first verse, this is a metaphor for radical criticism of the Social Democrats that they were revolutionary in principle but reformist in practice.

Verse 6

Wenn wir ihn’ das Licht ausdrehen,
Kann kein Bürger nichts mehr sehen,
Laßt die Lampen steh’n, ich bitt!
Denn sonst spiel ich nicht mehr mit!

*But our phoney revolutionary,
Cried ‘I am the lamp cleaner’.
This good lamp,
Please, please don’t hurt it!*

This verse parodies the Social Democratic view that a revolution would bring unwarranted disorder and strife down on the heads of the working class for no benefit to them; they believed that a reformist policy with incremental reforms

⁶² David Robb, ‘Mühsam, Brecht, Eisler and the Twentieth-Century Revolutionary Heritage’, in *Protest Song in East and West Germany Since the 1960’s*, ed. by David Robb (Rochester NY: Camden House, 2007), pp. 35-66, (p. 37).

would better serve the interests of the working class in the longer term than a violent revolution.

Verse 7

Doch die Revoluzzer lachten,
Und die Gaslaternen krachten,
Und der Lampenputzer schlich,
Fort und weinte bitterlich.⁶³

*Yet the phoney revolutionaries
laughed, and the glass lanterns
cracked,
And the lamp cleaner sneaked away,
And cried bitterly*

This final verse shows that the revolutionaries are determined to carry on regardless, intimating that those who are not prepared to follow such a path are weak, as shown by the image of the lamp cleaner weeping.

4.5: Protest Song and Political Radicalisation

Following a period of stellar economic and industrial expansion Germany had emerged as Europe's foremost industrial power by the beginning of the twentieth century, and was second only to the United States as a manufacturing country and a world leader in the chemical and electrical industries.⁶⁴ Theoretically, German industrialization, accompanied as it was by the introduction of a raft of social welfare legislation, should have improved the lives of industrial workers immeasurably. Legislation was passed to make provision for health insurance (1883), industrial accident insurance (1884) and for old age and disability payments (1889). In 1891 the factory safety regulations were strengthened, Sunday working was prohibited, a maximum 11 hour day for women and a ten hour day for under-16s was established, whilst child labour for those under 13 was banned. Between 1895 and 1907 average wages rose by 37.5% whilst the cost of living rose only 22.5%. Working hours were progressively shortened in the run up to the First World War, whilst no less than 5,500,000 workers found themselves covered by workers' insurance schemes by 1900, which in turn had paid out 10,000 million marks in benefits by 1912. Successive revisions to the Imperial Industrial Act, first passed in 1892, regulated and reduced working hours, restricted the employment of

⁶³ Erich Mühsam, *Der Krater Gedichte* (Berlin: Morgen Verlag, 1909), pp. 142-43.

⁶⁴ See Chickering, *Imperial Germany and the Great War*; Volker R. Berghahn, *Imperial Germany, 1871-1914: Economy, Society, Culture and Politics* (Providence and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); Dick Geary, 'Socialism and the German Labour Movement before 1914', pp. 101-136, for a statistical survey of Germany's industrial expansion.

women and children and introduced greater industrial safeguards for workers, particularly those in heavy industry.⁶⁵

However the reality of day-to-day working-class life was somewhat different. Government legislation had failed to halt working-class poverty, whilst rapid urbanization had transformed cities out of all recognition, and often resulted in unsanitary and overcrowded living conditions. In 1871 only 4.8% of German cities had a population in excess of 100,000: by 1910 that figure had increased massively to 21.3%. Whilst wages had steadily increased from 1881, the tariffs demanded by supporters of the Imperial government inexorably drove up food prices.⁶⁶ By the mid-1900s average annual income of 800-900 marks was barely adequate to clothe and feed a working family, and this figure was subject to wide regional variation. Overcrowded and drab housing for urban industrial workers predominated: women often had to seek work outside of the home to boost the families' meagre income; additionally many took in 'sleeping lodgers', who were often single young factory workers new to the city who could not afford their own lodgings.

This 'immiseration of the workers' fuelled a growing dissatisfaction on the part of the working class with their place in society. The lapsing of the Anti-Socialist Law in 1890 had provided a huge boost to the membership of working-class political organizations, and the ending of the recession in the middle of the last decade of the nineteenth century had considerably strengthened the workers' hand in their dealings with employers. Following the turn of the century the working class increasingly became more radicalised, helped in no small part by a growing awareness of the power that their productive strength gave them in such a modern industrial society. Ongoing tensions between workers and their employers inevitably manifested themselves in increased levels of industrial strife as strikes and lock-outs became ever more common. However the attitude to these strikes on the part of working-class politicians was divided. As the main political representative of the working class, members of the Social Democratic Party broadly espoused two distinct views as to how effective social and political reform could best be achieved. The first viewpoint espoused by many moderates, favoured consolidation and the avoidance of risk in order to concentrate on underpinning and strengthening the party's organisational structure. The second view, promoted by

⁶⁵ Grebing, *History of the German Labour Movement*, pp. 63-64.

⁶⁶ Stefan Berger, *Social Democracy and the Working Class in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Germany* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2000), pp. 58-62.

the left-wing of the party and inspired by the revolutionary events in Russia in 1905, reaffirmed their belief in Marxism. As a consequence of this, adherents of the latter policy, notably Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, favoured the use of the general strike as a political weapon. This, they hoped, would mobilize the masses and eventually lead to a spontaneous uprising against the seemingly inevitable war.⁶⁷ Whichever policy was favoured, Germany in the decade before the First World War remained gripped by widespread industrial unrest.

One of the most notorious of these powerful industrial struggles that of the Crimmitzschauer textile workers, who went on strike in 1903-04, demanding higher wages and a maximum ten-hour working day. Known as 'the city of one-hundred chimneys', Crimmitzschau was a major centre of world textile production.⁶⁸ In a very bitter dispute the employers had responded with mass dismissals and lock-outs. Despite great hardships the textile workers held out for 22 weeks, and a wave of mostly anonymous strike songs appeared spontaneously, often handwritten on flyers, praising the courage and fortitude of the beleaguered workers. The aural symbolism of their lyrics was reinforced by the clasped hand motif printed on the back of the song sheets, which was symbolic of the unity of the workers in their struggle against the employers.⁶⁹ One of these songs, the *Neues Streiklied* ('New strike-song'), was widely distributed on flyers both within Germany and abroad: offered at a price of 2 Marks to support the striking workers and their families, the *Neues Streiklied* engendered such a wave of sympathy both at home and abroad that it ultimately garnered some 1.25 million Marks in strike aid.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Susanne Miller and Heinrich Potthof, *A History of German Social Democracy from 1848 to the Present* (Leamington Spa: Berg Publishers, 1986), p. 53.

⁶⁸ The Crimmitzschau strike lasted from 22nd August 1903 to 18th January 1904.

⁶⁹ Inge Lammel, *Hundert Jahre Arbeitersuskultur in Deutschland: Aufsätze und Vorträge aus 40 Jahren, 1959-1998* (Teetz: Henrich and Henrich, 2002), p. 53.

⁷⁰ Lammel, *Das Arbeiterlied*, p. 48; Lammel, *Kampfgefährte: Unser Lied*, pp. 47-48.

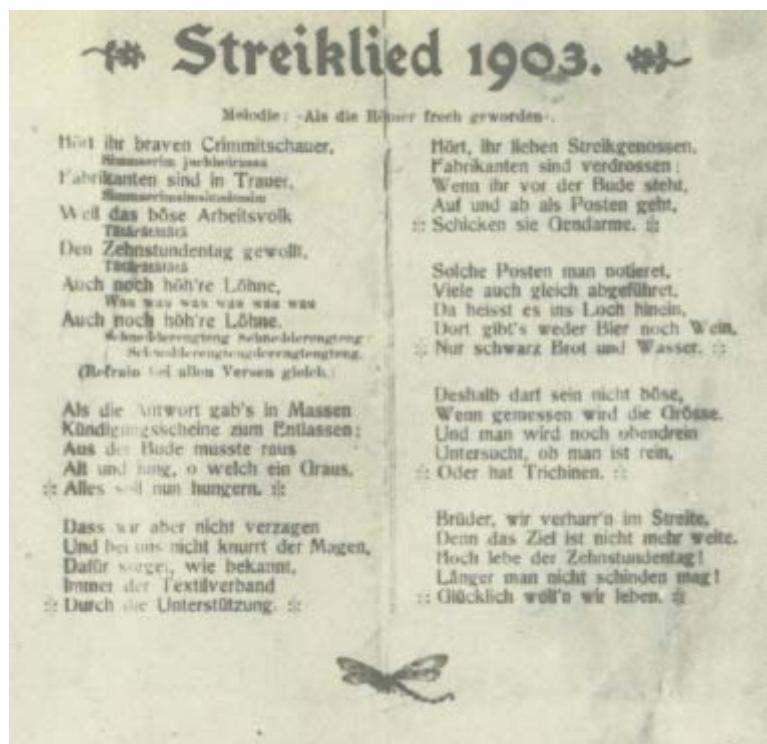


Fig. 4.1: *Fließblatt* copy of the 'Streiklied 1903', as distributed on the streets.⁷¹

This *Streiklied* was set to the tune *Als die Römer frech geworden* ('When the Romans became impudent'), and was yet another example of using a popular, well-known tune to enable the song to reach the widest possible audience in the shortest possible time. However, despite its popularity, the resolution of the dispute meant that the *Neues Streiklied* was in itself short-lived, and thus it did not find itself included in contemporary songbooks. This was often the case in such disputes where new or revised strike songs appeared and disappeared which kept pace with developments within the dispute itself.⁷²

The years 1909-1910 also saw some particularly bitter strikes in the mining industry. In October 1909 a strike in the Mansfeld coalfield was suppressed with the use of troops, but not before the hardships of the mineworkers had been publicized in song. However, unlike the *Neues Streiklied*, the song of the Mansfeld miners was one that had actually been used before. Entitled the *Internationales Knappenlied*, it had originally been written by the miner-poet Heinrich Kämpchen to mark the great *Ruhrkumpel* strikes in 1889. Kämpchen's composition was one of a number of songs whose utility extended beyond the events and circumstances that

⁷¹ Inge Lammel, *Arbeitermusikkultur in Deutschland, 1844-1945: Bilder und Dokumente* (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1984), p. 54.

⁷² See *Neustes Streiklied* (Zwickau: Druck und Verlag von Seifert und Ko., 1903)

lead to their original creation, which allowed them to be resurrected to suit suitable events once again in the future.⁷³ In 1910 a special edition of *Das Arbeiterliederbuch für Massengesang* ('The Workers' Songbook for Mass singing') in 1910 in aid of Germany's coal miners featured the *Internationales Knappenlied* in formal print for the first time. This popular songbook, which could be purchased for five Pfennigs, went through 15 print runs selling 300,000 copies in one year alone.⁷⁴

Following the Mansfeld miners strike, 170,000 building workers were locked out by their employers in a three month long dispute in April 1910. Throughout the whole of 1910 some 370,000 workers were involved in strikes and lock-outs, at a cost to the employers of some 9 million working days. In terms of the general political situation the government did not implement any major social policy reforms after 1911: their policy of using social reforms in an attempt to weaken the Social Democrats' hold on the working class had failed.⁷⁵

4.6: Women and Protest Song

The experience of working-class women differed notably from that of men in Wilhelmine Germany. Until 1908 women would remain excluded from active participation in politics by a series of nationwide *Vereingesetze* (Associational Laws).⁷⁶ Although varying in scope and severity across Wilhelmine Germany, the laws in Prussia, the largest and most influential state, were particularly strict: women were banned from joining political parties or meetings organised or even sponsored by political associations.⁷⁷ Women, unlike their skilled male counterparts in the organised labour movement, received few opportunities for training and thus occupied low skilled and poorly paid jobs in industries such as textiles. By 1907 the number of women employed in the textile industry had risen more than six-fold to 1.5 million in less than seventy years.⁷⁸ The injustices

⁷³ Lammel, *Kampfgefährte: Unser Lied*, p. 49.

⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 47-48.

⁷⁵ Feuchtwanger, *Imperial Germany*, p. 148; On the policy of 'Social Imperialism' see: Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Das Deutsche Kaiserreich, 1871-1918* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1973); Volker R. Berghahn, *Germany and the Approach of War in 1914* (London: Macmillan, 1973)

⁷⁶ Jacqueline Strain, 'Feminism and Political Radicalism in the German Social Democratic Movement, 1890-1914' (PhD thesis, University of California, 1964), pp. 56-69.

⁷⁷ Renate Pore, *A Conflict of Interest: Women in German Social Democracy, 1919-1933* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981), p. 16.

⁷⁸ Fricke, *Die Deutsche Arbeiterbewegung*, pp. 313-315. See particularly Table 39 on page 315 for an idea of the growth of the numbers of women in industries where females predominated.

wrought by the application of the Anti-Socialist Law brought thousands of women over to the political ideas of Social Democracy, and when it lapsed a number of women's organizations sprang up, although they remained restricted in some states both by law and by the Social Democrats' own local statutes.

No women in Europe were enfranchised prior to the First World War, and those that were active in politics concerned themselves with issues such as property rights in marriage, female education and women's suffrage: none of these issues found much resonance within those male dominated labour organizations that were more concerned with achieving fundamental political and social reforms.⁷⁹ Male concerns that women could displace them from the workplace often manifested themselves in vicious outbursts of what the historian Werner Thönen termed 'proletarian anti-feminism'.⁸⁰ To try and curb this internecine dissent, the International Workers' Congress held in Paris in 1889 demanded that 'it was the duty of male workers to take female workers into their ranks'.⁸¹

Despite this appeal, the world of local politics and trade unionism remained centred upon a principally male-oriented and sexist environment, with political meetings and other activities often centred upon the local pub, where talking politics often went hand in hand with drinking copious amounts of beer, whilst the women stayed at home.⁸² Thus marginalized from the day-to-day political debate, women found that their viewpoint was also rarely expressed in terms of the creation of working-class song: socialist songs tended to reinforce the view that the political struggle for working-class rights was an exclusively male preserve, and this was reflected in the lyrics of the vast majority of proletarian protest songs which overwhelmingly featured masculine lyrics centred on notions of conflict and struggle.

Despite extensive research, most notably by the sociologist and proletarian music historian Karl Adamek, very few songs emerged that were written from a female perspective. One notable exception was the *Lied der Arbeiterinnen* (Song of the Female Workers):⁸³

⁷⁹ Dick Geary, *European Labour Politics from 1900 to the Depression* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), p. 28.

⁸⁰ Werner Thönen, *The Emancipation of Women: The Rise and Decline of the Women's Movement in German Social Democracy, 1863-1933* (London: Pluto Press, 1973), p. 77.

⁸¹ Nespital, *Das deutsche Proletariat in seinem Lied*, p. 53.

⁸² Berger, *Social Democracy and the Working Class*, p. 65.

⁸³ Adamek, *Lieder der Arbeiterbewegung*, pp. 132-33; Karl Adamek, *Politisches Lied heute: Zur Soziologie des Singens von Arbeiterliedern* (Essen: Klartext Verlag, 1987), p. 35.

4.6.1 Lied der Arbeiterinnen

Wir müssen schaffen früh am Morgen,
Bis spät die Nacht herniedersinkt,
Sodann uns in des Hauses Sorgen
Noch neue Last und Mühe winkt.
Für uns kein Ruhe gibt's, kein Rasten,
Ist schwer des Mannes Bürde schon,
Mißt man uns doppelt zu die Lasten
Und obendrein um schlechter'n Lohn.

*We must work from early morning,
Until late as the night sinks low,
Thereupon breaks upon us the worries
of the house, yet new loads and efforts
There is no peace for us, no rest,
The man's burden is already heavy
But we're given a double load,
And on top of that, worse wages.*

The opening verse emphasises the heavy burden of work and home borne by women. Long hours in poorly paid jobs were compounded by the demands of caring for the home and looking after the children. In addition to this physical burden there was a mental one as it was usually the job of the woman to try and be creative and thrifty enough to eke out her family's existence, despite meagre resources, especially when the man of the house often retained part of his wages in order to socialize in the local tavern.

Verse 2

Wir wollen nicht als stolze Damen
In seid'nen Kleidern müßig geh'n.
Ein schönes Bild in gold'nem Rahmen,
Das fromm und lieblich anzuseh'n.
Wir wollen gern die Hände rühren
Für uns're Lieben jederzeit.
Doch zu des Hauses Wohlstand führen
Soll ems'ger Frauen Tätigkeit.

*We do not want, as proud women,
To go about idly in silken dresses, A
lovely picture in a golden frame,
To view piously and lovingly.
We happily move our hands,
For our loved ones at all times
Yet women's busy activity should lead
to the wellbeing of the home,*

For all the difficulties expressed in the opening verse, the second one exhibits notions of both class and gender pride – the idleness and materialism of rich women is rejected, in favour of expressions of pride and satisfaction that they, as members of both the industrial and domestic workforce, are working hard - 'we happily move our own hands' – and doing something constructive in caring for the home and the well being of their own families.

Verse 4

Sprecht nicht vom „Schwächeren
Geschlechte“!
Sind wir zur Arbeit stark genug,
Sind wir auch stark, für uns're Rechte
Uns einzureih'n dem Kämpferzug.
Ihr Männer, eilt, uns Raum zu geben!
Laßt ab vom blöden Vorurteil!
Der mut'gen Frauen Vorwärtsstreben,
Es dient zu eurem eig'nem Heil.

*Speak not of 'the weaker sex',
If we are strong enough to work,
We are also strong enough, to join
the procession of fighters for our rights
You men, hurry, give us room!
End your stupid prejudice!
The forwards striving of brave women,
It serves to your own benefit.*

This final verse builds on such notions of pride in the strength and utility of their gender. It also argues that women have equal cause to join with the men in the fight for equal rights, and laments the men's opposition with the lines 'You men, hurry give us room. End your stupid prejudice!' It also notes that by including women in the fight for social, political and economic equality, as a significant proportion of the industrial workforce, the men's case for the granting of such reforms would be unquestionably strengthened.

Eventually the new *Reichsvereingesetz* (Reich Associational Law), passed in 1908, largely lifted the restrictions on political association and assembly, potentially opening up the world of political activism to ordinary working-class women.⁸⁴ However, despite this, there was no discernible increase in the number of female oriented songs, and songbook content remained exclusively geared to expressing a wholly male viewpoint.

4.7: Youth and Protest Song

As part of this wider politicisation of working-class life, working-class youth too began to develop a canon of songs that sought to express their political hopes during the first decade of the twentieth century. Prior to the turn of the century, socialist youth groups remained subject to wide regional variations, both in form, membership and degree of political effectiveness, and until 1906 these disparate groups lacked a central organization. For example, the youth group formed in Chemnitz in 1873 was heavily involved in political work, pasting political slogans on notice boards, distributing political flyers (*Fliegerblätter*) and during the period of illegality, secretly distributing copies of the *Sozialdemokrat*, the socialist periodical that was being smuggled into Germany from Switzerland.⁸⁵ Other groups remained decidedly non-political at this time. However, after 1900 working-class youth adopted a more organized political character, as the labour movement sought to recruit young workers with a view to mobilizing them in their ongoing fight against the perceived evils of capitalism and militarism. In October 1904 *Der Verein der Lehrlinge und jugendlichen Arbeiter Berlins* ('Berlin Association of Apprentices and Youth Workers') was formed 'to preserve and promote the economic, legal and spiritual interests of apprentices and youth workers'.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ *Reichsvereingesetz* – passed 8th April 1908 – enacted 15th May 1908. See Fricke, *Die Deutsche Arbeiterbewegung*, p. 325.

⁸⁵ Fricke, *Die Deutsche Arbeiterbewegung*, p. 331.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 333.

The usefulness of song as a medium to promulgate these interests was quickly recognized by the leaders of many of these new youth groups from the outset, with many of them printing and distributing their own songbooks. Despite being intended for a youthful audience, the political content of youth songbooks initially relied almost exclusively on the existing Social Democratic *Kampflieder*.⁸⁷ One of the first of these youth-oriented songbooks, entitled *Der Kleine Pionier: Liederbuch für die Kinder des arbeitendes Volkes* ('The Little Pioneer: Songbook for the Children of Working People') followed this pattern, featuring such well known proletarian protest songs as the *Arbeiter Marseillaise* and the *Bundeslied*.⁸⁸ This book was self-published by a local songwriter, H. Matthies, and was printed in Halberstadt in 1891, and, typical of such locally produced efforts, featured many lesser tunes set to existing well known melodies: indeed, of the 22 songs included in this songbook, no less than 13 utilized pre-existing tunes. This, as argued in chapter one, was an effective method in facilitating their transmission to the widest possible audience.

In addition to the efforts of local individuals, as working-class youth progressively began to organize itself, songbooks increasingly began to appear that were the products of newly formed groups and associations. One of the first of these was the songbook entitled *Lieder für die arbeitende Jugend* ('Songs for the working youth'). This songbook first appeared in Berlin during 1907 and was published by the recently founded 'Freie Jugendorganisation Deutschlands' (German Free Youth Organization).⁸⁹ In his introduction the editor noted that the publication of this songbook marked the first occasion that song was being expressly employed to 'stir, enthuse and fire up youth in its fight for youth rights'. This introduction goes on to state that the book's intention is to 'rouse working-class youth from its long sleep', and that agreement on youth rights would be reached through massed singing.⁹⁰ However, despite this fiery rhetoric, of the fifty songs contained in this pioneering publication only twelve were remotely political in tone, the most prominent of which was Most's 1870 composition *Die*

⁸⁷ Inge Lammel, ed., *Lieder der Arbeiter-Jugend, Das Lied im Kampf Geboren*, Heft 5, Deutsche Akademie der Künste (Leipzig: VEB Friedrich Hofmeister, 1960), p. 1; Nespoli, *Das deutsche Proletariat in seinem Lied*, p. 70.

⁸⁸ AdK, A152, H. Matthies, ed., *Der Kleine Pionier: Liederbuch für die Kinder des arbeitendes Volkes* (Halberstadt: Franz Fischer, 1891)

⁸⁹ AdK, A21, Vereinigung der Freien Jugend Organisationen Deutschlands, ed., *Lieder für die Arbeitende Jugend* (Berlin: Mar Peters, 1907)

⁹⁰ AdK, A21, *Lieder für die Arbeitende Jugend*, pp. 2-3.

Arbeitsmänner ('The Working Men').⁹¹ The other political songs largely concentrated on themes of brotherhood and friendship as exemplified by the *Lied der Freundschaft* ('The Friendship Song').⁹² The remainder were a mixture of hiking songs (*Wanderlieder*) and so-called 'sociability' songs (*Geselligkeitslieder*), thereby underlining the fact that the political content, though important, was not the sole reason for the book's appearance. This pioneering youth songbook was soon followed by one published by the 'Central Committee for Youth Agitation' in Mannheim a year later.⁹³ Entitled *Freie Klange* ('Free Chimes'), this small booklet contained many notable standards of the adult labour movement, including most notably Kegel's *Sozialistenmarsch*, the *Arbeiter Marseillaise*, *Lied der Arbeit* and the *Lied vom Robert Blum*.

Although they would take a few years to appear in print, new songs did gradually emerge that were tailored to the specific hopes and demands of working-class youth. Two of the most important emerged during 1907, a year in which the mainstream Social Democratic Party suffered a notable setback in the elections to the Reichstag. These songs were notable in that they were not creations of the labour movement apparatus but were the efforts of ordinary people, namely a teacher and an anonymous shipyard worker. They are worthy of our examination not only because they were among the first 'youth songs' to appear but also because of the notable 'fighting' quality of their lyrics, which were more redolent of the early revolutionary *Kampflieder* than the later 'programme' songs advocating working-class social and political reforms.

The first of these songs is *Dem Morgenrot entgegen* ('Toward the red dawn'), also known as the *Lied der Jugend* ('The Song of Youth'):

4.7.1 Dem Morgenrot Entgegen

Wir reichen euch die Hände,
Genossen all, zum Bund!
Des Kampfes sei kein Ende,
Und jeder Feind am Boden liegt.

Vorwärts, du junge Garde des
Proletariats!⁹⁴

*We reached out hands to you,
Comrades all – to the alliance!
Let the battle have no end,
and every enemy lies in the ground.*

*Forwards, you young guard of the
proletariat!*

⁹¹ See above, Chapter 3, pp 112-14.

⁹² AdK, A21, *Lieder für die Arbeitende Jugend*, p. 7.

⁹³ Central Committee for Youth Agitation, *Freie Klange* (Mannheim: [n.pub.], 1908)

⁹⁴ Lammel, *Lieder der Arbeiter-Jugend*, pp. 8-9.

This song calls out to all youth, and in a theme now familiar from previous working-class protest songs it stresses the need for unity and banding together, reinforcing the idea that only concerted action will bring social change. Also the privileged position of youth is acknowledged once again as the potential vanguard of the political struggle. In this respect *Dem Morgenrot entgegen* expresses identical sentiments to those found in songs of the adult labour movement.

Dem Morgenrot entgegen was written by a teacher and left-wing Social Democrat Heinrich Arnulf Eildermann, but it did not appear in print until 1910. Fearing that he could lose his job if named, Eildermann insisted that the song should carry only the initials of his two forenames in order to preserve his anonymity. Further evidence of the song's revolutionary credentials can be judged by its adoption by the Communists after the First World War, a rare occurrence given their usual condemnation of many pre-war working-class songs for lacking a revolutionary emphasis. Indeed, so pre-eminent was *Dem Morgenrot entgegen* that it formed the basis for a Soviet version written by Besimenski known as *Das Lied der Komsomol* (The Komsomol Song).

The second of these songs, '*Jugend voran!*' ('Youth, Go Ahead') was written by an anonymous young shipyard worker from the Weser Shipyard in Bremen, following a speech given to the labour force there by the leading Social Democratic politician August Bebel during the Reichstag election campaign of 1907. Set to the tune of an old Imperial soldiers' song '*Auf, auf zum Kampf*' (Up, up to battle), *Jugend voran!* echoes reformist demands for equal voting rights, but it does so by recognizing in 'fighting' language that the process of obtaining political reform inevitably entailed an element of struggle. It also echoes familiar calls for unity as a pre-requisite for any successful struggle for equality of rights:

4.7.2 **Jugend voran!**

Tritt ein zum Kampf, zum Kampf
Der Jugend allerorten
Tritt ein zum Kampf, zum Kampf
Für unser Menschenrecht!
Denn August Bebel hat' zu uns
gesprochen:
„Seid stark, und werdet nimmermehr
ein Knecht!“

Wir sind bereit, bereit
Durch Schwur es zu erhärten,
Ja, seid bereit, bereit
Verlangt der Jugend Recht!
Denn August Bebel hat zu uns
gesprochen:

Join in the battle, to the battle
Youth of all places
Join in the battle, to the battle
For our human rights!
For August Bebel has told us:
Be strong: never again become a slave

We are ready, ready
To confirm it through an oath
Yes, be ready, ready
To demand youth rights!
For August Bebel has told us:

„Seid einig, und werdet nimmermehr
ein Knecht!“⁹⁵ *Be united: never again become a slave!*

This spontaneously composed song further reinforces the immediacy of its message by referring to Bebel's speech at the end of each verse, exhibiting the utility of song as a medium of communicating contemporary political ideas.

4.8: Song and Sporting Associations

In the last decade of the nineteenth century many working-class sporting associations were formed, a process that had begun immediately after Socialist organizations emerged from their period of illegality and repression under the strictures imposed by the *Sozialistengesetz*.⁹⁶ Many of these associations viewed singing as an inherent part of their structure, to the extent that they often produced their own songbooks as an integral part of the founding of their organizations. The first *Arbeiterturnverein* (Workers' Gymnastic Association) was founded in Berlin in 1890, and this event was marked by the composition of the *Fichte Marsch*. This march honoured the philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814) for his belief in linking the spiritual with the physical wellbeing of German youth. It also honoured the 'battalion of gymnasts', led by August Schärtner from Hanau, which defended the Rastatt fortress against government forces, the eventual fall of which signalled the end of the 1848-49 revolution. Twenty-eight of Schärtner's men were condemned to death for their part in the uprising, and their sacrifice was commemorated in the first verse of the *Fichte Marsch*:

4.8.1 Fichte Marsch

Frisch heran! Brüder hört das Klingens,	<i>Freshly forwards! Brother can you hear the sound</i>
Freiheitslieder vergangenen Zeit?	<i>Of freedom songs of a past time?</i>
Freie Turner von Hanau, sie singen,	<i>Free gymnasts of Hanau, sing,</i>
Die bei Rastatt den Tode geweiht.	<i>Who consecrated the dead at Rastatt.</i>
Treu dem Freunde, dem Gegner	<i>Faithful to the friend, ruin to the</i>
Verderben,	<i>enemy,</i>
Fichte Turner*, wir sind ihre Erben,	<i>Fichte's gymnasts, we are their inheritors,</i>
Frei und gleich heißt unser Panier. ⁹⁷	<i>Our banner calls 'Free and equal now'</i>

* Often Fichte-Sportler was substituted

⁹⁵ Lammel, *Lieder der Arbeiter-Jugend*, pp. 10-11.

⁹⁶ Frank Trommler, 'Working-Class Culture and Modern Mass Culture before World War 1', *New German Critique*, 21 (Spring/Summer 1983), 57-70 (p. 58).

