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The German Center Party from the November Revolution 1918 to the Adoption of the Weimar Constitution, August, 1919

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THE GERMAN CENTER PARTY FROM THE NOVEMBER REVOLUTION 1918
TO THE ADOPTION OF THE WEIMAR CONSTITUTION,
AUGUST, 1919

by

Sister M. Marcella Ripper, S. C. C.

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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LIFE

Sister M. Marcella (Anna C. Ripper) was born in St. Louis, Missouri on March 7, 1925.

She was received into the Congregation of the Sisters of Christian Charity in Wilmette, Illinois on August 21, 1941, making her temporary profession of vows on August 21, 1943 and final profession on August 20, 1949.

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From 1958-1965, Sister taught history and sociology at St. Gregory High School and Josephinum High School in Chicago. She was chairman of the Social Studies Department at Josephinum High School from 1963 to 1965. From 1965 to 1967, Sister M. Marcella has been a history instructor at Mallinckrodt College.

Beginning her graduate studies at Loyola University in the summer of 1958, she received her Master of Arts degree in February 1962. Her work on the doctoral program began in September 1962.

While teaching World History to homogeneous groups of freshmen at St. Gregory High School, Sister M. Marcella published an article called "Teaching the Slow Learners," Catholic School Journal, LXIII (November, 1963), 38-39.

PREFACE

This dissertation is a study of the German Catholic Center Party from the November Revolution 1918 to the adoption of the Weimar Constitution, August 1919. It attempts to determine the effectiveness of political Catholicism in helping to solve the problems of the chaotic conditions after the German Revolution of 1918 which witnessed the overthrow of the empire, thrones, army, and dynasties. Besides examining the socio-economic composition of the Party, this study endeavors to delineate the Party's ideology and program in adjusting to the new revolutionary conditions as an active member in the Weimar Coalition government. The focal point of consideration in this study is the role of the Center in formulating the three major tasks undertaken by the National Assembly: namely, the creation of a legal government, the conclusion of the peace negotiations, and the framing of a democratic constitution for the German Republic. Necessarily involved in this triple action of the Party are the internal conflicts within it, which are given as much consideration as available sources warrant.

Since most of the information is drawn from German sources, it was necessary for the writer of this dissertation to make her own translations. Throughout the dissertation, therefore, unless otherwise indicated, all translations are the author's own.

Very special thanks are due to Dr. Raymond H. Schmandt for his kindness and invaluable assistance in helping make this project a reality.

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INTRODUCTION

Germany in the fall of 1918 presented a woeful picture of frustration and unsuccessful offensives on the front and hunger, hardship, and general dissatisfaction at home. Four long years of fighting had left the people weary and discontented; defeatism and radical agitation were evident everywhere. Hence, it was not surprising that the November Revolution with its abdication of the Kaiser, the toppling of thrones all over Germany, and the establishment of the Republic, was effected with relative ease. Democracy had been prescribed as the solvent for all Germany's problems--better days beckoned just beyond the democratic horizon. But the new government was socialistic; workers' and soldiers' councils held the reign. The political situation was precarious. To bring order out of chaos, a National Constituent Assembly was demanded to guarantee a truly democratic government for the German people. Under such circumstances, old political parties revamped their programs and new parties were formed in order to adjust to the more recent political, social, and economic conditions. Along with all the others, the Catholic Center Party sought to marshal its members behind its revised political directives and prepared to play its role in the formation of the new democratic government.

The energetic part played by the Center in the establishment of the Weimar Republic cannot be understood without some knowledge of its past history and basic ideology. The Center Party of 1918 was no apprentice in the political sphere. It had been educated and tested by almost fifty years of struggle.

Founded in 1870 by a group of Catholic members of the Prussian Landtag who were concerned about the consequences for Catholicism and political and cultural policies, the Party sought to defend the constitutional rights of German Catholics. The following year it expanded its aims to include representatives to the first Reichstag of the newly organized German Reich.¹

Coming as a response to certain specific and unique features of German development, the Center Party reflected a political Catholicism which had been active in Germany since the time of Joseph Görres in the 1820's. Called to

¹For a comprehensive and detailed history of the Center Party, see Karl Bachem, Vorgeschichte, Geschichte und Politik der deutschen Zentrumspartei, 9 vols. (Köln: J. P. Bachem, 1927-1932). The most recent history of the Party is the excellent work by Rudolf Morsey, Die Deutsche Zentrumspartei 1917-1923 (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1966). (Work on this dissertation was well on its way before the publication of Morsey's book.) A brief study of the political structure of the party is given in Friederich Dessauer, Das Zentrum (Berlin: Pan-Verlagsgesellschaft, 1931); Josef Joos, Die politische Ideenwelt des Zentrums (Karlsruhe: G. Braum, 1928); and Johannes Schauff, Die deutschen Katholiken und die Zentrumspartei (Köln: J. P. Bachem, 1928). Other sympathetic histories are Karl Buchheim, Geschichte der christlichen Parteien in Deutschland (München: Kösel-Verlag, 1953); Ludwig Bergsträsser, Geschichte der politischen Parteien in Deutschland (8th ed.; München: G. Olzog, 1955) Karl A. Schulte, ed. Nationale Arbeit: Das Zentrum und sein Wirken in der Deutschen Republik (Berlin: Wilhelm Andermann, 1929); Martin Spahn, Das deutsche Zentrum (München: Kirchheim'sche, Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1906); Hans Broermann and Karl Grobbel, Unterm Zentrumsbanner: Dokumente zur Zeitgeschichte (Berlin: Weckruf Verlag, 1926); Wolfgang Treue, Deutsche Parteiprogramme, 1951-1956 (Göttingen: Münsterschmidt-Verlag, 1956). A balanced view is given by Edgar Alexander, "Church and Society in Germany," Church and Society: Catholic Social and Political Thought and Movement, 1789-1950, ed. Joseph N. Moody (New York: Arts, Inc., 1953) and Rudolf Morsey, "Die Deutsche Zentrumspartei," Das Ende der Parteien, ed. Erich Matthias and Rudolf Morsey (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1960). Also useful is Edward J. Dunne, "The German Center Party in Empire and Republic: A Study in the Crisis of Democracy," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Dept. of History, Georgetown University, 1950). The following guides are helpful: Georg Schreiber, "Eine Übersicht zur Literatur der Zentrumspartei für die Jahre 1914-1923" Die Politik des Deutschen Reiches, Politisches Jahrbuch I M.-Gladbach, Volksvereinsverlag, 1925); Bruno Gebhardt, Handbuch der Deutschen Geschichte (III, IV; 8th ed.; Stuttgart: Union Verlag, 1959) and Dahlmann-Waltz Quellenkunde der deutschen Geschichte (9th ed.; Leipzig: K. F. Koehler, 1931-1932).

Munich in 1827 as professor of history, Joseph Görres had become the inspiration for a group of Catholic intellectuals and politicians which developed organized Catholic political action in Germany. Görres' pamphlet, "Athanasius," written in protest against the imprisonment of the Archbishop of Cologne, was the great clarion call for political equality of Catholics and for the freedom of the Catholic Church. The ideas expressed in this publication provided a model for the adjustment of traditional Catholicism to modern political and social conditions.

These same policies were further developed by a group of southern German Catholic democrats active in the Frankfurt Assembly of 1848. These men organized a union called the Piusverein which advocated along with its grossdeutsch policy the protection of the autonomy of the German states against any strong centralization movement which might threaten the position of the Catholic Church in Germany. The group chose as its slogan, "Freiheit der Kirche im Staate!"²

Of special importance for the later development of the Center Party was the work of a loosely organized group of Catholic parliamentarians in the Prussian Landtag. In 1852, Hermann von Mallinckrodt³ and the Reichensberger

²A survey of the background and formation of the Center Party can be found in Ludwig Bergstrasser, Studien zur Vorgeschichte der Zentrumsparlei (Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1910).

³Hermann von Mallinckrodt (1821-1874) attended the universities of Berlin and Bonn. After practicing law from 1842-1848, he entered the Prussian Landtag in 1852 and served there until 1863. He was elected to the Diet of the North German Confederation in 1866, but returned to the Prussian Landtag in 1868. He became the head of the Center Party in the Prussian Landtag and the Reichstag in 1870. As a brilliant parliamentarian he bitterly opposed anti-clerical legislation until his untimely death in the midst of the Kulturkampf. See Otto Pfülf, Hermann von Mallinckrodt: Die Geschichte seines Lebens (Freiburg-im-Breisgau: Herder, 1901).

brothers, August and Peter,⁴ who were to become the co-founders of the Center Party, formed a Catholic faction (Katholischen Fraktion) to fight for the protection of the Catholic Church against the interference of state sovereignty. Such motivation tended to characterize the party as being predominantly a confessional group. This, however, was not the wish of the leaders who strove to give their faction a purely political rather than a confessional character. Accordingly, they stressed political goals for the party and changed its name in 1859, to the "Faction of the Center" (Fraktion des Zentrums) which signified the place they occupied in the chamber. Despite their efforts, the transformation from a confessional to a political faction was not entirely successful. Moreover, the lessening of Church-State tensions as well as the political disunity of the representatives brought this precursor of the Center Party to an inauspicious end.

After the election of 1866, the Catholic faction as such ceased to exist. Thus, the interlude between 1867-1870, allowed time for serious reflection and concentration of effort on the part of Catholic parliamentarians. Already the dark, threatening clouds on the political horizon warned of a coming great conflict for the Catholics in Germany. In 1866, the outcome of the Austro-Prussian war, the exclusion of Catholic Austria from the Germanic Confederation, left the Catholics of South Germany at the mercy of the predominantly Protestant North German Confederation. The avowed anti-clericalism of both the National

⁴August Reichensberger (1808-1895) studied at Bonn, Heidelberg, and Berlin. From 1848-1885 he was an active parliamentarian in the Frankfurt Assembly, Prussian Landtag, Prussian Herrenhaus (1851-1863), and the Reichstag (1871-1884). His brother Peter (1815-1892) studied at Bonn and Heidelberg. Like August he was an author and parliamentarian in the Reichstag from 1871 until his death. See Ludwig Pastor, August Reichensberger, 2 vols. (Freiburg-im-Breisgau; Herder, 1899).

Liberals and the Progressive parties alarmed the Catholics regarding their position in the new Reich and made them especially fearful of state control of education. The need for a "Catholic front" or at least for an organized stand against these encroachments was evident. Leaders of the old Center faction responded to the emergency by issuing a call for the formation of a new Catholic party. In October, 1870, after several months of discussion, the group published the so-called Soest Program which they later adopted as the platform for the new party.

Beginning with the slogan, "For Truth, Justice, and Liberty," the program listed nine basic principles:

1. Preservation of the independence and the rights of the Church
2. Parity of all recognized religious denominations
3. Opposition to civil marriages
4. Confessional schools
5. Creation of a Bundesstaat, with autonomy of the separate states
6. Decentralization of administration
7. Reduction of expenditures and equal distribution of the tax burden
8. Harmonizing of the interests of capital with those of the landowners and of both of these with the interests of labor by means of the support of a sturdy middle class
9. Freedom for all attempts to solve the social problems that do not deviate from the law, and legislative elimination of those evils which threaten to bring about the moral and physical ruin of the workers.⁵

This program indicated the party's desire of not merely defending the rights of

⁵Ludwig Bergsträsser, Der politische Katholizismus: Dokumente seiner Entwicklung (München: Drei Masken Verlag, 1923) II, 27-28.

the German Catholics, but of meeting also the political, social, and economic needs of its constituents. The basic principles of the Soest Program remained in force as the Catholic platform.

The new Center Party was not to confine its activities to Prussia alone. Its members were determined to gain representation in the Imperial Reichstag which was to have its first session in the spring of 1871. An appeal was made to the general electorate. The votes of the southern states were easily gained because of their fear for the fate of the Church in the newly-established Protestant empire. In areas where the religious issue had no appeal, the Center advocates were able to win votes by stressing the fear of over-centralization in Berlin and the complete sinking of the nationality of the various states into that of a united Germany. As a result, the Catholic and particularist policies were united, and so "ultramontanes," Poles, Guelphs, and later the French of Alsace-Lorraine, in fact, every opponent of nationalism helped the Center on to victory at the polls in the election of March, 1871. It was not, however, until the end of March that the party was formally organized at a meeting in Berlin called for that purpose.

The first election under the Soest Program was a great success for the Center or Constitutional Party (Verfassungspartei), as it was also named. Sixty-three delegates representing 18.6% of the entire vote entered the Reichstag carrying the Center's banner. Under the able leadership of the Hanoverian Ludwig Windthorst, the Center was to become a formidable political instrument in the hands of its clear-sighted, determined members.⁶

⁶Ludwig Windthorst (1812-1891) studied at Göttingen and Heidelberg. Elected president of the second chamber of the Hanoverian legislature in 1851, he left this position two years later when he was appointed Minister of Justice in the cabinet of George V. He held this new position until 1866 when he was

No sooner had the new Center Party taken its place in the Reichstag, when Bismarck launched his offensive. In his opinion, the particularism of the Catholic Church and its identification with separatist currents within the Reich jeopardized the newly won German unity and exposed the empire to the danger of complete disintegration. Bismarck's Kulturkampf or his war against the Catholic adversaries began with the removal of the special division for Catholics in the Prussian Ministry of Religious Affairs.⁷ Then came penal laws against priests preaching the inviolability of the rights of the Church. The suppression of the Jesuits was the next calamity. The climax of this escalating persecution was reached with the promulgation of the anti-Catholic "May Laws," introduced by the Prussian Minister of Religious Affairs, Adalbert Falk. These laws virtually crippled Catholic education in Germany and wiped out all remaining guarantees of the Prussian Constitution of 1850 which had safeguarded the Catholic Church according to the principle of "a free Church in a free State."