⁹⁷ Inge Lammel, ed., *Lieder der Deutschen Turn und Sport Bewegung, Das Lied im Kampf Geboren*, Heft 9, Deutsche Akademie der Künste (Leipzig: VEB Friedrich Hofmeister, 1966), pp. 18-19.

In calling upon the sportsmen of 1890 to remember the sacrifice of those who died in the failed revolution of 1848-49, singers were called upon to invoke their spirit in order to fortify them for the contemporary political struggle. The *Fichte Marsch* was one of the most widely sing *Arbeiterlieder*, both before the First World War and during the Weimar Republic, when it was notable for being one of the few pre-war songs that was adopted by both Communists and Social Democrats alike. The songs of 1848 and the ideas they contained would continue to be widely drawn upon by many new working-class compositions before the outbreak of the First World War.⁹⁸

Working-class sports and gymnastic societies were also responsible for producing many political songbooks. In July 1893 The *Arbeiter Turn und Sportbund* (Workers' Gymnastic and Sports Society) was founded to act as the national organizing body. The stated aim of the *Arbeiter Turn und Sportbund* was for youth to put 'their healthy bodies in the service of their political goal, the overthrow of capitalism'.⁹⁹ It was at the initial congress that agreement was reached that it should produce its own songbook. Indeed it is noteworthy that a songbook was one of the fledgling association's first concerns, illustrating the importance the movement attached to political song from the outset.

Prominent amongst these new songbooks was *Der Freie Turner* (The Free Gymnast), which ran in an unbroken sequence from 1894-1925. Although earlier figures are not available, each edition of *Der Freie Turner* sold 30,000 copies annually between 1908-1913. This series of books (as illustrated by the cover of the 1894 edition below) marked out quite clearly the direction taken by the wider political movement that spawned them: the editor frequently set the tone of the collection in his introduction with his hopes and ideas, and later his silences, doing much to illuminate not only contemporary working-class political thinking but also the restrictions imposed upon it.

⁹⁸ Inge Lammel, ed., *Lieder der Revolution von 1848, Das Lied im Kampf Geboren*, Heft 1, Deutsche Akademie der Künste (Leipzig: VEB Friedrich Hofmeister, 1957).

⁹⁹ Lammel, ed., *Lieder der Deutschen Turn und Sport Bewegung*, p. 8.

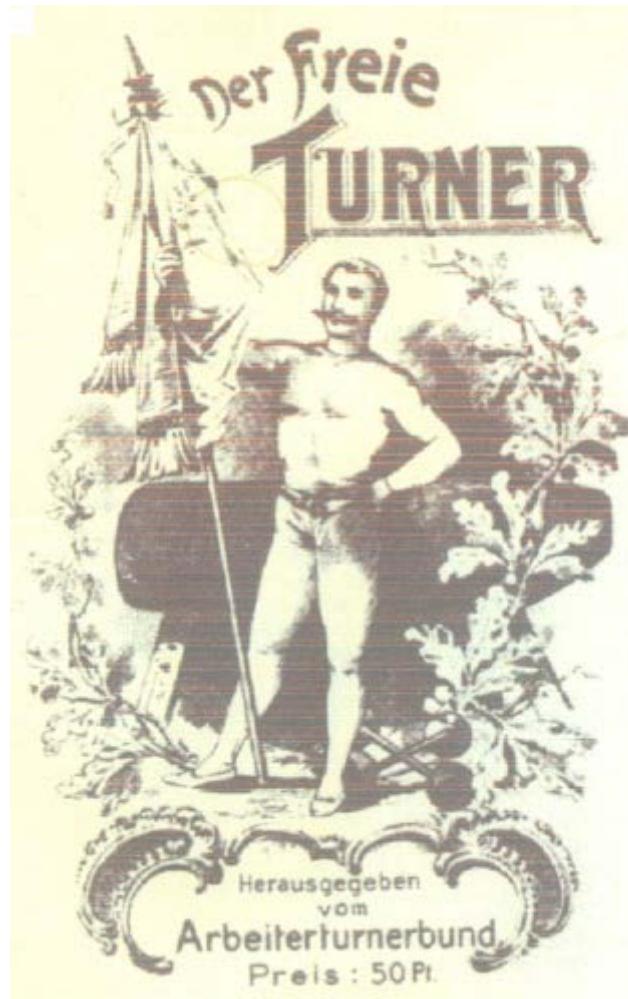


Fig. 4.2: Front Cover of the original 1894 first edition of *Der Freie Turner*.¹⁰⁰

Thus in the foreword to the initial edition of *Der Freie Turner*, the series editor Moritz Fromm introduced a mix of folk songs (*Volkslieder*), walking and hiking songs (*Wanderlieder*) and drinking songs (*Trinklieder*), before noting the inclusion of a handful of worker's songs (*Arbeiterlieder*).¹⁰¹ Fromm also noted that some of the songs suggested for inclusion in the songbook by members of the new Gymnastics and Sport Association had been rejected because they exhibited 'sentimental tendencies' which he viewed as more suitable for the liberal bourgeoisie. This remark underlines the depth of enmity between sections of the working class and liberalism at this time. In the second edition the *Arbeiterlieder* formed their own separate section, and in the third edition working-class political

¹⁰⁰ Lammel, *Arbeitermusikkultur in Deutschland*, p. 61.

¹⁰¹ AdK, A32h, *Liederbuch der Freie Turner*, Erste Auflage (Hamburg: J. Quellmalz, 1894), p. 1.

songs accounted for nearly 40% of the book's total content.¹⁰² This third edition includes many of the most well known working-class political songs of the day, notably the *Sozialistenmarsch*, *Arbeiter Marseillaise*, *Bet' und Arbeit*, and *Die Arbeitsmänner*. Fromm's foreword to the fourth and fifth editions urges his members to take their 'bodily strength and beauty' out of the gymnastics hall and off the sports field, so that they can take their songs out and about to 'quicken the soul' of all they meet and thus propagate the principles of socialism more widely.¹⁰³

The expanded foreword to the sixth edition of *Der Freie Turner* (1905), now under the stewardship of a new editor Franz Siedersleben, gives an overview of the *Bund*'s political position, one that mirrors many of the working class organisations at this time. Siedersleben notes how critics have derided previous editions as 'Red Gymnastic Songbooks', an epithet that he accepts proudly, stating that such jibes only 'strengthen the Association's determination to publish further books and to work on improving them with renewed vigour'.¹⁰⁴ Thus, according to Siedersleben, song is being brought to the forefront of the political battle between the authorities and the working-class in the Germany in the run up to the First World War.

The editor's introduction to the tenth edition, published in 1908, signalled a major change in tone and content. Unlike the overt political statements contained in all the previous editions, the introduction was reduced and offered no political comment at all, restricting itself to technical discussions of musical notation and style instead. Interestingly, the song content remained completely unchanged from the previous edition: significantly, of the 37 *Arbeiterlieder* present in 1908, 27 of them (73%) could be found in the first 1894 edition. Additionally, no song had ever been replaced so all the new content was due solely to the editors adding extra songs, rather than the censors removing them. Indeed, the content of the *Freie Turner Liederbuch* would remain completely unchanged through the next 12 editions until 1925. This stability of content could either be attributed to a consolidation of the canon, where songs expressing more radical policies were not deemed as necessary, or to a conscious decision by the books' editors not to tempt fate with the authorities, and can be contrasted with the dynamic, constantly evolving content of Communist books. Both viewpoints are equally valid through

¹⁰² AdK, A32a, *Liederbuch der Freie Turner*, Dritte Auflage (Leipzig: Verlag Hermann Rauh, 1898)

¹⁰³ AdK, A32g, *Liederbuch der Freie Turner*, Fünfte Auflage (Leipzig: Franz Siedersleben, 1904)

¹⁰⁴ AdK, A32b2, *Liederbuch der Freie Turner*, Siebente Auflage (Leipzig: Franz Siedersleben, 1905)

to the end of the First World War, though the latter explanation is more difficult to reconcile with the changed political position of the working class after November 1918 and the freedoms it then enjoyed.

The de-politicisation of songbook introductions does have a contemporary practical significance in the battle of the labour movement to forestall political repression by the authorities that increased substantially in the decade prior to the First World War. Many working-class associations attempted to prevent the authorities from declaring them to be ‘political organizations’ which would have left them open to close supervision and draconian punishments, and to achieve this they had to ensure that they avoided any political activities. However, for many of them, including the DASB, these attempts failed, allowing the authorities to repress their activities.¹⁰⁵

It was not just gymnasts and athletes that utilized political song in the run-up to the First World War. Other groups, such as the *Arbeiter Radfahrerverein* (Workers’ Cycling Association), were particularly active in support of the political work of the Social Democratic Party. Known as the *Rote Husaren des Klassenkampfes* (‘Red Hussars of the class struggle’), they used their mobility to distribute political flyers at voting rallies and demonstrations. The following song became known as the *Bundeslied* when the *Arbeiter Radfahrerverein* was formally founded in 1896, but it actually appeared first in the *Berliner Verkehr-Zeitung* on 1 November 1895:

4.8.2 Bundeslied

Wenn Losungswort „Frisch auf“
erschallt,
Frisch auf in aller Welt,
dann zeigen wir durch unser Werk,
Was uns zusammenhält.
Wir wollen frei und einig sein,
Freiheit für jedermann
Wo man für Recht und Wahrheit
kämpft,
Sind all zeit wir voran!

Wir halten treu vereint zusammen
Frisch auf voran, frisch auf voran!
Des Volkes Freiheit zu erlangen,
Frisch auf, voran, frisch auf, voran,
Frisch auf! ¹⁰⁶

*When the watchword ‘awake’ rings out,
Awake in all the world,
Then we show through our work
What binds us together
We want to be free and united
Freedom for everyone
Where one fights for right and truth
We are always at the fore!*

*We remain united,
Awake, onward, awake, onward!
To attain the freedom of the people
Awake, onward, awake, onward,
Awake!*

¹⁰⁵ Dowe, ‘The Workingmen’s Choral Movement in Germany’, p.281.

¹⁰⁶ *Der Berliner Verkehr-Zeitung*, 1 November 1895.

See also: Lammel, ed., *Lieder der Deutschen Turn und Sport Bewegung*, pp. 25-26.
The full text of this song can be found in Appendix A.

This song contains many of the themes typical of protest songs of this period; calls to ‘awake’, and to ‘bind together’, which demonstrate the significance of the need for unity and concerted action in order to achieve political reforms and the need to ‘fight’ in order to achieve this goal. This song was another to express the long-held socialist view that only through their own efforts would workers reach their goals.

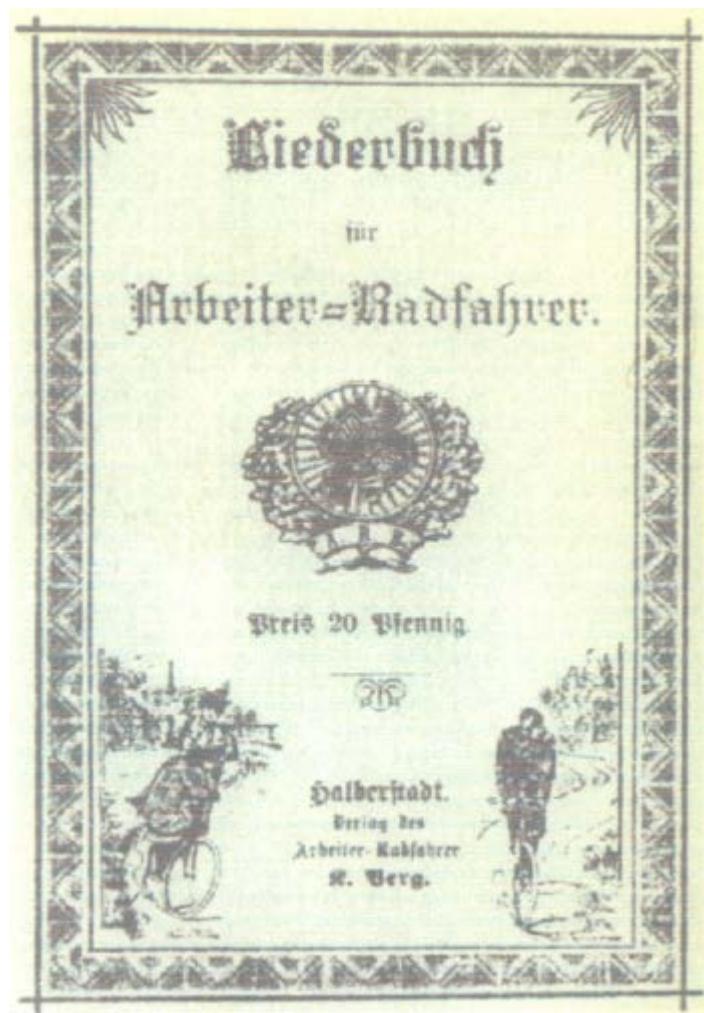


Fig. 4.3: Songbook of the *Arbeiter Radfahrerverein*, published around 1900.¹⁰⁷

Thus, by the time war clouds had gathered over Europe there were few areas of working-class life that remained impervious to the reach of proletarian protest song. Indeed, the fact that war was approaching would provide another opportunity for the working class to deploy song as a weapon, this time against the spectre of a deadly military conflict that would have grave consequences for ordinary workers and their families.

¹⁰⁷ Lammel, *Arbeiter-musikkultur in Deutschland*, p. 61.

4.9: Song, Anti-militarism and the Approach of War

As the First World War approached, the Social Democratic Party stepped up its efforts to combat the growing tide of state-sponsored militarism in Wilhelmine Germany. Headed by left-wing Social Democrats such as Karl Liebknecht, the party emphasised the international nature of the working class, actively promoting the idea that workers from all nations were brothers in a class war, and that they should not be diverted from this idea merely to be used as cannon fodder by individual national governments in wars motivated to satisfy expansionist and imperialistic objectives.¹⁰⁸

As early as the time of the Franco-Prussian War, songs had been sung that had called for the workers of all nations to rise up and defeat the real enemy, that of class injustice. As discussed in chapter three, in October 1870 the *Demokratisches Soldatenlied* ('Democratic Soldiers' Song') had appeared expressing just such sentiments.¹⁰⁹ This song was sung with increasing frequency in the years leading up to the First World War, and such was its political impact that it was strongly repressed by the police wherever it was encountered. Originally disseminated on hand printed fly-sheets, the *Demokratisches Soldatenlied* became a standard feature in most songbooks during the period of the Anti-Socialist Law, only to disappear from them after 1890 as wary editors considered discretion to be the better part of valour with regard to including it in a society where the military held such a pre-eminent position. For this reason very few expressly anti-militaristic songs can ever be found in printed songbooks prior to the First World War. Those songs that do exist owe their survival to their inclusion on individual *Flugblätter*, or were preserved through oral means. In the latter case, many popular songs that had previously been spread by word of mouth, only found their way into print when songbooks produced under the auspices of the burgeoning Communist movement began to appear from 1919.

On 4th August 1914 the Social Democratic Party voted in favour of war credits, effectively endorsing Germany's entry into the First World War on behalf of millions of ordinary workers. This action prompted a domestic truce between political opponents and the government, the so-called *Burgfrieden*, in the hope that the shared prosecution of a limited but successful war would heal the divisions and inequalities of pre-war Germany and forge a more equitable society for all.¹¹⁰ As

¹⁰⁸ Geary, *European Labour Politics from 1900 to the Depression*, pp. 27-28.

¹⁰⁹ See Chapter 3, pp. 116-117.

¹¹⁰ Chickering, *Imperial Germany and the Great War*, p. 1.

subsequent events would prove, Germany had embarked on a course where, far from unifying workers with the rest of society, the outcome of war would result in the reinforcement of a fundamental schism within the working class, which would prove to have disastrous consequences for its future.

Conclusion

The period between 1878 and the outbreak of the First World War saw a number of significant developments in working-class song. Prior to the enactment of the Anti-Socialist Law, political song had reached what many observers believed to be the highpoint of its pre-war radicalism. Revolutionary songbooks printed in exile before and during the period of the Anti-Socialist Law did generally display true revolutionary potential, and were unequivocal in their condemnation of the Kaiser and his political system. Once Social Democracy was restored to legality, it is true that the most outspoken songs disappeared from printed songbooks, but this was due more to the fear of censorship and a lack of willingness on the part of publishers and editors to invite repression, then necessarily a rejection of political radicalism, or indeed a wholesale adoption of reformism. Where songs were censored or removed from songbooks, such works were often replaced by others that reverted to the language of the mid-nineteenth century: this involved a return to protesting about social conditions without suggesting a revolutionary alternative, or measured calls for the granting of equal rights.

Critics have argued that by adopting reformist political policies, the Social Democrats adversely affected the ability of working-class song to deliver a revolutionary message. To these observers, instead of being deployed to emphasize the need for working-class struggle and to foment a proletarian revolution, the energies of song were being dissipated in pursuit of achieving specific social reforms, notably equal voting rights and a restriction in the length of the working day. In reality, and despite the adoption of the Erfurt Programme, the Social Democrats remained largely revolutionary in their rhetoric and reformist in their practice.

Foreign revolutionary events also provided a useful source of the most popular and enduring working-class songs, which were subsequently found in most song collections of the period. Songs were drawn from the freedom movements of many European countries, most notably those of Russia, Poland and especially France. The *Marseillaise* is particularly noteworthy for its widespread distribution

throughout Germany, and for the large number of different versions that it subsequently spawned.

The content of songbooks had largely stagnated by the middle of the first decade of the twentieth century, with only few new political songs being added to them before the First World War. Instead the focus of song for political purposes had largely switched to those created on an ad hoc basis to support strikes to express the growing discontent of the working class. Such songs were often printed and quickly distributed on flyers, with some of the proceeds going directly to support the beleaguered workers. A number of these songs would later be formalized into the canon of workers' songs by their inclusion in printed songbooks. Thus whilst formal songbooks may have lacked the radicalism of an earlier age, anonymous street songs and *Spottlieder*, as well as songs produced by critics of the mainstream Social Democratic party retained their radical edge, and were no less critical of the regime than their late nineteenth century forebears.

The effects of continuing working-class poverty resulted in many previously disenfranchised groups in society becoming increasingly politicised in the run up to the First World War. As a consequence of this, songs were often specially composed for sports and gymnastic societies and youth groups to enhance their prestige and to underline their commitment to the socialist cause. These groups initially deployed the same array of songs found in existing songbooks intended for working-men before slowly adopting songs of their own. This period also reflected the paucity of songs written specifically to advance women's issues, especially within the context of a male dominated labour movement that remained focused on achieving its own political goals and that remained generally hostile to the female workforce.

The run up to the First World War was also marked by the appearance of songs that argued against working-class involvement in an imperialist war. Due to their radical nature such songs remained confined to flyers or were sung covertly, to forestall police repression. Thus it was with this mix of established, often unchanged songbooks, tightly controlled by censorship, and spontaneously created radical street songs and *Spottlieder*, that proponents of working-class protest song faced up to the privations of the First World War. Neither protest song, nor the working class itself, would emerge unchanged from this great conflict.

Chapter 5

Protest Song in War and Revolution, 1914-1923

This chapter discusses the development of working-class protest song during the period from 1914-1923 and it is divided into two main parts. The first deals with the role of song during the First World War, concentrating on how both nationalists and socialists alike used it as a medium to comment on the war. Additionally it will note how the strains of war and the exigencies of increased military production conspired to produce an altogether more radicalized home-front workforce, one that would have a direct bearing on the production of more politically charged and revolutionary songs in the immediate post-war period.

The second part of the chapter deals with the years 1918-1923, noting how these years of revolutionary upheaval strengthened the divergence of opinion within the working class which had already been exacerbated during the war years. It will explain why the Social Democratic song canon would remain largely unchanged from the pre-war era, whilst that of the newly emergent Communist Party unashamedly espoused proletarian revolution under the influence of Soviet Russia. It will further discuss how strikes, street violence and demonstrations influenced the production of Communist songs, and how political songs from other countries were appropriated to augment and expand the existing home-grown repertoire. In turn it will examine the role youth played in the production and reception of song, noting their particular importance in Communist thinking as bearers of the revolution. Finally this chapter will conclude with an account of how, in an era of daily street violence and political unrest, Communists and Social Democrats differed as to the revolutionary emphasis they placed upon the lyrical content of their respective songs.

5.1: Protest Song and the First World War, 1914-1918

The Kaiser's proclamation at the outbreak of hostilities that he recognized no political parties, only Germans implied the notion that the shared experience of war would act as a panacea to overcome all the old political and societal divisions of Wilhelmine Germany. This idea, collectively known as the 'spirit of 1914', was to gain widespread currency amongst both contemporary observers and historians alike.¹ However, more recent scholarship has successfully challenged both this view, and the wider myth that all classes greeted the war with equal enthusiasm.² In his study of how the news of the outbreak of war was received in Darmstadt, Michael Stöcker has argued that 'there was no unified 'August experience', rather that there were many August experiences'.³ Illustrative of this divergence of opinion was the decision of the SPD's leadership to vote in favour of the war credits needed to finance the war did not imply a wholehearted acceptance of its necessity: as Chickering observed, leading Social Democrats, convinced of the need for a limited defensive war to break Germany free of her ring of enemies, voted to finance the conflict 'with reluctance and fatalism, but with little enthusiasm'.⁴

Despite this reluctance, there were some within the SPD and trade union leadership who welcomed the opportunities they believed war would bring, both to obtain long-sought after social and political reforms, and to achieve the political legitimacy long denied them as the main representative party of organized labour.⁵ These leaders hoped that the loyal participation of workers in war industries would convince the government to end the discrimination against socialists within German society, and they looked to use their position of strength - the government

¹ Wolfgang Kruse, 'Die Kriegbegeisterung im Deutschen Reich zu Beginn des Ersten Weltkrieges: Entstehungszusammenhänge, Grenzen und ideologische Strukturen', in *Kriegsbegeisterung und mentale Kriegsvorbereitung: Interdisziplinäre Studien*, ed. by Marcel van der Linden and Gottfried Mergner (Berlin: [n.pub.], 1991). For accounts promulgating the 'Spirit of 1914' see: Friedrich Meinecke, *The German Catastrophe: Reflections and Recollections* (Boston: Boston University Press, 1950), p. 25; Eric Leeds, *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War One* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 39.

² Jeffrey Verhey, *The Spirit of 1914: Militarism, Myth and Mobilization in Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 12-64; For the situation in Berlin on the eve of war see: Jean-Louis Robert, 'Paris, London, Berlin on the Eve of the War', in Jay Winter and Jean-Louis Robert, eds., *Capital Cities at War: Paris, London, Berlin, 1914-1919* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 25-43.

³ Michael Stöcker, *Darmstadt: Legende und Wirklichkeit* (Darmstadt: [n.pub.], 1994), p. 9.

⁴ Roger Chickering, *Imperial Germany and the Great War, 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 16.

⁵ Edgar Feuchtwanger, *Imperial Germany, 1850-1918* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 175. Chickering, *Imperial Germany and the Great War*, p. 16-17.

needed the skilled labour that the SPD and unions organized and controlled - to pressure the government into agreeing to widespread social reforms. These hopes would seem to have been realized with the passing of the Auxiliary Service Law in December 1916. This legislation aimed to mobilise the whole population on behalf of the war effort, requiring all able-bodied Germans to perform mandatory war service.⁶ After a bitter parliamentary struggle, the state made significant concessions to the unions, most notably granting them the right to establish arbitration boards in the larger factories.⁷ The involvement of the labour movement in administering this law effectively made the socialists responsible for the mobilization of German labour for the war effort.

Despite the initial influx of patriotic volunteers into the armed forces in the immediate aftermath of its outbreak, prosecuting a major industrialized war inevitably necessitated large-scale conscription, which soon resulted in a large number of industrial workers being drawn into the tumult of war. As a consequence, the German military authorities were themselves quick to employ song in an attempt to imbue their newly expanded armed forces with the fighting spirit necessary to fight for or die a heroes' death for their 'Kaiser and Reich'. Nationalistic soldiers' songs and bombastic military marches were produced as sound recordings and repeatedly played in soldiers' barracks, acting it was hoped, as an aural manifestation of the 'Spirit of 1914'.⁸ On the battlefield itself the authorities used song to promote tales of patriotic glory: official reports of the Battle of Langemarck told of the eager young conscripts charging the enemy whilst defiantly singing the National Anthem.⁹

However much the military authorities tried to play on nationalistic sentiments, the war itself was received with mixed feelings by the working class. Although some of their political leaders may have welcomed it, most rank and file

⁶ The Auxiliary Service Law of December 5, 1916 - § 1. To the extent that he has not already been called into the armed services, every male German from the age of eighteen to sixty shall be obligated to participate in national Auxiliary Service for the duration of the war.

⁷ Gerald D. Feldman, *Army, Industry and Labor in Germany* (Providence: Berg, 1992), pp. 197-249.

⁸ Klaus Jürgen Hohn, 'Schallplatte und Arbeiterbewegung', in *Illustrierte Geschichte der Arbeiterchöre*, ed. by Rainer Noltenius (Essen: Klartext Verlag, 1992), pp. 147-48 (p. 148).

⁹ Karl Unruh, *Langemarck: Legende und Wirklichkeit* (Koblenz: [n.pub.], 1986); Bernd Hüppauf, 'Langemarck, Verdun and the Myth of a New Man in Germany after the First World War', *War and Society*, 6 (1988), pp. 70-103.

On the uses of the national anthem (*Deutschlandlied*) see: Jost Hermand, 'On the History of the Deutschlandlied', in *Music and German National Identity*, ed. by Celia Applegate and Pamela M. Potter (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2002), pp. 251-268.

workers were not so enthusiastic about their involvement in a major war. Since the turn of the century, working-class agitation had been directed along the lines of anti-militarism and internationalism, so the idea of fighting against the workers of another nation should have held little appeal for the ordinary worker. However, as Feuchtwanger states, ‘nationalism was the reality, international working-class solidarity was the shadow, [as] nation came before class’.¹⁰ Many ordinary German workers showed a high degree of patriotism when faced with the prospect of war, with the proviso that it was to remain a largely defensive conflict without annexations. Certainly the official organ of the DASB, the *Deutscher Arbeiter Sängerzeitung* or DASZ, vigorously proclaimed its support for this defensive war, announcing in December 1914 how its members ‘stood ready in the service of the *Heimatfront*’, in addition to those already serving in the trenches.¹¹ Thus the DASZ attempted to portray the working class as Germany’s truest patriots at this desperate time, the front page of its 15th March 1916 edition loudly attacked the greed of middle class war profiteers under the banner headline ‘Germany’s poorest seem to be its most loyal’.¹² However, this apparent working-class unity would not survive the economic and social privations of the war.¹³

Songs produced in wartime were subjected to levels of censorship that were even more stringent than those encountered in the politically repressive atmosphere that had prevailed in Germany since the turn of the century. During the war, all forms of political expression were subjected to the extensive censorship powers of the Deputy Commanding Generals. These officers, each of which headed a geographical area commensurate with the deployment of the individual army corps within Germany itself, were given broad executive powers: they could curtail personal liberties, seize property, censor publications, inspect mail, and imprison opponents of the regime on the merest pretext.¹⁴

¹⁰ Feuchtwanger, *Imperial Germany*, p. 151.

¹¹ *Deutscher Arbeiter Sänger Zeitung*, 15 December 1914, p. 3, as quoted in Dietmar Klenke, *Nationale oder proletarische Solidargemeinschaft: Geschichte der deutschen Arbeitersänger* (Heidelberg: Stiftung Reichspräsident Friedrich Ebert Gedenkstätte, 1995), p. 22.

¹² *Deutscher Arbeiter Sänger Zeitung*, 15 March 1916, p. 1.

¹³ Feldman, *Army, Industry and Labor*, pp. 459-472; Chickering, *Imperial Germany and the Great War*, pp. 151-160; Stefan Berger, *Social Democracy and the Working Class in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Germany* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2000), pp. 91-93.

¹⁴ Wilhelm Deist, *Militär und Innenpolitik im Weltkrieg 1914-1918*, 2 vols. (Düsseldorf: [n.publ.], 1970), vol. 1, pp. 26-28; Chickering, *Imperial Germany and the Great War*, p. 151.

Not surprisingly, expressions of dissent such as those expressed in the form of protest song were subjected to the strictest levels of repression: song-sheets being sold on the streets were confiscated and those caught singing banned songs were imprisoned, redolent of similar events in previous eras.¹⁵ This repressive atmosphere naturally inhibited the publication and dissemination of working-class protest songs that offered criticism of Germany and her military regime, so that for the duration of the war, virtually no new *Arbeiterlieder* appeared in print. This resulted in the printing of only officially sanctioned songbooks, from which songs deemed to be contentious or overly critical of the regime were removed.¹⁶ Whether this was a pragmatic response by songbook editors, seeking to stave off official sanction, or part of a greater willingness by moderate Social Democrats to support the prosecution of the war is unclear. The practical result from the available evidence was a moderation of the content of songbooks published in Germany during the war. As happened during the period of the Anti-Socialist Law, the publication of radical songbooks had to be moved abroad, principally to Switzerland.

Conversely, amongst radical socialists, the repressive atmosphere fostered increased levels of dissent and political agitation. Almost from the outset, Karl Liebknecht had opposed the Social Democrats' support for the war, drawing upon pre-war socialist traditions of internationalism, anti-militarism and working-class solidarity to support his position.¹⁷ Although no Social Democrats had actually voted against the war credits bill in August 1914, a number including Liebknecht, had expressed their vehement opposition. In December Liebknecht broke ranks and voted against the issue, and within another year twenty Socialists had joined him in opposing further financial support for the war. The proceedings of the Reichstag were one of the few published sources that not even the Deputy Commanding Generals could censor, and this change in parliamentary mood was mirrored by the growing anti-war sentiment being expressed across Germany. In a number of towns

¹⁵ Chickering, *Imperial Germany and the Great War*, p. 151.

¹⁶ For instance, the comparison of: AdK, A3g, Arbeiter Sängerbund, ed., 'Liederbuch', Neunte Auflage (Berlin: W Bolz, 1915) with: AdK, A3a, Arbeiter Sängerbund, ed., 'Liederbuch', Zehnte Auflage (Berlin: W Bolz, 1920).

¹⁷ David W. Morgan, *The Socialist Left and the German Revolution: A History of the German Independent Social Democratic Party, 1917-1922* (Ithaca and London: [n.pub], 1975); A.J. Ryder, *The German Revolution of 1918: A Study of German Socialism in War and Revolt* (Cambridge: [n. pub], 1967), pp. 1-139; Eric D. Weitz, *Creating German Communism, 1890-1990* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997) pp. 62-83; Chickering, *Imperial Germany and the Great War*, pp. 154-156.

and cities noted for their pre-war radicalism, opposition hardened at grassroots level too. Chickering notes that:

Resistance survived in pockets of the labour movement, whose network of *Vereine* – including the neighbourhood pubs where like-minded workers gathered – provided nascent channels of communication among dissident factory groups and party cells.¹⁸

Pubs and working-class locales thus became centres of opposition to the regime, and such dissent often found expression in song. With the repressive apparatus in full effect, these protests often took the form of anonymously composed *Spottlieder*, or songs smuggled into Germany from abroad. This song, printed in Zurich late in 1914, was smuggled into Germany and covertly distributed throughout the country. Like many such songs, it used parody – the setting of songs to existing well known melodies, in this instance ‘*Es war in Schöneberg*’, – to facilitate the communication of its anti-war sentiments:

5.1.1 Anonymous *Spottlied*

Diese ganze Puppenspiel,
Das kostet uns Millionen,
Und wenn wir hungrig sind,
Schickt man uns ‘blaue Bohnen’!
Wer kümmert sich darum,
Ob wir in Not verkommen,
wenn nur die noblen Herrn
auf ihre Rechnung kommen!¹⁹

*This whole puppetshow,
costs us millions,
and if we are hungry,
one sends us ‘blue beans’! **
*Who cares,
If we fester in need,
So long as noble gentlemen
Get their rewards*

* ‘blue beans’ = bullets

This song emphasised the sense of futility felt by working-class soldiers during the war, the feeling that they were powerless to shape their own destiny just as they had been in pre-war German society. The feeling that ordinary soldiers were being used to serve the interests of the rich and powerful is evident by the reference to the war as a ‘puppet show’, with generals replacing politicians as the men directing and controlling all aspects of their lives. The lyrics also make clear how workers feel they are being needlessly sacrificed for the benefit of their leaders whilst they themselves go without, and that the only reward they receive for their hunger and sacrifice is death due to diet of ‘blue beans’.

¹⁸ Chickering, *Imperial Germany and the Great War*, pp. 154-155.

¹⁹ Inge Lammel, *Das Arbeiterlied* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Röderberg, 1973), p. 53.

Antiwar sentiments combined with conscription meant that recruiting depots and military barracks became important centres for those seeking to stimulate an anti-war mood amongst soldiers and new trainees.²⁰ Paul Haase from Bernburg, recalling his two years of compulsory military service just prior to the First World War, noted the dangers inherent in possessing a copy of a song expressing anti-war sentiments:

A colleague had written the song on a note and kept it in his locker. Then that evening at nine o-clock an unannounced locker inspection took place. Luckily it was not found, but had it gone wrong, then I would have gone before a military court charged with inciting mutiny.²¹

Haase's experience was not untypical. Franz Rehfeld, a fellow Bernburg recruit, noted that another soldier was sentenced to 14 days in jail after a reserve Second Lieutenant overheard him singing an anti-war song whilst they were in a trench on the Western Front.²² That such acts carried such a serious punishment clearly demonstrates the danger that the authorities believed protest song posed to the morale and willingness to fight of the rank and file of the army. The demands of modern war, with the large-scale slaughter inherent in trench warfare, necessitated a large number of conscripts: such men were inevitably partially drawn from the pool of pre-war industrial workers, many of whom were ill at ease with the concept of fighting a war for a regime that had been so hostile to them in peacetime.

In addition to newly composed songs, oppositional songs from earlier wars also found themselves back in popular circulation. Many new recruits found themselves singing anti-war songs that their fathers or grandfathers had sung in earlier conflicts.²³ One such song, the *Demokratisches Soldatenlied* (Democratic soldier's song), had first appeared just prior to the Franco-Prussian War in 1870.²⁴ This song expressed the idea that all men were brothers, a sentiment that was clearly at odds with the intent of the German government that sought to foster popular support for the war. The *Demokratisches Soldatenlied* was one of the songs that had disappeared from Social Democratic songbooks after the lapsing of the Anti-Socialist Law in 1890, but it began to reappear in the radicalised

²⁰ Lammel, *Das Arbeiterlied*, p. 53.

²¹ Akademie der Künste Veteranenberichte, Paul Haase, Bernburg, AdK Berlin; quoted in: Inge Lammel, *Kampfgefährte: Unser Lied* (Berlin: Verlag Tribune, 1978), p. 56.

²² Akademie der Künste Veteranenberichte, Franz Rehfeld, Bernburg, AdK, Berlin; quoted in: Lammel, *Kampfgefährte: Unser Lied*, p. 56.

²³ Lammel, *Kampfgefährte: Unser Lied*, p. 56.

²⁴ See Chapter 3, pp. 114-15.

atmosphere prevailing in the run up to the outbreak of the First World War. Highly popular amongst working-class conscripts both in barracks and at the front, any soldier caught singing it by his officers were immediately arrested and sentenced to a spell in a military prison.²⁵

Songs that stressed the idea of ‘a brotherhood of workers from all nations’ also began to disappear from official songbooks. It was difficult for those commissioning songbooks, particularly the Social Democrats, to advance the ideas of international working-class solidarity found in such songs as the *Internationale*, whilst many of their members and supporters were potentially fighting fellow socialists on both the Western and Eastern Fronts. Even if their opponents were not socialists, fighting a war, however portrayed, be it a defensive or necessary war, did not sit comfortably with pre-war socialist ideas of anti-militarism and the notion that workers of all nations were brothers. The *Internationale*, had long been a regular feature in the series of songbooks published by the DASB since 1906: indeed, it was considered so important that it was always included as the last entry in the book, despite successive editions adding ten or more songs every year.²⁶ In making the song easy to find, but placing at the back so it did not act as a bold challenge to songbook censors, this positioning of the *Internationale* itself held a political significance. However, in the final wartime edition, published in 1915, it had pointedly disappeared, bowing to the sensibilities of the European War and the wartime censors. Calls to unite with workers of countries that Germans were now fighting was not an approach to endear songbook editors to the German military authorities, nor in fact to their own soldiers, many of whom had rallied to the patriotic cause to defend the fatherland in what they believed to be, at least in the early stages, a purely defensive war. That the positioning of the *Internationale* had political significance can be underlined by the fact that in the first edition published after the war it reappeared at the very front of the book, second only to the *Marseillaise*.²⁷ The new political freedom that the Socialists now enjoyed meant that they were now permitted to include whatever songs they chose. That their

²⁵ Lammel, *Das Arbeiterlied*, p. 53.

²⁶ AdK, A3k, Arbeiter Sängerbund, ed., ‘*Liederbuch*’, Erste Auflage (Berlin: Julius Meyer, 1906); AdK, A3f, Arbeiter Sängerbund, ed., ‘*Liederbuch*’, Zweite Auflage (Berlin: Julius Meyer, 1907); AdK, A3h, Arbeiter Sängerbund, ed., ‘*Liederbuch*’, Vierte Auflage (Berlin: Paul Kupfer, 1909); AdK, A3d, Arbeiter Sängerbund, ed., ‘*Liederbuch*’, Fünfte Auflage (Berlin: Paul Kupfer, 1910); AdK, A3i, Arbeiter Sängerbund, ed., ‘*Liederbuch*’, Sechste Auflage (Berlin: Paul Kupfer, 1911); AdK, A3c, Arbeiter Sängerbund, ed., ‘*Liederbuch*’, Achte Auflage (Berlin: Paul Kupfer, 1913).

²⁷ AdK, A3g, Arbeiter Sängerbund, ed., ‘*Liederbuch*’, Neunte Auflage (Berlin: W Bolz, 1915) and AdK, A3a, Arbeiter Sängerbund, ed., ‘*Liederbuch*’, Zehnte Auflage (Berlin: W Bolz, 1920).

books did not include the radical, revolutionary songs that disappeared in the wake of the lifting of the Anti-Socialist Law confirms in my view that song supported the Social Democrat worldview, namely that reform and democracy was what they desired - and had achieved in November 1918 - not proletarian revolution.

Later wartime songs began to reflect the fact that the financial consequences of promulgating a modern industrial war had massively increased the social hardship of many Germans, and that this burden fell most heavily on the shoulders of the working class. Wages failed to keep pace with the rise in the cost of living, which rose 200% between 1914 and 1918, although skilled workers in war-related industries generally fared better than their less-skilled colleagues.²⁸ Exceptionally long wartime working hours, allied to increasing food shortages, conspired to sap the enthusiasm of ordinary German workers and their families: the failure of the potato crop in 1916 was compounded by an exceptionally severe winter, and industrial workers in the towns and cities had to rely on official food distribution sources.²⁹ Local government officials in the countryside fought to control the burgeoning black market for even the most basic of foodstuffs, and the whole question of food supply gradually became politicised, to the point where hunger became a daily source of political discontent, allied to a general sense of war weariness.³⁰

The worsening food situation on the home front became the subject of a number of anonymous songs that often only comprised a single verse. One such song reflected the situation in Mannheim, and lamented the fact that the rich enjoyed better food whilst ordinary people had to make do with basic, unappealing staples such as turnips:

Es braust ein Ruf wie Donnerhall,
in Mannheim sind die Kartoffel all.
Eier, Butter, Schinke, Speck
fressen uns die Reichen weg.
Und füttern uns wie's liebe Vieh
mit Rüben und Kohlrabibrüh³¹

*A call roars like thunder,
In Mannheim are all the potatoes,
Eggs, butter, ham and bacon
Are eaten up by the rich,
While they feed us like cattle
With turnips and cabbage broth*

Indeed, the harsh winter of 1916-17 had left only turnips available to the majority of the population, fuelling resentment that the better off, with their greater financial

²⁸ Jürgen Kocka, *Klassengesellschaft im Krieg: Deutsche Sozialgeschichte 1914-1918* (Göttingen: [n.pub.], 1973), p. 17.

²⁹ Elizabeth H. Tobin, 'War and the Working Class: The Case of Düsseldorf, 1914-1918', *Central European History*, 17 (1985), 252-278 (pp. 269-276).

³⁰ Chickering, *Imperial Germany and the Great War*, pp. 140-146; Feuchtwanger, *Imperial Germany*, pp. 182-185.

³¹ Lammel, *Das Arbeiterlied*, p. 135.

resources and consequent access to the black market, were able to enjoy a better, more nourishing and varied diet. Workers on the homefront needed to keep their strength up as they laboured in war industries whilst the majority of men were at the front, so a poor diet increased their burden. Faced with such stark inequality, for a working class facing the claims of the Kaiser that the nation had pulled together and was sharing the burdens and privations of the war equally sounded truly hollow.

Additionally, the feeling grew that the working class was being expended for the benefit of capitalists and war profiteers also found expression in song:

Er zog ins Feld,
Er starb als Held,
Für Deutschlands Millionär.³²

*He went onto the field,
He died as a hero,
For Germany's millionaires*

Another song expressed similar sentiments:

Wir kämpfen nicht fürs Vaterland,
Wir kämpfen nicht für Gott.
Wir kämpfen für die reichen Leut'
Die Armen schießt man tot.³³

*We do not fight for the Fatherland,
We do not fight for God,
We fight for rich people,
The poor get shot dead.*

With such growing opposition amongst soldiers in depots at the front, those at home were not reticent in registering their growing discontent.

As the war went on and hardships on the home-front increased, opposition to the stance of the SPD's leadership grew, leading to increasing demands for the immediate overthrow of capitalism and an end to the war without annexations. Initially, because the working class political leadership had generally supported the war, voting for war credits while continuing to support the idea of a negotiated peace, radical calls for peace had been largely ignored. However the events of 1st May 1916, traditionally a day of protest in the labour movement, proved crucial, not only in sharpening working-class opposition to the war, but for revealing the sharp rift in the labour movement which would ultimately prove fatal to the survival of the Weimar Republic. On this day the leading socialist radical Karl Liebknecht was arrested for speaking out against the war at a protest demonstration in Berlin. Liebknecht was sentenced to four years in jail by a military court, which triggered a wave of mass industrial action. In support of Liebknecht and his opposition to the war, 55,000 Berlin metalworkers went out on strike, a move mirrored in many other industrial cities. These strikes grew in frequency and

³² Lammel, *Das Arbeiterlied*, p. 135.

³³ Lammel, *Das Arbeiterlied*, p. 135.

duration throughout the final two years of war, as workers demanded higher wages, more rations and shorter working hours: these economic and social demands were increasingly accompanied by calls for tangible political reform and, most tellingly, a swift end to the war.³⁴

Economic misery was now being directly equated with political inequality and injustice. In January 1917 those radicals who had been expelled from the mainstream SPD a year before formed their own political party, the Independent German Social Democratic Party (*Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* or USPD), and they too demanded an immediate end to the war without annexations.³⁵ This party demonstrated its political importance when it inspired a massive nationwide strike in late January 1918, a dispute that drew in over a million workers demanding both an end to the war and economic and social reform.³⁶ Although the strikes were quelled by the intervention of the army, there could no longer be any doubt that the linked questions of war and domestic reforms were at the forefront of German political discourse as the war drew to its bloody climax.³⁷

With ever larger sections of the population growing increasingly disenchanted with the war and the privations it forced them to endure, anti-war songs began to emerge that matched this change in public mood. In June 1918 an anonymous gunner composed an anti-war poem that was later set to music, which called for an end to the ‘imperialistic’ war and advocated a revolution along the lines of that so recently undertaken in Russia. The song, entitled *Ein roter Soldat* (‘A Red Soldier’), was distributed in leaflet form to recruits at the Posen Recruitment depot, and it was massively popular with the new intake of soldiers. As well as being circulated within the barracks and then being taken to the front-line, it also went back to the home front when soldiers went on leave:

³⁴ Wolfgang Mommsen and Gerhard Hirschfeld, eds, *Social Protest, Violence and Terror in Nineteenth-century and Twentieth Century Europe* (Macmillan: Basingstoke, 1992); Conan Fischer, *The German Communists and the Rise of Nazism* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), pp. 2-3. For an individual case study see: Friedhelm Boll, ‘Spontaneität der Basis und politische Funktion des Streiks 1914 bis 1918: Das Beispiel Braunschweig’, *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, 17 (1977), 337-366; Feldman, *Army, Industry and Labor*, pp. 459-472; Chickering, *Imperial Germany and the Great War*, p. 151-160;

³⁵ Feuchtwanger, *Imperial Germany*, p. 186.

³⁶ Stephen Bailey, ‘The Berlin Strike of January 1918’, *Central European History* 13 (1980), 154-174.

³⁷ Chickering, *Imperial Germany and the Great War*, pp. 158-160.

5.1.2 Ein roter Soldat

Matrosen,	<i>Seaman,</i>
Mate,	<i>Petty Officers,</i>
Machts wie in Rate-Staat,	<i>Do as the 'council state',</i>
Im großen Russenland.	<i>In great Russia'</i>
Nehmt das Steuer selbst in die Hand,	<i>Take the tiller in your own hands,</i>
Kamaraden, Soldaten	<i>Comrades, soldiers</i>

The appearance of this song, with its exhortation to the ordinary soldier to ‘form a ‘council-state as in Great Russia’ and to ‘take the tiller into your own hands’ was an unambiguous signal to the Imperial authorities that a desire existed within the ranks of its own armed forces for political revolution and a remodelling of German society along Soviet lines. Understandably the fact that workers had now received military training, had access to weapons, and that many of them now had combat experience was also deeply unnerving for the authorities: indeed these fears would be realized with the repeated putsch attempts and insurrections against the lawfully constituted government that occurred in between November 1918 and November 1923.

These sentiments also found expression through the singing of such protest songs in the trenches. The army’s idea to send those workers who had actively participated in the great munitions strikes of January 1918 to the front-line was soon revealed for the mistake it was. These disaffected workers wasted little time in outlining the privations and shortages being suffered by workers and their families at home (and of course the soldiers’ own families), and a staff officer spoke of these new troops as ‘less a reinforcement of the troops, than a poison’.³⁸ Unsurprisingly given the delicate state of the last major German offensive on the Western Front at this time, the anti-war message promoted by *Ein Roter Soldat* was roundly condemned by the German military authorities, who offered a month’s leave to anyone willing to reveal the identity of the songs’ author. Given such a powerful incentive, its author Paul Korni-Schräder was soon betrayed, and following an army court-martial was sentenced to a year in a military prison.³⁹ Nevertheless, with the end of the war close at hand, song would take on a renewed impetus in shaping and expressing working-class political hopes and aspirations.

³⁸ Wolfgang Kruse, ‘Krieg und Klassenheer: Zur Revolutionierung der deutschen Armee im Ersten Weltkrieg’, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 22 (1996), 530-561 (pp. 556-57).

³⁹ Inge Lammel, *Arbeitermusikkultur in Deutschland, 1844-1945: Bilder und Dokumente* (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1984), p. 61.

4.2: Song and the Post-War Chaos, 1918-1923

The fall of the Imperial German regime, begun by the sailors' mutiny at Kiel in late October 1918, was completed by the abdication of the Kaiser and the replacement of Prince Max's interim government with one drawn equally from leading figures of the majority Social Democratic Party (MSPD) and the USPD. However, even before the armistice, Germany found itself in revolutionary crisis. In the immediate aftermath of the war forces from both left and right struggled to fill the political power vacuum. Calls to establish political republics, independent of the legitimate SPD government, were proclaimed by both socialists and communists alike, whilst insurrections were raised and defeated throughout the country, often accompanied by violence.⁴⁰

These revolutionary events did not immediately lead to the production of new political protest songs, unlike the flood of songs that had immediately resulted from the defeat of the 1848-49 Revolution. Instead the events of November 1918 were accompanied by the singing of the old standard songs of the early socialist labour movement: even anonymously created songs, usually the source of the most fiery and radical political compositions, eschewed calling for political revolution and merely contented themselves with rejoicing at the recent fall of the monarchy.⁴¹ Mass rallies and street demonstrations held in the period immediately following the signing of the November armistice were accompanied by well-known *Arbeiterlieder* drawn from the earliest days of the socialist labour movement, such as the *Internationale* and *Die Arbeitsmänner*.⁴²

This lack of revolutionary song output is not as surprising as may be first thought. For many Social Democrats, the outcome of the war had seen their hopes for social and political reforms fulfilled; the political system had been democratised and the SPD were now in power; parliamentary democracy and universal adult suffrage, two key demands of their pre-war programme of agitation had been achieved, along with the introduction of the eight-hour day and the establishment of collective wage bargaining agreements.⁴³ With their ambitions achieved, or in the process of being so, many Social Democrats did not feel the

⁴⁰ Hans Mommsen, *Die Verspielte Freiheit: Der Weg der Republik von Weimar in den Untergang bis 1918-1933* (Berlin: Propyläen Verlag, 1990), pp. 13-31; Hans Mommsen, *Der erste Weltkrieg und die europäische Nachkriegsordnung: Sozialer Wandel und Formveränderung der Politik* (Köln: Böhlau, 2000), pp. 107-124; Theo Balderston, *Economics and Politics in the Weimar Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 34-60; Berger, *Social Democracy and the Working Class*, pp. 96-99.

⁴¹ Lammel, *Das Arbeiterlied*, p. 53, pp. 137-139.

⁴² Lammel, *Das Arbeiterlied*, p. 55.

⁴³ Berger, *Social Democracy and the Working Class*, p. 100.

need to take the revolution any further, and this was reflected in a lack of new songs. As Berger relates, the pre-war notion of ‘class struggle’ now took on a very different meaning for the Social Democrats from their Communist Party (KPD) opponents:

Whereas the SPD saw ‘struggle’ as a process of negotiation between workers and employers and the state (and sometimes at least, between Social Democrats and bourgeois parties in government), the KPD interpreted ‘struggle’ as the violent clash between irreconcilable social forces.⁴⁴

This demonstrates clearly the fundamental difference in the political outlook of Social Democrats and Communists. For the former, the establishment of an SPD-led parliamentary democracy that had resulted in both the achievement of long sought after political reforms was the culmination of years of political struggle. They believed that all that remained to be done was to underpin these achievements with further reforms that could be achieved by negotiation now that they were in power. In contrast, the Communists saw this as only an interim stage on the road to an inevitable proletarian revolution, rather than an end in itself. The Social Democratic song canon reflected this sense of achievement by remaining largely unchanged after the First World War, reflecting the view that no further fundamental struggle was required. To Communists, for whom struggle was a key element in their songs, this basic difference in their political outlook could be explained as evidence of the Social Democrats’ lack of revolutionary fervour, which in their eyes betrayed the workers and denied them the chance to fulfil their true political destiny through the establishment of a dictatorship of the proletariat.

However content they were with achieving political power, and as passive as their apparent lack of revolutionary fervour made them appear to their Communist opponents, the fact that the Social Democrats were passionate about defending their new, hard won republic is clearly expressed in Karl Bröger’s *Republikanische Hymne* (‘Republican Hymn’). The lyricist, Bröger (1886-1944), was a noted workers’ poet and a prominent SPD journalist, having worked for many Social Democratic publications and organizations. As such, the opinions expressed in ‘The Republican Hymn’ represent those of a man committed to the concept of parliamentary democracy:

4.2.1 Republikanische Hymne

⁴⁴ Berger, *Social Democracy and the Working Class*, p. 104.

Verse 1

Vaterland, ein hohes Licht,
Freiheit glänzt von deiner Sterne.
Von der Marsch zum Alpenfirne,
Glühen Herzen, wachen Hirne,
Und die heilige Flamme spricht.

*Fatherland, a high light
Freedom shines from your star,
from the marsh to the Alpine firn,
Hearts glow, brains awake,
And the holy flame speaks.*

Chorus

Volk, hab' acht!
Brüder wacht!
Eher soll der letzte Mann verderben,
Als die Freiheit wieder sterben.

*People, be aware!
Brothers awake!
Sooner that the last man be ruined,
Than freedom die again.*

The natural metaphors hark back to the age of Romanticism, as if Bröger is consciously trying to distance the new Republic from the social and political chaos of the post-war period in order to return to a simpler, more innocent age. Bröger's composition also returns to quasi-religious themes seen previously in songs such as *Dem Morgenrot entgegen*: his reference to 'the holy frame' gives it a somewhat intangible spiritual context, in stark contrast to the direct language of Communist songs. The chorus draws attention to the danger of a counter-revolution, and calls upon Social Democrats to resist such an eventuality with all possible means, even at the possible cost of their own life:

Verse 2

Brüder, lässt uns armverschränkt,
Mutig in das Morgen schreiten!
Hinter uns bei schwarzen Zeiten,
Vor uns helle Sonnenweiten!
Nicht, nur wer die Freiheit tränkt!

*Brothers, let us clasp arm in arm,
step courageously into tomorrow!
Behind us in black times,
before us an expanse of bright sun!
Not only he who drinks of freedom!*

Volk, hab' acht!
Brüder wacht!
Deutsche Republik wir alle schwören:
Letzter Tropfen Blüt soll die gehören.⁴⁵

*People, be aware!
Brothers awake!
We all swear to the German Republic,
The last drop of our blood belongs to
it.*

The second verse speaks of unity, and how the new democratic ideas enshrined in the Weimar Republic were an unknown quantity, and that to continue to support them would require courage. Nevertheless, despite such uncertainties, there is agreement, expressed in metaphors of light and darkness, that the 'black times' of the Kaiser's regime are behind them, and that a better future is expressed as a 'bright sun'. The second chorus again makes the overriding sentiment expressed in this song clear, namely that the fledgling republic was still under threat and that all

⁴⁵ AdK, A3c, Arbeiter Sängerbund, ed., 'Liederbuch', Zehnte Auflage (Berlin: W Bolz, 1920). This extract was pasted into this songbook, taken from an unknown Social Democratic periodical.

Social Democrats should stand ready to defend it. It restates the notion that the SPD were wholly committed to the idea of a democratic parliamentary republic, and that they were prepared to fight and, if necessary die, in order to maintain it. Bröger himself was certainly prepared to fight for his beliefs, for as an active SPD city councillor in Nuremberg he was sentenced to serve two months imprisonment in Dachau concentration camp by the Nazi authorities in the late summer of 1933.⁴⁶

However, not all sectors of the working class were content with the creation of a parliamentary democratic republic. Pressure for revolutionary change within Germany had built up slowly during the war years as sections of the working class, unwilling to accept the traditional discipline of the established Social Democratic trade unions, progressively became more radicalised. The war had acted as the catalyst for a change in the composition of the labour force: fully one-third of Germany's industrial workers had already been called into the army by the close of 1914, and as conscription gathered pace the composition of the workforce altered markedly. A more youthful and feminine workforce evolved to satisfy the voracious demands of military production, although strenuous efforts would be made in the immediate post-war period to replace those women in industry with men returning from the front.⁴⁷ Overall, the reconstituted post-war workforce contained many people unhappy with the 'creeping gradualism' of the moderate Social Democratic trade unions and who wanted to take a more radical course.⁴⁸ In branches such as the metalworking industry in Berlin this wartime workforce had been exposed to the radicalism of the *Revolutionäre Obleute* (revolutionary shop stewards), and these 'radical' workers railed against the perceived conservatism of a Social Democratic labour movement that had spent such a long time in opposition.⁴⁹ All of this meant that the new democratic parliamentary republic now possessed a more stratified and politically heterogeneous workforce, many of

⁴⁶ Gudrun Heinsen-Becker, *Karl Bröger und die Arbeiterdichtung seiner Zeit* (Nürnberg: [n.pub.], 1977); Siegfried Kett, Manfred Scholz und Harald Zintl, eds., *Karl Bröger – Arbeiterdichter, Journalist und Politiker. Dokumentation zum Symposium am 4. Oktober 2008 in Nürnberg*. (Nürnberg: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2009).

⁴⁷ Ursula von Gersdorff, *Frauen im Kriegsdienst, 1914-1945* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1969); Ute Daniel, *The War from Within: German Working-Class Women in the First World War* (Oxford: Berg, 1997); Werner Thönessen, *The Emancipation of Women: The Rise and Decline of the Women's Movement in German Social Democracy, 1863-1933* (London: Pluto Press, 1973).

⁴⁸ Feuchtwanger, *Imperial Germany*, p. 182.

⁴⁹ Fischer, *The German Communists and the Rise of Nazism*, pp. 1-2. See also Gerald D. Feldman, *Vom Weltkrieg zur Weltwirtschaftskrise. Studien zur deutschen Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte 1914-1932* (Göttingen: [n.p.], 1984), pp. 71-72 and J. Gerber, 'From Left Radicalism to Council Communism: Anton Pannekoek and German Revolutionary Marxism', *Journal of Contemporary History* 23-2 (1988), 172-179.

whom were unwilling to accept unquestionably the Social Democrats as the de facto leaders of the working class.⁵⁰

Although soldiers and Workers Councils (*Räte*) had quickly sprung up as Germany's Imperial regime faced defeat, any hopes that the left-wing radicals had that Germany would follow a revolutionary path in the manner of Soviet Russia were soon defeated by the moderation of the Social Democrats, whose members formed a majority on these councils.⁵¹ At a meeting of the Council's National Congress on 16 December 1918, held to debate Germany's political future, Social Democratic proposals to convene a National Assembly to frame a constitution based on the idea of a democratic parliamentary republic were accepted by the Councils without significant discussion. This decision, which radical workers believed to be symptomatic of the Social Democrats' lack of revolutionary potential, and allied to their disenchantment with the USPD, directly led to the formation of the *Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands* (Communist Party of Germany or KPD), on the last day of 1918.

As early as 1919, many industrial workers had become disillusioned with mainstream Social Democracy and support grew for both the USPD and the KPD. At the heart of this disillusionment was the willingness of the Social Democrats to co-operate with the army, due to their fear of a Soviet style revolution. These feelings were compounded by the Social Democrat tactic of employing the right-wing *Freikorps* militia against left-wing insurgents, their perceived neglect and sidelining of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils and their failure to effect a socialisation of heavy industry. The altered physical composition of the industrial workforce, coupled with changed political expectations meant that the Social Democrats could no longer justifiably claim that they alone represented the political aspirations of all industrial workers.