Through the decade of the 1870's the Center played the role of a strong opposition party in the Reichstag. Fighting diligently to keep the Church

elected to the Prussian Landtag and to the Reichstag of the North German Confederation. After the death of Mallinckrodt in 1874 he became the leader of the Center in the Reichstag and remained head of the party until his death. A master political strategist, he was one of the fiercest opponents of Bismarck in the Reichstag. Windthorst was adept in the management of men, an excellent judge of character and one of the best parliamentary debaters of his time. See Edward Hüsgen, Ludwig Windthorst (Köln: J. P. Bachem, 1911).

⁷As yet there is no really thorough and fully satisfactory work on the Kulturkampf. A handy summary of the latest publications can be found in the critical review by Rudolf Lill, "Der Kulturkampf in Deutschland: Bemerkungen zu einer neuen Darstellung," in Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken, XLII/XLIII (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1963), pp. 571-591. This review is severely critical of the latest work by Erich Schmidt-Volkmar, Der Kulturkampf in Deutschland, 1871-1890. (Göttingen: Musterschmidt-Verlag, 1963).

free from state domination, the Centrists systematically attacked every piece of anti-clerical legislation discussed in the Reichstag. Government successes were purchased at the price of a bitter parliamentary struggle. Nevertheless, the Kulturkampf enabled the Center to emerge from the conflict the best-disciplined, the most powerfully organized, and the strongest single party in Germany. Moreover, the conflict served to make Catholics in Germany realize even more the need for such a party, for it was evident that the Center's Weltanschauung cut across class barriers, making it literally a party for the masses. Since 1871 the Center had developed a Catholic press with Germania, published in Berlin, as its official organ, and other similar publications for the Rhineland and the South.⁸ Emerging from the struggle of the Kulturkampf and aided by the new freedom of assembly, press, and suffrage, the Center became a regular popular party even employing popular slogans. Such a development was understandable since political Catholicism, as exemplified by the Centrists, was basically in conformity with the fundamental ideas of a democratic-liberal freedom in political and cultural life.

Because of the party structure and its principles the Center soon attained, and always kept, the position of strategic center between the parties of the Right and Left. Unlike most other parties of the German Reichstag, the composition of the Center Party followed ideological rather than social or class lines. It embraced people from all walks of life. Included in its

⁸Other important Catholic newspapers were the Kölnische Volkszeitung; Westfälischer Merkur in Münster; Schlesische Volkszeitung in Breslau; Mainzer Journal; Augsburger Postzeitung; Der Badischer Beobachter in Karlsruhe; Das Deutsche Volksblatt in Stuttgart. In 1871 there was a total of 126 Centrist newspapers with a total circulation of 322,000; by 1912 this had increased to 446 papers and 2,624,900 circulation. See Bachem, Zentrumspartei, III, 155.

membership were great landowners and lowly peasants, industrial magnates and factory workers, bankers, shopkeepers, professional men, and artisans. Under the unifying yet loose bond of religious attachment, it combined seemingly divergent streams of conservatism, liberalism, and radical social reform. Spanning the cross-currents of ideas and social forces, it purposely shunned any extreme and doctrinaire positions. To meet the needs of such a diversified representation, necessity demanded a flexible socio-economic policy. Consequently, the Party freely applied the basic principles of the Soest Program, adjusted them to changing ideas of the times, and thus realistically and continuously redefined its own position. Because of such a course of action, the Center at times was denounced by its opponents as an unscrupulous, unprincipled, opportunistic power group.

As the decade of the 1870's drew to an end, it became apparent that the Kulturkampf was decreasing in strength and it seemed as if the strained relationship between Bismarck and the Center Party might be improved. The government's change from free trade to protection in 1879 had cost Bismarck the support of the National Liberals. Such a transition was greeted favorably by the Centrists who represented, among others, large agrarian interests eager to have their farm products protected by tariff legislation. Other factors also tended to ease the tension between the Centrists and Bismarck. The German alliance with Catholic Austria on the one hand, and the strong anti-clerical policies of republican France on the other compelled the Center Party to support Bismarck's foreign policy. While Bismarck had at first feared the social demands of the Center, he now began to see their usefulness in successfully weaning away many of the working classes from the more hated socialist movement. Furthermore, since Bismarck planned no further extension of centralized controls

since the Church question was no longer a matter of strong controversy, and since it was possible to grant reasonable concessions to Catholic workers, the Iron Chancellor was now willing to cooperate with the Center Party in the Reichstag.

The Centrists capitalized on this change of attitudes and labored unceasingly in the 1880's to remove the obnoxious Kulturkampf legislation. Bit by bit, they were able to obtain the revision of many of the anti-clerical laws. Although the German government kept the anti-Jesuit laws and retained the right to supervise Catholic education and to approve clerical appointments, conditions had generally improved by 1887. From this time onward the Center usually followed a conservative course, becoming staunch supporters of the Reich's program except in policies which conflicted with the Soest Program; notwithstanding, Bismarck retained his mistrust of the Centrists and took care never to be in the position of being dependent upon their support.

Nevertheless, during the Wilhelman epoch and also later, the Center came to achieve precisely the position which Bismarck feared. The greater the increase in the representation of the Social Democrats, the greater became the importance of the Center Party as the holder of the balance of power in the Reichstag. Between 1895 and 1906, the Center was the chief support of the imperial government, and from 1907 onward there was never a government majority without the Center. With its fairly stable representation of about one hundred deputies and its well-disciplined party organization, the Center became the political arbiter of Germany.

It was only logical that the Center should follow a middle course, having as it did such a close mutual interaction of political and social Catholicism.

The equalizing of social interests between the property owners and the propertyless, and the equalization of political interests between the strong and the weak, (protecting minority groups), helped to give the Center a certain elasticity and adaptability. In the field of social legislation the Party made a positive contribution. Throughout its history the Centrists worked indefatigably toward the attainment of social ideals. They were a vital factor keeping before the eyes of Germany the Catholic idea of social justice and social charity. Social reform was an important plank in the Party program from 1871 onward. In 1876 a social plank in the Party's program included provisions for a Sunday holiday, regulation of the years and terms of an apprenticeship, protection of factory workers, limitation of hours of work for women, limiting and protection of child labor and the establishment of an arbitral tribunal to settle disputes between labor and capital. Later, partly due to its socio-economic program of 1894, the Center was able to achieve protective legislation for the workers and social insurance schemes, protective trade legislation and fiscal policies which attempted to regulate an equitable balance between the interests of industry and agriculture.⁹ While advocating more labor legislation, the Center always remained bitterly hostile to socialism.

In fulfilling its responsibilities and duties towards all classes of people, the Center furthered legislation that protected such minority groups as the Poles and the citizens of Alsace-Lorraine. In military and colonial policies the Party took a critical position, positive on principle but always

⁹For some of the party's socio-economic programs, see Wolfgang Treue, Deutsche Parteiprogramme, 1861-1956. A helpful survey of the history of the Center's social and economic policies is given in Lorenz Zach, 50 Jahre Zentrum Wirtschafts-und Sozialpolitik im Reichstag, 1871-1921 (Berlin: Germania, 1921).

trying to limit militarism and imperialism. This position at times caused the Center to suffer the loss of its parliamentary influence, as in 1884, 1893, and 1907 but usually not to any great degree.¹⁰ Pursuing policies of the middle often caused violent tensions within the Center Party. On the whole the larger Prussian faction was usually more conservative in its outlook than the smaller number of democratically inclined non-Prussians of Hesse, Baden, and Württemberg.

Despite the Party's well-disciplined organization, these internal conflicts were often reflected in the Centrists' attitudes. Ideologically its membership was united and ready to face any assault upon the freedom of the Church. This was the source of its strength during the Kulturkampf. But on political matters there were sharp divergences within the Party. This became apparent especially in the period between the turn of the century and the outbreak of the war. At times there were strained relations between the Centrists in the Reichstag and those in the Catholic Workers Associations and the Christian Trade Unions.

During the reign of William II the leadership of the party was essentially conservative. The Party was in the hands of a group of Catholic civil servants who adopted a staunch attitude in support of the existing political situation in Germany. The Center's alignment with the government and the right-wing parties was traceable to its fear of the rapidly growing popularity of the Social Democratic Party in Germany. Bureaucrats, landowners, clergymen, and professional men supplied the political ideas and leadership of the Catholic community. Suspicious of the restless proletarian element in the Party, the

¹⁰For an excellent coverage of this period, see John K. Zeender, "The German Center Party and the Growth of German National Power, 1890-1906" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Dept. of History, Yale University, 1952).

leaders along with the German hierarchy believed that the Catholic minority and the Church would suffer if the semi-absolute monarchy would ever be replaced by a democratic state similar to England or France. Unwilling, therefore, to work with the left-wing parties for the democratization of Germany, the Center continued to support the monarchy and its older parliamentary allies.

It was not surprising that a progressive and democratically inclined liberal faction should emerge within the Party. The complacent attitude of the conservative "old guard" irked this newer faction. The leadership of the liberal faction was assumed by a young energetic politician from Württemberg, Matthias Erzberger.¹¹ By 1907 he had become one of the most conspicuous members of his Party. As head of the left-wing faction he wanted to draw the Center closer to the more progressive political groups.

This agitation coincided also with an increased tendency to convert the Party into more than a confessional organization and to open its doors to members of other religious groups. The German Christian Trade Union had been able to establish an interconfessional basis for its organization by 1899. In attempting to do the same, the Center hoped to overcome prevalent anti-Catholic passions and make itself more acceptable in the Reichstag. The controversy came to a head as a result of the publication of an important article by a Centrist member, Julius Bachem, which appeared in March 1906 entitled, "We

¹¹Matthias Erzberger (1875-1921) entered the Reichstag as its youngest member in 1903 after a distinguished career as a journalist, pamphleteer and organizer of Catholic lay institutions. He was also one of the founders of the German Christian Trade Union movement in the 1890's. He served as German Peace Commissioner in 1918, as a delegate to the National Assembly (1919-1920), and as Minister of Finance (1919-1921). He was assassinated at Griesbach, Germany, in 1921. See Klaus Epstein, Matthias Erzberger and the Dilemma of German Democracy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959).

Must Get Out of the Tower."¹² Bachem, publisher of the Kölnische Volkszeitung and a leading representative of the progressive social views, argued that although the Center Party had its origin in religious issues, it was really not meant to be a religious party. He quoted one of the founders of the party, Mallinckrodt, as emphasizing this same point in the Reichstag in 1872. Bachem wanted the Party to return to the founders' original intentions of having an interconfessional party. He proposed that the Center collaborate with Protestant groups. He further suggested that the Center along with the Christian Trade Unions throw its support wherever feasible to non-Catholics running for office.

A heated discussion on this question developed within Catholic circles, becoming more intense as it became involved in a similar controversy among intellectuals concerning Modernism and Integralism. The Modernists favored closer cooperation between Catholic and non-Catholic forces of modern culture. The Integralists, on the other hand, rejected all non-Catholic culture and took special pride in asserting the existence of specifically Catholic principles to govern all areas of activity. Although Modernism was espoused by a very limited group of German intellectuals, the German Integralists of Berlin chose to consider all Catholics who favored close cooperation with non-Catholics in political or economic questions as Modernists at heart. This struck directly at the Center's attempts to rid itself of its confessional character.

Tensions broke forth in a vehement Richtungsstreit ("the 'Where are we going?' controversy") between the confessional sector with its centers in

¹²Wir müssen aus dem Turm heraus. The complete text is reprinted in Ludwig Bergsträsser, Der politische Katholizismus: Dokumente seiner Entwicklung (München: Drei Masken Verlag, 1923) II, 332-341.

Trier-Berlin-Breslau, and the non-confessional sector which drew its strength from the Party's following in Cologne-München-Gladbach. The Köln^{er} Richtung led by the two Bachems, Karl and Julius, and Hermann Cardeaus, and the Kölnische Volkszeitung, as well as the Christian Trade Unions in M.-Gladbach under the leadership of Franz Hitze, August Pieper, and Heinrich Brauns were attacked by the Berliner Richtung headed by Count Hans von Oppersdorff, Franz Bitter, and Hermann Roeren and backed by the Catholic Workers' Association operating under the influence of the aristocratic and clerical direction of Karl von Savigny, Heinrich Fournell, and Paul Fleischer. The Berliner Richtung accused the Kölnische Richtung of advocating the supplanting of Catholic organizations by "super-confessional" and general Christian institutions.¹³ The bulk of German Catholicism as well as almost all the Centrist leaders were on the side of Cologne from the beginning, but for a while Berlin appeared to possess the better Vatican connections besides the support of the German hierarchy.

The unity of the Party was undoubtedly strained by the bitter internal controversy. The Zentrumsstreit, as it was also called, caused the Centrists to take inventory of their Party's accomplishments and to re-evaluate the purpose of its existence. The Berlin group, hostile to all non-Catholic culture, insisted that the Center should be a purely Catholic party, not merely an inter-confessional Christian one. The interconfessional trade unions advocated by the progressive wing were also opposed by this strictly conservative wing because such unions would be liable to corrupt the faith of the Catholic members. The Berliners desired the close clerical supervision of all Catholic lay

¹³For an interesting but also one-sided account of the controversy, see Bachem, Zentrumspartei, VII, chapters iii-iv. Also helpful is John K. Zeender, "German Catholics and the Concept of an Interconfessional Party, 1900-1922," Journal of Central European Affairs, XXIII (1963-1964), 424-439.

organizations and denounced any type of cooperation between Catholics and Protestants. This view was vigorously opposed by the secretary-general of the Volksverein, August Pieper, and the Centrist leaders, Franz Hitze and Karl Trimborn. Erzberger, in his criticism of the Berliners, asserted they were straining Catholic principles beyond the breaking point by demanding a specifically Catholic answer to every problem.¹⁴ A combined Reich and Prussian Committee for the Center Party finally resolved the dispute on November 28, 1909, by formally declaring that the Center Party was political, not clerical.¹⁵ Both Roeren and Count von Oppersdorff were expelled from the Party in 1912 when they refused to accept the Party's verdict.¹⁶

Although the Party did not actually split as a result of its internal struggle, it nevertheless suffered in the election of 1912. Dissatisfaction among the Berliners over the results of the Richtungsstreit on the one hand, and the unpopularity among urban Catholic workers of the Party's conservative

¹⁴Erzberger at first espoused the Berlin cause but later, because of its doctrinaire position, he renounced it and came out in support of the Cologne group. He was irritated by the whole controversy and deplored the bickering within the party's ranks as a danger to its unity.