This fracturing of the working-class into two implacably opposed camps was mirrored in their respective political songs that expressed two very diverse political identities. Whilst post-war Social Democratic song, now free from Imperial and wartime censorship, settled down to enjoy legality and government patronage for the first time, the output from their Communist opponents took an altogether more radical turn. This process was fuelled by the outrage felt by Communists because

⁵⁰ Fischer, *The German Communists and the Rise of Nazis*, pp. 1-2.

⁵¹ Reinhard Rürup, 'Probleme der Revolution in Deutschland, 1918-1919', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 3-4 (1968), 109-135; Wolfgang J. Mommsen, 'The German Revolution, 1918-1920: Political Revolution and Social Protest Movement' in *Social Change and Political Development in Weimar Germany*, ed. by Richard Bessel and E.J. Feuchtwanger (London: Croom Helm, 1981), pp. 21-54.

the Social Democrats had used the army and in particular the irregular nationalist *Freikorps* militia to maintain civil order in the early years of the new republic. This action resulted in the wartime schism in the German labour movement being ‘reinforced in blood’ as Communists and security forces under SPD command fought a series of violent battles in many parts of Germany.⁵²

This schism influenced the development of two distinct types of Communist song: the first group, termed by Lammel as ‘revolutionary folksongs’, were created spontaneously, and usually anonymously to relate, in minute detail, the real-life events of strikes and street battles with the security forces. The second group was composed of songs written specifically to support the agitational role of the newly formed Communist cultural and self-defence organizations that sprang up in the early post-war years.⁵³ The influence of the recent Bolshevik Revolution in Russia also manifested itself in a large number of songs being added to the repertoire of the nascent KPD inspired wholly, or in part, by the revolutionary experiences of the Russian workers, and Communist songbooks from 1920 onwards reflected these new influences. Finally, the international workers movement provided revolutionary songs for the German Communist movement drawn from lands as diverse as Sweden, Norway, Italy, Britain and France.⁵⁴

The revolutionary workers’ folksongs recounted the events of strikes and street- battles, praised the courage of fallen workers, lionized Communist heroes and demonized their SPD and *Freikorps* opponents. They were mostly anonymous songs that reflected the constantly changing political situation in Weimar Germany.⁵⁵ Examples include *Das Leuna Lied* (‘The Leuna Song’), which tells of the workers’ defence of the giant Leuna chemical works in the so-called 1921 ‘March Action’.⁵⁶ The *Büxensteinlied* (‘Büxenstein Song’) meanwhile, tells of the workers defence of the large Büxenstein print-works in the newspaper quarter of Berlin in January 1919 against what it terms the *Noskehunden*, (‘Noske’s dogs’), the troops and militia employed by the reviled SPD defence minister Gustav Noske, who was the target of such savage Communist lyrics throughout the Weimar period:⁵⁷ As well as recounting tales of strikes and bloody street battles,

⁵² Chickering, *Imperial Germany and the Great War*, pp. 140-146.

⁵³ Lammel, *Das Arbeiterlied*, pp. 54-55.

⁵⁴ Lammel, *Kampfgefährte: Unser Lied*, p. 59.

⁵⁵ Lammel, *Kampfgefährte: Unser Lied*, p. 61.

⁵⁶ Inge Lammel, ed., *Lieder der Partei, Das Lied im Kampf Geboren*, Heft 10, Deutsche Akademie der Künste (Leipzig: VEB Friedrich Hofmeister, 1971), pp. 17-18. See the discussion of this event above in Chapter 2, pp. 75-77.

⁵⁷ Lammel, *Das Arbeiterlied*, pp. 142-143.

songs also lionized fallen comrades: ‘*Auf, auf zum Kampf*’ (‘Up, up to the struggle!’) was a particular favourite among many Communists as it expressed their outrage over the brutal murders of the Spartacist leaders Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht in January 1919:⁵⁸

4.2.2 **Auf, auf zum Kampf**

Den Karl Liebknecht haben wir verloren, Die Rosa Luxemburg fiel durch Mörderhand. ⁵⁹	<i>We have lost Karl Liebknecht,</i> <i>Rosa Luxemburg fell by a murderer's</i> <i>hand</i>
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The melody for ‘*Auf, auf zum Kampf*’ was taken from a soldiers’ song. This was significant, as the wartime service of many workers had exposed them to the whole canon of popular soldiers songs. Thus it was perhaps inevitable that this enforced familiarity with soldiers’ songs ensured that their melodies would be used for the new songs being created to get the new Communist messages to the widest possible audience. The use of military melodies, and increased references to ‘battle’ and other wartime metaphors would be a feature of those songs produced under the auspices of the Communist Party and its associated organizations.

The recent Bolshevik Revolution proved to be a rich source of Communist songs, and reflected the KPD’s increasing identification with Marxism and the Communist International.⁶⁰ Also, songs that had become popular during the First World War were swiftly adapted to suit Communist political ideas. This song, *Ach, kleiner Tambour, schlag doch ein*, (‘My little drummer, now beat the drum’) was one of the most popular of those wartime songs adopted for political purposes. In its original wartime form the lyrics were as follows:

4.2.3 **Ach, kleiner Tambour** (Wartime version)

Verse 1

Ach, kleiner Tambour, schlag doch ein, Denn heute gilt es zu marschieren. Nach Frankreich müssen wir hinein, Der Feind soll uns’re Waffen spüren. Am Waldesrand die Rosen blühn, Wo Muskatier zu Felde ziehn.	<i>My little drummer, now beat the drum,</i> <i>Today we must start marching.</i> <i>On to France we must go;</i> <i>Let the enemy feel our arms.</i> <i>On the forest's edge the roses bloom,</i> <i>Where musketeers move on to the field.</i>
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[....]

⁵⁸ Berger, *Social Democracy and the Working Class*, p. 97.

⁵⁹ Lammel, *Das Arbeiterlied*, pp. 140-41.

⁶⁰ Lammel, *Das Arbeiterlied*, pp. 180-181.

Verse 4

Und sollten wir nicht siegreich sein,
So lebt denn wohl, ihr stolzen Eichen;
Vom Schlachtfeld kehr'n wir nimmer
heim,
In Frankreich sollen uns're Knochen
bleichen.
Auf fremder Erde schlafen wir
Als tapfre Königsgrenadier.⁶¹

*And should we not be victorious,
Then, farewell, proud oaks, to you:
We will not return from battle;*

Let our bones decay in France.

*We will sleep in foreign soil –
Heroic royal grenadiers.*

The Communists swiftly adopted this text to suit their own political message in the immediate post-war period:

4.2.4 Ach, kleiner Tambour (Communist version)

Verse 1

Auf, junger roter Tambour, schlage ein,
schlage ein,
Nach München, da wollen wir
marschieren.
Nach München wollen wir hinein, ja
hinein,
Die Orgesch soll uns're Waffen spüren.
Am Wege rot die Röslein blühn,
Wenn Rotgardisten nach München
ziehn.

*Up, red drummer, beat the drum, beat
the drum,
For we must march to Munich.*

Into Munich we must now move;

Let Orgesch feel our arms.
On the way, little red roses bloom,
As Red Guards move to Munich.*

* Organisation Escherich

[....]

Verse 4

Und sollten wir nicht siegreich sein,
siegreich sein,
Von dem Schlachtfeld, da wollen wir
nicht weichen!
Und kehren wir als Sieger heim, Sieger
heim,
Dann laßt, Brüder, uns die Hände
reichen.
Und schießt uns so ein Bluthund tot,
Wir sterben für die Fahne rot.⁶²

*And should we not be victorious,
We'll not leave the battlefield.*

*But if we come home as victors,
Then my brothers, shake our hands.*

*And if the bloodhound shoots us dead,
We shall die for the flag that's red.*

The two versions offer us some interesting comparisons: in the Communist version of *Ach, kleiner Tambour* the drummer is clearly identified as a Communist by being given the appellation 'red'. Whereas in the wartime song the soldiers are marching to France, the traditional German foe of the Wilhelmine regime, in the

⁶¹ Vernon L. Lidtke, 'Songs and Nazis: Political Music and Social Change in Twentieth-Century Germany', in *Essays on Culture and Society in Modern Germany*, ed. by Gary Stark (Arlington: Texas A&M University Press, 1982), pp. 167-200 (pp. 177-79).

⁶² Elfriede Berger and Inge Lammel, ed., *Lieder des Roten Frontkämpferbundes, Das Lied im Kampf Geboren*, Heft 8, Deutsche Akademie der Künste (Leipzig: VEB Friedrich Hofmeister, 1961), pp. 111-112; Wolfgang Steinitz, *Deutsche Volkslieder demokratischen Charakters aus sechs Jahrhunderten*, Vol. 2 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1962), pp. 495-96.

Communist version the fighters are en-route to Munich, to confront the nationalist 'Orgesch' militia. Organisation Escherich, more popularly known as 'Orgesch', was a Bavarian nationalist paramilitary group active in 1920-1921 under the leadership of Georg Escherich. This interchangeability of places and subjects underlined the ability of song to communicate a multiplicity of messages to both a geographically diverse and politically disparate audience. The blooming red roses could also relate to the Communists' attempts to use their march to attract new members to their cause along the way.

The final verse of the wartime version speaks in sombre, almost resigned tones of 'the heroic royal grenadiers', and how they were likely to die on a foreign field of battle in the service of the Kaiser. The Communist version expresses similar sentiments initially, but such negative thoughts are quickly set aside and amid invocations to their comrades to welcome them home as victors. This could suggest that Communists truly believed in the inherent superiority of their cause fighting for a Communist ideal, rather than being servile to the Kaiser and his elites. The final two lines refer to the 'bloodhounds' of SPD defence minister Gustav Noske's security services, which numbered the hated nationalist *Freikorps* militia amongst their ranks. Hatred of the Social Democrats, and of its leading personalities such as Noske, was a familiar feature throughout the entire life of the Weimar Republic.

4.3: Youth and Protest Song

Both Social Democrats and Communists actively used political song to attract young people to working-class politics. Each party made strenuous efforts to appeal to the next generation of industrial workers as potential recruits, in order to indoctrinate them with their particular political vision of the nascent Republic. To the Social Democrats, this meant pressing ahead with social and political reforms under the auspices of the fledgling democratic parliamentary system: for their Communist opponents, this meant imbuing young people with the spirit of class-based revolution. Reflecting the split in the labour movement as a whole, very soon after the armistice, working-class youth organisations split into two clearly defined wings, one supporting the Social Democrats, the other the Communists. As a consequence, the divergence in revolutionary emphasis that we noted with regard to songs intended for adults was replicated in the extensive song literature written to serve each party's youth organisations.

The Social Democratic youth movement, known as the *Sozialistische Arbeiter- Jugend* (Socialist Working Youth or SAJ), influenced the production of a long-running series of songbooks in the 1920-30s.⁶³ Communist critics point to the content of these songbooks as providing ample evidence that Social Democrat-sponsored working-class song lacked significant revolutionary fervour. In the '*Jugend Liederbuch*' (Youth Songbook) of 1911 only 27 out of its 169 songs contained any noticeable political message, the remainder being a mixture of love songs, folk tunes, comic songs and '*Wanderlieder*', the latter reflecting the love of hiking and walking common to a large section of pre-war youth.⁶⁴

Communist critics argued, with some justification, that these Social Democratic youth songs were full of symbolism and poetic allegories, and that rather than espousing a clear political goal, such as the Communist belief in proletarian revolution, they spoke of some distant ill-defined political aim that was often couched in the most nebulous terms.⁶⁵ One of the most popular of these songs, '*Der Freiheit Morgenrot*', ('The red dawn of freedom') first came to prominence in the 1890s:

4.3.1 Der Freiheit Morgenrot

Im Osten glüht der junge Tag
Und Morgenlüfte wehen.
Wie Lerchensang und Wachtelschlag
Klingt's über Tal und Höhen.
Da ziehn wir aus mit frohem Schall,
Das golden Licht zu grüßen,
Und fernhin schwingt der Widerhall
Sich über Tal und Wiesen:

Chorus

Schlaft nur, ihr Mächtigen der Welt,
Laßt uns der Zukunft sorgen!
Die junge Garde zieht ins Feld
Und ihr gehört der Morgen!⁶⁶

*The young day glows in the east,
And the morning air blows.
How larksong and quail call
It sounds over valleys and heights.
There we head off with happy sound,
To greet the golden light,
And the echo sounds far out
Over valleys and meadows.*

*Sleep just, you powerful of the world,
Let us worry about the future!
The young guard takes to the field,
And the morning belongs to them.*

The lyrics of *Der Freiheit Morgenrot* are unashamedly pastoral in their form and content, and like many contemporary Social Democratic songs it uses metaphors

⁶³ AdK, A8 series, produced under variations of the title '*Jugend Liederbuch*' from 1911-1929 by the *Arbeitende Jugend Vereine Deutschlands*.

⁶⁴ AdK, A8g, *Zentralstelle für die Arbeitende Jugend Deutschlands*, ed., '*Jugend Liederbuch*', (Berlin: Buchhandlung Vorwärts Paul Singer, 1911).

⁶⁵ Inge Lammel, ed., *Lieder dr Arbeiter-Jugends, Das Lied im Kampf Geboren*, Heft 5, Deutsche Akademie der Künste (Leipzig: VEB Friedrich Hofmeister, 1960), p. 4: Dieter Dowe, 'The Workingmen's Choral Movement in Germany before the First World War', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 13 (1978), 269-296 (p. 284): Lammel, *Das Arbeiterlied*, p. 58.

⁶⁶ Lammel, *Lieder der Arbeiter-Jugend*, pp. 12-13.

drawn from nature to symbolise political change. As evident from its title, the ‘red dawn’ is equated directly with the coming of freedom, which for Social Democrats was to be achieved with the establishment of a democratic parliamentary republic. The dawning of a new ‘young day’ suggests that the future is effectively a new start, with no hangovers from the old, discredited regime. This hoped for new era of freedom is symbolised by ‘a golden light’, in contrast to the darkness of the repressive Wilhelmine regime. The chorus states that youth would be at the forefront of the struggle to achieve this new era of freedom, and that they are to be solely responsible for any concerns that may arise as a consequence.

Der Freiheit Morgenrot would become a key song in the SAJ’s youth repertoire, particularly after 1918, and it is symbolic of the wider trend that saw many pre-war songs retained in the Social Democratic canon of political protest songs after hostilities had ended. For example, in the first post-war edition of the *Jugend Liederbuch*, published in 1919, 26 out of 30 songs that contained a political message in the first section entitled *Freiheit- und Kampflieder* (‘freedom and struggle songs’) were taken directly from the 1911 edition. However, the editors’ foreword to this new edition reveals some of the thinking behind this choice of songs:

The *Kampflieder* have been set free by way of the Revolution (the *Internationale, Bet’ und Arbeit*), and a few new ones have been added. We hope that this new youth songbook will help our struggle and intensify our zest for life.⁶⁷

This passage reveals that the Social Democrats not only believed that the events of 1918 had seen them largely achieve their political aims, but that the elevation of the SPD to power and the concomitant ending of repressive anti-working class censorship had actually breathed new life into their existing canon of *Kampflieder*. *Bet’ und Arbeit* had regularly appeared in Social Democratic songbooks up until 1909, until the increasing levels of police repression that presaged the First World War forced its removal.⁶⁸ It was not restored in published collections until 1918, although like all banned songs it continued to be sung covertly. This demonstrates the belief that although there were still economic and political reforms to strive for in the future, the Social Democrats saw no need for a whole new raft of critical

⁶⁷ AdK, A81, Verbände der Arbeiter-jugend Vereine Deutschlands, ed., ‘*Jugend Liederbuch*’, (Berlin: Buchhandlung Vorwärts Paul Singer, 1919), p. 2.

⁶⁸ AdK, A3h, Arbeiter Sängerbund, ed., ‘*Liederbuch*’, Vierte Auflage (Berlin: Paul Kupfer, 1909).

political songs, and instead they revelled in their new found freedom to sing their existing standards unhindered.

In contrast to the pastoral symbolism and natural metaphors contained in the lyrics of Social Democratic songs, Communist lyrics breathed fire and revolution and were often sharply critical of the SPD and its right-wing allies. Communist songs espoused a clear political goal, that of proletarian revolution, and that aim was expressed in clear direct language. One such song, *Wir sind die erste Reihe* ('We are the first row') first appeared in Communist songbooks in 1922 during the periods of attempted putsches and uprisings:

4.3.2 *Wir sind die erste Reihe*

Wir sind die erste Reihe, Wir gehen drauf und dran! Wir sind die Junge Garde, Wir greifen, greifen an. Im Arbeitsschweiß die Stirne, Der Magen hungerleer, ja leer, Die Hand voll Ruß und Schwielen Umspannet das Gewehr	<i>We are the first row , We go on and at it, We are the young guard, We attack, attack, The sweat of work on our forehead Hungry stomach empty, yes empty Hands full of soot and callouses Clasped round the rifle.</i>
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The sentiment that young people would be at the forefront of any political revolution expressed in this song is similar to that of the Social Democratic song *Der Freiheit Morgenrot* discussed above. However the tone of *Wir sind die erste Reihe* with its Communist sentiments differ markedly from the pastoral language of its Social Democratic counterparts. The first verse also lacks any hint of pretension; the efforts to achieve political freedom would require 'sweat' and 'hands full of soot and callouses', whilst the necessity for armed struggle is symbolised by the presence of the rifle.

Es lebe Sowjetrußland, Hört, wir marschieren schon. Wir stürmen in dem Zeichen Der Völkerrevolution. Sprung auf die Barrikaden, Heraus zum Bürgerkrieg, ja Krieg, Pflanzt auf die Sowjetfahnen Zum blutig-roten Sieg! ⁶⁹	<i>Long live Soviet Russia, Hear, we are already marching. We storm at the signal Of the peoples' revolution Jump on the barricades, out to the civil war, yes war, Plant the Soviet flags, To bloody red victory!</i>
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This second verse is also typical of many Communist songs that espoused a deep affection for the Soviet Union and its revolutionary government. As well as direct exhortations of praise for the Soviets, there are echoes of the 1917 Revolution in

⁶⁹ Lammel, *Das Arbeiterlied*, pp. 59-61.

this song, evident by references to the erection of barricades and notions of a civil war. Such sentiments were anathema to the Social Democrats, who consistently expressed a deeply ingrained fear of the spread of Bolshevism and a proletarian revolution.

Communist songbooks dedicated to ‘revolutionary working youth’ appeared under the auspices of the Communist Party’s youth organization, the *Kommunistische Jugendverband Deutschlands* (German Communist Youth Association) or KJVD. This movement was tasked with providing working-class youth with a socialist education that would make them aware of the need for class struggle, both in the schools and out on the streets. Their repertoire included many songs sung by their adult comrades, as well as especially composed *Kampflieder* that spoke of the difficult political situation that gripped the lives of their parents, as well as expressing their own hopes and fears. Communist influence permeated down to younger children through the formation of groups such as the *Jung-Spartakus Bund* (Young Spartacus League) and the *Roten Jung-Pioniere* (Young Red Pioneers), both of which developed extensive song repertoires to accompany their activities. In addition to formal songbooks, extensive use was made of the *Spottlied*, which, as with the adult Communist working-class movement, was especially useful to highlight specific events (e.g. strikes or armed clashes between workers and the security forces) in order to expose what Communists saw as the brutality and political duplicity of both national and regional government.⁷⁰

Examining songbooks drawn from youth groups that switched their allegiance from Social Democratic to Communist patronage shortly after the war clearly illustrates the divergence in political emphasis that the split in the working class engendered. The *Freien Sozialistischen Jugend* (Free Socialist Youth or FSJ) was formed in October 1918 from the many disparate post-war youth groups that had Communist sympathies. The content of their first songbook, published in 1919, closely mirrored those published on behalf of the Social Democratic Party, and as such, it featured a mixture of well-known international workers’ hymns such as the *Internationale*, the *Arbeiter Marseillaise* and *Die Arbeitsmänner*, allied to a selection of songs which featured the use of natural metaphors.⁷¹ It featured only one contemporary song, *Schon dämmert in der Ferne* (‘Dawn is a long-time away’), popularly known as the *Dänischer Sozialistenmarsch*, (‘Danish Socialist

⁷⁰ Lammel, ed., *Lieder der Arbeiter-Jugend*, p. 4.

⁷¹ AdK, A17a, Freien Sozialistischen Jugend Deutschlands, ed., ‘*Kampflieder*’, (Berlin: Verlag Junge Garde, 1919).

March'), which formed part of the general influx of revolutionary songs of foreign origin noted above.

Following the founding of the Communist Party, the FSJ began to develop into a Marxist-Leninist influenced organization. In 1920 the FSJ formally changed its identity to the *Kommunistische Jugendverband Deutschlands* (Communist Youth Association of Germany), and the next edition of the songbook reflected many of the differences inspired by the influence of Communism.⁷² Four songs were replaced in the 1920 edition by new tunes that reflected the strong influence of the Russian Revolution. These replaced the songs that had relied heavily on natural metaphors rather than overt political language, and all of the new songs featured lyrics that expressed their revolutionary aims in direct language, with no recourse to metaphors or allegory.⁷³

4.4: 1923 and the End of the Revolution

Since the end of the First World War, Germany had been plagued by assassinations, political uprisings and putsches, all of which took place against a permanent backdrop of street violence.⁷⁴ These activities were to reach their post-war zenith during 1923. The French military occupation of the Ruhr, begun in January 1923, was met with a campaign of passive resistance from the region's industrial workers, centred on widespread strikes. The economic chaos that this engendered fuelled the hyperinflation and increased unemployment, threatening Germany with disastrous economic collapse.⁷⁵ In an attempt to ameliorate this crisis, the new coalition formed under the leadership of Gustav Stresemann, chairman of the *Deutsche Volkspartei* (German People's Party or DVP) in August, called off the strikes the following month and proclaimed a state of emergency. This positive action was reinforced by the introduction of a new currency, the *Rentenmark* in November, which progressively underpinned and stabilized the German economy and began to tackle the manifold social and economic problems caused by hyperinflation.

⁷² AdK, A17c, Kommunistischen Jugend Deutschlands, ed., '*Kampflieder*', (Berlin: Verlag Junge Garde, 1921). This was a book in the same series as: AdK, A17a, Freien Sozialistischen Jugend Deutschlands, ed., '*Kampflieder*', (Berlin: Verlag Junge Garde, 1919), but now displaying Communist influences.

⁷³ Lammel, ed., *Lieder der Arbeiter-Jugend*, p. 4.

⁷⁴ Mommsen, *Die Verspielte Freiheit*, pp. 13-31; Mommsen, *Der erste Weltkrieg und die europäische Nachkriegsordnung*, pp. 107-24; Balderston, *Economics and Politics in the Weimar Republic*, pp. 34-60; Berger, *Social Democracy and the Working Class*, pp. 96-99.

⁷⁵ Balderston, *Economics and Politics in the Weimar Republic*, pp. 34-60; Feldman, *The Great Disorder*.

Despite these measures, Germany was still plagued by repeated uprisings and insurrections, culminating in Hitler's abortive Beer Hall Putsch in Munich in November 1923. Although defeated on this occasion, the nascent Nazi party would later rise to become the recipient of a large measure of working-class hatred and derision during long periods of the Weimar Republic, sentiments that were often most trenchantly expressed in the form of anti-fascist protest song.⁷⁶ In the meantime Communist supporters continued to direct their fire at their Social Democratic opponents, not only in terms of their supposedly passive lyrics but in the timid way they used song in their daily lives. One of these critics, Larissa Reissner, a Russian communist whose father was of German origin, relates this account of a Social Democratic meeting held in Hamburg on 9 November 1923 to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the founding of the Weimar Republic:

Then a choir of at least 50-60 people sings sentimental songs for an hour and a half: on the stage is a fine company of workers, divided into two lines by the flapping coat-tails of a socialist sexton, peering through their glasses at the nice clean sheets of music, and with zeal and fervour sing exultations of pastoral bliss and pure love.

'O swallow!', a fit-looking broad shouldered building worker leads off, his solid adam's apple sticking painfully out over the sweaty stand-up collar. His voice sounds as if his boots are too tight.

'O, those flowers of May!', a platoon of joiners and stevedores respond tenderly from the left-hand choir. Their tight jackets rustle over their magnificent bulging muscles. Not a stammer or a wrong note. Clearly the men have been practising ensemble performances for at least two months, despite hunger, unemployment, the howling of unfed children and the fascists' preparations for war. No nothing can divert the SPD from peaceful and educational exercises.

The crowd disperses in a weakened, irritated and helpless mood. Its healthy anger and enormous discontent, the arsenal of revolution, have been flushed down the sewer of debilitating and depraved pseudo-art. Cunning those SPD-ers! Towards the end the very same choir that had heroically managed top 'C' performs, among other lyrical songs, the Internationale. This is to foster the impression in the proletariat that this song is not indissolubly linked to revolutionary action, and that its drums do not have to sound out only amid blood and powder smoke.

No, that dangerous battle cry must be tamed in advance, and cooped up in the general hen run of songs, so that on the day of war, before the assault, it will not stir the proletarians ear nor unfurl over his head like a fresh banner flapping in the wind.⁷⁷

As this account demonstrates, Communists often accused the Social Democrats of failing to grasp the latent potential of political song to energize the working class:

⁷⁶ Inge Lammel, ed., *Lieder gegen Faschismus und Krieg. Das Lied im Kampf Geboren*, Heft 4, Deutsche Akademie der Künste (Leipzig: VEB Friedrich Hofmeister, 1958)

⁷⁷ Larissa Reissner, *Hamburg at the Barricades and other writings on Weimar Germany*, ed. and trans. by Richard Chappell (London: Pluto Press, 1977), pp. 37-38.

worse than that, Communists believed that the Social Democrats' preoccupation with artistic excellence masked calls to revolutionary action, thereby robbing song of any effective social and political utility. Written at the height of the insurrectionary period of late-1923, Reissner's biting tone should be viewed in light of the recent failure of the 'Hamburg Rising', where lightly armed Communists fought a series of street battles against the army and police over three days, only to be heavily defeated with a significant loss of life. Additionally Reissner's reference to the 'fascists' preparations for war' relate to the abortive putsch staged by Hitler and his supporters in Munich just the previous day. The failure of this putsch, the imprisonment of leading Nazis, and a temporary ban on the KPD would all serve to ameliorate the revolutionary tensions of the immediate post-war years, paving the way for a period of relative political and economic stability, albeit a situation that rested on fragile foundations.⁷⁸

Conclusion

The First World War had a profound influence on the future development of working-class political song. Anti-war sentiments and a belief in the concept of an international brotherhood of workers were largely defeated by an up swell of working-class patriotism, although this was not to last for the duration. Indeed, during the conflict, and although it was heavily suppressed by stringent military censorship, song was used to express working-class dissent, both with the war itself and the economic and social hardships it engendered. This repressive atmosphere hindered the production of formalized political protest songs, although an abundance of *Spottlieder* emerged to express working-class soldiers' discontent.

The end of the war saw Germany descend into revolutionary chaos, as the new Social Democratic government fought off a succession of challenges to its authority from both the political left and right. The Social Democrats' policy of political accommodation with the pre-existing bureaucratic and military elites, and their willingness to work with the leadership of German industry in order to maintain industrial peace in the face of revolutionary pressures did not endear them to the more radical members of the working class. The Social Democrats believed that the fall of the monarchy and the establishment of a democratic republic had seen them achieve their most important political objective, one that would allow them to use their newly acquired political power to achieve even more graduated

⁷⁸ Eve Rosenhaft, *Beating the Fascists?: The German Communists and Political Violence, 1929-1933* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983)

reform for the working class. By contrast, Communists believed in the need for an outright socialist revolution, and hated the Social Democrats for their belief in parliamentary democracy.

This divergence of political opinion would have a profound effect on the production of working-class political song, leading to the emergence of two distinct canons that each supported their own particular political viewpoint. The Social Democrats, believing that their political demands for reform were being met following the events since November 1918, relied on a canon of songs that were largely unchanged from pre-war days, although they did appreciate that the new political atmosphere allowed them to sing them without a fear of repression. In contrast to their opponents for the working class political vote, the Communists introduced a whole new canon of political protest songs. These eschewed the natural metaphors and nebulous allegories that characterized Social Democratic songs in favour of hard-hitting lyrics that clearly and unequivocally advocated proletarian revolution.

Communist songs drew on a variety of influences to convey their particularly radical message: songs from revolutionary movements from other lands, most notably the Soviet Union, joined with home-grown songs that told of the real-life political events of the day, whilst the newly formed self-defence organizations spawned a diverse range of new compositions that directly supported their agitational role on the streets. The role of working-class youth in the political process was also a key stimulant to the creation of new songs. Whilst Social Democratic youth groups largely continued to use existing pre-war youth songs, the Communists believed that as young people would be at the forefront of the desired proletarian revolution, new songs should be written to underline that pivotal role, whose lyrics were suitably direct in their espousal of the need to fight and die in the defence of that goal if necessary. This comprehensive difference in emphasis would also be mirrored in how each side envisaged song should be used: the Social Democrats believed that song should be a medium to celebrate their political achievements whilst the Communists viewed song as a frontline weapon in an as yet unresolved political and ideological struggle for a proletarian dictatorship.

Chapter 6

Working-Class Protest Song in the Weimar Republic, 1924-1933

This chapter will conclude the discussion of the development of political working-class song in the Weimar Republic. Taking 1924 as its starting point, when Germany entered a period of relative social and economic stability, and ending with the Nazi seizure of power early in 1933, it seeks to establish in what ways working-class song was used to illuminate the key political events of this period. Particular emphasis is placed upon how the continuing split in the labour movement was a factor in the way song developed, and how significant this was during a time of violent social, economic and political upheaval. Additionally this chapter will discuss the influence of political violence, which was endemic to the life of the Weimar Republic, demonstrating how it remained a central theme of working-class protest songs throughout this period.