¹⁵This did not really end the Zentrumsstreit; it became acute again in 1914. Theodor Wacker, the Baden Centrist leader, was censored in Rome for his article, "Zentrum und kirchlichen Autorität" which upheld the independence of the party in political matters. Although the censorship was later withdrawn and Wacker's position accepted by Rome, the incident tended to reopen the controversy over the confessional character.

¹⁶A survey of the Zentrumsstreit can be found in Ludwig Bergsträsser, "Der Riss im Zentrumsturm," Akademische Blätter, XXV (November, 1910), 241-246; see also Ernst Deuerlein, "Verlauf und Ergebnis des Zentrumstretes (1906-1909)," Stimmen der Zeit, CLVI (May, 1955), 103-126. For Erzberger's role in the struggle, see Klaus Epstein, "Erzberger's Position in the Zentrumsstreit Before World War I," Catholic Historical Review, XLIV (April, 1958), 1-16. Erzberger's own views on the confessional issue can be found in the English translation, Erzberger, The German Centre-Party. Studies in Politics, Economics and Apologetics (Amsterdam: International Catholic Publishing Co., 1911).

course on the other, cost the Center a serious loss of votes.¹⁷ The Socialist victory at the polls in 1912, which saw the Social Democrats replace the Center as the strongest party in the Reichstag, was undoubtedly due in some measure to the Catholic workers' votes. Not that the Center was remiss in its concern for social reform; the fact was, the Reichstag and Prussian Center delegations contained only a few labor members, whereas the rural areas were more strongly represented than their Catholic populations warranted. Due to hard competition with the Social Democratic trade unions, Catholic labor leaders began to question plutocratic suffrage in Prussia, indirect taxation, and other conservative policies.

At the same time the awareness of these problems intensified an already existing crisis in leadership in the Party. The election of Baron Georg Hertling as parliamentary leader of the Center had temporarily resolved the crisis in 1908.¹⁸ His fame as a noted scholar and skillful conciliator and long-time member of the Party had placated the discontented. After his resignation in 1912 to become Minister President of Bavaria, the problem again became acute. The new parliamentary leader, Peter Spahn, though of Rhenish origin, had an essentially sympathetic view of Prussian institutions because

¹⁷The returns of the election of 1912 gave the Center 91 seats in the Reichstag in comparison to the 105 seats held in 1907. The Social Democrats gained 110 seats in 1912 as compared to the 43 seats held in 1907.

¹⁸Georg von Hertling (1843-1919) studied at Münster, Munich, and Berlin, and taught philosophy at Bonn and Munich. He served as a member of the Reichstag from 1875-1890 and in 1896. He was leader of the party from 1909 until he became president of the Bavarian ministry in 1912. During World War I, he replaced Michaelis as chancellor of the Reich, resigning in late 1918. See Hans Eisele, "Hertling," Hochland, X (September, 1913), 750-755 and Karl Bachem, "Hertling," Deutsches Biographisches Jahrbuch, 1917-1920, II (1925), 416-425.

of his long service in the Prussian judiciary.¹⁹ He favored the Right and desired to bring conservative Catholicism and conservative Protestantism closer together. While Spahn refused to sponsor policies which would weaken the existing monarchical, aristocratic and federal institutions, he was by no means a static conservative. Yet, neither could he formulate a policy which would reconcile the social and political aspirations of the masses with the existing constitution of the German states.

Differences in policies and personality separated Spahn from the youthful Ersberger. The latter, accustomed to the more democratic institutions of southern Germany, felt that the universal tide of democracy would eventually sweep away the resistance of the monarchies and aristocracy, but he realized that his Party and the nation were not ready for democratic government. He directed his efforts, therefore, toward the formation of a coalition with the liberal parties to achieve liberal political and constitutional reforms. For a time just prior to the first World War he succeeded so well in winning the support of enough moderate conservatives that he swung his Party away from its traditional opposition to direct taxes, and associated it with the liberal parties in a program of tax reform. Although the majority of the Centrists favored the measure there was deep resentment among the "old guard," such as Baron von Hertling, Peter Spahn, Count von Galen, and Adolf Gröber. Nonetheless, they had to concede that definite progressive and democratic elements were gradually assuming greater importance in the Party.

¹⁹Peter Spahn (1846-1925) as a Doctor of Law combined his judicial duties with parliamentary work. He served as a member of the Prussian Landtag from 1882-1909 and the Reichstag (1884-1917). He was the Prussian Minister of Justice from 1917-1918. From 1912-1917 he was the official party leader. He was elected as a delegate to the National Assembly, 1919-1920, and to the Reichstag of the Weimar Republic, 1920-1925. See Bachem, Zentrumspartei, VI, 146-147.

The outbreak of the war in 1914 found the Center forcing its divergent interests into the background in order to present a common front on war issues. The slow, hesitant progress the Party had made in veering to the Left in the two years prior to the war was delayed by the Burgfrieden which imposed a check on domestic reforms. Parliamentarianism, the Prussian electoral system and social reforms were not seriously discussed again until 1917. The Centrist leaders, eager to demonstrate the patriotism of German Catholicism, agreed with the Reich government as to the cause of the war, the means to win it, and the policies to follow upon victory.²⁰

As the war was prolonged with no immediate end in view, privations which had been keenly felt on the home front were aggravated by the British blockade. Political tensions became apparent despite the official Burgfrieden, for war weariness was definitely exacting its toll by 1916. A controversy over the war aims caused much friction in the Reichstag. Annexationist war aims were espoused by all the political parties except the Social Democrats. In the first two years of the war, the Center satisfied itself with general statements about the necessity of annexations commensurable to Germany's sacrifice and future security needs. Even Erzberger at first was as ardent an annexationist as any. Later, however, as he gained a truer perspective of the international situation, he became politically more mature and more critical in judgment. Gradually he retreated from his extreme annexationist views taking with him the liberal Centrists. The majority of the Party, nevertheless, supported Spahn and his demands for annexations.

²⁰For an account of the Center Party's internal strife prior to and during World War I, see John K. Zeender, "The German Center Party during World War I: An Internal Study," Catholic Historical Review, XLII (January, 1957), 441-468. Also helpful is Bruce Frye, "Erzberger and German Politics, 1914-1921," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Dept. of History, Stanford University, 1954).

But by 1916 dissatisfaction with the conservative type of Centrists' leadership again began exerting itself. Not only Erzberger's democratic wing, but also the Volksverein, a Catholic lay organization under Centrist direction, as well as the Christian Trade Unions voiced criticisms about the excessive agrarian influences in the Party and began agitating for social and political reforms. This gravitating toward the Left by the liberal wing was viewed with alarm by the Centrist conservative leadership. The atheism, the anti-clericalism, the materialistic socialism of the Social Democrats had always been strongly opposed by the Center. Collaboration with the unreliable Social Democrats was tantamount to denial of Catholic principles. But under the strain of high prices and faulty provisioning of the war years, the Catholic Labor representatives no longer accepted the thesis that the Social Democrats were unreliable. This democratic element wanted the Center to collaborate with the Social Democrats in its demands for suffrage reforms in Prussia. Viewed in the light of the tremendous sacrifice all Germans were making for the Fatherland, the Prussian three-class system of voting was found wanting.²¹ German soldiers and workers wanted a more equitable taxation and voting system. Erzberger's liberal wing succeeded in mustering enough Centrists to concert with the Left in demanding suffrage reforms and in formulating a peace policy. Erzberger and

²¹According to the three-class system the political voting power of an individual was determined by his taxes; that is, according to his income and property. Josef Joos, the Centrist liberal writer, later reported, "The average man, who was everywhere undervalued, disdained, and slighted and yet called upon to render the same services in the field and at home, suddenly ceased to accept this and regarded electoral reform in Prussia simply as the expression of the appreciation of the plain man . . ." Joos also referred to the opposition of the Catholic hierarchy to electoral reforms. Cited in Ralph Haswell Lutz, Fall of the German Empire, 1914-1918 (California: Stanford University Press, 1932), II, 275-276.

his associates on the Left intended to identify the Reichstag and the nation with "a peace of understanding and compromise." Then too, in order to create a better impression on the democratic Allies, Erzberger and the left-wing parties planned that the government should immediately introduce equal suffrage in Prussia.

The offshoot of this whole movement was the famous "July Peace Resolution" proposed by Erzberger to the Reichstag in 1917. By this time he had become the most influential member in his party and was recognized, albeit reluctantly, by the "old guard" as the undisputed leader of the Party. Spahn had resigned from the Party to become the Prussian Minister of Justice, but he had advised the other conservatives to go along with the Party's new policy. True to its operational pattern, the Center as a body took a realistic view of the political situation and, therefore, loyally supported the peace resolution.

The events of July precipitated a crisis in the government which resulted in a change of chancellor. The July Resolution itself was stillborn, a victim of the new Chancellor Michaelis' qualified acceptance. Opportune victories along the front boosted sagging German morale; the pressure of military success and conservatism were at work. The high-sounding phrases of the peace resolution were forgotten as the Right clamored for a victorious peace. The early successes of the offensives in the West in the first months of 1918 speeded up the forces of erosion in the Center Party. The conservative wing again asserted itself for a victorious peace. Moderate conservatives began joining forces with extreme conservatives at the expense of Erzberger's democrats.

Events in the last few months of the war brought about a sudden reversal in this conservative trend. As failures along the front mounted and popular

dissatisfaction at home became more radical, the parties of the Left became bolder in their democratic demands. This movement strengthened Erzberger's liberal wing which was in sympathy with the political demands of the Left. The propitious moment had come to broaden the base of the Party in order to turn it more in the direction of a liberal and democratic policy and to cooperate toward these ends with other democratic groups. Thus the basis was laid for the Centrist coalition with the Socialists and other republican groups during the Weimar period.

As one surveys the almost half-century history of the Center Party one cannot help concluding that basically it remained conservative. In crucial decisions between conservative and liberal elements the Center tended to tip the scales in favor of the former. This was so as long as the landed aristocracy and large industrialists provided the leadership for the Party. Once the urban population, especially the workers, began to exert themselves through their labor organizations and labor leaders, the conservative leadership was challenged and a movement toward the Left began slowly to appear. Its ascendancy was long and laborious; conservatism was reluctant to give way. Though Erzberger had gained a position of leadership in the Party by the summer of 1918, his position was tenuous; he had still to cope with strong opposition.

True, Catholicism was a common denominator for the Center Party, but apart from that, there was no unifying element in the Party's heterogenous socio-economic structure. Divisions were within the social classes, not between them. In Baden, Württemberg, and some parts of Bavaria, the local clergy, peasants, and lower middle class were strong supporters of the peace movement and democratic reform, while in other parts of Bavaria the leaders were suspicious of Erzberger's centralizing tendencies. In Rhineland and Westphalia

the peasants were organized under aristocratic leadership and supported conservative policies. The Catholic Workers Association favored Erzberger's total program. Some of his defenders like Wilhelm Marx, later Weimar chancellor, and Johann Giesberts, the labor leader and deputy, were closely attached to the Volkverein. But Adam Stegerwald,²² the leader of the Christian trade-unions, while acquiescing in the liberal social policies, was a supporter of a strong monarchy and critical of parliamentary reform.

Such was the complex structure of the Center Party as Germany stood on the brink of military collapse at the end of the summer of 1918. Events almost beyond control were propelling the Center Party along with the rest of Germany toward major political changes which would necessitate realignments and re-vamping of the Center's program. Tensions within the Party were to be further increased by the important decisions to be faced in the coming months.

²²Adam Stegerwald (1874-1945) was a champion of Social Catholicism and a leader in labor movements. He was one of the founders of the Christian Trade Unions and was elected the national chairman in 1921. In 1899 he also founded the Central Union of Christian Carpenters. Later he was chosen international secretary of the Christian Workers Association. He served as a delegate in the Prussian Herrenhaus (1917-1918,) the National Assembly (1919-1920), and the Reichstag (1920). He was Minister of Commerce for the Reich (1928-1930) and Minister of Labor (1932). He was elected chairman of the Center in 1929. See Josef Deutz, Adam Stegerwald: Gewerkschafter, Politiker, Minister, 1874-1945 (Köln: Bund-Verlag, 1952).

CHAPTER I

PARTY ACTIVITY BETWEEN REVOLUTION AND ELECTION DAY

During the months of October and November 1918, Germany experienced momentous changes in the structure of her government. Already at the end of the summer military disaster, defeatism, social unrest, famine and general discontent had precipitated the popular rejection of the old Bismarckian autocracy and militarism. The Allied threats to refuse to deal with the Reich so long as it retained a semiautocratic regime were effective. The masses were continuing to agitate for a more democratic government, and political leaders, reflecting the will of the people, were importuning the Emperor for action. William II had responded to these pressures by appointing Prince Max of Baden as Chancellor, entrusting to him the difficult task of introducing democratic reforms into Germany and opening peace negotiations with the Allies.

In an address to the Reichstag on October 22, 1918, Prince Max outlined his proposal for a constitutional change.¹ Accordingly, on October 28, 1918, a law was passed amending the old Bismarckian Constitution and making the chancellor fully responsible to the Reichstag.² By the end of October 1918

¹Address of Prince Max to the Reichstag, October 22, 1918, as cited in Herbert Michaelis and Ernst Schraepfer, ed. Ursachen und Folgen vom deutschen Zusammenbruch 1918 und 1945 bis zur staatlichen Neuordnung Deutschlands in der Gegenwart, II (Berlin: Dokumenten-Verlag Dr. Herbert Wendler & Co., 1959), p. 363.

²Law of October 28, 1918, as cited ibid., p. 367.

the German empire had been converted into a constitutional monarchy. For the first time in German history a government had been made responsible to the people's representatives. This assumption of power by the majority in the Reichstag, though it failed to arrest the social and economic ills of Germany, brought about the fall of the old aristocratic regime and ushered in a parliamentary system.

The Center Party's role in the promotion of the constitutional reforms was reluctant from the outset. Having succumbed to pressure and having grudgingly supported the majority in the Reichstag for these reforms, it had nevertheless ceaselessly protested and warned that these forms of liberal parliamentary government were alien to German tradition and to German national character. Proud of its traditionalism and its conservatism and convinced of the soundness of the federal structure of the Reich, the Party defended the House of Hohenzollern with a zeal comparable to that of the Prussian Conservative party.³

As late as June 30, 1918, the Center's Reich committee had published a program to meet the "new times" which war had created. It had pledged anew its loyalty to the federal character of the constitution, a strong monarchy, and "einer kraftvollen Volksvertretung."⁴ The sentimental idealization of the monarchy which the Center associated with German national character and tradition played a major role in its political theory. All branches of the Party favored the retention of the monarchy and believed that its fall would represent

³Maximilian Pfeiffer, Zentrum und neue Zeit (Flugschriften der Deutschen Zentrumspartei, #1, Berlin: December 5, 1918), p. 9.

⁴"Program of the Center Party, June 30, 1918," as cited in Bachem, Zentrumspartei, VIII, 363-366.

the destruction of German social cohesiveness. Even Erzberger prior to the revolution had been no exception to this position.⁵ As one of the Reich's ministers he consistently rejected proposals by the National Liberals that the Emperor be urged to abdicate. Erzberger summarized his objections to such proposals in a letter to the Papal Nuncio, Archbishop Pacelli, on October 31, 1918:

The considerations speaking against an abdication at this moment are that the present governing majority would be seriously shaken; that there would be difficulties about a new oath of loyalty for the army; and that the throne would presumably pass to the oldest son of the Crown Prince. . . . The abdication would weaken Germany by leading to deep internal friction. For these reasons I share the view of all the members of the government that an abdication would at this moment harm, not help, Germany.⁶

A more explicit declaration of loyalty was printed in a leading editorial of a Centrist newspaper, Münstersche Anzeiger, on November 1, 1918, which stated:

The loyal praises [of the Herrenhaus] for the monarchy and dynasty find a very lively echo throughout the land, especially with our Center Party whose monarchical tradition even in this time of democracy undergoes no change. For us, the monarchy is the embodiment of German unity, and the difficult days through which we pass cannot make us waver in our position toward the dynasty. The question whether the emperor and king will abdicate concerns the whole population in a high degree, not so much that they wish such a step, but rather because they fear it. If the Social Democrats as the principle opponents of monarchy should demand its elimination, then they stand alone in their requests.⁷

⁵For indications of Erzberger's loyalty to the monarchy, see Matthias Erzberger, Erlebnisse im Weltkrieg (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1920), pp. 38, 50, 207, 226, 243-244, 253, 337.

⁶Erzberger to Archbishop Pacelli, October 31, 1918, as cited in Epstein, Matthias Erzberger, pp. 267-268.

⁷Cited in Eduard Schulte, Münstersche Chronik zu Novemberrevolte und Separatismus 1918: Tagebücher, Berichte, Akten, Briefe, Zeitungen, Plakate, Bilder (Münster in Westfalen: Verlag der Aschendorffschen, 1936), pp. 1-2.

Another group favorable to the Center which also evidenced this loyalty to the Kaiser was the Catholic Women's League of Germany. Its chairlady, Hedwig Dransfeld,⁸ sent a petition dated November 2, to the Chancellor in the name of 120,000 members of her organization begging that all attacks upon the Kaiser and his dynasty "be effectively and unflinchingly repulsed."⁹

During the historic first week of November, while the revolutionary movement was gathering momentum and the Social Democrats were pressuring for the emperor's abdication, the Center Party still continued stolidly to back the monarchy. In Cologne on November 2, the Centrists were told by Father Bertram Kastert, one of their leading spokesmen, that the Center should be known as a "convinced supporter of a monarchical system" and should prove itself "a strong Christian, national, and social party with God, for the emperor and the Reich."¹⁰ On November 5, three days later, Adam Stegerwald addressed a large assembly of Centrists at Hamm and extolled the glories of the German emperor:

Only political naivete can assert that if the emperor goes, we will receive a better peace. The king is an earnest, mature man: something we certainly cannot say about the Crown Prince. Or does one think he is able to replace the emperor with the eleven-year-old son of the Crown Prince? That would involve an imperial regency. . . . In that hour wherein we erect a republic in the Reich and place a president at its head, then will the union of the Reich vanish. . . . For centuries our ancestors have fought for the Kaiseridee. We must certainly be a sorry people if we are to give up with one blow all these

⁸Hedwig Dransfeld (1871-1925) was a school teacher and writer. In 1912 she became active in feminine movements for social betterment and took over the leadership of the Catholic Women's League. In 1919 she was elected as a Centrist delegate to the National Assembly. She contributed articles to various journals and wrote Die Christliche Frau.

⁹Cited in Schulte, Münstersche Chronik, p. 2.

¹⁰Cited ibid, p. 4.

traditions of the past. The emperor forms the rallying point, the focal unit for the German people.¹¹

Until the day before the revolution the conservative Centrists adhering to the advice of their Catholic hierarchy had maintained "an unshakable loyalty to the emperor and the princes, our monarchs by the grace of God."¹² Yet, even while they were attempting to preserve the old monarchical system in the face of insurrection, a left-wing Centrist paper, the Schlesische Volkszeitung, was announcing: "The Center now supports the opinion that the abdication of the emperor is the only possible relief from the difficult circumstances."¹³

By November 8, it had become apparent even to staunch supporters of the monarchy that the emperor's position was precarious. In a Centrist Reichstag committee meeting held that day in Berlin, a proposal for the abdication of William II was discussed. Chairman Adolf Gröber¹⁴ and nominal party leader Karl Trimborn¹⁵ both voted against the proposal, asserting that there was no

¹¹Cited ibid., pp. 11-12.

¹²For the episcopal letter of November 8, 1918, signed by all the archbishops and bishops of Germany, see Schulte, Münstersche Chronik, p. 31.

¹³November 8, 1918, as cited ibid.

¹⁴Adolf Gröber (1854-1919) was educated at the universities of Tübingen, Leipzig, and Strassburg. After serving in a judicial capacity in the provincial courts of Neresheim and Saugard, he became director of the provincial courts at Hall, Regensburg, and Heilbronn. Appointed chairman of the Württemberg Center faction in 1894, he retained this position throughout his life, assuming as well the national chairmanship of the party in 1917. He also served as a member of the Reichstag (1887-1918) and of the second chamber of the Württemberg Landtag (1889-1919). He was appointed minister in Prince Max's cabinet (1918) and in the Weimar cabinet (1919). As chairman of the Center faction in the National Assembly (1919) he was a zealous advocate of Christian education and represented the party in the constitutional committee on the section of "Church and School."

¹⁵Karl Trimborn (1854-1921) was a Cologne lawyer who received his education at the universities of Leipzig, München, and Strassburg. He was a member

"political necessity for such an action."¹⁶ But the Reichstag's president, Centrist Konstantin Fehrenbach,¹⁷ taking a more realistic view, announced to the committee: "I am under the impression that we debate something which perhaps around four o'clock [today] will no longer be important."¹⁸ In Fehrenbach's opinion, there was no alternative, the emperor would abdicate. Yet if he did not, "totally different questions [would] come under discussion."¹⁹ On the following day, not only Centrists but all Germans were compelled to face those "totally different questions."

Weeks earlier, Prince Max alarmed by the deterioration of political conditions, had requested the emperor to abdicate that Germany might be saved from

of the Prussian Landtag and the Reichstag from 1896-1918. He was appointed to the Ministry of the Interior in Prince Max's cabinet in 1918. From 1914-1921 he served as chairman of the Volksverein and as chairman of the Rhenish Center Party from 1919 until his death in 1921. In 1919 he was elected to the National Assembly and distinguished himself as an expert parliamentarian in the discussion on constitutional matters. See Hermann Cardauns, Karl Trimborn (M.-Gladbach: Volksvereins-Verlag, 1922); also Karl Bachem, "Trimborn," Deutsches Biographisches Jahrbuch 1921, III (Stuttgart, 1927), pp. 263-265.

¹⁶Cited in Rudolf Morsey, "Die deutsche Zentrumsparlei Zwischen November-Revolution und Weimar Nationalversammlung," in Dona Westfalica, ed. by Johannes Bauermann (Münster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1963), p. 240. Morsey gives a detailed account of the activities during the months of November and December, 1918, drawing upon much unpublished material from the state archives at Cologne. (Most references from Morsey in this chapter are from this article, although Morsey's Die Deutsche Zentrumsparlei 1917-1923, Sec. II, Chap. I, contains similar information.)

¹⁷Konstantin Fehrenbach (1852-1926) attended the University of Freiburg. He became a member of the Reichstag in 1903 and its president in 1918. Later he was also elected president of the National Assembly. From 1920-1921 he was appointed chancellor of the Weimar Republic and participated in the conferences with the Allies at Spa (1920) and London (1921). Later he served as chairman of the Centrist left-wing in the Reichstag (1924-1926).

¹⁸Morsey, "Zentrumsparlei," p. 241.

¹⁹Ibid.

anarchy. Weary of war and hungry for peace, the populace was sensitive to the implication of the Allies that the presence of William II was impeding peace negotiations. No definite plans for a popular insurrection had been formulated; nevertheless a revolutionary spirit had been fomented as a result of a widespread mood of despair brought on by the military collapse.²⁰ Only an incident was needed and this was provided on October 28 when the sailors mutinied at Kiel. From Kiel the insurrection spread rapidly along the coast to Hamburg, Bremen, and Lübeck. Within a week almost every city in the German empire had witnessed socialist rioting and the establishment of soldiers' and workers' councils as new forms of local government. By November 7 the revolution had reached Brunswick and then Munich. In Bavaria a republic was proclaimed with the left-wing Socialist Kurt Eisner as president. Berlin was next to succumb to strikes and insurrections.²¹

Prince Max repeated his warnings of impending danger in an effort to save the Hohenzollern dynasty, but William II refused to be moved. On November 9, 1918, therefore, to preserve Berlin and Germany from further chaos, Prince Max compelled by necessity announced the abdication of the emperor and handed the reins of government over to the Social Democrat Friedrich Ebert.²² Yet, neither

²⁰In the words of one author it was "eine Revolte der Müdigkeit, der Angst und der Erschöpfung." See Heinrich Lutz, Demokratie im Zwielficht: Der Weg der deutschen Katholiken aus dem Kaiserreich in die Republik, 1914-1925 (München: Kösel-Verlag, 1963), p. 67.

²¹For contemporary accounts of the various insurrections, see Schulte, Münstersche Chronik, pp. 1, 13, 15, 19-73; Pfeiffer, Zentrum, pp. 9-13.

²²Pfeiffer, Zentrum, p. 14; Ebert claimed he undertook the new leadership in order to protect the Germans from "Bürgerkrieg und Hungernot." See Eduard Heilfron, Die Deutsche Nationalversammlung im Jahre 1919 in ihrer Arbeit für den Aufbau des neuen deutschen Volksstaates (Berlin: Norddeutsche Buchdruckerei und Verlagsanstalt, n.d.) I, 103.

Prince Max nor Ebert was thinking in terms of ending the monarchy.²³ It was Philipp Scheidemann, another leader of the Social Democrats, who decided the issue on his own initiative. In the afternoon of November 9, he greeted an assembly of insurrectionists outside the Ministry headquarters with the proclamation of a German Republic.²⁴

Germans everywhere were surprised and stunned. The Kölnische Zeitung, a leading newspaper for the right-wing of the National Liberals soon to become the German People's Party, referred to the incident as a "Blitzschlag" which had "jolted" the people and left them "paralyzed."²⁵ A Centrist paper in the Rhineland, Kölnische Volkszeitung, described the happenings as being "of monstrous and incalculable significance."²⁶ Another national Centrist newspaper printed in Berlin expressed regret but said it was an event which had become "inevitable" as the revolutionary agitation increased in intensity.²⁷ The emperor's hesitancy had cost him both throne and dynasty.

²³Even the Social Democrats favored a constitutional monarchy similar to England. Bachem, Zentrumsparlei, VIII, 250.

²⁴Scheidemann's proclamation was: "The old and rotten--the monarchy--has been broken down. Long live the new! Long live the German Republic!" Philipp Scheidemann, Memoirs of a Social Democrat, trans. by J. E. Michell (London: Hodder and Stroughton, 1929), II, 582. This is a variant of the original as published in the Vossische Zeitung, November 9, 1918, cited in Ernst Rudolf Huber, Dokumente zur Deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte, III (Berlin: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1960), pp. 1-2.

²⁵November 9, 1918, #1049, evening edition. Since each edition is identified by a new number, further references will carry only the date and edition number. All articles are from front page unless otherwise designated.

²⁶November 9, 1918, #886. Hereafter cited as KV.

²⁷Germania: Zeitung für das deutsche Volk, November 9, 1918, #529.

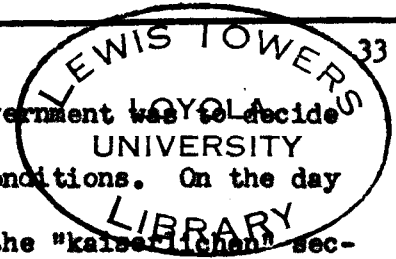
With a revolution perpetrated, the Kaiser overthrown, and a republic proclaimed, the Center, like all of Germany's political parties, now faced the question of its own status. Long identified as a champion of the monarchy, it was altogether alien to republican tenets. The traditions of its Christian Weltanschauung were repugnant to a socialist republic. But Germany was in a chaotic condition; immediate steps had to be taken to preserve order. Centrist leaders could not afford the luxury of bewailing their own uncertain position. They had not favored the insurrection; they had not perpetrated the course of events.²⁸ They deplored and would continue to deplore a state of affairs which in their opinion was completely unnecessary.²⁹ Meanwhile, however, they decided temporarily to accept the fait accompli, to cooperate with the new regime,³⁰ and to work energetically "to preserve peace and order."³¹

²⁸"Nicht das Zentrum hat den Thron verlassen, sondern der Kaiser hat sein Volk verlassen." Josef Schofer, Politische Briefe über das alte und das neue Zentrum (Frieberg-im-Breisgau: Herder & Co., 1922), p. 22. At the national "Parteitag" of the Center Party on January 19, 1920, the Baden Minister of Finance, Joseph Wirth, noted: "The thrones were not overthrown because we were unfaithful; they were ruined on account of the policy which the supporters of the thrones exercised." Official Report, as cited in Morsey, Zentrumspartei 1917-1923, p. 81.