New songs that appeared in the final years of the Weimar Republic inevitably reflected the tumultuous political events that formed the backdrop to their creation. This chapter will demonstrate which of these events were pivotal in influencing the production of working-class political protest songs, and how changes to the nature of political organisations, such as the formation of *Wehrverbände* (Combat Leagues) and the rise of the *Agitprop Truppen* (Agitprop troupes) brought protest song squarely onto the streets. Additionally, by comparing the radical songs produced by both Social Democrats and Communists alike, this chapter will also discuss the enmity that existed between these two main workers' parties, in order to ascertain just how crucial this discord was in their combined failure to arrest the advance of fascism.

This chapter will conclude with an overview of the songs produced by working-class sports associations, women's groups and youth organizations, with a particular emphasis on their roles in assisting the wider class struggle. Such groups would become more and more crucial as sources of political activism as the radical combat leagues and Agitprop troupes found that they were being subjected to increased levels of repression by ever more authoritarian governments.

6.1: 1924: The Changing Nature of Political Violence

As the preceding chapter argued, the tumultuous post-war years had stirred up numerous resentments and fostered a sense of alienation within the working class milieu which would ultimately prove fatal to the survival of democracy. These resentments and political differences manifested themselves in a polarization of the political stance adopted by the Social Democrats and the Communists, a divergence that would be mirrored in the subsequent output of protest song.

Following the revolutionary upheaval of the immediate post-war years, during 1924 the Weimar Republic entered a period of comparative economic stabilisation. The Dawes Plan, agreed in April 1924, provided an interim settlement of the divisive question of reparations. Under its provisions, Germany was committed to paying one billion marks in 1924, and then increasingly large sums for the next three years, until the total was to rise to two and a quarter billion by 1927. At the same time a substantial international loan, secured against state property, provided the German economy with an essential boost. With the question of reparations largely settled, the justification for the continued French occupation of the Ruhr was over, although the last French troops would not finally evacuate Düsseldorf and Duisburg until August 1925.¹

By 1924 the division in the political representation of the working class was firmly established.² The SPD had seen its membership reach an all-time high figure of 1,261,072 the previous year, not least due to the absorption of the majority of the breakaway USPD membership in September 1922.³ Its Communist opponent was now firmly established as a credible political rival. In the May 1924 *Reichstag* elections the KPD attracted 12.6% of the vote, giving them 62 seats, although this would fall to 9% and leave them with just 45 seats six months later. In political terms the results of the December 1924 *Reichstag* elections saw a reduction in the previous gains made by the extremist parties of both left and right: in addition to the losses suffered by the Communists, the National Socialist Freedom Movement, a nationalist bloc which included the fledgling Nazi party, saw its representation

¹ Theo Balderston, *Economics and Politics in the Weimar Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 61-76 and Appendix B, pp. 198-199; Gerald D. Feldman, *The Great Disorder: Politics, Economics and Society in the German Inflation, 1914-1924* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

² Susanne Miller and Heinrich Pothoff, *A History of German Social Democracy: From 1848 to the Present* (Leamington Spa: Berg Publishers, 1986), p. 93.

³ Stefan Berger, *Social Democracy and the Working Class in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Germany* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2000), p. 100.

slump from 32 to 14 seats.⁴ However, this did not mean that Germany was now successfully able to achieve a broad based long-term coalition: compromise and political fragmentation remained the order of the day, and between May 1924 and June 1928 Weimar Germany was to have five different cabinets, none of which contained the main architects of the republic, the Social Democrats.⁵

The process of economic stabilization was accompanied by a change in the nature of the political violence that had dogged the Weimar Republic since its inception. The ban on the KPD, imposed in November 1923, had been lifted after three months, although the *Proletarian Hundertschaften* remained outlawed. During this period of prohibition the overt revolutionary impetus within Weimar Germany seemed to fade somewhat, and the culture of political violence adopted a different character.⁶ Rosenhaft argues that 'after 1924 there did not emerge again a threat to the stable government of the Republic so direct and so organized as to demand military intervention'.⁷ After this time, political violence became a series of street clashes between members of opposing political parties, as distinct from those dating from the early years of the Weimar Republic, that had involved direct confrontation with the state security forces. Rosenhaft named this reorientation of street agitation as '*Zusammenstoss*' ('clash violence'), noting that it took the form of spontaneous street brawls in addition to more organized attempts to disrupt opponents' political meetings.⁸

Schumann reinforces this point, arguing that in the period before the prohibition of the KPD, political violence in the Weimar Republic had centred around assassinations, such as those of Erzberger and Rathenau in 1921 and 1922, uprisings such as that in the Ruhr in 1920 and attempted coups, such as that of Hitler's nascent Nazi Party in Munich in November 1923.⁹ After this point Schumann believes that most violence fell into the category he calls 'unrest', which

⁴ Jürgen W. Falter, Siegfried Schumann and Thomas Lindberger, *Wahlen und Abstimmungen in der Weimarer Republik* (Munich: [n.pub.], 1986), p. 66.

⁵ Ruth Henig, *The Weimar Republic, 1919-1933* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 39-42; Hans Mommsen, *The Rise and Fall of Weimar Democracy*, trans. by Elborg Forster and Larry Eugene Jones (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1996); Eric D. Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007).

⁶ Dirk Schumann, *Political Violence in the Weimar Republic, 1918-1933: Fight for the Streets and Fear of Civil War* (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2009), p. 192.

⁷ Eve Rosenhaft, *Beating the Fascists?: The German Communists and Political Violence, 1929-1933* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 2.

⁸ Rosenhaft, *Beating the Fascists*, p. 3.

⁹ Georg Franz-Willing, *Putsch und Verbotszeit der Hitlerbewegung : November 1923-Februar 1925* (Oldendorf: K.W. Schutz, 1977).

he characterizes as being clashes with the police at demonstrations, brawls with opponents at political meetings and assaults in the streets, the latter particularly being conducted in the defence of working-class residential areas.¹⁰

During this time Communist workers (and their Nazi opponents) were not reticent in using protest song to proclaim their group identity in street demonstrations, and to disrupt their opponents' political meetings. Marches and demonstrations were usually accompanied by massed singing, whilst brawls often started during political meetings when both Communist and Nazi activists climbed onto the tables and sang a few lines from a popular political song. Thereafter the political discourse inevitably descended into one of fists, boots, chairs and beer mugs.¹¹ In all such applications of 'street politics' Schumann notes how violence 'was accompanied by commentaries that reveal just how deeply an unspoken consensus about the legitimacy of violence had already penetrated into the political culture'.¹² This 'unspoken consensus' continued after 1924, as evident in the lyrics of most Communist protest songs produced throughout the life of the Weimar Republic.

This change in the nature of political violence was a reaction to the post-war challenge posed by nationalist paramilitary associations, such as the *Stahlhelm*, *Bund der Frontsoldaten* to claim the streets as the venue for their political activities. The *Stahlhelm* served as a 'rallying point for war veterans in uniform, [and] sought to use the public space of the streets to present themselves as [the] champion of political and social order, [being] opposed to Weimar democracy'.¹³ Prior to the First World War this public space had largely been the preserve of the organized labour movement, most notably represented by the agitational activities of the SPD.¹⁴ To challenge these emerging nationalist paramilitaries Communist and Social Democrats alike felt it necessary to found their own *Wehrverbände*. As Ziemann argues, the formation of these groups 'cemented a pattern of conflict, one of whose normal elements included acts of violence'.¹⁵ This normalization of violence as a factor in everyday life would resonate in the lyrics of virtually all the

¹⁰ Schumann, *Political Violence*, pp. xviii-xix.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 257. For a Bavarian example see: Geoffrey Pridham, *Hitler's Rise to Power: The Nazi Movement in Bavaria, 1923-1933* (London: Hart-Davis, 1973), pp. 128-130.

¹² Schumann, *Political Violence*, p. 143.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 92-93.

¹⁴ Benjamin Ziemann, 'Germany after the First World War- A Violent Society: Results and Implications of Recent Research on Weimar Germany', *Journal of Modern European History*, 1·1 (2003), 80-94 (p. 89).

¹⁵ Ziemann, 'Germany after the First World War', p. 89. Schumann, *Political Violence*, pp. 228-244.

working class political protest songs produced by the Communist party and its associated organizations during the Weimar era.

The formation of the *Roter Frontkämpferbund* (RFB) by the German Communist Party in July 1924 was both a response to the death of a young Communist flag bearer, shot recently by the police in Halle, and to the establishment of the similar Social Democratic *Reichsbanner-Schwarz-Rot-Gold* (Reichsbanner Black-Red-Gold) organisation, itself formed in Magdeburg the previous February. The *Reichsbanner* saw as its main task the defence of the Weimar Republic against threats to its democratic constitution from National Socialists, monarchists and Communists alike. As far as the Communists were concerned, the *Roter Frontkämpferbund* should adopt an altogether more aggressive role, a belief that they enshrined in the wording of their membership oath:

We, the class-conscious proletariat swear to use all our strength in the struggle for freedom from all the workings of capitalist exploitation, oppression and persecution. Victory or death – a holy oath. We live and die for you, the red flag of the dictatorship of the proletariat.¹⁶

In addition to those adult members joining the RFB, sections were also created to encompass other sectors of the population: 16-21 year olds boys could join the *Roter Jungfront* (Red Youth Front) or RJ, whilst girls and young women could join the *Roter Frauen und Mädchen Bund* (Red Women and Girls League), the RFMB. The memory of the important role played by the seaman in Kiel during the revolutionary events of November 1918 provided the impetus for the formation of a naval section, the Rote Marine (Red Marine) in June 1925.¹⁷

The creation of the *Roter Frontkämpferbund*, had owed a great deal to the anger that had arisen following the death of a young Communist flag bearer, shot by the police whilst participating in a Communist counter-demonstration against the fascist 'Deutschen Tag' (German Day), a large rally of nationalist associations held at Böllberg bei Halle on 11th May 1924.¹⁸ This event quickly became the subject of a commemorative song, *Es zog ein Rotgardist hinaus* ('A Red Guard set forth'), which is an example of how the Communists used song to recount

¹⁶ Nikolaus Brauns, 'Der Roter Frontkämpferbund' <<http://www.raeterrepublik.de/RFB.htm>> [accessed 22 March 2010].

¹⁷ Inge Lammel, ed., *Lieder des Roten Frontkämpferbundes, Das Lied im Kampf Geboren*, Heft 8, Deutsche Akademie der Künste (Leipzig: VEB Friedrich Hofmeister, 1961)

¹⁸ Inge Lammel, *Das Arbeiterlied* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Röderberg, 1973), p. 235.

contemporary political events, as well as to inflame passions and to promote their own political ideas:

6.1.1 Es zog ein Rotgardist hinaus

Verse 1

Es zog ein Rotgardist hinaus,
Er ließ sein Mütterlein zu Haus.
Und als die Trennungsstunde kam,
Er traurig von ihr Abschied nahm.
Sie aber leise zu ihm spricht:
'Spartakusmann, tu deine Pflicht'

*A red guard set forth,
He left his mother at home.
And as the hour of leaving came,
He sadly took his departure,
She quietly spoke to him:
'Spartacusman, do your duty'.*

[....]

Verse 3

Bei Böllberg war die große Schlacht,
Die roten Fahnen wehen.
Davon erzählt kein dickes Buch,
Was sich am elften Mai zutrug,
Als eine kleine Heldenchar
Für Spartakus gefallen war.

*The great battle was at Bollberg,
The red flag waved.
No thick book tells
What took place on the 11th May,
As a small multitude of young heroes
Fell for Spartacus.*

Verse 4

Der Fahnenträger fiel voran,
Er war kaum achtzehn Jahr'.
'Grüßt mir mein liebes Mütterlein,
sie soll nicht weinen, nicht traurig sein;
denn ich, ich fiel in blut'ger Schlacht,
hab' Spartakus viel Her' gemacht'.¹⁹

*The flag bearer fell at the forefront,
He was barely eighteen years old,
'Greetings to my beloved mother,
she ought not to cry or be sad:
because I, I fell in a bloody battle
that has made many a Spartacus man.*

This song is notable for its representation of the prominent role Communists believed youth would play in the longed-for German revolution, namely that they would be at the forefront of the armed struggle. With its direct references to 'the bloody hot battle', this song recognises that, in the Communist worldview, a proletarian revolution would necessarily involve violence, and that, as a consequence of this, each worker must be prepared to fight and if necessary die. The fallen flag bearer asks not to be mourned, suggesting that falling in battle for such a worthy cause as the advancement of Communism was indeed something to be proud of: arguably the last line equates the brave sacrifice of the young drummer as a way of bringing him to full manhood. Moreover, the role of the mother emphasises the belief in the need for a mother's sacrifice, a willingness to support the Communist cause even though it meant that in doing so, and in encouraging his participation in revolutionary activities, her son was likely to be killed.

¹⁹ Lammel, *Das Arbeiterlied*, pp. 147-149. For the full text of this song see Appendix A.

Due to the circumstances surrounding its composition, this song became one of the most popular Communist songs of the Weimar period. The Communists chose to pin the blame for the tragic events at Halle not on the right-wing combat leagues or directly upon the police, but ‘on the heads of the Social Democrat protectors of the Republic’, notably Severing, the Prussian Minister of the Interior, and Hörsing, the *Oberpräsident* of Saxony.²⁰ In contrast to the Communist position, the Social Democrats abhorred the use of violence, arguing that ‘the counter-revolution could not be fought with rifles and blackjacks, but with a unified workers’ movement’.²¹ Such beliefs were mirrored in the continuing passivity of the lyrics of Social Democratic political protest songs, in stark contrast to the combative and direct language of their Communist opponents.

A later version of *Es zog ein Rotgardist hinaus* commemorated those Communists killed in pitched battles with police in Berlin early in May 1929, the so-called *Blutmai* (Bloody May).²² This was accomplished simply by changing the fourth line of the third verse to read ‘What took place on 1st May’.²³ This demonstrates once more the adaptability of political protest song, in that a tune created for a specific political event could be easily adapted to suit a subsequent occurrence. Moreover, the process of perpetual re-composition testifies to the active role song played in the political contest.

Songs were also written to support the agitational role of these new defence organizations. The RFB organized demonstrations and large party meetings on behalf of the Communist party, and supported KPD candidates at election time. In addition, the RFB made extensive use of political protest songs by holding a series of *Rote Tagen* (Red Days), at smaller events in regional towns and larger villages.²⁴ As a consequence of these activities, political song was accorded a central role, being used to maintain discipline at demonstrations and marches, and to promote a strong Communist identity. RFB-affiliated musical bands often led protest marches, playing *Kampflieder* to demonstrate their singularity of purpose, both to onlookers and to their own members alike.²⁵

²⁰ *Klassenkampf*, No. 59, 12 May 1924.

²¹ *Volksstimme*, No. 113, 15 May 1924

²² Chris Bowlby, ‘Blutmai 1929: Police, Parties and Proletarians in a Berlin Confrontation’, *The Historical Journal*, 29.1 (1986), 137-158.

²³ Inge Lammel, *Kampfgefährte: Unser Lied* (Berlin: Verlag Tribune, 1978), p. 65.

²⁴ Lammel, ed., *Lieder des Roten Frontkämpferbundes*, p. 22.

Lammel, *Das Arbeiterlied*, p. 59.

²⁵ Lammel, *Kampfgefährte: Unser Lied*, pp. 65-66.

Appearing shortly after the RFB was formed, *Auf proletarier, heraus aus der Fron* ('Up proletarian, out of the drudgery'), was one of the most popular of these songs, and as the first verse demonstrates, it acted as a working-class call to arms:

6.1.2 Auf, Proletarier, heraus aus der Fron'

Auf, Proletarier, heraus aus der Fron',
Auf, und ergreift das Gewehr,
Kämpft für der Arbeit gerechten Lohn,
Herrscht über Land und Meer!

Vorwärts, marsch, marsch,
Und stärkt die rote Front!
Reih du dich ein, Prolet!²⁶

*Up proletarian, out of the drudgery,
Up and grab the rifle,
Fight for a just wage for work,
Rule over land and sea.*

*Forwards, march, march,
And strengthen the red front!
Join together proletarians!*

This song is also replete with martial metaphors and it directly equates the political struggle with armed violence, recognising the need for every worker to be prepared to support the violent overthrow of the existing political order. This correlates with those studies of Nazi songs that expressed comparable political sentiments through the use of such terms such as 'combat', 'struggle' and 'revolution', and whose lyrics were noted for having a 'zackig' ('jagged') quality.²⁷ Additionally, this song's call for unity reflects the Communist belief that working class solidarity was an essential pre-requisite for establishing a collective consciousness about the injustice of their social position, which was necessary to undertake a successful proletarian revolution. This demonstrates continuity with protest songs stretching right back into the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

Most RFB songs reflected many of the themes found in the wider Communist canon: gratitude for the friendship of the Soviet Union, and respect and admiration for the achievements of Lenin and his comrades for their efforts to build 'a true socialist state'.²⁸ During the 1920s the Communist party would come under the increasing influence of its parent organisation in Moscow, and references to the impedimenta of the socialist cause, most notably to the red flag, would become commonplace in most songs produced by or on behalf of the KPD and its related organizations.

This love for the achievements and leadership of the Soviet Union can also be found in the song 'Alarm', which appeared in one of the first RFB songbooks,

²⁶ Lammel, *Lieder des Roten Frontkämpferbundes*, pp. 24-25.

²⁷ Vernon L. Lidtke, 'Songs and Nazis: Political Music and Social Change in Twentieth-Century Germany', in *Essays on Culture and Society in Modern Germany*, ed. by Gary Stark (Arlington: Texas A&M University Press, 1982), pp. 167-200 (p. 169)

²⁸ Lammel, *Das Arbeiterlied*, p. 59.

published in 1925. It also acknowledges leading Communist personalities, such as the fallen German political hero Karl Liebknecht, as well as such notable figures as Marx and Lenin. This process of identifying leading political figures was an intrinsic part of Communist song lyrics, in stark contrast to those composed by the Social Democrats who rarely, if ever, identified political personalities in their songs.²⁹

6.1.3 Alarm

Alarm, braust es von Osten,
Auflammt der Horizont,
Kam'raden auf den Posten,
Es ruft die Rote Front!
Die Sowjetfahn' geht uns voran.
Wir folgen alle, Mann für Mann.

Refrain:

Rot Front, Rot Front! Brüder herbei!
Rot Front! Rot Front die Lösung sei.
Rot Front! Rot Front die Lösung sei.

Die Sklavenket' zerspringet,
Wo rote Herzen glühn.
Rot Front die Freiheit bringet
Mit Liebknecht und Lenin.
Nieder die schwarze Reaktion!
In Sturme naht die Rebellion.

Refrain

Bald muß es sich erfüllen,
Was unser Will' erstrbt.
Sturm auf des Feind's Bastille,
Die Rote Garde lebt.
Karl Marx lehrt' uns die kühne Tat,
Es lebe hoch der Sowjetstaat!³⁰

Refrain

*Alarm, roaring from the east,
The horizon on fire,
Comrades to your posts,
The Red Front calls!
The Soviet flag goes before us.
We all follow, man for man.*

*Red front, Red front! Brother, here!
Red front! Red front is the slogan.
Red front! Red front is the slogan.*

*The chain of slavery burst,
Where red hearts glow.
Red front brings freedom,
With Liebknecht and Lenin.
Down with the black reaction.
In a storm the rebellion nears.*

*It must soon fulfil
What our will strives for
Storm the enemy's Bastille.
The Red Guard lives.
Karl Marx teaches us the bold deed,
The Soviet state lives high!*

The 'Red Front' that was 'roaring from the east' represented the revolutionary spirit emanating from the Soviet Union, which had of course successfully effected a revolution in 1917. Such phrases struck fear into both Social Democrats and Nationalists alike, and also reflected the anxieties of many of the population who feared that a similar event could happen in Germany. Undoubtedly the presence of such lyrics helped the Communists unnerve their political opponents, the 'black reaction', who they state will be swept away by the storm of rebellion. The utter

²⁹ Vernon L. Liedtke, 'Songs and Politics: An Exploratory Essay on *Arbeiterlieder* in the Weimar Republic', *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, 14 (1974), 253-273 (pp. 267-268).

³⁰ Lammel, ed., *Lieder des Roten Frontkämpferbundes*, pp. 30-31.

destruction of the political opposition was of course a key tenet of both Communist and Nazi policies. In addition to lionizing Communist heroes, this song is once more replete with martial imagery; ‘comrades to your post’, ‘storming the enemy’s Bastille’, and indeed the term ‘red front’, the latter equating the Communist struggle with a battlefield, all leave the singer and listener in no doubt that the class struggle was more than a battle of words or passive ideology. Another familiar feature is the idea that Communist revolution would free workers from the servitude of capitalism, with references to ‘bursting the chains of slavery’. ‘Alarm’ was a typical example of those songs used to publicize the RFB, and intended to attract new members into its ranks. Other songs such as *Die Roten Sturmkolonnen*, (‘Red Storm Columns’), *Hoch Rot Front*, (‘Hail Red Front), *Rot Front* (‘Red Front’), and the *Roter-Frontkämpfer-Marsch* (‘Red Front Fighters’ March’), were all similarly employed, and as their names suggest, all featured martial language, with numerous references to marching, struggle, and armies, as well as paying traditional deference to the Soviet Union and the leading personalities of the Communist movement.³¹

6.2: The middle years of Weimar, 1925-1928

Although the ‘inflationary decade’ of 1914-1924 had given way to a brief period of relative economic stability, the German economy continued to be plagued by a number of inherent structural weaknesses.³² The adoption of the Dawes Plan in 1924 had calmed the question of reparations for the immediate future, and the economic security it engendered, encouraged by high interest rates, promoted a stream of foreign investment into Germany. Industrial workers seemingly profited from this as real wages rose by 37% from 1924-1927. However only in 1929 did the net weekly wage exceed that of 1913, and then by only 2%, whilst chronic unemployment remained endemic to the republic even before the onset of the world economic crisis. In terms of industrial relations many employers were using this structural unemployment to circumvent legislation such as the maximum 8-hour working day, the introduction of which had been the centrepiece of post-war Social Democratic political achievements, and a long cherished theme of working-class political protest songs. Even as early as October 1926, more than 53% of industrial workers were being compelled to work more than 48 hours per week.³³

³¹ Lammel, ed., *Lieder des Rotenkämpferbundes*, pp. 30-38.

³² Feldman, *The Great Disorder. Politics, Economics and Society in the German Inflation*, pp. 96-113; Balderston, *Economics and Politics in the Weimar Republic*, pp. 77-99.

³³ Miller and Potthoff, *A History of German Social Democracy*, p. 96.

In addition to this gradual erosion of their hard won political, economic and social reforms, during these middle years of Weimar the main political representatives of industrial workers, the Social Democrats, did not find themselves in a position to influence government policy at a national level. A succession of multi-party coalition governments would exclude the SPD from power until Hermann Müller's 'Grand Coalition', formed from his own Social Democrats, the Centre Party, the German Democratic Party and the German People's Party, took power in July 1928. Prior to this, however, the Social Democrats had also lost their grip on the highest political position in the land, the presidency, with the death on 28 February 1925 of Friedrich Ebert. As a leading Social Democrat and architect of the Weimar Republic, Ebert's death would begin the process of delivering the republic into the hands of the resurgent political right: in a hard fought campaign, Fieldmarshal Paul von Hindenburg, Germany's aged World War One military commander, emerged as the new president. Hindenburg's attitude towards a democratic political system he distrusted was one of 'inner rejection', and a position of power that was to have an ever more crucial influence on Germany's political course was delivered into the hands of a man at best unsympathetic to the plight of the working class.³⁴

Schumann notes that violence during the middle years of the Weimar Republic 'emanated above all from the right-wing combat leagues and the Nazis'.³⁵ In the period 1924-1929, the principal opportunities for such violence emerged during political campaigning: this period contained no fewer than three Reichstag elections, two rounds of presidential voting, and a referendum on the Young Plan, in addition to numerous local, regional and national election campaigns. As well as direct involvement in street demonstrations, political activists pasted up election posters, often removing or vandalizing those from other parties on the way, and also sent speakers to heckle and harangue their political opponents at their meetings. In all of these activities, working-class political song was used to deride the policies of the opposition, to influence voters' opinions, and to reinforce the sense of collective identity felt by Social Democrats and Communists alike.

There were notable differences in the ways that the Social Democrats and Communists chose to identify their political opponents. The Social Democrats were seemingly unwilling to name their political opponents directly, whereas their Communist opponents displayed no such reluctance. Schumann proposes that this

³⁴ Miller and Potthoff, *A History of German Social Democracy*, p. 101.

³⁵ Schumann, *Political Violence*, p. 182.

unwillingness stemmed from the Social Democratic belief that the ordinary Communist was a prodigal son, who could be encouraged to return to the SPD fold, thus explicit and personalized attacks were noticeably lacking in the lyrics of their songs.³⁶

6.3: Communist and Social Democratic Protest Song Compared

The final few years of the Weimar Republic were dominated by the failure of the two main working-class political parties to agree to a joint effort to defeat the growing menace of fascism. In terms of the development of protest song, there was a great divergence in the political emphasis that the Social Democrats and Communists attached to their respective repertoires: whilst the former continued to sing their pre-war songs largely unchanged, the Communists, as befitting a party born out of the revolutionary chaos of the immediate post-war years, adopted a canon of songs possessed of the sharp uncompromising language that validated the need for armed struggle, and venerated the revolutionary example and friendship of the Soviet Union.

Certain songs, such as the *Sozialistenmarsch*, *Bundeslied*, *Arbeiter Marseillaise* and the *Internationale* remained hugely popular and continued to feature prominently in the working-class canon of the late 1920s.³⁷ These songs were staple features of songbooks produced by both Social Democrats and Communists throughout the life of the Weimar Republic.³⁸ However as the waves of crises progressively began to break over the defences of the Weimar political

³⁶ Schumann, *Political Violence*, pp. 200-203; Lidtke, *Songs and Politics*, pp. 267-268.

³⁷ Margarete Nespital, *Das deutsche Proletariat in seinem Lied* (Rostock: Mecklenburgische Volkszeitung GmbH, 1932), pp. 75-80.

³⁸ For the Social Democrats:

AdK, A8b, *Arbeiter Jugend Deutschlands*, ed., *Jugend Liederbuch* (Berlin: Arbeiterjugend Verlag, 1924); AdK, A8c, *Arbeiter Jugend Deutschlands*, ed., *Jugend Liederbuch* (Berlin: Arbeiterjugend Verlag, 1925); AdK, A8d, *Arbeiter Jugend Deutschlands*, ed., *Jugend Liederbuch* (Berlin: Arbeiterjugend Verlag, 1928); AdK, A9a, *Arbeiter und Freiheits Liederbuch* (Berlin: Arbeiterjugend Verlag, 1928)

For the Communists:

AdK, A34a, *Rot Front* (Berlin: Viva Verlag, 1925); AdK, A34b, *Zum roten Sturm voran - Kampfliederbuch* (Berlin: Verlag Junge Garde, 1926); AdK, A34d, *Rot Front : Das Neue Liederbuch* (Berlin: Verlag Junge Garde, 1927); AdK, A34c, *Rot Front : Das Neue Liederbuch* (Berlin: Verlag Junge Garde, 1928).

system, these traditionally popular songs were supplemented by what Margarete Nespital termed the ‘new proletarian *Kampflieder*’. These were songs that continued to express the social aims and demands of the ‘old’ party songs, but did so in the more direct and uncompromising language that had been the hallmark of many Communist songs created since the First World War. Additionally their lyrics demonstrated a greater awareness of, and were often drawn from, the real life events of this tumultuous period, whilst many of them more strongly emphasized the element of ‘struggle’ and the pivotal role of the working man, both as the creator of a new, and as the driving force within, a more egalitarian world.³⁹

Arguably the most influential of these ‘new proletarian *Kampflieder*’ was *Das Lied der Arbeiter von Wien* (‘The Song of the Workers from Vienna’), which first appeared shortly after the ‘July Revolt’ in Austria in 1927. This uprising stemmed from the acquittal of members of the Austrian right-wing paramilitary *Heimwehr*, who had been tried for the death of a man and child during a clash with their Social Democrat rivals at Schattendorf, Burgenland on 30 January 1927. This acquittal prompted a general strike and a mass protest at the *Justizpalast* in Vienna, aimed at overthrowing the government: 84 people died and more than 600 were injured as the police minister authorized his men to open fire on the demonstrators. The lyrics were written by Fritz Brügel (1897-1955), a Viennese lyricist and essayist, whilst the melody was borrowed from the Soviet march ‘White Army, Black Baron’ (*Weiße Armee, schwarzer Baron*) reflecting the influence of Soviet songs on the German revolutionary movement.

6.3.1 Die Arbeiter von Wien

Wir sind das Bauvolk der kommenden Welt,
Wir sind der Sämann, die Saat und das Feld.
Wir sind die Schnitter der kommenden Mahd,
Wir sind die Zukunft und wir sind die Tat.