²⁹An editorial queried: "War das notwendig?" and responded in the negative by taking each of the October reforms and showing how these reforms had already provided for a democratic government. See KV, November 30, 1918, #944. A condensed form of this article appeared in the Münstersche Anzeiger on December 1, 1918: "War die Revolution notwendig, um den Militarismus zu beseitigen? Nein! Denn das Volk hatte die Regierung bereits in Händen. War die Revolution notwendig, um die kaiserliche Gewalt dem Volkswillen zu unterstellen? Nein! Denn die kaiserliche Gewalt war dem Volkswillen bereits unterstellt. War die Revolution notwendig, um die Auswüchse des Kapitalismus zu bekämpfen? Nein! Denn es war gute Aussicht vorhanden, diesen Kampf auf gesetzlichem Wege erfolgreich durchzuführen." Cited in Schulte, Münstersche Chronik, p. 195.

³⁰"The Centrist leaders diligently and courageously strove to prevent worse occurrences and to preserve the sorely tried Fatherland from anarchy." Karl Schulte, "Werden und Wirken in der deutschen Republik," in Nationale Arbeit, p. 29.

³¹Pfeiffer, Zentrum, p. 17.



One of the first responsibilities of the new government was to decide what Germany would do about the difficult armistice conditions. On the day following the abdication of the emperor a meeting of the "kaiserlichen" secretaries of state under the direction of the new chancellor, Friedrich Ebert, resolved to accept the armistice terms in order to avoid a capitulation of the army. Centrists Gröber and Trimborn both participated in the session and then, after having accepted the majority view, resigned as state secretaries.³² Fehrenbach, who as president of the Reichstag was also present, left immediately after in deep distress and returned to his home in Baden. Here he addressed a meeting of his Centrist colleagues and dejectedly concluded his speech with the remark: "Finis Germaniae."³³

The overthrow of the old regime also caused the dissolution of the Reichstag elected in 1912 ending at the same time the tenure for the Reichstag faction of the Center Party as well as that of the individual Landtag factions. This left the Party leaderless and without direction. Technically, the Centrist national committee which had met several times during the war could not be reconvened in order to elect a governing group for the Party. This put the Center Party in a precarious position. For the next few days the few members of the Centrist Reich's committee who were still in Berlin remained quiet and seemingly impervious to the calls of the press for action.³⁴ State committees,

³²Morsey, "Zentrumspartei," pp. 244-245; KV, November 12, 1918, #894, noted that Trimborn "after one month as Minister of the Interior" had resigned and returned to the Rhineland.

³³Josef Schofer, Mit der alten Fahne in der neue Zeit (Freiburg-im-Breisgau: Herder & Co., 1926), p. 103; Bachem, Zentrumspartei, VIII, 439.

³⁴Berliner Tageblatt, November 12, 1918, #580; Germania, November 12, 1918, #529; KV, November 13, 1918, #897.

for their part, impatient at receiving no directives from the Center's national committee, acted on their own initiative, some holding back in silence, others participating vigorously in their local provisional governments. Thus in Upper Silesia where the Center, under the new title of "Catholic People's Party," feared for its territorial integrity because of the unfavorable armistice terms, a certain political reserve was maintained.³⁵ But in Württemberg as well as in Hesse, a Centrist was included in each of the new provisional governments.³⁶ Similarly, in Karlsruhe as early as November 10, two leading representatives of the Baden Center, Joseph Wirth and Gustav Trunk, joined the provisional government in order to help check the Revolutionssturm. Their action was endorsed on the following day by a large majority of the Center's central committee of Baden, and Archbishop Thomas Nörber of Freiburg also gave his approval.³⁷ By joining with the majority parties, the Centrists in Baden, Hesse, and Württemberg de facto continued the kind of coalition government set up on a national plane within Prussia in 1917.

Preparations to enter the local government at Cologne were also being arranged. At an assembly of Centrists, the local chairman of the Party, Father Bertram Kastert, told his hearers they must be willing to enter into cooperation with the new government in order to insure "peace and order."³⁸ Kastert demanded the right for the Center Party to express its principles and position

³⁵Morsey, "Zentrumspartei," p. 246.

³⁶Hesse's representative was Otto von Bretano di Tremezzo; Württemberg's representative was Johann von Kiene. Ibid., p. 245; Bachem, Zentrumspartei, VIII, 419.

³⁷Schofer, op. cit., pp. 104-106; Bachem, Zentrumspartei, VIII, 421.

³⁸KV, November 11, 1918, #889.

"clearly and distinctly," insisting that all "popular groups" should cooperate "immediately" in forming workers' and soldiers' councils and committees of public safety. The Rhenish Centrists at this time gave no indication of accepting a republic; they still had hopes of obtaining "democracy" within the structure of a monarchical government. At all events, they demanded that this decision should be left to a National Constituent Assembly.³⁹

On the local scene, the Center's committees for the most part refrained from making any major readjustments to the Party's structure or program, hoping that definite directives would eventually come from the national committee. Their news organs, nonetheless, continued to pressure for immediate action. The Kölnische Volkszeitung demanded the convocation of a "Parteitag" and urged the Center "to get on board now . . . to publish its goals and no longer lag behind the developments . . . to declare in explicit terms what our task is and to determine what the party is to do."⁴⁰ Dortmund's Tremonia wrote that they awaited a program from competent leaders "not the day after tomorrow, but today."⁴¹

In South Germany the Bavarian Centrists struck out on their own. In the summer of 1918 indications of a cleavage between the Bavarian Centrists and the Prussian Centrists had already been evident. Bavarian suspicions of the left-wing movement within the Party were strengthened by such remarks of Erzberger as: "Links ist das Leben und rechts ist der Tod."⁴² The conflict between the

³⁹Ibid., November 11, 1918, #887.

⁴⁰From the editorial, "Zentrum an Bord!", November 15, 1918, #901.

⁴¹Cited in Morsey, "Zentrumspartei," p. 246.

⁴²Karl Schwend, Bayern Zwischen Monarchie und Diktatur (München: Richard Pflaum, 1954), p. 59.

Berlin Centrists and the Bavarian Centrists became more pronounced after the October parliamentary reforms. Conservative Catholicism looked askance at the Center's consorting with the traditional enemies of Catholicism. Also a long tradition of suspicion of the North tended to stir up separatist currents which were never too far from the surface. The revolution in Bavaria and its separatist movement had indeed received the sanction of the Bavarian Centrists. Two of the party members, in fact, were invited to participate in the new provisional government: Dr. Georg Heim, director of the Bavarian Peasants Union and Dr. Sebastian Schlittenbauer.⁴³ But the Bavarian Centrists distrusted the revolutionists. To preserve "security of persons, property, and democratic solidarity," Dr. Schlittenbauer recommended "the formation of a new Christian party based on democratic principles."⁴⁴ He and Dr. Heim, the leader of the Bavarian Center Party, called a Centrist meeting at Regensburg on November 12, 1918, to form the "Bayerische Volkspartei."⁴⁵ Heim pointed out to his "old friends of the Center" that the Bavarian People's Party was not merely a change in the name of the Party but a completely new independent organization open to all countrymen, "Catholics and Protestant Christians" alike. "All who support Christian culture as opposed to the all-devastating and corrosive materialism must unite with us," he said.⁴⁶ A committee comprising former Bavarian

⁴³See Buchheim, Geschichte der Christlichen Parteien, p. 347.

⁴⁴Cited in Schwend, op. cit., p. 59.

⁴⁵Buchheim, Christlichen Parteien, p. 348.

⁴⁶Quoted in Buchheim, Christlichen Parteien, p. 349. His appeals did not go unheeded. Two famous Protestant leaders, Professor Otto from the University of Munich and Baron von Pechmann, the well-known spokesman for French Lutherans, answered the summons.

Centrists drafted a new program at Munich on November 15 and published it officially three days later.⁴⁷

The program of the Bavarian People's Party recognized the revolution as an "accepted fact." But the Party did not agree in principle with the manner in which the republic had been created. They aspired to bring about changes only by legal means. Therefore, they demanded the calling of a Constituent National Assembly elected by universal suffrage to provide for a parliamentary system, and desired important questions to be decided by direct referendum. Other provisions, more traditional to the Center, requested the maintaining of a Christian Weltanschauung, the safeguarding of marriage and the family, and the guaranteeing of Christian education and confession schools. In the economic area it recommended provisions found in previous Centrist programs: adjustment of interest groups, protection of property, the curtailment of the "abuses" of capitalism, and as an appeal to the peasants, "healthy agrarian reforms." In the seventh and last provision, indicative of Bavarian animosity against Prussian hegemony,⁴⁸ they demanded "a union of German states on a federal basis with no single state predominating. . . . The present far-reaching federal, economic, and fiscal political dependence of Bavaria on the overpowering North must under all circumstances end."⁴⁹

News of the Bavarian cleavage was conspicuously slow in reaching both West Germany and Berlin and was accepted by the Center Party "north of the

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 350.

⁴⁸One sentence in this section states: "Wir haben es satt, für die Zukunft von Berlin aus bis ins kleinste regiert zu werden." Ursachen und Folgen, III, 202.

⁴⁹The complete program is printed in ibid., III, 200-202.

Main" with "sincere regret."⁵⁰ The Centrist there suspected Bavarian "Sonderbunderlei"⁵¹ and "strong particularist tendencies," and perhaps an attempt on the part of the Bavarians to win over to their cause the German Austrians in order to erect a "strong opponent to North Germany" ("Schwergewicht gegen Norddeutschland").⁵² However, due to the turbulence of the day, the Centrists in Berlin and Cologne saw no possibility of influencing the decision of the Bavarians. Unable to check the movement, the Centrist leadership acquiesced to the formation of the Bavarian People's Party.⁵³ But Berlin headquarters allowed the Bavarians no illusions as to the future role they would play within the Center Party.⁵⁴

The revolutionary situation in Berlin hindered the Centrist Reichstag members in their efforts to formulate any immediate plans.⁵⁵ Only six members remained in Berlin: Martin Fassbender, Johann Giesberts, Bartholomäus Kossmann, Maximilian Pfeiffer, Albrecht Frhr. von Rechenberg, and Eugen Schiffer.⁵⁶ These men felt the absence of a dominant figure. The leaders of the Party who

⁵⁰KV, November 19, 1918, #912.

⁵¹Germania, November 19, 1918, #541.

⁵²Becker-Arnsberg to A. Stegerwald, November 19, 1918, cited in Morsey, Zentrumspartei 1917-1923, p. 88.

⁵³KV, November 19, 1918, #912; Bachem, Zentrumspartei, VIII, 267.

⁵⁴On December 18, 1918, the Secretary-general Maximilian Pfeiffer wrote to brother Anton, Secretary-general of the Bavarian People's Party, that the BVP would be allowed "absolutely no influence" in the National Assembly. Cited in Morsey, Zentrumspartei 1917-1923, p. 88.

⁵⁵Due to strikes, insurrection, and street fighting the session of the Reichstag was suspended on November 8, 1918, and many members returned home.

⁵⁶Pfeiffer, Zentrum, p. 18.

had served as Reich officials in Prince Max's government were not available. With Gröber exhausted and ill and Trimborn and Fehrenbach disgusted with events in the capital, all had returned to their home states.⁵⁷ Erzberger, the one Centrist who could have provided the necessary leadership, was at Compiegne acting as the German Armistice Commissioner, but due to arrive back at Berlin shortly. The six Centrist Reichstag members awaited Erzberger's arrival. However, in order to placate the local committees that were pressuring the Center's headquarters at Berlin for direction and "enlightenment of the electorate,"⁵⁸ the six committee members formulated a public declaration on November 12, 1918. In it they insisted that the old Reichstag was the "only unaltered remaining representation of the German people" whose authority "ought not be diminished."⁵⁹ Published the following day, the proclamation, addressed to the "electors in city and country," after noting that most of the Centrist members had left Berlin, continued:

Those members still present in Berlin turn to the people and declare: We solemnly demand respect and equality of rights for our principles. We assume the right of freedom of speech and the right of assembly. In the decisive moment of balloting, the Center Party will call on all who acknowledge its principles.

But today it is necessary to work for peace, security, and order in the land. . . . We beg our Party friends everywhere: Deliberate on the circumstances! Prepare for the election! Prepare and instruct the women!

Help preserve order and public security that we may all have bread and sustenance!

⁵⁷Morsey, "Zentrumspartei," p. 242.

⁵⁸KV, November 13, 1918, #897; Germania, November 14, 1918, #533.

⁵⁹Pfeiffer, Zentrum, p. 18.

Watch for the directions of the Party's instructions!

[Dated:] Berlin, November 13, 1918.

[Signed:] Members of the Center faction of the German Reichstag: Dr. Fassbender, Giesberts, Kossmann, Dr. Pfeiffer, Dr. Freiherr von Rechenberg, Schiffer.⁶⁰

This constituted the prelude to the first steps toward Party reorganization. Party friends from various economic and social organizations and members of the Catholic press hastened to the assistance of the six-membered Centrist committee.⁶¹

Prussian Centrists on the same day made a similar appeal to "all other Prussian friends" stating that the crisis of the hour demanded that everyone "should do all in his power to keep peace and order, to prevent the shedding of more blood and to end famine."⁶² Party members were asked to cooperate in strengthening the party to meet the new crisis.⁶³

A second general manifesto exhorted all people--"laborers, farmers, office workers, city dwellers, civil servants, teachers"--to concentrate their efforts for a united front against the disorder of the day. The party denounced class rule and the turn of events in the capital. "Berlin is not Germany. . . . The ideas embodied in the Center's slogan, 'Truth, Justice, and Freedom!' will not die in forty-eight hours. The German people are not to be dictated to by anyone. They should voice their own opinions and declare themselves. The

⁶⁰Ibid., pp. 20-21; printed also in Germania, November 13, 1918, #532; KV, November 14, 1918, #898.