Refrain:

So flieg, du flammende, du rote Fahne,
voran dem Wege, den wir ziehn.
Wir sind der Zukunft getreue Kämpfer,
Wir sind die Arbeiter von Wien.⁴⁰

*We are the founders of the coming world,
We are the sower, the crop and the field.
We are the reapers of the coming harvest.
We are the future and we are the act.*

*So fly, you flaming, you red flag,
We follow the path before us.,
We are the loyal fighters of the future,
We are the workers of Vienna.*

³⁹ Nespital *Das deutsche Proletariat in seinem Lied*, pp. 77-78.

⁴⁰ Karl Adamek, *Politisches Lied heute: Zur Soziologie des Singens von Arbeiterliedern* (Essen: Klartext Verlag, 1987), pp. 42-43.

Again this song contains numerous themes that demonstrate continuities with earlier examples of the Social Democratic song canon. This song's theme is the future, advocating the idea that socialists would have a prominent role in the coming political transformation of society. The references to being both 'sower' and 'reaper' suggests that for the first time in a future socialist society, workers' will reap the rewards of all the hard work they had previously put in, rather than seeing it appropriated by the factory owners and employers as in the past. The reference to the red flag shows that this was the universal colour of socialism, whether the singer was a Social Democrat or a Communist, and as this work has demonstrated, this is a motif common to a great many working-class protest songs.

In the post-war period the content of Social Democratic songbooks had remained largely unchanged from those that they had produced in pre-war times, even with the fundamental shift in the balance of political power towards their party that had been achieved as a result of the events of November 1918. This could be ascribed to a feeling of achievement amongst Social Democrats following the creation of the Weimar Republic and the granting of equal political rights to the working class. Their staunch defence of the whole idea of a democratic parliamentary republic stood in stark contrast to the fiery rhetoric of Communist songs demanding the violent overthrow of the Weimar regime and its replacement with a Soviet style 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. Additionally, song also formed part of a deeper reservoir of working-class cultural capital, i.e. the existing canon was an integral part of the proletarian tradition, knowledge of which was often initially gained in the home and subsequently reinforced in the workplace.⁴¹

However entrenched this divergence between political attitudes to the Weimar Republic seemed to be, a number of Social Democrat songbooks produced from 1928 onwards demonstrated a shift in content towards those that had more in common with songs normally found in publications produced by the Communist party. Comparisons between the '*Jugend-Liederbuch*', (Youth Songbook) and rival Communist youth songbooks published on behalf of the *Kommunistische Jugendverband Deutschlands* (KJVD) reveal that prior to 1928 only 7 out of 36

⁴¹ John Guillory, *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. xviii; See also: Pierre Bourdieu, 'Forms of Capital', in *The Handbook of Theory and Research in the Sociology of Education*, ed. by John G. Richardson (New York: Greenweed Press, 1983), pp. 241-258; Robert Morre, 'Capital', in *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*, ed. by Michael Grenfell (Stocksfield: Acumen Publishing, 2008), pp. 101-117 (pp. 103-109).

songs were common to both publications.⁴² From 1928 (and continued into the 1929 edition at least, although records after that are not available), the number of songs common to both publications rose to 17, or nearly 50% of the content of the *Kampflieder* section.

This was a significant development as the '*Jugend-Liederbuch*' was a hugely popular publication, regularly selling in excess of 50,000 copies a year. This movement from Social Democratic towards Communist views ran contrary to the general spirit of the two parties at this time: in addition to the Communists hardening of their view that their opponents were nothing but 'social fascists', many leisure associations at this time were splitting into separate wings. Thus, although it is difficult to divine the intentions of those who commissioned these songbooks, as no explanation is forthcoming in the editors' preface, perhaps such a development is symptomatic of the general radicalisation and polarisation of the political scene in the late-Weimar period. However, as with their street-based agitation, even when adopting songs previously only attributed to the Communists, the Social Democrats avoided any notion of the necessity of a violent overthrow of the existing social order. The songs that suddenly appeared in the Social Democratic canon were not the radical fire-breathing compositions of the Communist affiliated organisations that had been appearing since 1924, but were mostly the work of radical composers sympathetic to the political situation of the working class, and whose four-part harmony songs were adapted for massed singing. Nevertheless, given the enmity that existed between them, any convergence at this late stage of the Weimar Republic when the Communists had adopted the policy of referring to their SPD opponents as 'Social Fascists' is noteworthy, and as such more representative of grass-roots sentiment rather than being reflective of the views of the party leadership.

6.4: Song on the Streets: The emergence of Agitprop Theatre

In addition to the 'new proletarian *Kampflieder*' that were injecting a new sense of realism into political protest songs, the mid-1920s also saw the emergence of a completely new method of combining contemporary political events with the

⁴² Comparison of the SPD songbooks: AdK, A8b, Arbeiter Jugend Deutschlands, ed., *Jugend Liederbuch* (Berlin: Arbeiterjugend Verlag, 1924); AdK, A8c, Arbeiter Jugend Deutschlands, ed., *Jugend Liederbuch* (Berlin: Arbeiterjugend Verlag, 1925) with the Communist songbook: AdK, A16c, Kommunistische Jugendverband Deutschlands, *Arbeiterlieder* (Berlin: Verlag Junge Garde, 1925).

everyday lives of the ordinary worker.⁴³ In 1927 a highly-politicized leftist theatre movement known as Agitprop was founded under the auspices of the Communist Party. Organised into individual troops with the artistic assistance of the *Arbeiter Theatre Bund Deutschlands* (German Workers' Theatre League), their formation signalled the intention of the Communists to make more explicit use of songs for propaganda purposes.⁴⁴ The term 'agitprop' was a conflation of agitation and propaganda: troupes used plays, scenes, recitals, songs and monologues to disseminate communist ideas and convince people of the validity of their cause.

These performances, which took place in small halls in many towns and cities throughout Germany, were run by young composers, actors, singers and poets, many of whom were unemployed, and they were used to educate people about Communist attitudes to the problems in contemporary Weimar society, most notably unemployment and the impoverishment of the working class, and to the need for a unified front against the dangers of fascism.⁴⁵ In addition to formally organised performances, Agitprop troupes often found themselves engaged in discussions with political opponents in ad hoc gatherings in front of businesses or in public squares, which would dissolve as spontaneously as they appeared before the police could intervene. Heinrich Hammann, a designer and leader of a Berlin Agitprop troupe offered this appreciation of the impact of Agitprop on its audience:

We played everywhere: on the streets, in halls, in pubs, in small gatherings or in massed demonstrations. The theatre was a square, a lorry, the street. This intimate connection with the audience was the decisive reason why the game [the actual Agitprop work] was never routine.⁴⁶

Agitprop troupes were particularly active in demonstrations against fascist organizations, and during the numerous local, regional and national election campaigns their members pasted up voting posters, and painted slogans on house walls and wooden fences.⁴⁷ One particular group, active in the town of Weimar itself, directed its political agitation against personalities from official life: in addition to satirizing Chancellor Brüning's government, and the SPD's policy of

⁴³ Werner Fuhr, *Proletarische Musik in Deutschland*, Goppinger Akademische Beiträge Nr. 101 (Goppingen: Verlag Alfred Kummerle, 1977), p. 97.

⁴⁴ Lidtke, *Songs and Politics*, p. 261.

⁴⁵ Kurt Thomas, *Arbeitergesang-Arbeitermusik: Traditionen der Arbeiterchöre und der Arbeitermusik im Bezirk Erfurt* (Weimar: Stadtmuseum Weimar, 1974), pp. 68-69.

⁴⁶ Inge Lammel, ed., *Lieder des Agitprop-Truppen vor 1945, Das Lied im Kampf Geboren*, Heft 2, Deutsche Akademie der Künste (Leipzig: VEB Friedrich Hofmeister, 1959), p. 118.

⁴⁷ Lammel, *Das Arbeiterlied*, pp. 59-60.

tolerating it, the Weimar group *Armer Gigolo* ('Poor Gigolo') was also outspoken in its criticism of the Nazi Thuringian Interior Minister Wilhelm Frick.⁴⁸ Increased police intervention eventually led to these Agitprop troupes being banned during the increasingly repressive atmosphere that prevailed in Germany during 1932: however by displaying a degree of ingenuity many individual troops continued to hold legal meetings by disguising them as membership conferences.⁴⁹ Frick however would later gain his revenge dismantling the remnants of the Agitprop movement when he became Reich Interior Minister at the end of January 1933.

Much of the antagonism that the Agitprop troupes caused to the government of the day stemmed from their willingness to criticise vociferously the administration on a wide range of contemporary political issues, and such songs were not reticent in blaming individuals either. In this respect, Agitprop, and the songs it produced, was at the forefront of unfolding political events, and as in the past, the anonymously composed *Spottlied*, often using parody and satire, was prominent. For example, the reaction of the Agitprop troupes to the decision of the Social Democratic led government to sanction the construction of pocket battleship 'A' for the German navy in 1928 was a case in point: this move was roundly denounced by the Communists, who viewed the construction of such an overtly offensive weapon as an echo of pre-war German imperialism. To protest against the ship's construction, this satirical *Spottlied*, set to the popular tune 'O Mona', achieved widespread popularity:

6.4.1 Anonymous *Spottlied*

Wir haben einen Panzerkreuzer,
O Mona,
Der Noske macht der Oberheizer,
O Mona,
Der Hindenburg den Steuermann,
Und Stinnes gibt die Richtung an.

We have a pocket battleship, O Mona,
Noske the chief stoker, O Mona
Hindenburg the helmsman,
And Stinnes sets the course.

This *Spottlied* is another example that demonstrates that Communist songs were not reticent when it came to naming their political enemies directly.⁵⁰ As previous songs in this study have demonstrated, Gustav Noske had become a KPD hate figure for his role in quelling Communist anti-government riots using troops and nationalist paramilitaries whilst he was the SPD Defence Minister in 1919-20. Additionally Noske's acknowledgement in this song had a particular significance

⁴⁸ Thomas, *Arbeitergesang-Arbeitermusik*, pp. 68-69.

⁴⁹ Rosenhaft, *Beating the Fascists* p. 3.. Thomas, *Arbeitergesang-Arbeitermusik*, p. 69.

⁵⁰ Lüdtke, *Songs and Politics*, pp. 267-268.

with regard to this issue, as prior to the First World War he had been a vocal advocate of building up the navy, ostensibly as a measure to create jobs for the shipbuilding industry. Hugo Stinnes, (1870-1924), was a leading industrialist and DVP politician, who had been largely responsible for drawing up the post-war agreement that consolidated workers reforms and ensured greater co-operation between the employers and the unions and as such was seen by many Communist as one of the arch proponents of policies that they believed offered inducements that diverted the German industrial worker from his true path, namely that of proletarian revolution

6.5: Social Fascism and *Blutmai*, 1928-1929

The divergence between the Social Democratic and Communist labour movements widened significantly when the latter adopted the policy of referring to their socialist opponents as ‘social fascists’ after 1928. As early as April 1924 the KPD had acquired an ultra-left leadership, the principal consequences of which were a desire to maintain their supporters in a ‘constant fighting mood’ against the prevailing democratic political system, and to foster determined opposition to the Social Democrats.⁵¹ Schumann argues that this policy was seen as a pre-cursor to the adoption of the policy of ‘social fascism’.⁵²

According to Communist advocates of this theory, the tenets of Social Democracy actively inhibited workers in creating a sense of class consciousness, thus effectively denying them the opportunity to develop a true revolutionary outlook, and thereby playing into the hands of the real fascists. For their part, the Social Democrats argued that both Nazis and Communists alike were ‘two sides of the same coin’, given that the stated intention of both movements was the overthrow of the democratic republic and its replacement with a dictatorship.⁵³ During 1928 this divergence, which we have already noted in the changes to the content of published songbooks, would manifest itself in the structure of the formalized workers’ singing movement, which began to develop separate organisations for those radical members unhappy with the political ambivalence of the Social Democrats. When celebrating the 1st May, the traditional day of labour, members of the *Freundschaft Sängerbundes Weimar* (Weimar Friendship Singers’ League), which contained workers who were supporters of both the SPD and KPD

⁵¹ Heinrich August Winkler, *Der Schein der Normalität: Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung in der Weimarer Republik, 1924 bis 1930*, 2nd edn. (Berlin: [n.pub.], 1988), pp. 202-205.

⁵² Schumann, *Political Violence*, p. 149.

⁵³ Berger, *Social Democracy and the Working Class*, p. 105.

and who had always previously marked the occasion together despite their disparate political sentiments, decided to hold their festivities simultaneously but in separate buildings.⁵⁴

The deep ideological differences between the Social Democrats and Communists were exacerbated further by the events surrounding the celebration of the traditional day of labour in Berlin on 1 May 1929.⁵⁵ On 13th December 1928 the Social Democratic police chief in Berlin, Emil Zörgiebel, had ordered that the traditional working-class demonstrations and parades in the city should be prohibited, in a vain attempt to avoid any violent street demonstrations. The following March, Zörgiebel extended this prohibition to include the whole of Prussia, but seeing the move as a direct challenge to their street activities the Communists chose to ignore this ban. Thus on 1st May 1929, some 200,000 workers and their supporters took to the streets of Berlin to mark this traditional day of labour. The SPD-led police responded vigorously to this challenge to their authority, and the situation quickly degenerated into a series of bloody battles between armed officers and stone and bottle-wielding demonstrators that continued unabated for several days, most notably in the staunchly working class districts of Wedding and Neukölln.⁵⁶ In the bloody chaos 33 people were killed and 198 seriously wounded, but the political consequences, especially the further deterioration of the relationship between Communists and Social Democrats, were even more serious.⁵⁷

Any hope that the two factions could be reconciled in some way in order to fight the growing menace of fascism had been irrevocably shattered by the events of *Blutmai*, and the actions of Zörgiebel were seen by many Communists as proof of the Social Democrats application of ‘social fascism’. Certainly the events of ‘bloody May’ were another real-life episode that was to be swiftly commemorated by a popular song. The lyrics of this song, *Der Rote Wedding* (‘Red Wedding’), sprang out of the Berlin Agitprop movement, and fulsomely praised the defiance of the workers in the Wedding district, and is particularly useful as it clearly demonstrates the basis of the Communists anger against the Social Democrats:

⁵⁴ Freundschaft-Sängerbundes, *Protokollbuch des Freundschaft-Sängerbundes* (Weimar: [n.pub.], 1928), p. 400.

⁵⁵ Inge Lammel, ed., *Lieder zum 1.Mai, Das Lied im Kampf Geboren*, Heft 3, Deutsche Akademie der Künste (Leipzig: VEB Friedrich Hofmeister, 1959)

⁵⁶ Thomas Kurz, ‘*Blutmai*’. *Sozial Demokraten und Kommunisten in Brennpunkt der Berliner Ereignisse von 1929* (Bonn: [n.pub.], 1988).

⁵⁷ Bowlby, ‘*Blutmai* 1929: Police, Parties and Proletarians in a Berlin Confrontation’, pp. 137-158.

6.5.1 Der Rote Wedding

Verse 1

Links, links, links, links!
 Die Trommeln werden gerührt!
 Links, links, links, links!
 Der Rote Wedding marschiert
 Hier werden uns nicht gemeckert,
 hier gibt es Dampf,
 Denn uns're Parole ist Klassenkampf
 Nach blutiger Melodie!
 Wir betteln nicht mehr um
 Gerechtigkeit!
 Wir stehn zum entscheidenden Angriff
 bereit,
 Zur Vernichtung der Bourgeoisie!

Left, left, left, left!
The drums are stirring!
Left, left, left, left!
'Red Wedding' marches!
Here, we do not moan,
Here there is calm.
For our slogan is 'class struggle'
After bloody melody!
We no longer beg for justice!
We stand ready for the decisive attack,
To annihilate the bourgeoisie!

Refrain

Roter Wedding grüßt euch, Genossen!
 Haltet die Fäuste bereit!
 Haltet die roten Reihen geschlossen,
 Denn unser Tag ist nicht weit!
 Drohend stehen die Faschisten
 Drüben am Horizont!
 Proletarier, ihr müßt rüsten!
 Rot Front, Rot Front!

Red Wedding greets you, comrades!
Keep fists ready!
Keep the red ranks closed
For our day is not far!
The fascists stand threatening
There on the horizon!
Proletariat, you must arm,
Red front, red front!

Given its direct and trenchant criticism of the police, *Der Rote Wedding* is a song that clearly represents the heightened emotional atmosphere of the time: its lyrics amply demonstrate the depth of enmity between the two main working-class parties at this crisis point in the life of the Weimar Republic. As befits a song that emerged from the violence of the later stages of the Weimar Republic, *Der Rote Wedding* features many of the key ideas, images and motifs of the Communist canon: military metaphors abound, with referencing to marches and military drilling ('left, left, left'); slogans such as class struggle are prominent, as is the language of destruction personified by the call to 'annihilate the bourgeoisie'. Indeed, the use of the word *Vernichtung* (annihilate) is particularly interesting as it is typical of the Nazi language of the period, suggesting that the Communists are not averse to copying political slogans, even from their sworn ideological enemies. That the Wedding district was staunchly defended is recalled in the refrain, which notes that the fascists were to be met with fists at the ready. These lyrics highlight the determination of the Communist party to overthrow the democratic state by violent means, and stand in marked contrast to the passive lyrics of Social Democratic songs, which support parliamentary government.

Verse 2

Links, links, links, links;
 Trotz Faschisten und Polizei!
 Links, links, links!
 Wir gedenken des Ersten Mai!
 Der herrschenden Klasse blut'ges
 Gesicht,

Der Rote Wedding vergift es nicht,
 Und die Schande der SPD!
 Sie woll'n uns das Fell über die Ohren
 ziehn!
 Doch wir verteidigen das rote Berlin,
 Die Vorhut der Roten Armee!⁵⁸

*Left, left, left, left;
 Despite fascists and the police!
 Left, left, left, left!
 We remember the 1st May,
 The bloody face of the ruling class,*

*Red Wedding does not forget it,
 And the shame of the SPD!
 They want us to pull the wool over our
 eyes!
 But we defend Red Berlin,
 The vanguard of the Red Army!*

More familiar themes are apparent in the second verse; the necessity to close ranks, demonstrated here in the call to 'defend Red Berlin'; the naming of class enemies such as the fascists, the police, and most importantly, the Social Democrats. The 'shame of the SPD', a reference to the actions of Zörgiebel, continues Communist criticism of leading Social Democratic figures. Because of the widespread outrage surrounding them, the events of *Blutmai* directly contributed to the RFB being banned, with effect from 6th May 1929, under the provision of the Law for the Protection of the Republic.⁵⁹ Communist onlookers viewed this action as a further betrayal of their class heritage.

6.6: The Economic Crisis and the Battle for the Streets, 1930-1933

A dispute with its coalition partners over raising insurance contributions to provide support for the rapidly growing numbers of the unemployed saw Müller's SPD-led government fall in March 1930. The Centre Party politician Heinrich Brüning formed a new administration, which continued in power for six months before seeking a new mandate from the electorate. The result of the September 1930 Reichstag elections would prove crucial for the long-term democratic survival of the Republic. As the votes were counted it became clear that no less than 39.1% of the votes, representing no less than 225 of the legislature's 577 seats, were held by those parties such as the NSDAP, DNVP and the KPD that remained implacably hostile to the whole idea of a democratically elected republic. That the grass roots of the Social Democratic party were more militant than their party leadership seemed clear when, only six days after the election, the normally moderate

⁵⁸ Inge Lammel, ed., *Lieder der Partei, Das Lied im Kampf Geboren*, Heft 10, Deutsche Akademie der Künste (Leipzig: VEB Friedrich Hofmeister, 1971), p. 82-83.

⁵⁹ *Reichsgezetzblatt*, p. 235.

Reichsbanner Schwarz-Rot-Gold formed *Schutzformationen* ('protective formations'), with the sole idea of robustly defending the republic.⁶⁰

The adoption of the policy of 'social fascism' by the Communist party was triggered by its swing to the ultra-left, a development that led many party activists to denounce their own trade union officials as 'conciliators' and to accuse them of being an intrinsic part of the 'bourgeois' regime. These tactics, coupled with the growing unemployment rate, combined to reduce the Communists' presence in the workplace, and ultimately it required them to turn their attention towards the protection of their own neighbourhoods. This battle for the streets, be it against the Nazi SA or the SPD's *Reichsbanner*, became the focal point for Communist agitation, which was directed more and more towards the young and the unemployed (who were often one and the same), and who had been particularly disillusioned by the difficulties experienced by the Weimar democratic system of government.⁶¹ In defence of their own districts, the KPD attacked rival factions, supported rent strikes and participated in food riots, as the economic crisis brought greater hardship to unemployed industrial workers and their families.⁶² Organised groups of singing workers were also present in the squares and workers' districts during industrial disputes: both the October 1930 Berlin metalworkers strike and the Ruhr strikes in January 1931 were strongly supported in this manner.⁶³

Since the onset of the world financial crisis, unemployment throughout Germany had quickly reached critical levels.⁶⁴ Unemployment officially peaked at 6.13 million during 1932, representing 29.9% of the total available workforce, although some estimates put the figure closer to 7.5 million people.⁶⁵ In addition to the severe financial hardships that widespread unemployment placed on state and individual alike, as calls for assistance outstripped the money available, unemployment also impacted on feelings of worthiness and self-respect as illustrated by this sign detailing entry charges to a Berlin museum in 1932: 'For humans 30Pf., for unemployed and children 15Pf.' (*Für Menschen 30 Pf, Für Erwerblose und Kinder 15Pf.*).⁶⁶

⁶⁰ Miller and Potthoff, *A History of German Social Democracy*, p. 115.

⁶¹ Schumann, *Political Violence*, p. 195.

⁶² Berger, *Social Democracy and the Working Class*, p. 111.

⁶³ Fuhr, *Proletarische Musik in Deutschland*, p. 149.

⁶⁴ Miller and Potthoff, *A History of German Social Democracy*, p. 106.

⁶⁵ Berger, *Social Democracy and the Working Class*, p. 108.

⁶⁶ Jurgen Kuczynski, *Geschichte des Alltags des Deutschen Volkes, 1600-1945*, Vol. 5 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1982), p. 107.

Unsurprisingly this economic crisis, and the widespread unemployment it engendered, proved to be a rich source of inspiration for working-class protest songs, many of which were spontaneously composed to accompany organised demonstrations and local strike actions. Many such songs complained bitterly that employers were trying to take advantage of their workforce, using the economic difficulties in which late-Weimar businesses found themselves to pressurize shop floor workers into taking wage cuts. For example, the industrial action taken by workers at the Berlin confectionery firm *Kaß* in February 1932 where the management had decided that in order to ensure that the business survived the economic recession, some of the workers' hard fought rights, such as the maximum eight-hour day, were to be revoked. In addition the female workers were to have their wages cut, a move agreed to by the head of the firms' own workers' council, Krüger. In cutting only the women's pay, Krüger was implementing the Social Democratic policy that sought to sacrifice the rights of female workers to ensure the continued employment of men. The 600 strong workforce, both male and female, voted unanimously to dismiss Krüger from his post, and invited the Communist RGO trade union to organize the strike in his place, believing that this move would offer a better guarantee of success in resisting their bosses' demands.⁶⁷ The song that resulted from this episode is typical of its type, but like so many of the spontaneously composed songs that portrayed real-life events, the author is unknown.⁶⁸

6.6.1 Streiklied der Kaß Belegschaft

Wir sind in den Streik getreten,
Sie wollen uns rauben den Lohn!
Doch wir, die Kaß-Proleten!
Wir wehren uns gegn den Hohn!

Refrain:
Wir lassen uns nicht unterdrücken,
Durch Lohnraub, Stoppuhr und Haß!

Wir streiken und kämpfen weiter,
Die Belegschaft der Firma Kaß!

*We stepped into the strike,
They want to rob us of our wages,
We, the Kass-proletariat,
We defend ourselves, against the
sneers.*

*Refrain:
We do not let ourselves be oppressed
Through wage robbery, stopwatch and
hate
We strike and fight on,
The Kass employees.*

This song demonstrates the workers' determination not to see their hard fought rights eroded, and demonstrates their willingness to use the strike as a political weapon, a policy that had been the preserve of radicals since before the war.

⁶⁷ *Die Rote Fahne*, 13 February 1932.

⁶⁸ Lammel, *Das Arbeiterlied*, p. 169, p. 240.

Communists in particular were active in supporting the unemployed, especially at election time. During the campaigning for the September 1930 Reichstag election the KPD organized an *Erwerbslosentag* (unemployment day) on the 10th of that month, which involved a large demonstration through the streets of Berlin, accompanied by an RFB brass band and the singing of popular political songs. The Communist newspaper the *Hamburger Volkzeitung* (HVZ) reported the progress of the marchers through the working-class districts:

They came from all parts of the city, having gathered people on their journey through the tenements, and joined up on the Lübecker-Tor Field. This took about half an hour, before the last demonstrators were ready to leave the area. From around St. Georg they arrived at Hammerbrook, a typical *Reichsbanner* [i.e. SPD] quarter. SPD banners hung from the balconies, which contrary to those of 'List 4',⁶⁹ hung limply.⁷⁰

Whilst some of their ranks chanted 'Death to the fascists, vote Communist, List 4., others began to sing this song based on the familiar theme of the treachery of the SPD that we noted in *Der Rote Wedding*:

6.6.2 Anonymous *Spottlied*

Wer hat uns verraten?	<i>Who has betrayed us?</i>
Die Sozialdemokraten!	<i>The Social Democrats!</i>
Wer macht uns frei?	<i>Who will free us?</i>
Die Kommunistische Partei! ⁷⁰	<i>The Communist Party.</i>

The banning of the RFB in May 1929 stimulated a concerted effort on the part of the Communists to strengthen their agitational efforts still further. A *Kampfbund gegen des RFB-Verbot* ('Fighting League against the RFB ban') was created shortly afterwards, to carry on the struggle of this prohibited organization: however, mounting police pressure finally succeeded in suppressing the activities of these activists, with the last demonstration taking place in Hamburg in June 1930. The growing threat of the Nazi party, demonstrated by its first significant national success in the September 1930 election, persuaded the Communists to form new organizations in the working class quarters of the major towns and cities to defend their streets against nationalist incursions. The Social Democrats also responded to this fascist threat by forming the *Eisernen Front* ('Iron Front'), which sought principally to arrest the flow of workers, discontented with the SPD's

⁶⁹ *Hamburger Volkszeitung*, 10 September 1930.

⁷⁰ *Hamburger Volkszeitung*, 10 September 1930.

apparent helplessness during this time of economic crisis, migrating to join the ranks of the Communist party.

The Communists responded by establishing an umbrella organization, the *Antifaschistische Aktion* ('Anti-fascist Action') to control and co-ordinate the activities of such diverse groups as the KPD itself, the KJVD (*Kommunistische Jugend Verband Deutschlands*) which represented Communist youth groups, sporting associations, self-defence organizations which sprang up locally to defend working class districts and the underground remnants of the illegal RFB. This new grouping was used more and more to interrupt fascist meetings, to protect their own gatherings and, in particular, to deny the streets of working-class areas to their fascist opponents. To accomplish this work, meetings and demonstrations were often accompanied by the singing of working class songs. All of this activity was supported by the work of the Agitprop troops, whose *Kampflied gegen des RFB-Verbot* ('Song of Struggle against the RFB Ban'), was an especially popular accompaniment to their activities:

6.6.3 Kampflied gegen des RFB-Verbot

Und gegen Faschismus und Reaktion,
Gegen Imperialismus und Krieg,
Für die Verteidigung der Sowjetunion,
Für die deutsche Räterepublik,
Gegen die Partei des Arbeiterversrats,
Für die kommunistische Idee,
Für die Diktatur des Proletariats
Marschierte der RFB!⁷¹

*And against fascism and reaction,
Against imperialism and war,
For the defence of the Soviet Union,
For the German Council Republic,
Against the party of workers' traitors,
For the Communist idea,
For the dictatorship of the proletariat
The RFB marches!*

This extract is notable for its succinct summary of the main tenets of Communist thinking in Germany during the Weimar period; calls to defeat fascism and reaction; anti-militarism; affection for the Soviet Union; calls for a 'council republic, i.e. a state organized along Soviet lines; hatred of the SPD ('the party of workers' traitors'); and finally the desire to establish, through revolution, a 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. In heaping equal amounts of opprobrium on fascist and Social Democrat alike this song serves as evidence that the split in the labour movement is as wide as ever, just at a time when unity was so badly needed.

⁷¹ Lammel, ed., *Lieder des Roten Frontkämpferbundes*, pp. 90-91.

6.7: Protest Song and the Rise of Authoritarianism

The new chancellor Heinrich Brüning, appointed in March 1930, adopted a more authoritarian approach to government from the outset.⁷² The new administration had swiftly initiated a stringent cost cutting programme as part of a wider policy of deflationary measures, many of which served only to exacerbate working-class hardship.⁷³ The Social Democrats were to suffer greatly under this more authoritarian form of government control and by 1932 their electoral support in places such as Bavaria had dwindled to 10%. To balance this, the SPD still held a leading role in states such as Baden, Hamburg, Hesse and above all Prussia, which had been under SPD political control since 1920. The Prussian Minister-President Otto Braun and his administration were rightly regarded as holding this, the largest and most influential state as a working class bastion against the swelling tide of the political right. However, the loss of his majority in the April 1932 *Landtag* elections seriously weakened Braun's position, and he was left in a virtual caretaker role, at the mercy of the new chancellor, Franz von Papen, who finally deposed him in the *Preußenschlag* (Prussian Coup) in July.