⁶¹KV, November 15, 1918, #901; Pfeiffer, Zentrum, p. 17.

⁶²Germania, November 13, 1918, #532; KV, November 14, 1918, #898.

⁶³Ibid.

German people want peace. Disunity will bring disorder, famine, and disintegration."⁶⁴ Germans were warned that to accept Bolshevism meant abrogating their rights. All citizens were urged to unite and demand the convocation of a National Assembly. Until such a group existed, the party declared, it would recognize only the Reichstag as the sovereign power in Germany.⁶⁵

This was the state of affairs to which Erzberger returned in the late afternoon of Wednesday, November 13, 1918.⁶⁶ He was stunned by the transformation which had overtaken his country and alarmed at the lack of law and order in the capital.⁶⁷ After reporting to the provisional government concerning the armistice terms, Erzberger attended a meeting on November 14 of all the Centrist members in the area.⁶⁸ This Party caucus decided to set up a steering committee selected from the group to help in reorienting the Center Party. The committee consisted of three members: Maximilian Pfeiffer⁶⁹ from the Reichstag faction, Rudolf Wildermann from the Prussian Landtag faction, and the director

⁶⁴Germania, November 15, 1918, #526, p. 2; KV, November 15, 1918, #901.

⁶⁵KV, November 15, 1918, #901; Pfeiffer, Zentrum, p. 18.

⁶⁶Erzberger, Erlebnisse, p. 340. Pfeiffer, Zentrum, p. 17, has Erzberger arriving on Friday, November 15. This is obviously incorrect since Erzberger was present in Berlin for a Centrist caucus on November 14, see Erlebnisse, p. 340.

⁶⁷Ibid. While at Compiègne Erzberger heard rumors of a revolution in Germany and wondered which government he represented--the Empire or the Republic. Ibid., p. 335.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 340.

⁶⁹Maximilian Pfeiffer (1875-1926) studied at the universities of Berlin, Heidelberg, and München. In 1903 he became secretary of the Library of Bamberg and custodian in 1910. He was appointed archivist at the State Archives at Munich in 1912. From 1907-1918 he was a member of the Reichstag. He served as general secretary of the Center from 1918-1920 when he was appointed German Ambassador to Vienna.

of the Zentrums-Parlaments-Korrespondenz, Franz Fortmann.⁷⁰ On the following day as the caucus continued its discussion, Erzberger proposed a reorganization of the national structure of the Party. To achieve greater cohesiveness within the Center, he suggested establishing a general secretariat with headquarters at Berlin. The proposal was well received and the officers were selected. Maximilian Pfeiffer, an old friend and fellow worker of Erzberger, was appointed the Party's national treasurer. Other members of the central Party bureaucracy included the members of the newly-created steering committee.⁷¹

The establishment of a general-secretariat fulfilled an oft-repeated desire of the Center Party and was welcomed by all the members of the Party who now looked to it as the "animated focal point of Centrist policies."⁷² The secretariat did not disappoint its Party members. Immediately, it set about its task of "enlightening the electorate" by organizing a speakers' bureau, preparing courses in political education and issuing pamphlets and short articles. Henceforth all campaign material and general manifestoes were to be issued through this department.⁷³

The Center Party, now "come on board," saw for itself what other parties were already doing to revamp their programs to adjust to the new situation. With great rapidity the old monarchical elements were abandoning former platforms, reorganizing themselves (in some cases adopting a new name), and advocating democratic measures for preserving the state from anarchy. The old

⁷⁰KV, November 16, 1918, #904.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Germania, November 20, 1918, #543.

⁷³Bachem, Zentrumspartei, VIII, 253-254.

Conservative Party of Prussia and Germany was in the process of joining with Free Conservatives, Pan-Germans, and a majority of the Junker class to form the German National People's Party. Right-wing members of the former National Liberal party, long known as the champion of liberalism, now became the German People's Party, while their left-wing opponents were uniting with the Progressive People's Party to form the German Democratic Party. Only the Majority Social Democrats and the Independents retained their old party names and platforms.⁷⁴

The reorganization of the national Party structure accomplished at the Center caucus of November 14-15 in Berlin created an impression of party activity which was gratefully acknowledged as a symptom of a "new awakened energy."⁷⁵ Nonetheless, this activity created an illusion of major policy readjustments which at that time were not forthcoming. An indication of this is seen in the six manifestoes published by the General secretariat between November 15 and December 2, 1918. Five of these declarations were addressed to various social groups; "to the workers, soldiers, and sailors of the Center";⁷⁶ "to the like-minded people of Austria";⁷⁷ "to the officials, teachers, and employees";⁷⁸ "to the citizens and farmers of the German Fatherland";⁷⁹

⁷⁴After the Independents left the coalition government of the Council of Peoples' Commissars on December 27, 1918, the Majority Socialists preferred to be called Social Democrats (SPD).

⁷⁵KV, November 15, 1918, #903.

⁷⁶Germania, November 15, 1918, #537; KV, November 16, 1918, #904.

⁷⁷Germania, November 16, 1918, #538.

⁷⁸Ibid., November 20, 1918, #543.

⁷⁹Ibid., November 26, 1918, #551.

and "to the German academic youth."⁸⁰ A sixth statement was entitled "Peace and Bread!"⁸¹ Yet, each proposition was a stereotyped appeal, an expression of dismay at the difficulties of the times, an assurance that the Party would help. There were vague promises of "new things to come," of rejecting "the reaction of the Right and the terror of the Left," of "driving out anarchy," of lifting "the hunger blockade," of demanding "the return of war prisoners," but there was no definite program, no constructive political reform, no down-to-earth plan for the future. Only in the last statement addressed to the academic youth was there an indication of something positive, and that merely in connection with changing the name "Zentrum" to foster interconfessional participation.⁸²

Nevertheless, agitation for reform was evident. At a Centrist assembly in Trier on November 17 the director of the local Centrist organization, Christian Stöck, repeated queries he had been hearing concerning the Center: "Where is the Center? Does it sleep? Is it already dead or buried?"⁸³ Stöck had but to look around to find his answer. Numerous well-attended Centrist meetings were held throughout the nation. Karlsruhe witnessed a large Centrist assembly on November 16.⁸⁴ At another held in Cologne the

⁸⁰Ibid., December 2, 1918, #562.

⁸¹Ibid., November 24, 1918, #549. The complete set of proclamations is given in Pfeiffer, Zentrum, pp. 26-40.

⁸²This one was signed: "Der Generalsekretär der Deutschen Zentrumsparlei (Christliche Volkspartei), Dr. Pfeiffer, M. d. R." Ibid., p. 40; Germania, December 2, 1918, #592.

⁸³Trierische Landeszeitung, November 18, 1918, #273, as cited in Morsey, "Zentrumsparlei," p. 248.

⁸⁴Bachem, Zentrumsparlei, VIII, 442.

following day over 3000 persons attended,⁸⁵ while a similar gathering met simultaneously in Münster.⁸⁶ There were several distinguishing features which made these meetings different from previous Centrist gatherings. For the first time women speakers came to the fore.⁸⁷ Then too, with the exception of Otto von Bretano di Tremezzo in Wiesbaden and Frhr. von Rechenberg in Berlin, there was a noticeable absence of representatives of the nobility and of the members of the agrarian-conservative wing within the Center Party.⁸⁸ This absence had a positive effect on the growth of dominance of the left-oriented faction of the Center Party begun in 1917.

The purpose of the Centrist assemblies and caucuses was to determine the future policies for the Party. A sense of urgency engendered by the pending elections goaded every political party on as it formulated the kind of platform it hoped would attract the voter. Of the several programs proposed by various local Centrist factions and Catholic organizations, none was so crucial in "awakening the Center" as the program drafted in the middle of November by Father Heinrich Brauns, the spiritual director of the Volksverein.⁸⁹ Convinced

⁸⁵KV, November 18, 1918, #909; Germania, November 19, 1918, #542.

⁸⁶Germania, November 19, 1918, #542; Schulte, Münstersche Chronik, pp. 119-120.

⁸⁷In Karlsruhe, Clara Siebert; in Cologne, Christine Teutsch and Minna Bachem-Sieger, as cited in Morsey, Zentrumspartei 1917-1923, p. 93.

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹Heinrich Brauns (1868-1939) studied theology at the University of Bonn and at Cologne and economics at Bonn and Freiburg. In 1890 he was appointed chaplain in Erefeld and later vicar in Borbeck. He was director of the Central Office of the "Volksverein" from 1900-1920 and general director from 1920-1933. He was elected as a delegate to the National Assembly (1919) and to the Reichstag (1920). From 1920-1928 he served in the Reich's cabinet as Minister of Labor. See Joseph Schmitt, "Brauns," in Staatslexikon, 6 ed. II, (February, 1958), pp. 161-166.

that the future success of the Center Party lay in its ability to emerge as quickly as possible from its "tower," Brauns submitted to the leaders of the Party a plan for the reorganization of party structure and platform. His program was so constructed as to appeal to liberal and democratic elements as well as to the more conservative aristocratic groups. The plan called for a widely democratic and interconfessional party. It suggested that the name "Zentrum" be dropped so that Protestants would not hesitate to seek membership. It offered social reforms to keep the masses from siding with the Socialists; yet at the same time it held fast to the Christian principles so as not to alienate the clergy. It proposed the restoration of the monarchy, but conceded that such a measure rested with the decision of the National Assembly. Finally, the plan called for a "Grossdeutschland" which would include Austria.⁹⁰

Brauns' plan was the first to offer a definite proposal for the future party structure. The Berlin caucus of November 14-15 avoided taking any definite stand and merely confined itself to discussing the daily political and economic problems without offering positive solutions. Brauns' proposals did not come under discussion by the Berlin group.

Brauns' proposed draft, however, did find a receptive audience among his left-wing colleagues of the Rhineland. There the Centrists, dependent upon the votes of the industrial areas, were eager for an immediate constructive program to retain their hold on the Catholic laborers who were being wooed by socialist propaganda. Progressive labor leaders took the initiative to call a Centrist meeting to discuss plans for a preliminary program. Gathered at Duisberg on November 16, this energetic group, with an almost unanimous vote

⁹⁰Brauns to Wilhelm Marx, November 13, 1918, State Archives of Cologne, as cited in Morsey, "Zentrumsparlei," pp. 248-249.

accepted Brauns' program.⁹¹ The proposal for the restoration of the monarchy, however, was rejected despite strong opposition to the contrary; this question was to be left to the National Assembly to decide.⁹²

On November 18, a committee of twelve Centrists⁹³ appointed by the Duisberg assembly outlined a twenty-one point program to serve as the basis for discussion at a general meeting of the Center Party.⁹⁴ Two days later the Kölnische Volkszeitung published this program under the heading: "The Center—the Free German People's Party!"—indicating a proposed new name for the Party.⁹⁵ The article emphasized the Center's fundamental opposition to the Socialists and impressed upon its readers that this draft represented a changed platform adapted to the "new times." The program set forth a plan of Christian social policy ("Sozialpolitik"), offered "safety and security" to all who professed a positive faith in God, demanded the "preservation of the Bundesstaaten," and proposed the introduction of "proportional and women's suffrage rights."⁹⁶

⁹¹Ibid., p. 250. Morsey derives much of his material concerning this movement from the unpublished Memoirs of Wilhelm Marx found in the state archives of Cologne.

⁹²Ibid. Morsey cited a letter of the Rhenish labor secretary, Johannes Beckers: "It has been very difficult for me to convince our trade unionists . . . that the monarchy belongs to the past."

⁹³Ibid. Among the members were F. X. Bachem, K. Hoesber, J. Kuckhoff, A. Rings, B. Kastert, P. Schlack, and J. Becker.

⁹⁴Ibid., November 21, 1918, #917, indicates that the group wanted to be able to present the electorate with "something completely new." A general meeting was held in Berlin on the same day that this draft program was printed. It is doubtful if this program was used as a basis for discussion at the Party's Berlin session. See Ibid., November 25, 1918, #928.

⁹⁵November 20, 1918, #915. J. Becker here proposed the new title "Freie deutsche Volkspartei" to indicate the Party's conversion to a "progressive and interconfessional party."

⁹⁶Ibid.

Drafted as they were by Centrists who were attuned to the sentiments of the working classes, the twenty-one points carried a definite appeal to the labor classes. Such policies as assistance in the building of homes, the legal confiscation of large estates, "with remuneration," and the dissolving of entails, reflected the Party's concern with socio-economic affairs. In the cultural area, there were promises of resistance to any illegal or forceful change of Church-State relations.⁹⁷ But nothing was said about the Grossdeutschland proposal, nor about a positive program for the mitigation of the war debts or the political reorganization of the country.

A further explanation of the Rhinelanders' Kölnner Pläne was published the next day (November 21). Reviewing the Party's history and traditions, and emphasizing the Center's integrity, declaring that it had always acted in the public interest and would continue to do so, the article pointed out that social reforms could not be adequately provided by Catholics who were not social-minded. In conclusion, it extended an appeal to the Bavarian Centrists to unite with the Rhineland group:

We beg our Bavarian friends not to refuse their consent to the Rhineland proposals, to accept the proposed draft of the Party's name, "Free German People's Party," as their own, and to examine the well-intentioned provisional program. All this will be simple as soon as the printed matter, etc., of the Party is circulated in Bavaria and has done its work.⁹⁸

The Rhineland Centrists had not acted without a certain stratagem. It was their hope that the hasty compilation and publication of the provisional program would catch the Center off-guard and dissolve with one revolutionary stroke the former conservative direction of the Party. The leaders also hoped

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid., November 21, 1918, #917.

to prevent the workers from drifting into the camp of the SPD. To this end it employed the practice now popular in bourgeois political campaigns of incorporating "deutsche" or "Volkspartei" in the party title.⁹⁹

But the impetuous and unprecedented act of the left-oriented Rhinelanders failed its mark. Far from dissipating the power of the conservatives, the program mobilized a strong reaction within the Party. For some, the "strong movement to the left" was the cause of downright resentment.¹⁰⁰ The left-wing was warned that such precipitate activity could lead to the dissolution of individual state organizations and jeopardize the unity of the entire Center.¹⁰¹

On the same day that the "Cologne Plan" was published, similar ideas came under scrutiny in another quarter, for an official Party caucus under the chairmanship of Erzberger had been arranged in Berlin to discuss the Centrists' new party program. Present at this gathering were various Reichstag Centrists, Party members from the Prussian Landtag, directors of the Rhineland and Westphalian factions, representatives of the Center's news organs, delegates from the Christian Workers' Association, the Volkverein, the Farmers' Union, and even from the Central Council of the Catholic Women's League.¹⁰² The assembled members discussed what they called the "two big problems of the day": The inevitability of another Kulturkampf should the government succumb to a proletarian dictatorship, and the threat of anarchy in the disturbances instigated

⁹⁹"Deutsche Volkspartei," "Deutschnationale Volkspartei," "Deutsche Demokratische Partei," and "Bayrische Volkspartei."

¹⁰⁰In a communication "aus Mittelstandskreisen," KV, November 25, 1918, #914.

¹⁰¹Karl Hoeber, ibid., November 21, 1918, #917.

¹⁰²A report of the meeting of November 20 was printed in Germania, #514 on the same day.

by the Bolshevist groups. The Centrists agreed that unless the new Party were adapted and made relevant to present situations, it would remain vain and ineffectual. Like the Kolner Gruppe the Berlin assemblage considered proposals to break asunder once and for all the traditional confessional framework of the Center Party and to rearrange it into an interconfessional Christian majority party. Unwittingly, they set their approval on a major portion of Cologne's provisional draft by embodying many of the same ideas in their preliminary program.¹⁰³

Dr. Pfeiffer published the results of the meeting in the form of a proclamation on the same day (November 20). In the proclamation which told of the Party's adjustment to the revolutionary situation, he set forth the ideals of the new temporary platform:

The World War and the Revolution have ruined the old Germany, in storm and stress will a new one be born. It shall be a free social republic in which all Germans, all classes and ranks, all citizens without distinction of reliefs and membership of party can be contented. To create this new Germany is the task of the whole nation, not of one party dictatorship. All parties want and must join in it. But to do so all old parties require an internal and external renewal.

A new Center must and will endure the change of these days. Public belief in a democratic republic, opposition to the rule of the upper classes, order in freedom, open renunciation of mammonism and materialism of our day, fostering of ideal values, making the people and the nation financially sound: these are the fundamental principles of its renewal as a Christian-democratic People's Party.

¹⁰³KV, "Die Reform des Zentrums," November 23, 1918, #924, indicated that a comparison between the two programs (Berlin and Cologne) would lead one to believe that they had used "identical models." Morsey, Zentrumspartei 1917-1923, pp. 104-105, notes that neither group was aware of what the other was doing. He cites a letter of Brauns' which said that after he had returned home from the Duisburg conference on November 19, he had received a notice to hurry to Berlin. Brauns reached the capital on November 25 and stayed over the next few days to confer with the Center's leaders. Cited ibid., p. 105.

All social classes, men and women, who profess these principles and would join up with these slogans in the election for the National Assembly should accept the new Center. The Center dare not go under. It must continue on with new goals and a wider foundation. It must lead to newer heights.¹⁰⁴

The statement was followed by certain "guiding principles" formed by the assembly pertinent to the two major areas of foreign and domestic policies. Among the important provisions were demands for a "swift conclusion of a world peace," "regulation of international relations on lasting justice instead of force," "creation of a league of nations with equal rights for small and large nations," "international regulations and protection of the rights of workers," "substitution of private capitalistic monopoly" by local cooperatives, "maintenance of confessional "Volksschulen," "retention of parental rights" in education, and "freedom of religious orders and congregations."¹⁰⁵ The cultural section of the guiding principles gave evidence of the Party's new concern for all Christian groups. Only in two of these cultural and religious proposals did it make specific reference to Catholics.¹⁰⁶ It left no doubt of its earnest wish to open its doors to all Christian denominations.

On the whole the Berlin proposals were more moderate than the Cologne draft. While the latter called for a complete Party reorganization, the

¹⁰⁴See the Flugschriften by Pfeiffer, Zentrum, pp. 41-46 for the complete proclamation along with the "Leitsätze." Also printed in Germania, November 20, 1918, #544; KV, November 22, 1918, #919. The latter paper indicated that it subscribed to the points and anticipated the accomplishment of a combined program of all Centrist factions in the near future. This was just two days after it had printed the Kölner Pläne.

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

¹⁰⁶Sec. I, point 6 (foreign policies): "Vollkommene, durch völkerrechtliche Bürgerschaftern gesicherte Unabhängigkeit des Heiligen Stuhles." Sec. II, C, point 6 (cultural policies): "Freiheit . . . der katholischen Orden und Kongregationen." Ibid., pp. 42, 45.

former's "Leitsätze" proposed a renewal of the old Center--"Christlich-demokratische Volkspartei." They would change the name but retain much of the Center's program of June, 1918. The two drafts were similar in that neither made reference to an official Party plan for the future political structure of Germany. The social economic suggestions were also similar with the exception that the Berlin plan contained no mention of dissolving entails, nor of legal confiscation of large properties. There was some variance also in the treatment of war profits: the Cologne plan demanding their confiscation; the Berlin proposals mildly requesting the "strongest fiscal assessments."¹⁰⁷

The publication of the more "left-oriented" Cologne plan and the "right-oriented" Berlin proposals created widespread discussion in Centrist circles. Catholic public opinion, reflecting the diversified views of the heterogenous Centrist groups, varied from total agreement on the need of renovation, to partial or complete disagreement on the manner and extent of reformation. In small local Centrist meetings in Rhineland, Berlin, and Württemberg, stolid conservatives who until now had maintained an ominous silence began to promote their ideas despite the fact that their position had been greatly undermined by the events of November 9 and the power balance within the Party upset. This conservative wing resented the attempts to break the Zentrumsturm, and warned against abandoning the old Party name,¹⁰⁸ and the sudden desertion of fidelity to the old monarchical structure.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷"Berliner Leitsätze": ". . . schärfste steuerliche Erfassung der hohen Einkommen und Vermögens, besonders der Kriegsgewinne . . ." Ibid., p.45; "Kölner Entwurf": "Schärfste Erfassung der hohen Einkommen, der grossen Vermögen und des unverdienten Vermögenszuwachses. Einziehung aller Kriegsgewinne." KV, November 20, 1918, #915.

¹⁰⁸See Karl Hoeber in KV, November 25, 1918, #927.

¹⁰⁹"Furst Salm-Reifferscheidt to Wilhelm Marx, November 18, 1918, cited

Apparently no two Centrist groups supported identical platforms. Lack of Party cooperation was bewailed while each group waited for the other to conform. On November 26, for example, a provincial meeting of the Westphalian Centrist committee met at Hamm to discuss a provisional program. The committee issued a manifesto to the local community in which it called upon its constituents "to work together for the maintenance of order by rejecting every type of narrow-minded Party rule." It demanded the "erection of local committees of safety" which would accurately present the picture of the economic, professional, and political conditions in city and community. "We have the obligation to cooperate [it stated]. We also have the right to be heard. . . . We frankly declare ourselves for a democratic republic."¹¹⁰ In the Berlin directives this group recognized a basis for a "clear and final program." They did, however, object to dropping the name "Zentrum," but they were willing to add the name "Christlich-demokratische Volkspartei," in order to encourage other Christians to join the party.¹¹¹

Far different was the outlook of the little group which met in Cologne on the following day, November 27. Representing the conservative middle class interests within the Party ("Ortsausschuss Köln der Vereinigung zur Wahrung der Interessen des Mittelstandes innerhalb der Zentrumsparlei"), this smaller group criticized what they termed a "privately drafted" program which had originated in a committee that had failed to include the representatives of middle class interests. In a special program representing its own vested interests,

in Morsey, Zentrumsparlei 1917-1923, p. 107.

¹¹⁰Cited in Schulte, Münstersche Chronik, p. 166.

¹¹¹Ibid., p. 167.

it demanded that the "treatment" of economic life be based on "Christian moral principles," and it declared that "a fundamental belief in the monarchy" was "a conscientious duty." In this latter proposition, it enjoyed the support of the Rhineland aristocratic wing of the Center Party which also criticized the "abandonment" of the monarchy.¹¹²

In direct contrast to this conservative approach was the policy espoused by the traditionally democratic Württemberg Center faction termed "adapting oneself to the changed circumstances." Meeting likewise on November 27, this group considered the reestablishment of the monarchy as impossible, and spoke out clearly for a "democratic-republican state structure."¹¹³ Similarly, the Baden Centrists gave their approval to the precedent set by Berlin in rejecting a monarchical form of government. Meeting in Karlsruhe the Baden Centrists rejected the offer of a combined list ("Listenverbindung") with the conservatives and retained the "name and banner" of the Center.¹¹⁴

One of the most controversial questions discussed by various local committees was the change of Party name. Despite repeated efforts on the part of the Center's democratic wing to broaden the membership to include non-Catholics, the Party tenaciously clung to its confessional characteristics and to the name which identified it as a Catholic Party. Yet not Catholic concerns alone, but the religious, social, and educational interests of the entire German Christian population were threatened by the Socialist regime. It was the time for Protestants and Catholics both to unite in a common front against the

¹¹²Cited in Morsey, "Zentrumspartei," p. 254.

¹¹³KV, November 28, 1918, #937.

¹¹⁴Schofer, Mit der alten Fahne, pp. 113, 115, 119-120.

dangers of atheistic materialism and anarchy. If the confessional connotation of "Zentrum" hindered Christian unity, it was to be expected that Centrists would change the name to something more acceptable.

Among the various suggestions for name-changing offered by Centrists, shades of conservatism or liberalism could be detected. Berlin's national committee, for instance, preferred dropping the old name and assuming the title "Christliche Volkspartei." According to the Cologne plan "Freie deutsche Volkspartei" could be added to the old name--but temporarily. Once the constituents had become adequately instructed, "Zentrum" could be dropped without opposition.¹¹⁵ Westphalian Centrists advocated the retention of the old name with the added title, "Christlich-demokratische Volkspartei," while some of the more liberally inclined Baden Centrists favored "Christlich-soziale Volkspartei."¹¹⁶ The minority conservative element still clung to the name of Center.¹¹⁷ And some, like the Karlsruhe Centrists, thought the name "Christlich-sozialen Volkspartei" would perhaps bring "momentary" success, but in the long run might pose a danger to ideological rigidity ("Weltanschauliche Geschlossenheit").¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵Opinions varied in the Cologne conference of November 18. Wilhelm Marx thought it important that the old name be retained. J. Becker was of the opinion that "Zentrum" should be dropped as soon as the electorate became familiar with the new name. He wrote to Stegerwald, Erzberger, Brauns, Joos, Gronowski, Lensing, and Bell to win their support for this proposal. See Morsey, "Zentrumspartei," p. 251.

¹¹⁶Ibid., p. 255.

¹¹⁷Dr. Martin Fassbender severely criticized this attitude in his moving defense for the name "Christliche Volkspartei." See Germania, November 28, 1918, #556, p. 2.

¹¹⁸Schofer, op. cit., p. 120.

Besides emphasizing the interconfessional character of the Party, Centrist leaders were also stressing "democratic party life" which was to dominate "more strongly" in the future. At a Centrist rally in Cologne in the first week of December, Karl Trimborn pointed this out to an assembly of over 5,000 people. He referred to the revolution as a "national misfortune" which "aggravated the arrangement of the armistice" and caused "much internal disorder."¹¹⁹ The Centrist leader favored the idea of a "greater Germany" with the inclusion of Austria and the maintenance of the Reich's unity. He admitted that the Center had traditionally been a staunch supporter of the monarchy which served as a strong bond of unity for the Reich. But under the present circumstances the erection of a republic was perhaps the "most correct, most expedient, and most imperative necessity. . . . Loyalty to the monarchy is no longer an obligatory principle in our program. . . [he stated.] If the National Assembly decides for a republic, then we have to recognize the will of the people."¹²⁰ Wilhelm Marx¹²¹ addressing the overflow crowd in an adjoining room expressed similar sentiments and prophesied a "great future" for the "Christlich-demokratischen Volkspartei" based on the Berlin "Leitsätze."¹²²

¹¹⁹KV, December 5, 1918, #957.

¹²⁰Ibid.

¹²¹Wilhelm Marx (1863-1946) studied jurisprudence at the University of Bonn and became a lawyer in 1884. He was appointed economic councillor in 1904 and judge of the Court of Appeals in Cologne (1906) and in Düsseldorf (1907). He served as a member of the Prussian Landtag (1899), the Reichstag (1910-1918), and the National Assembly (1919-1920). He was chosen president of the Center Party (1921-1923) and two years later succeeded Gustav Stresemann as chancellor of the Reich (1923-1924; 1926; 1927-1928). He retired from political leadership when the Center was weakened in the election of May, 1928.

¹²²KV, December 5, 1918, #957.

This reversal of one of the major tenets of the Party's program of June 1918, was indicative of a significant change in Rhineland sentiments and showed the growing strength of republican acceptance.