During this difficult period, and as the working-class movement came under increased pressure, protest song began to be used more intensively to express discontent with the deteriorating political and economic situation. Workers protested more and more vociferously about their worsening social and economic conditions, and consequently such activities came under increasing pressure from the authorities. In particular the political work of the Agitprop Troupes quickly attracted official attention: *Das Rote Sprachrohr* ('The Red Mouthpiece'), a troupe formed in Berlin in 1928, had devised particularly effective methods of agitating on behalf of Communist workers: they supported mass strikes, held street discussions, and published newspapers, often distributing them provocatively outside the offices of established nationalist publications, whilst all the time using spontaneous outbursts of song to communicate their political message.

One area where the Agitprop troupes excelled was in the realm of '*Haus und Hofpropaganda*' ('house and courtyard propaganda'). This was a process where

⁷² Harold James, 'Economic Reasons for the Collapse of the Weimar Republic' in *Weimar: Why did German Democracy Fail*, ed. by Ian Kershaw (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1990), pp. 30-57 (p. 48); Feldman, *The Great Disorder. Politics, Economics and Society in the German Inflation*, pp. 96-113; Balderston, *Economics and Politics in the Weimar Republic*, pp. 77-99; Miller and Potthoff, *A History of German Social Democracy*, p. 115.

⁷³ For an overview of his period as chancellor see: William L. Patch Jr., *Heinrich Brüning and the Dissolution of the Weimar Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

Agitprop singers gathered in the communal yards of the unsanitary and overcrowded workers' housing blocks (*Mietskasernen*).⁷⁴ The Wedding district was representative of Berlin as a whole: of its 104,703 apartments, nearly 45,000 had no toilets whilst only just over 11,000 had bathing facilities.⁷⁵ Social reformers offered this contemporary description of a typical *Mietskaserne* in 1930:

Nowhere has the Mietskaserne system become so prevalent as in Greater Berlin. There, such complexes, consisting of 3-4 parallel buildings with side wings and side buildings, are common. These also necessarily have poor floor plans and contain apartments with completely insufficient ventilation possibilities and lack of light, air and sun.⁷⁶

In a typical *Mietskaserne*, an attractive façade faced the street, whilst an arched tunnel led into a courtyard bounded on all sides by high walls, studded with numerous small windows denoting the serried ranks of overpopulated workers' flats. Noack too commented on the overcrowded accommodation of the majority of Berlin's industrial workers:

Berlin apartment buildings! These apartments are dark, made small by overcrowding, and filled with the roar of children's cries. They are the source of these breath-robbing things: kitchen smells, vapours from washing clothes, oven and tobacco smoke, gassy secretions. A mixture of kitchen, room, and toilet haze is dammed between the rising walls, which are indeed close together like a chimney. It weighs heavily over the couple of square meters in the dark deepness which is attractively called a courtyard and will gradually be forced out through the opening high up on the roof's ridges. And, even so, windows are opened onto this shaft like asthmatic mouths.⁷⁷

During the performance, a lookout was posted at the archway leading to the street to warn of the approach of the police, whilst group members sang songs that sought to appeal to the everyday concerns of the residents: for their part the workers and their families would lean out of their windows and join in raucously with the refrain of the most popular songs.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Richard Bodek, *Proletarian Performance in Weimar Berlin: Agitprop, Chorus, and Brecht* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1997), p. 26.

⁷⁵ P. Lang, '61020 Berliner Wohnungen ohne Licht. Über eine Million Einwohner haben keinen Abort', *Die Rote Fahne*, 8 August, 1928.

⁷⁶ W. Rusch, 'Mietkaserne', in *Handwörterbuch des Wohnungswesens. Im Auftrage des Deutschen Vereins für Wohnungsreform e.V. Berlin*, ed. by Gerhard Albrecht and others (Jena: Fischer, 1930), p. 549.

⁷⁷ Victor Noack, *Wohnungsnot und Mieterelend: Ein Erbstück des alten Stadt* (Berlin: F. Kater, 1925), p. 8.

⁷⁸ Lammel, *Lieder des Agitprop-Truppen vor 1945*, p. 18; p. 39.



Fig. 6.1: *Haus und Hofpropaganda* in a typical Berlin *Mietsekaserne*, performed by the Agitprop troupe *Der Roter Wedding*.⁷⁹

On 20 July Von Papen engineered the downfall of Braun's Prussian cabinet, thereby removing the last political mechanism that could have offered an effective challenge to the establishment of a right-wing authoritarian regime.⁸⁰ From this point onwards, only concerted and co-ordinated political protest action on the streets by both Social Democrats and Communists could seemingly forestall a right-wing political takeover of power.

⁷⁹ Lammel, *Lieder des Agitprop-Truppen vor 1945*, from unnumbered end pages

⁸⁰ Rosenhaft, *Beating the Fascists*, p. 9.

In hindsight then, it seems astounding that even following the strong, albeit slightly diminished showing of the Nazi party in the November 1932 election campaign, the Communist party still directed their main agitational thrust against the forces of ‘Social Fascism’ (the SPD), rather than those of ‘National Fascism’ (the NSDAP), continuing to denounce the former as ‘the social mainstay of the bourgeoisie’.⁸¹ As Benjamin Ziemann noted, the National Socialist stormtroopers (the SA) had been largely responsible for the marked increase in the levels of violence deemed necessary to achieve possession of the streets since 1924.⁸²

The KPD deputy chairman had vainly attempted to redirect his party’s main effort towards the growing Nazi menace, encouraging his members with the slogan ‘Hit the Fascists wherever you meet them’, but he was dismissed from his office as the party leadership chose to adhere rigidly to the guidelines laid down in Moscow. The KPD had already supported an earlier NSDAP and DNVP call for a referendum to remove Otto Braun’s Social Democratic government in Prussia, whilst in November during the Berlin transport strike Fascists and Communists patrolled the streets side by side, demonstrating their fundamental hostility to the Republic in general and to the Social Democrats in particular.⁸³

However, as the crisis deepened, songs began to appear that seemed to hold out hope for a unified front between Social Democrats and Communists in the fight against fascism. A number of different compositions, many of which were titled as *Solidaritätslieder* (‘solidarity songs’) or *Einheitsfrontlieder* (‘unified front songs’), accompanied efforts to develop greater cooperation between the two parties representing industrial workers.⁸⁴ Such songs were the creation of both noted working-class composers and lyricists such as Hans Eisler and Bertolt Brecht, and of anonymous workers, who as we have previously seen, set their compositions to existing well-known melodies.⁸⁵ One of the most well known of these anonymously composed *Einheitsfrontlieder*, that appeared in 1932 set to a melody

⁸¹ Miller and Potthoff, *A History of German Social Democracy*, p. 115.

⁸² Ziemann, ‘Germany after the First World War’, pp. 285-286.

⁸³ Miller and Potthoff, p. 111; Stefan Berger, *Social Democracy and the Working Class in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Germany* (Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd, 2000), p. 103. Adamek, *Politisches Lied*, p. 47.

⁸⁴ Inge Lammel, ed., *Lieder gegen Faschismus und Krieg, Das Lied im Kampf Geboren*, Heft 4, Deutsche Akademie der Künste (Leipzig: VEB Friedrich Hofmeister, 1958).

⁸⁵ For an overview of the musical collaboration between Eisler and Brecht see: Hanns Eisler: *Gespräche mit Hans Bunge „Fragen Sie mehr über Brecht.“ Gesammelte Werke*, Serie III, Bd 7 (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1975); Theodor W. Adorno and Hanns Eisler: *Komposition für den Film. Gesammelte Werke*, Serie III, Bd 4. (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1969).

by Karl Rankl, illustrates the general tone of songs that appealed for working-class unity:

Einheitsfrontlied

Verse 1

Wir sind gegen Krieg und Faschismus und Not,
Wir stehen im Kampfe für Freiheit und Brot.
Wir schließen die Reihen, marschieren vereint,
Wir schlagen vereint den gemeinsam Feind!

Die Einheitsfront ist marschbereit,
Und was uns trennt, das fliegt bei seit!
Wer mit marschiert in Stadt und Land.⁸⁶

*We are against war, fascism and poverty,
We stand in the struggle for freedom and bread,
We close ranks, and march united,
We battle the same enemy together!*

*The united front is ready to march,
And what separates us, flies aside
Who marches with us in town and country*

The lyrics are clear and unequivocal, stating the need to ‘close ranks and march united’, whilst defining ‘war, fascism and poverty’ as the common enemies of Communist and Social Democrat alike. Such lyrics are notable for they directly reflect the situation on the streets, as the Nazi challenge to the existing social order increased rapidly. How the Social Democrats reacted to such calls after months of being hysterically labelled ‘Social Fascists’, particularly when confronted with the lyric ‘what separates us flies aside’ is unknown, but so late in the day such sentiments must have been hard to swallow.

Verse 2

Wir fragen euch nicht nach Verband und Partei,
Wir fragen nur: Seid ihr im Kampfe dabei?
Ob parteilos, Kommunist,
Sozialdemokrat,
Wir rufen euch auf zur gemeinsamen Tat!⁸⁷

*We do not ask you about your association and party
We only ask: Are you in the struggle?
Whether impartial, Communist, Social Democrat
We call you to joint action!*

The second verse continues the conciliatory theme of the first, making a direct appeal to all workers, irrespective of their current political affiliation, to join together to defeat the Nazi menace. This is in striking contrast to the previously partisan nature of working-class politics, amply demonstrated by the very different lyrical content of Communist and Social Democrat songs. As subsequent events

⁸⁶ Inge Lammel, *Mit Gesang wird gekämpft: Lieder der Arbeiterbewegung* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1967), pp. 62-63.

⁸⁷ Lammel, *Mit Gesang wird gekämpft*, pp. 62-63.

were to demonstrate, such appeals failed to influence the course of events in the final days of the Weimar Republic.

6.8: Sport, Women, Youth and Protest Song

Working class politics did not end at the factory gates: throughout the years of the Weimar Republic many clubs and associations, including sports organisations, became hubs of political activity. This sphere of political activism also included groups that mobilised women and youths for political activities, offering numerous opportunities for the deployment and utilization of working-class protest song. Many sports clubs and athletic associations had continued to function largely as before throughout most of the Weimar Republic and featured their own range of working-class protest songs, the majority of which dated from before the First World War.⁸⁸ Indeed, the content of the main songbook of the most important gymnastic association entitled *Der Freie Turner*, (The Free Gymnast), which was published between 1894-1925, had remained wholly unchanged since 1908.⁸⁹ However the increasing political polarization prevalent in the later stages of the Weimar Republic meant that as each wing radicalised, the relative harmony of Social Democratic and Communist members within many labour movement organizations began to crumble. This process was accelerated by the Communists adoption of the policy of ‘social fascism’, which effectively equated the conduct of the Social Democrats with that of the Nazi fascist movement. Such tensions inevitably surfaced between individual Communists and Social Democrats within these sports associations, and in a move similar to that of their formal singing associations, from 1928 workers formed separate clubs which were divided along party political lines.⁹⁰

In the case of sports clubs, the issue was assisted by the decision of the leadership of the *Arbeiter Turn und Sportbund* (Workers Athletic and Sport League), the socialists’ umbrella organisation for sport, to expel 60,000 radical workers during 1928-1929 as they decided to try and keep politics and sports in strictly segregated spheres. Whilst the vast majority, some 1.2 million workers,

⁸⁸ AdK, A32 Series – *Der Freie Turner* (1894-1925). This was the standard songbook of the non-communist sports and athletic associations.

⁸⁹ In 1908 *Der Freie Turner* was so successful that it was published in two separate versions, with total sales of 60,000 copies that year alone:

AdK, A32e, *Der Freie Turner* (Leipzig: Frey und Backhaus (Karl Frey), 1908);

AdK, A32e, *Der Freie Turner* (Leipzig: Backhaus und Diettrich (Fritz Wildung), 1908).

⁹⁰ Inge Lammel, ed., *Lieder der Deutschen Turn und Sport Bewegung, Das Lied im Kampf Geboren*, Heft 9, Deutsche Akademie der Künste (Leipzig: VEB Friedrich Hofmeister, 1966), pp. 8-9.

continued their traditional activities supported by a canon of songs that were largely unchanged, Communist workers set about building an association that represented their more radical political beliefs. Eventually these ideas crystallised, after the formation of a number of short-lived associations, with the creation of the *Kampfgemeinschaft für Rote Sportseinheit* (Fighting Community for Red Sports Unity) in 1930. The aims of this new association were to use the medium of sport to make people aware of the dangers of fascism, and to satisfy the demand for *Wehrsports* ('defensive sports'), which came mostly from former members of the now prohibited combat leagues. Their songs were drawn from all ranks of the Communist movement, most notably those of the RFB and from the *Agitprop Truppen*. In addition each club produced their own songs, as well as continuing to sing the most popular songs of the international labour movement. By the early part of 1933, just prior to the Nazi seizure of power, this association counted some 200,000 members.⁹¹

The banning of many Communist political organizations after the events of May 1929 drove many former party activists underground. The practice of coming together at marches and demonstrations to sing songs that were often also banned, or whose legality was entirely subject to the whim of the local police commander, was a dangerous one that often invited large fines or terms of imprisonment. However there were alternatives: following the banning of the RFB, many former members sought to continue their agitational activities in secret, and were thus quickly admitted into the new Communist sports organizations. As members of athletic clubs, football teams and cycling groups, former RFB-activists kept themselves physically fit, and the disciplined nature of these sports clubs was the perfect cover for their covert quasi-military activities.⁹²

However it was not only the Communists who used their sporting associations to battle for control of the streets as the political and economic situation in Weimar Germany deteriorated further. In 1931 the *Reichsbanner* united with the sports organisations from both the SPD and the ADGB, to form the *Eisernen Front* (Iron Front). This combined force, imbued with a primarily defensive ethos, in contrast to the aggressive offensive attitude of the SA, was primarily tasked with protecting Social Democratic residential areas, and in doing so it fought many pitched street battles with Communists and Nazis alike.⁹³

⁹¹ Lammel, ed., *Lieder der Deutschen Turn und Sport Bewegung*, pp. 8-9.

⁹² Rosenhaft, *Beating the Fascists*, p. 129.

⁹³ Berger, *Social Democracy and the Working Class*, p. 103.

Although women had been extensively politicised by their participation in workplace strikes and in food protests during the First World War, they remained marginalized and underrepresented in the post-war social and political organizations of both major left-wing parties.⁹⁴ The political activities of women were restricted to those seen as being within the ‘female sphere’ – welfare policies, children’s rights, sexual reform and women’s rights - and women often featured prominently in the running of children’s organizations. The Social Democrats in particular maintained a duality of calling for women’s rights on the one hand, and supporting a vicious campaign against the so-called ‘double earners’ (*Doppelverdienertum*) on the other: the latter campaign sought to push married women out of the workplace in order to make room for men.⁹⁵

The emergence of the Communist Party during the 1920s had done little to attract women, despite its championing of equal pay, and its stated belief that housework was oppressive and a major factor in preventing female emancipation. However loudly such views were expounded, they did not sit well with the traditional Communist view of the unashamedly male nature of violent physical struggle, which dominated the lyrics of Communist working-class political protest songs.⁹⁶ Thus, during the Weimar Republic, as in earlier times, songs that featured an individual and distinctive role for women in the struggle for working class political rights remained noticeably lacking.⁹⁷

However, that is not to say that women and girls were not mobilized in the course of that struggle, or that song did not feature as a part of their political education during the Weimar years. In November 1925 the Communists women’s association, the RFMB, had been formed under the auspices of the RFB. The main task of this new association was to enlighten women and girls about the nature and causes of imperialist war, to promote the supposed achievements of the Soviet Union in light of Social Democratic and nationalist criticism, and to win new members to their cause. This song, *Das Frauenlied* (‘Womens Song’) was popular on marches and demonstrations and highlights many of the most prominent concerns of the RFMB:

⁹⁴ Berger, *Social Democracy and the Working Class*, p. 121.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 122.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 110; Rosenhaft, *Beating the Fascists*, pp. 151-154.

⁹⁷ See Chapter 4, pp. 142-44. See also: Karl Adamek, *Lieder der Arbeiterbewegung: Ein Liederbilderlesebuch* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Büchergilde Gutenberg, 1981), pp. 132-33; Adamek, *Politisches Lied heute*, p. 35; Rosenhaft, *Beating the Fascists*, pp. 151-154.

6.8.1 Frauenlied

Arbeiterschwestern, habt ihr schon
vernommen
Unsern Kampfruf: „Stärkt die rote
Front“!
Frauen gehen unter roter Fahnen,
In die Herzen neues Leben kommt.
Aus den Küchen, den Fabriken
Strömt der Frauen mut'ge Schar.

Und aus Qualen, Not und Sorgen
Wächst ein Wille stolz und
wunderbar.⁹⁸

*Worker-sisters, have you already
heard?
Our battle cry, ‘Strengthen the Red
Front’!
Women go under red flags,
In hearts new life comes.
Out of the kitchen, the factories,
Stream a courageous multitude of
women.
And out of torment, need and worry,
Grows a will, proud and wonderful.*

This song views the role of women as supporting the political struggle of men, as shown by the cry to ‘strengthen the Red Front’. It offers no hint of a distinctive political role for women, noting only that they possessed great numbers, and that the hardship of their existence, both working and running the family home left them tormented and worried due to poverty, but this song also salutes their courage in the face of such adversity. Interestingly the authorities also seemed to take the view that the mobilization of women and girls was politically benign, as the RFMB was the only one of the RFB’s organizations that escaped the ban on its activities in May 1929.

As already noted, during 1924 the Communist party had created its own defence organisation, the RFB, which by the end of that year already possessed its own youth section, the *Rote Jungfront* (Red Youth Front). This new association was charged with ‘organising youth agitation against militarism and fascism’.⁹⁹ As the social, political and economic crisis deepened it became clear that the conservative and organised approach of Social Democracy to political activism seemingly held little appeal for the young; in 1930 only a paltry 8% of the party’s membership were below the age of 25.¹⁰⁰ Thus youth membership became particularly important to the Communist party, not least because they were primarily responsible for the activities on the streets, which largely comprised violent clashes with their political opponents.

⁹⁸ Lammel, *Lieder des Roten Frontkämpferbundes*, p. 80.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

¹⁰⁰ Miller and Potthoff, *A History of German Social Democracy*, p. 99.

6.9: The End of the Weimar Republic

Despite the huge pressure now being brought to bear on the ranks of oppositional singers, many groups, particularly from Communist workers' organisations, still endeavoured to take their protests onto the streets. One of the last to do so successfully before the Nazi assumption of power at the end of January 1933 were the doughty Agitprop troupes, despite having been formally banned the previous year. This song, *Kampf dem Hunger* ('the Struggle against Hunger') derived from a programme intended to raise awareness of the hardships being suffered by striking workers: indeed, the unemployed and their families were among the last protesters to appear on the streets of Germany in January 1933:

6.9.1 Kampf den Hunger

Korn verkommt in vollen Speichern,
Viele Zimmer ungezählt,
Daß die Reichen sich bereichern,
Während uns der Hunger quält.

*Grain degenerates in full storehouses
Countless rooms full,
That the rich profits from it
Whilst hunger torments us.*

Refrain:

Kämpft, Proleten, schließt die Reihen,
Setzt euch kühn zur Wehr!
Fordre, Arbeitslosenheer:
Brot, Karoffeln, Kohle her!

*Fight, proletariat, close ranks,
Set boldly to arms!
Demand, army of the unemployed,
Bread, potatoes, coal here.*

Berge von Kartoffelhaufen
Lagern und verfaulnen schon.
Der Prolet kann nichts mehr kaufen
Von der Stütze und dem Lohn!¹⁰¹

*Piled mountains of potatoes,
Are rotting in store,
The proletariat cannot buy anymore,
From the dole and from his wages.*

Refrain

As well as espousing future political goals, protest song could be deployed to deal with more pressing situations. This song, *Kampf den Hunger*, sharply criticises the inability of the state to provide sufficient food during the economic crisis that blighted the final years of the Weimar Republic. The problem of food shortages was exacerbated by very high levels of unemployment: this meant people who had exhausted their entitlement to unemployment benefit struggled to afford even basic foodstuffs. This song laments the fact that food is being hoarded by the rich whilst workers and their families starve, and demands that the working class close ranks once more, this time to obtain supplies of such staples as bread, potatoes and coal as a basic right of existence. Finally it attacks an economic system that allows

¹⁰¹ Lammel, *Lieder der Agitprop-Truppen vor 1945*, pp.36-37.

potatoes to rot because the state cannot support the unemployed with sufficient funds to purchase them.

Despite their commitment to the political interests of their own milieu, the Nazi seizure of power on 30 January 1933 inevitably spelt the end of Social Democrat and Communist efforts to control the streets, and of their use of song to promote and reinforce such efforts, although activities continued in a covert fashion thereafter. Soon however, the formalized singing movement was progressively disassembled or forcibly integrated into Nazi organisations as part of the wider process of *Gleichschaltung*, whilst individual conductors and singers who fell foul of the new regime and its policies were swiftly arrested.¹⁰² Radical movements such as the banned *Agitprop* troupes and the surviving remnants of the illegal-RFB were forced into exile in countries such as Czechoslovakia.¹⁰³ Thus, as during the time of the Anti-Socialist Law, many new songs were composed and published abroad, and ironically and somewhat belatedly, Communist songwriters used this period of exile to make fulsome appeals for working-class unity.¹⁰⁴ That these came too late quickly became apparent as Germany laboured under a progressively more tyrannical regime. It would be to a much-changed Germany that those workers' singers lucky enough to survive the Nazi scourge would return some twelve years later and only then would the consequences of the failure of the political representatives of the working class to stem the tide of fascism become painfully obvious.

Conclusion

Even after the revolutionary upheaval of the immediate post-war years had subsided, the Weimar Republic continued to present the working class with many political, social and economic challenges. By 1924 the situation in Germany seemed to have stabilized somewhat: the Ruhr Occupation had been effectively brought to an end, and a new less stringent package of reparations had been agreed to reduce the strain on Germany's economy, which combined with effective measures to control inflation had begun to stimulate substantial foreign investment. However fundamental structural weaknesses lay just below the surface that would have dire consequences by the close of the decade, not least for the working class.

¹⁰² Fuhr, *Proletarische Musik in Deutschland*, pp. 160-170.

¹⁰³ Lammel, *Lieder der Agitprop-Truppen vor 1945*, p.18.

¹⁰⁴ Typical of those songbooks published in exile is this example from Paris: AdK, A98, W. Brandmeier, ed., *Alles Singt Mit: Sammlung Neuer und Alter Kampflieder*, compiled by the Kampfgemeinschaft der Arbeitersänger an der Saar (Paris: Gleb und Felix, 1934).

The nature of the political violence that had dogged the Weimar Republic since its formation also changed markedly during 1924. The failure of both Communist and nationalist insurrections the previous year ended the immediate threat to the republic's fundamental stability and presaged a reorientation of political violence along the lines of 'clash violence'. This development saw activists from the principal political parties of the left and right engage in a concerted and prolonged battle for control of the streets. Opponents' political meetings were disturbed and their political marches and demonstrations were often subjected to brutal physical challenges. In all of these occurrences, political protest song took a prominent role, one that was augmented by the establishment of the politically militant combat leagues.

The radicalisation of Communist politics continued apace throughout the Weimar years, and this manifested itself in the tone and content of the political songs it produced. As well as validating the use of violence to achieve their political aims, most notably the overthrow of the democratic republic and its replacement with Soviet style 'dictatorship of the proletariat', Communist songs viciously attacked their Social Democratic rivals. Although there were songs drawn from the formative years of the labour movement that were sung by Social Democrats and Communists alike, in general both sides also drew on their own distinct canon of songs which reflected their own diverse political views. This schism mirrored the divergent political views held by both passive and radical members of workers' political associations and labour movement organisations, differences that would eventually manifest themselves in a split during 1928.

These differences would be exacerbated by the Communists adopting the policy of seeing their Social Democratic rivals as 'social fascists', a move that was extensively supported in the lyrics of their songs. Additionally the events of May 1929 were to reinforce the ideological divide between the two parties. Whilst the Social Democrats would largely cling to their pre-war canon of songs, the Communists drew upon their radical street activities, not least through the efforts of their newly formed *Agitprop Truppen*, to bring song to a new level of political criticism. These groups would be largely responsible for bringing political agitation directly to the individual worker, both at home and on the streets, through the '*Hof und Haus*' agitational programme. This battle for the streets gained even greater significance as the world economic crisis struck Germany sharply at the end of the decade. Street violence increased and the labour movement deployed its organizations to offer support for those workers suffering the economic and social

effects of mass unemployment. During this crisis, songs in support of critical election campaigns helped to inform the wider population of the respective views of the main parties of labour.

The radicalisation of the labour movement after 1928 also manifested itself in the establishment of separate Communist sports associations, which increasingly became the refuge of those activists affected by the ban on many Communist organisations in May 1929. Thereafter the emphasis switched from sporting pursuits to readying men for the active defence of their own districts. Although women were assigned no distinctive role, as noted by the absence of songs portraying purely female political aims, they were active in supporting the activism of the wider labour movement. This stood in contrast to the views expressed in the songs of the youth movement, which underlined the vital importance of young people both in terms of street based agitation and their leading role in any future political revolution.

Critically for the survival of the republic, attempts to unify the efforts of the Social Democrats and the Communists at this late stage, exemplified by the composition of 'unity songs', went largely unheeded. Workers' singing would become subject to increasing levels of repression even before the Nazi takeover, and that event would formally mark the beginning of the end for the public activities of both Communist and Social Democrat workers' singers. Twelve long years of suffering would follow before they began to emerge into the open once more.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ Adamek, *Politisches Lied heute*, pp. 55-64.

Conclusion
Striking a Discordant Note

This thesis has examined the role played by protest song in the development of the political culture of Germany's industrial working class between 1844-1933. It has sought to determine how and why song was regarded, both by industrial workers themselves and their political representatives, as an effective medium of articulating and communicating socialist thoughts and ideas. In doing so, by investigating what was being sung, when, and by whom, this work has also established what the main political, social and economic changes were that influenced the creation and use of protest song during the period 1844-1933. Additionally, this study has examined the impact of repressive measures on protest song, noting the challenges that politicised singing brought to successive governments and authority figures under a number of disparate regimes.

Song provided the working class with an effective means of communicating socialist ideas. Songs that had lyrics that were easy to remember, and that were often based on existing well-known melodies, were effective in communicating those messages of protest, support, outrage and solidarity, as suited each particular situation. Song could be transmitted orally, both from place to place and down through successive generations, thereby facilitating a sense of a shared commonality of political purpose amongst those by whom it was remembered and sung. Song was widely adaptable as a method of political protest: lyrics could be made and remade to suit changing political, social and economic situations. This flexibility meant that songs could appear, lie dormant, and then reappear, adapted in whole or in part as necessary, to suit another political situation. Again, familiarity with the lyrics and melody of an existing protest song helped to facilitate its wider transmission and enhance the impact of its message.

Oral transmission provided a modicum of security during repressive times: with nothing written down, and the song in the worker's head, hummed or sung quietly out of earshot, retained an ability to sustain a tangible element of resistance that the authorities could not effectively suppress. At times of repression by the authorities such defiance, though restricted in its physical impact, could nevertheless maintain working-class resistance and boost morale. Additionally, the printed word facilitated the use and dissemination of song as a weapon of protest: lyrics were often publicized through the large network of working-class

newspapers and periodicals, whilst cheap proletarian songbooks were readily available from the earliest days of the labour movement.

Song had long been a useful medium of communicating thoughts, news and opinions to a wide audience. From the early-modern period, song was used to carry the news from village to village, either through public singing or the through the production of cheap song-sheets. By the 1840s, increasing economic hardship led workers to resort to rioting and widespread disorder, which was often directed against their employers. Out of this unrest came the first *Arbeiterlieder*, which, though describing the poverty and misery of the life of the German worker, did not offer any solutions, revolutionary or otherwise, to their problems.

The failure of the 1848 Revolution enabled the resurgent authorities to repress dissent most harshly, and the freedom to create and sing protest song suffered accordingly. Nevertheless, this repression served only to harden workers' anger at the injustice of their position within German society, and filled them with a new resolve: hereafter, industrial workers sought to act for themselves on the political stage. This decision, together with a growing recognition of the power they wielded as the providers of labour within a rapidly industrializing society, eventually led the working class to form their own political parties during the 1860s. Alongside these new parties and trades unions, numerous working-class singing associations were formed, stimulating the creation of new political songs to disseminate the views and to boost the membership of these emerging political parties. These early party songs emphasized the element of struggle as the political representatives of the working class sought to establish themselves in a society increasingly hostile to socialism. In response to their growing political strength, and ever more fearful of a proletarian revolution, the authorities began to increase the amount of legislation opposing the creation and performance of protest song, a process that was codified in the wide-ranging provisions of the Anti-Socialist Law, introduced in 1878.

Prior to the enactment of the Anti-Socialist Law, political song had reached the highpoint of its pre-war radicalism. During their period of exile, socialists continued to print songbooks and pamphlets that offered direct and outspoken condemnation of the Kaiser and his political system, many of which were overtly revolutionary in their language. Once the Anti-Socialist Law had been permitted to lapse, these contentious songs were removed from those songbooks sanctioned by the labour movement, and often replaced by others that reverted to the language of

the mid-nineteenth century, protesting about social conditions and calling for equal rights, as opposed to espousing outright revolution.

Social Democratic songbook editors argued that the removal of radical songs was an attempt to stave off further repressive measures by the authorities, rather than a wholesale rejection of political radicalism. However, it is true that, whilst retaining a revolutionary outlook, at least as far as its published political programme was concerned, despite its fiery rhetoric the Social Democratic party itself steadily became more reformist in its everyday political practices. From the last decade of the nineteenth century, songs began to appear demanding specific reforms, such as equal voting rights and a restriction in the length of the working day. Increasingly after the turn of the century, and in particular as the spectre of war loomed ever larger, radical socialists saw this development both as a dilution of the potential of song to foment proletarian revolution and a misuse of a medium which they argued should be intensively deployed to create, reflect and promote revolutionary ideas.

However, the working class protest song canon was never solely confined to the content of songbooks. Indeed, whilst the content of officially sanctioned songbooks remained largely unchanged from the middle of the first decade of the twentieth century, the growing industrial unrest in Germany at this time found itself supported and publicised by other, much more radical, protest songs. These songs were often created spontaneously and contemporaneously with strikes, mass demonstrations and other expressions of working-class political unrest. Often these songs were created anonymously by workers actively involved in the disputes they described, printed on flyers and distributed at the factory gates and on the streets. However the very transient nature of their creation and dissemination, as they often only lasted for the duration of the particular dispute, coupled with their often unashamedly radical nature, meant that relatively few survived to be recorded. Nevertheless, it should be remembered that throughout the period up until 1933, the content of songbooks was not wholly definitive in gauging the radicalism of Germany's industrial working class.

During the the First World War, strict military censorship by the authorities actively sought to repress any songs critical of the war and the aims of Germany's ruling elites: once again it was left to anonymously created *Spottlieder*, and to the covert singing of anti-war songs in the barracks and trenches, to express working-class discontent. The end of the war saw Germany descend into revolutionary chaos, as the new Social Democratic government fought off a succession of

challenges to its authority, and was not reticent in harnessing the forces of the previous regime to achieve its aims. The Social Democrats, fearful of a full scale Bolshevik revolution, believed that by establishing a democratic republic they had achieved their most important political objective, moreover one that would allow them to introduce further reforms. However in contrast, the nascent Communist party believed in the need for an outright socialist revolution and hated the Social Democrats for their advocacy of parliamentary democracy.

This fundamental divergence of political opinion would have a profound effect on the production of working-class political song, leading to the emergence of two distinct canons that each supported their own particular political viewpoint. Whilst the Social Democrats believed that song should be used to celebrate their political achievements, Communists viewed it as a frontline weapon in an as yet unresolved political and ideological struggle. The Social Democrats thereafter drew on a canon of songs that were largely unchanged from pre-war days. Meanwhile the Communists introduced a whole new canon of political protest songs that eschewed the indirect language and natural metaphors that characterized Social Democratic songs in favour of hard hitting lyrics that clearly and unequivocally advocated proletarian revolution, many of which drew their ideas and imagery from revolutionary Russia.

The self-defence organizations that formed in the early years of the Weimar Republic spawned a diverse range of new compositions that directly supported their agitational role. As the years passed, working-class politics increasingly radicalised and polarised, sharpening the ideological divide between the Social Democrats and the Communists, and this manifested itself in the tone and content of the political songs that appeared. As well as encouraging the use of violence to achieve their political aims, Communist songs increasingly attacked their Social Democratic rivals. From the mid-1920s the Communists increasingly began to deploy song as part of their radical street activities, not least through the efforts of their newly formed *Agitprop Truppen*. Ultimately however, fundamental differences, and the concomitant lack of co-operation between the two parties, would result in the working class being denied any effective means of resisting the Nazis, with a catastrophic effect on the whole labour movement.

Throughout this study the wider developments outlined above have also been viewed from the perspectives offered to us at the outset by Willi Bleicher, namely those of working-class identity, gender and youth. Protest songs were used to create a working-class identity, one that was distinct from those extant within

German society. The shared act of singing, by those with a similar political outlook, was reinforced by a commonality in living and working conditions that engendered a resolve to improve their disadvantaged social and economic position. In this, protest song, in moderate and radical form, was a key factor in expressing working-class identity. Whilst the Social Democrats used the ballot box to harness the power and distinctiveness of the working class to achieve political reforms, Communists believed that a sense of 'class consciousness' would be created, a political awareness that would encourage the proletariat to organise and overthrow the existing social order.

The creation of protest song was undertaken in a largely male dominated arena. In both mainstream socialist parties, women were assigned no distinctive political role, as noted by the absence of songs portraying purely female political aims. This was indicative of a male dominated labour movement that remained focused on achieving its own political goals, and that remained generally hostile to the whole idea of the female industrial worker. Nevertheless, women were active in support of the wider labour movement, and songs, particularly Communist ones, often portrayed women as solid supporters of the aims and objectives of the party.

In contrast to their stance on the political role of women, views expressed in the songs of the socialist youth movement underlined the vital importance of young people in terms of street level agitation and their leading role in any future political revolution. In the immediate pre-war period, the effects of continuing working-class poverty had resulted in protest song being adopted by youth groups and sporting associations, many of which were affiliated to the mainstream Social Democratic party. Initially adopting the songs of the adult labour movement, the role of working-class youth in the political process, particularly after the war, was a key stimulant to creating new working-class songs. Social Democratic youth groups largely continued to use existing pre-war youth songs, but the Communists believed that as young people would be at the forefront of the hoped for proletarian revolution, new songs were required to underline their importance to the achievement of this goal.

However much this study has sought to illuminate differences between them, there were songs drawn from the formative years of the labour movement that were sung by Social Democrats and Communists alike. Also it would be wrong to assume that each worker restricted themselves to knowing only workers' songs: *Arbeiterlieder* formed only a part of a workers' canon, alongside drinking songs, humorous songs, folksongs and other popular melodies. Nor indeed were all

industrial workers card carrying Social Democrats or Communists, but the extent that protest song pervaded the socialist milieu would have meant that at the very least they would have been aware of their existence. To those who were politically active however, it was the protest songs of the working class that linked the experiences of everyday life to the wider political aims of the party, be it Social Democrat or Communist. Songs defined identity and underscored political affiliation, however uneven the ideas and programmes they espoused were received by the individual worker.

This study has above all tried to show that singing was not merely a peripheral leisure activity and the preserve of cosy singing associations, but a fundamental element of the everyday life of the politically conscious industrial worker. Indeed, the seriousness of the threat that working-class political song posed to the state can be gauged by the reaction of the authorities, whose repressive measures took many forms. However effective it may have seemed to those in authority, such repression failed to take into account the essential element inherent in all protest songs, namely the ability to be carried around in a persons' head. However intimidated a worker may have been they could always turn to song, as *Die Gedanken sind frei* ('Thoughts are Free'), noted earlier, demonstrates:

Die Gedanken sind frei

Die Gedanken sind frei, Wer kann sie erraten? Sie fliehen vorbei, Wie nächtliche Schatten; Kein Mensch kann sie wissen, Kein Kerker verschließen; Wer weiß was es sei? Die Gedanken sind frei.	<i>Thoughts are free Who can guess them? They fly on by Like night shadows, No person can know them, No jail can lock them up; Who knows what they are? Thoughts are free.¹</i>
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Song offered workers the opportunity to protest even in the most difficult of circumstances. Right throughout the period 1844-1933, workers were, in whole or in part, in dispute with those in authority. The nature of those in authority may have changed from the Wilhelmine Empire, through the First World War and into the political maelstrom that was the Weimar Republic, but song always retained its ability to register a protest with officialdom, to strike a discordant note.

¹ *Königsberger Arbeiterliederbuch* (Königsberg: [n.p.], 1848): see also Chapter 3, p.88.

Appendix A – Full Song Texts

Das Leuna Lied

Bei Leuna sind viele gefallen,
Bei Leuna floß Arbeiterblut.
Da haben zwei Rotgardisten,
Einander die Treue geschwör'n.

Sie schwuren einander die Treue,
Denn sie hatten einander so lieb,
„Sollt' einer von uns beiden fallen,
Schreibt der andre der Mutter 'nen
Brief.“

Da kam eine feindliche Kugel,
Die durchbohrte dem einen das Herz,
Für die Eltern, da war es ein Kummer,
Für den „Stahlhelm“, da war ein Scherz.

Und als nun die Schlacht war zu Ende,
Und sie kehrten zurück ins Quartier,
Da hatt' sich so vieles verändert,
Er nahm einen Bleistift und schrieb auf
Papier.

Und er schrieb mit zitternden Händen,
Er schrieb es mit tränendem Blick:
„Euer Sohn ist vom ‘Stahlhelm’
erschossen,
Lieg bei Leuna, kehrt nimmer zurück“.

O „Stahlhelm“, dir schwören wir Rache
Für vergossenes Arbeiterblut!
Es kommen die Zeiten der Rache,
Dann bezahlt ihr's mit eigenem Blut.¹

*In Leuna many fell,
In Leuna, workers' blood flowed.
There, two red guards
Swore loyalty to one another.*

*They swore loyalty to one another,
For they had such love for one another,
'Should one of us fall,
The other will write his mother a letter'.*

*There came an enemy bullet,
That bored through one of their hearts,
For the parents, that was grief,
For the 'Steelhelmets', that was a joke.*

*And as now the battle was at an end,
And they returned to their barracks,
There so much had changed,
He took a pencil and wrote on paper.*

*He wrote with a shaking hand,
He wrote it with watering eyes,
'Your son has been shot by the
'Steelhelmets'
He lies at Leuna, he is not coming back.*

*O, 'Steelhelmets', we swear revenge on
you,
For spilt workers' blood!
The times of revenge are coming,
Then you will pay with your own blood.*

¹ Inge Lammel, ed., *Lieder der Partei Das Lied im Kampf Geboren*, Heft 10, Deutsche Akademie der Künste (Leipzig: VEB Friedrich Hofmeister, 1971), pp. 17-18.

Das Weberlied

Im düsten Auge keine Träne,
Sie sitzen am Webstuhl und fletschen die
Zähne,
Deutschland, wir weben dein
Leichertuch,
Wir weben hinein den dreifachen Fluch –
Wir weben, wir weben!

Ein Fluch dem Gotte, zu dem wir gebeten,
In Winterskälte und Hungersnöten,

Wir haben vergebens, gehofft und geharrt,
Er hat uns geäfft und gefoppt und
genarrt –
Wir weben, wir weben!

Ein Fluch dem König, dem König der
Reichen,
Den unser Elend nicht konnte erweichen,

Der den letzten Groschen von uns erpreßt,

Und uns wie Hunde erschießen lässt –
Wir weben, wir weben!

Ein Fluch den falschen Vaterlande
Wo nur gedeihen Schmach und Schande

Wo jede Blume früh geknickt
Wo Fäulnis und Moder den Wurm
erquickt,
Wir weben, wir weben!

Das Schiffchen fliegt, der Webstuhl
kracht,
Wir weben emsig Tag und Nacht –
Altdeutschland, wir weben dein
Leichertuch,
Wir weben hinein den dreifachen Fluch
Wir weben, wir weben²

*In sombre eyes no tears,
Grinding their teeth, they sit at weaving:*

*‘O Germany, we weave your shroud,
We’re weaving a threefold curse in it –
We’re weaving, we’re weaving!*

*A curse on the god we prayed to, kneeling
With cold in our bones, with hunger
reeling;
We waited and hoped, in vain persevered,
He scorned us and duped us, mocked and
jeered –
We’re weaving, we’re weaving!*

*A curse on the king, on the king of the
rich,
Who hardens his heart at our
supplication,
Who wrings the last penny out of our
hides
And lets us be shot like dogs besides –
We’re weaving, we’re weaving!*

*A curse on this false fatherland, teeming
With nothing but shame and dirty
scheming,
Where every flower is crushed in a day,
Where worms are regaled on rot and
decay –
We’re weaving, we’re weaving!*

*The shuttle flies, the loom creaks loud,
Night and day we weave your shroud –
Old Germany, we weave your shroud,

We’re weaving a threefold curse in it,
We’re weaving, we’re weaving*

² Heinrich Heine, *The Complete Poems of Heinrich Heine: A Modern English Version*, ed. by Hal Draper (Boston: Suhrkamp/Insel Publishers, 1982)

Robert-Blum Lied

Ja, frühmorgens zwischen vier und
fünfen,
Da öffnet sich das Brandenburger Tor,
Die Händ' am Rücken festgebunden
Tritt Robert Blum mit festem Schritt
hervor.

Die schweren Ketten rasseln an seinen
Händen,
Sein treuer Freund, der ihm zur Seite
steht,
Der Henkersknecht steht in der Mitte,
Er liest ihm jetzt sein Todesurteil vor.

„Ja, meine Herrn, ich bin bereit zu
sterben,
ich geb' mein Leben für die Freiheit
hin.
Nur eines liegt mir schwer am Herzen,
Das ist mein heißgeliebtes Weib, mein
Kind.

Hier diesen Brief, den gebt ihr
meinem Freunde
Und diesen Ring, dem heißgeliebten
Weib,
Und diese gold'ne Uhr, die kleine,
Die gebt ihr meinem einz'gen Sohn,
dem Heinz”.

Der erste Schuß traf ihn in seine
Schläfe,
Der zweite in sein treues Herz-
So starb der erste Freiheitskämpfer,
der erste Freiheitskämpfer Robert
Blum³

Yes early morning, between four and five,
The Brandenburg Gate opens,
Hands tied behind his back,
Robert Blum, strides forward with firm
steps

The heavy chains rattle on his hands,
His faithful friend stands by his side,
The hangman's servant stands in the
middle,
He reads him his death sentence.

'Yes, gentlemen, I am ready to die,
I give up my life for freedom.
Only one thing lies heavy on my heart,
That is my beloved wife, my child.

Here, give this letter to my friend,
And this ring to my beloved wife,
And this gold watch, the small one,
Give it my only son Heinz.

The first shot struck him in his temple,
the second in his true heart,
So died the first freedom fighter,
the first freedom fighter, Robert Blum'

³ Inge Lammel, ed., *Lieder der Revolution von 1848, Das Lied im Kampf Geboren*, Heft 1, Deutsche Akademie der Künste (Leipzig: VEB Friedrich Hofmeister, 1957), pp. 15-16.

Die Arbeitsmänner
(Wer schafft das Gold zutage?)

Wer schafft das Gold zutage?
 Wer hämmert Erz und Stein?
 Wer webet Tuch und Seide?
 Wer bauet Korn und Wein?
 Wer gibt den Reichen all ihr Brot
 Und lebt dabei in bitterer Not?

Das sind die Arbeitsmänner,
 Das Proletariat!

Wer plagt vom frühen Morgen
 Sich bis zum späten Nacht?
 Wer schafft für andere Schätze,

Bequemlichkeit und Pracht?
 Wer treibt allein das Weltenrad
 Und hat dafür kein Recht im Staat?

Das sind die Arbeitsmänner,
 Das Proletariat!

Wer war von je geknechtet
 Von der Tyrannenbrut?
 Wer mußte für sie kämpfen
 Und opfern oft sein Blut?
 O Volk, erkenn' daß du es bist,
 Das immerfort betrogen ist!
 Wacht auf, ihr Arbeitsmänner!
 Auf Proletariat!

Rafft eure Kraft zusammen,
 Und schwört zur Fahne rot!
 Kämpft mutig für die Freiheit!
 Erkämpft euch bessres Brot!
 Beschleunigt der Despoten Fall!
 Schafft Frieden dann dem Weltenall!
 Zum Kampf, ihr Arbeitsmänner!
 Auf, Proletariat!

Ihr habt die Macht in Händen,
 Wenn ihr nur einig seid
 Drum haltet fast zusammen
 Dann seid ihr bald befreit.
 Drängt Sturmschritt vorwärts in den
 Streit,
 Wenn auch der Feind Kartätschen speit!
 Dann siegt, ihr Arbeitsmänner,
 Das Proletariat!⁴

*Who brings the gold to the surface?
 Who hammers ore and stone?
 Who weaves cloth and silk?
 Who grows grain and wine?
 Who gives the rich all their bread?
 And lives the same time in bitter need?*

*The working men do,
 The proletariat!*

*Who slaves away from early morning
 Until late at night?
 Who works for someone else's treasures,
 Comfort and beauty?
 Who alone drives the world around?
 And has no rights in the state at the same
 time?*

*That is the working men,
 The proletariat!*

*Who has been eternally enslaved,
 by the tyrant's brood,
 Who had to fight for them,
 And often sacrifice his blood?
 O people, recognise that you are they, that
 are continually deceived,
 Wake up, you working men!
 Proletariat, arise!*

*Gather your strength together,
 And swear to the red flag,
 Fight bravely for freedom
 Fight for better bread!
 Speed the despots' fall,
 Then create peace in all the world,
 To battle working men!
 Proletariat, arise!*

*You have the power in your hands,
 If only you are united,
 Therefore, hold fast together,
 Then you are soon free.
 Press forwards into the quarrel at the
 double,
 Even if the enemy spews grapeshot!*

*Then victory, you working men!
 The proletariat!*

⁴ Karl Adamek, *Politisches Lied heute: Zur Soziologie des Singens von Arbeiterliedern* (Essen: Klartext Verlag, 1987), pp. 25-26; Adamek, *Lieder der Arbeiterbewegung*, p. 106.

Wacht auf, Verdammte dieser Erde

Wacht auf, Verdammte dieser Erde,
 Die stets man noch zum Hungern zwingt
 Das Recht wie Glut im Kraterherde
 Nun mit Macht zum Durchbruch dringt.
 Reinen Tisch macht mit dem Bedränger!
 Heer der Sklaven, wache auf!
 Ein nichts zu sein, tragt es nicht länger,
 Alles zu werden, strömt zuhauf!

*Arise you damned of the earth,
 You prisoners of starvation!
 The right like a volcanic glow,
 Is about to erupt with force.
 Clean out the oppressor
 Arise you army of slaves!
 Bear your nullity no longer
 Become everything – unite!*

Chorus

Völker, hört die Signale!
 Auf, zum letzten Gefecht!
 Die Internationale
 Erkämpft das Menschenrecht

*People, hear the signal,
 Arise, for the last battle
 The International
 Fight for the Rights of Man!*

Es rette uns kein höh'res Wesen,
 Kein Gott, kein Kaiser, noch Tribun
 Uns aus dem Elend zu erlösen
 Können wir nur selber tun!
 Leeres Wort: des armen Rechte”
 Leeres Wort: des Reichen Pflicht
 Unmündigt nennt man uns Knechte,
 Duldet die Schmach länger nicht!

*No higher being can save us,
 No God, no Kaiser nor tribune.
 Saving us from misery,
 We ourselves alone must do.
 Empty phrase: ‘Rights of the poor!’
 Empty phrase ‘noblesse oblige’
 Dependent, servile they call us
 Bear that shame no longer now!*

Chorus

In Stadt und Land, ihr Arbeitsleute,
 Wir sind die stärkste Partei’
 Die Müssiggänger schiebt beiseite!
 Diese Welt muss unser sein;
 Unser Blut sei nicht mehr der Raben
 Und der mächtigen Geier Frass!
 Erst wenn wir sie vertrieben haben
 Dann scheint die Sonn’ ohn’ Unterlass!

*In town and country, you workers,
 We are the strongest of parties.
 Push the loafers aside!
 This world must be ours
 Our blood shall no more feed
 The crows and mighty vultures
 Only when we’ve driven them out,
 Will the sun forever shine.⁵*

Chorus

⁵ Translation by Richard S. Levy.

Lied der Arbeiterinnen

Wir müssen schaffen früh am Morgen,
 Bis spät die Nacht herniedersinkt,
 Sodann uns in des Hauses Sorgen
 Noch neue Last und Mühe winkt.
 Für uns kein Ruhe gibt's, kein Rasten,
 Ist schwer des Mannes Bürde schon,
 Mißt man uns doppelt zu die Lasten
 Und obendrein um schlechter'n Lohn.

Wir wollen nicht als stolze Damen
 In seid'nen Kleidern müßig geh'n.
 Ein schönes Bild in gold'nem Rahmen,
 Das fromm und lieblich anzuseh'n.
 Wir wollen gern die Hände rühren
 Für uns're Lieben jederzeit.
 Doch zu des Hauses Wohlstand führen
 Soll ems'ger Frauen Tätigkeit.

Ihr Schwestern in der Arbeit Heere,
 Vernehmt auch ihr den Ruf der Zeit!
 Uns drückt dasselbe Los, das schwere,
 Das schon die Männer rief zum Streit.

Seit wie die Männer kämpfend stehen,
 Für einer besser'n Zukunft Glück.
 Seht rot die Freiheitsbanner wehen,
 Und bleibt länger nicht zurück.

Sprecht nicht vom „Schwächeren
 Geschlechte“!
 Sind wir zur Arbeit stark genug,
 Sind wir auch stark, für uns're Rechte
 Uns einzureih'n dem Kämpferzug.
 Ihr Männer, eilt, uns Raum zu geben!
 Laßt ab vom blöden Vorurteil!
 Der mut'gen Frauen Vorwärtsstreben,
 Es dient zu eurem eig'nem Heil.⁶

*We must work from early morning,
 Until late as the night sinks low,
 Thereupon breaks upon us the worries
 of the house, yet new loads and efforts
 There is no peace for us, no rest,
 The man's burden is already heavy
 But we're given a double load,
 And on top of that, worse wages.*

*We do not want, as proud women,
 To go about idly in silken dresses, A
 lovely picture in a golden frame,
 To view piously and lovingly.
 We happily move our hands,
 For our loved ones at all times
 Yet women's busy activity should lead
 to the wellbeing of the home,*

*You sisters in the worker's army,
 Also hear the call of the age!
 The same heavy pressing lot,
 That already calls men to the
 argument,
 Since like the man who stand and fight
 For better fortune in the future.
 See the red banner of freedom flutter,
 And don't stay back any longer.*

*Speak not of 'the weaker sex',
 If we are strong enough to work,
 We are also strong enough, to join
 the procession of fighters for our rights
 You men, hurry, give us room!
 End your stupid prejudice!
 The forwards striving of brave women,
 It serves to your own benefit.*

⁶ Karl Adamek, *Politisches Lied heute: Zur Soziologie des Singens von Arbeiterliedern* (Essen: Klartext Verlag, 1987), p. 35.

Bundeslied

Wenn Losungswort „Frisch auf“
erschallt,
Frisch auf in aller Welt,
dann zeigen wir durch unser Werk,
Was uns zusammenhält.
Wir wollen frei und einig sein,
Freiheit für jedermann
Wo man für Recht und Wahrheit
kämpft,
Sind all zeit wir voran!

Wir halten treu vereint zusammen
Frisch auf voran, frisch auf voran!
Des Volkes Freiheit zu erlangen,

Frisch auf, voran, frisch auf, voran,
Frisch auf!

Von Ort zu Ort, durch Wald und Feld,

Wir ziehen froh dahin:
Ein stetes Vorwärts drängt in uns,

Nicht ändert unsern Sinn
Ob Regen oder Sonnenschein
Ob drohende Gefahr
Für Volkes Freiheit kampfet stets

Die freie Radlerschar.

Chorus

Mit Herz und Hand, mit Mut und
Kraft,
Sind immer wir bestellt
Zu Kämpfen gegen jene Macht,
Die uns in Banden hält
Mit geistigen Waffen siegen wir,

Mit Aufklärung wohlan!
Darum tretet ein in unsre Reihen,
ihr Radler, Mann für Mann⁷

*When the watchword ‘awake’
rings out,
Awake in all the world,
Then we show through our work
What binds us together
We want to be free and united
Freedom for everyone
Where one fights for right and
truth
We are always at the fore!*

*We remain united,
Awake, onward, awake, onward!
To attain the freedom of the
people
Awake, onward, awake, onward,
Awake!*

*From place to place, through
wood and field,
We advance happily
A constant urge drives us
forward
Nothing changes our minds
Whether rain or sunshine
Whether threatening danger
Always fighting for the people’s
freedom
The free cycling troop*

*With heart and hand, with
courage and strength,
We are always ordered
To fight against that power
That keeps us in bonds,
We win with intellectual
weapons
With enlightenment onward!
Therefore step into our ranks
You cyclists, man for man*

⁷ *Der Berliner Verkehr-Zeitung*, I November 1895.

Es zog ein Rotgardist hinaus

Es zog ein Rotgardist hinaus,
 Er ließ sein Mütterlein zu Haus.
 Und als die Trennungsstunde kam,
 Er traurig von ihr Abschied nahm.
 Sie aber leise zu ihm spricht:
 'Spartakusmann, tu deine Pflicht'

Die blutig-heiße Schlacht begann,
 Sie aber wanken nicht.
 Sie wanken und sie weichen nicht,
 Tun bis zum Tode ihre Pflicht.
 Für die Fahne blutigrot
 Gehn sie mit Freuden in den Tod.

Bei Böllberg war die große Schlacht,
 Die roten Fahnen wehen.
 Davon erzählt kein dickes Buch,
 Was sich am elften Mai zutrug,
 Als eine kleine Heldenchar
 Für Spartakus gefallen war.

Der Fahnenträger fiel voran,
 Er war kaum achtzehn Jahr'.
 'Grüßt mir mein liebes Mütterlein,
 sie soll nicht weinen, nicht traurig sein;
 denn ich, ich fiel in blut'ger Schlacht,
 hab' Spartakus viel Her' gemacht'.⁸

*A red guard set forth,
 He left his mother at home.
 And as the hour of leaving came,
 He sadly took his departure,
 She quietly spoke to him:
 'Spartacusman, do your duty'.*

*The bloody-hot battle began,
 But they did not waver,
 They neither waver nor retreat,
 Did their duty until death.
 For the bloody-red flag
 They go with joy into death.*

*The great battle was at Bollberg,
 The red flag waved.
 No thick book tells
 What took place on the 11th May,
 As a small multitude of young
 heroes
 Fell for Spartacus.*

*The flag bearer fell at the forefront,
 He was barely eighteen years old,
 'Greetings to my beloved mother,
 she ought not to cry or be sad:
 because I, I fell in a bloody battle
 that has made many a Spartacus
 man.*

⁸ Inge Lammel, *Das Arbeiterlied* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Röderberg, 1973), pp. 147-49.

Der Rote Wedding

Links, links, links, links!
 Die Trommeln werden gerührt!
 Links, links, links, links!
 Der Rote Wedding marschiert
 Hier werden uns nicht gemeckert,
 hier gibt es Dampf,
 Denn uns're Parole ist Klassenkampf
 Nach blutiger Melodie!
 Wir betteln nicht mehr um
 Gerechtigkeit!
 Wir stehn zum entscheidenden
 Angriff bereit,
 Zur Vernichtung der Bourgeoisie!

Refrain
 Roter Wedding grüßt euch,
 Genossen!
 Haltet die Fäuste bereit!
 Haltet die roten Reihen geschlossen,
 Denn unser Tag ist nicht weit!
 Drohend stehen die Faschisten
 Drüben am Horizont!
 Proletarier, ihr müßt rüsten!
 Rot Front, Rot Front!

Links, links, links, links;
 Trotz Faschisten und Polizei!
 Links, links, links, links!
 Wir gedenken des Ersten Mai!
 Der herrschenden Klasse blut' ges
 Gesicht,
 Der Rote Wedding vergißt es nicht,
 Und die Schande der SPD!
 Sie woll'n uns das Fell über die
 Ohren ziehn!
 Doch wir verteidigen das rote Berlin,
 Die Vorhut der Roten Armee!

Refrain

Left, left, left, left!
The drums are stirring!
Left, left, left, left!
'Red Wedding' marches!
Here, we do not moan,
Here there is calm.
For our slogan is 'class struggle'
After bloody melody!
We no longer beg for justice!
We stand ready for the decisive attack,

To annihilate the bourgeoisie!

Red Wedding greets you, comrades!
Keep fists ready!
Keep the red ranks closed
For our day is not far!
The fascists stand threatening
There on the horizon!
Proletariat, you must arm,
Red front, red front!

Left, left, left, left;
Despite fascists and the police!
Left, left, left, left!
We remember the 1st May,
The bloody face of the ruling class,
Red Wedding does not forget it,
And the shame of the SPD!
They want us to pull the wool over our
eyes!
But we defend Red Berlin,
The vanguard of the Red Army!

Links, links, links, links,
 Die Fahne weht uns voran!
 Links, links, links!
 Der Rote Wedding tritt an!
 Wenn unser Gesang durch die
 Straßen braust, dann zittert der Feind
 vor der Arbeiterfaust!
 Denn die Arbeiterklasse erwacht!
 Wir stürzen die Säulen des
 Ausbeuterstaats
 Und gründen die Herrschaft des
 Proletariats.
 Kamaraden, erkämpft euch die
 Macht!⁹

*Left, left, left left,
 The flag flutters before us,
 Left, left, left left,
 Red Wedding steps up!
 When our song burst through the
 streets, then the enemy shakes before
 the workers fist!
 For the working class awakes!
 We overthrow the columns of the
 exploitation state,
 And establish the domination of the
 proletariat!
 Comrades, fight for power!*

Refrain

⁹ Lammel, ed., *Lieder der Partei*, pp. 82-83.

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