As the month of November drew to a close the Center leaders faced the still unsolved problem of party solidarity. How were they to combine the various proposals of local committees to formulate a national program acceptable to all members? Moreover, how were the various interest groups to be reconciled to a democratic interconfessional party? Another problem confronting the leaders was that of finding a suitable program dealing with Church-State relations and Christian cultural principles which would meet the approval of the German Catholic hierarchy.¹²³

The problem of how to hold the Center Party together or at least how to prevent their members from drifting into other political camps became more acute as various parties made their bid for public support. One such party attempting to lure the discontented aristocratic conservative Centrists into its camp was the newly created German National People's Party (DNVP).¹²⁴ This party, founded on November 22, 1918, combined elements from the old Conservative Party, Free Conservatives, Pan-Germans, and a majority of the Junker class. Organized to protect the interests of the conservative aristocracy

¹²³In a letter written by Bishop Karl J. Schulte of Paderborn to Dr. Pfeiffer on November 23, 1918, the bishop agreed "on the whole to the Berlin principles" but wished that "the requirement of freedom of instruction be more strongly protected." Cited in Morsey, "Zentrumspartei," p. 255.

¹²⁴For an excellent study of this party, see Lewis Hertzmann, DNVP: Right-Wing Opposition in the Weimar Republic 1918-1924 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963).

against the attacks of the bourgeois liberals, the DNVP posed as a respectable middle class party,¹²⁵ and hoped to unite "all good citizens" in defense against the "dangers of socialism" and the "indignity" of the Republic.¹²⁶ Broad appeals aimed at the anti-revolutionists in the German People's Party and the Center Party were made during the election campaign;¹²⁷ but at the time were not too successful. Most Centrists, regardless of their feelings towards the revolution, preferred to await the decisions of the National Assembly.¹²⁸

The solution to Party solidarity was provided, surprisingly enough, not from within the Party, but rather from a force outside. On November 13, the revolutionary government appointed the Independent Socialist Adolf Hoffmann ("Zehn-Gebot-Hoffmann") as Minister of Culture.¹²⁹ His appointment portended trouble for future Church-State relations and for the system of confessional

¹²⁵In one of the Party's appeals published in East Prussia it stated: "Such persons may all the more easily come to the DNVP without damaging the honor of their old party because the Nationalist organization is not, like the DVP, an old party with a new name, but it is a completely new Party. . . . The DNVP is not the old Conservative Party. It does not wish to be that, nor can it be." Edward Beckmann, "Stellung nehmen!" in Ostpreussische Zeitung, December 10, 1918, as cited ibid., p. 44.

¹²⁶"Richtlinien der Deutschnationalen Volkspartei vom 27. Dezember 1918," as cited in Ursachen und Folgen, III, 205-206.

¹²⁷Hertzmann, DNVP, p. 43.

¹²⁸The DNVP continued to woo the discontented Right wing of the Center Party after the January election. In midsummer of 1919 Germania complained about the efforts being exerted by the DNVP to win Catholic support for their political program, and to join their Party. See Germania, July 4, 1919, #298.

¹²⁹Hoffmann's appointment was criticized as a "tasteless afterthought of history" ("geschmackloser Treppenwitz der Weltgeschichte"), KV, November 14, 1918, #899.

schools in Germany.¹³⁰

A fanatical atheist, Hoffmann immediately promulgated a Socialist anti-clerical program. Two of his decrees, published on November 27 and 29, respectively, abolished clerical supervision in the "Volksschule," forbade the teaching of religion, and nullified such practices as prayer before and after classes, pupil attendance at religious services, and observance of religious holidays--cherished concessions which had been granted to confessional schools by the old regime.¹³¹ The Catholic reaction was immediate; protests broke out everywhere.¹³² Bishops resented the "de-Christianizing of schools."¹³³ But there was more to come. Government subsidies to the Church, it was learned, were to be suspended after April 1, 1919. Secularization of Church and convent property would obviously follow. All were appalled at the "irreligious achievement" of the revolution and feared the establishment of a proletarian dictatorship. The specter of a "new Kulturkampf" loomed darkly.¹³⁴

¹³⁰ "Heute stehen wir von der brennenden Sorge, welches die Lage der katholischen Kirche im neuen Deutschland sein wird." Germania, November 15, 1918, #535.

¹³¹ The two decrees are cited in Maximilian Pfeiffer, Kampf um die heiligsten Güter! (Flugschriften der Deutschen Zentrumsparlei, #5, Berlin: January 9, 1919), pp. 12-17.

¹³² Germania, November 28, 1918, #556; November 29, 1918, #558; November 30, 1918, #559.

¹³³ Cardinal von Hartmann, Archbishop of Cologne, in a protest written on December 16, 1918, as cited in Pfeiffer, Kampf, p. 21.

¹³⁴ In a "flaming protest published December 20, 1918, Cardinal Hartmann and the Prussian bishops lashed out against the dangers of the socialistic materialism of the day: "Jetzt kommt ein Kulturkampf von noch viel schlimmerer Art." Ibid., pp. 23-33.

Catholics and Protestants alike resented Socialist attempts to secularize education.¹³⁵ Together they staged interdenominational demonstrations against the obnoxious decrees.¹³⁶ In Berlin a special interdenominational committee was established to fight a common cause against the "materialism" of the day.¹³⁷

Among outspoken critics of Hoffmann's legislation, the Center Party stood out as the stalwart defender of Christian culture and education. Beginning in the middle of November and continuing beyond the January election campaign, the Party waged a tireless and, at times, vitriolic battle against the Socialist anti-clerical program. A mandate published by the Prussian Center faction¹³⁸ was only the first of many such bitter protests to be penned by Centrists against the "rape of Catholics and Protestants" through the "Jakobinermassregeln" of Adolf Hoffmann.¹³⁹ The Socialist Minister of Culture was abused and insulted on every side. He was condemned as a "Kulturschädling," as an "illiterate person . . . bristling with an itch for dictatorial power."¹⁴⁰

¹³⁵For a report of the discussion held by the Protestant High Consistory, see ibid., pp. 44-45.

¹³⁶Joseph Selbst, Vicar-general of Mainz wrote: "Catholic and Protestant brethren rose up as one man. . . . From numerous massive assemblies one could hear a cry of protest and a storm of opposition which swept over the land like a natural catastrophe and in the chaos of revolution Berlin itself could not be left unheard." Cited in Morsey, "Zentrumspartei," p. 257.

¹³⁷Pfeiffer, Kampf, p. 55; Germania, November 15, 1918, #535, spoke of a "mobilization of all religious strength."

¹³⁸KV, November 19, 1918, #912.

¹³⁹Ibid., November 25, 1918, #928.

¹⁴⁰"Mann ohne Bildung . . . gestachelt von diktatorischem Machtkitzel." Ibid. The Munster professor Johann Plenge protested "as a scholarly Socialist" to Ebert against the "sudden frenzy of power exhibited by Hoffmann" whose

In the Kölnische Volkszeitung he was depicted as a big-mouthed, illiterate atheist of Berlin, a cynic, an evil scum from Berlin's quagmire, a gushing water-spout before an imposing building, an intellectual Thersites."¹⁴¹

An uninterrupted wave of protest stemming from individuals, from Catholic organizations, and from Protestants added its weight to the cultural and religious demands of the Center.¹⁴² Capitalizing upon the religious issue, the Centrist leaders combined the various socio-economic groups within the Party into a common front with the defense of Christian education as a unifying common denominator. The publication of the anti-clerical decrees, furthermore, gave the Party a suitable slogan for the coming election campaign for the National Assembly--one that could be used to attract both Catholics and Protestants alike.¹⁴³

The incessant protests against Hoffmann gained their end. By the middle of December, his co-worker in the Ministry of Culture, Konrad Haenisch, was

appointment had been "a continuous historic disgrace for the Socialists." Cited in Schulte, Münstersche Chronik, p. 132.

¹⁴¹"Grossschnautziger, ungebildeter Berliner Gottesleugner, widerwärtiger Zyniker, üble Blüte aus Berliner Grossstadtstrumpf, grinsender Wasserspeier vor einem Monumentalgebäude, geistiger Thersites," December 17, 1918, #988; also cited in Schulte, Münstersche Chronik, p. 289.

¹⁴²On November 27 Professor Georg Schreiber spoke to a Centrist assembly about the "Catholic crisis" and the dangers of separation of Church and State. A protest signed by one thousand men and women of Cologne concerning the religious question was sent to Ebert by the Center Party on December 4. Later the reading of Ebert's reply at another large gathering of Centrists at Münster tended to increase the antagonism against government policies. Cited ibid., pp. 180, 206, 262-265.

¹⁴³A few months later Kaas spoke of the "revolutionary flirtation" which exposed the "cultural aims" of the SPD and shook the "christliche Volkseele" and raised the campaign to a "battle of ideals." Cited in Morsey, "Zentrumspartei," p. 258.

forced to confess that Hoffmann's policies had been "shipwrecked." "A hasty separation of State and Church by a mere decree . . . [he stated] would lead, in my opinion, to disastrous political consequences," therefore, the government would have "to tolerate" the interests of Christianity in Prussia.¹⁴⁴

Under pressure of public opinion Haenisch cancelled de facto Hoffmann's edict of November 29 concerning the abolition of religious instructions, declaring it illegal since it had not been published in the "prescribed form."¹⁴⁵ On January 4, 1919, Hoffmann disgustedly resigned his office. The united efforts of German Catholics and Protestants marshalled by the strong force of the Center had scored a victory.¹⁴⁶

But it was not the voice of religion solely which called a halt to political tyranny. Nor for that matter were the pending elections the decisive factor in the withdrawal of the recent administrative decrees. The warning note that had set the Socialist government quaking was a small cry out of the West. Identified by German Nationalists as Centrist-inspired, "Los von Berlin" became a rallying slogan that echoed through the land.¹⁴⁷ Rhineland citizens

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Public decree of December 28, 1918, see Pfeiffer, Kampf, pp. 59-60. Germania published an editorial, "Ein Erfolg der christlichen Protest," December 28, 1918, #604; see also Berliner Tageblatt, January 5, 1919, #8.

¹⁴⁶ Pfeiffer warned that the struggle had just begun. The Socialist anti-clerical program indicated the trend of its secularism and materialism; worse things would happen if the Socialists should win a majority in the coming election. See Pfeiffer, Kampf, p. 60.

¹⁴⁷ Already on December 17 Professor Plenge warned Haenisch: "You are not aware of the manner by which the 'Los von Berlin,' 'selbständiges Rheinland-Westfalen' have received an echo here. Practically the whole responsibility for it falls on the Prussian Ministry of Culture." Cited in Schulte, Münstersche Chronik, p. 235.

were determined to create a new republic of Prussia's western provinces.¹⁴⁸ Too long had they been irked by Prussia's unsympathetic domination over them. They had watched the unsettled events of November and the chaotic situation brought about by strikes and Spartacist riotings. They had endured the presence of allied occupation troops. They had lived in fear of partial annexation of Rhenish territory by France. Now they were cringing under the lash of a new Kulturkampf. No wonder that even hitherto loyal Rhenish people began to favor separation from Prussia. "Rhenish law for Rhenish land" ("Rheinisches Recht für Rheinisches Land")¹⁴⁹ became the motto of a reactionary movement against the undemocratic and "irresponsible" government of Berlin.¹⁵⁰ With Red dictatorship of "the worthless 'rassefremden' intruder, Kurt Eisner of Bavaria," threatening on the one hand and the "rule of Berlin demagogues" on the other, Rhenish Centrists desired a new Reich formation with a separate republic for the Rhineland area (Pfalz, Hessen-Nassau, Rhineland and Westphalia) based on a "new free Germany." "Treue zum Reich, los von Berlin!"¹⁵¹

Press reaction to the movement was naturally divided. A few Centrist publications supported the idea;¹⁵² other larger dailies were highly skeptical.¹⁵³ The "Centrist" label had been tagged on the movement by newsmen

¹⁴⁸ KV, December 5, 1918, #957.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., December 4, 1918, #953.

¹⁵⁰ "We will not dance to the tune of Berlin," Tremonia, December 6, 1918, # 337, as cited in Morsey, "Zentrumspartei," p. 259.

¹⁵¹ KV, December 4, 1918, #953. This separatist movement was not anti-German but simply anti-Prussian.

¹⁵² For some of these comments, see Schulte, Münstersche Chronik, pp. 233-235.

¹⁵³

The Kölnische Zeitung, December 6, 1918, #1125, criticized the

who might more correctly have identified it with two fellow-editors. Employing the slogan, "Weg mit Berlin!" Karl Hoerber and Father Josef Froberger, editors of the Kölnische Volkszeitung, had lashed out in their papers against the dictatorship of minority groups and the "foolishness of the Spartacists."¹⁵⁴

It was their paper which had originated the idea of dividing Germany into four republics arranged in such a pattern as to break the dominant position of Prussia and reconstruct the Reich on a "federal democratic basis."¹⁵⁵ At a meeting in Cologne on December 4, called for the purpose of acquainting Cologne's citizens with the proposed "Berliner Leitsätze" and other proposed reforms of the Center Party, Karl Hoerber read the resolution demanding a new division of the Reich to a large assembly of Centrists. The response was overwhelming.¹⁵⁶ At the same meeting, Father Kastert eagerly endorsed the resolution, declaring that it carried the sanction of the Archbishop of Cologne, and underscoring the fact that its demands were not the Centrists' alone but the desire of all people in the Rhineland.¹⁵⁷

arrangement as "impractical" and "unacceptable." The Tägliche Rundschau called it "clerical particularism"; Vorwärts accused the Centrists of creating a "private domain of clerical backwardness"; Germania warned of the "danger to the unity of the Reich in these chaotic times"; the Telegraphen Union doubted whether the movement represented the "general will of the Rhenish-Westphalian people." All articles as cited in ibid., pp. 215-217.

¹⁵⁴ December 6, 1918, #959.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., December 12, 1918, # 976; Schulte, Münstersche Chronik, p. 264 has a map of the proposed reconstruction of the Reich.

¹⁵⁶ "Stürmischer, sich starker und starker wiederholender Beifall, Hüt und Tücherschwenken. Die Anwesenden erheben sich von ihren Plätzen. Ein weltgeschichtlicher Augenblick, der für immer im Gedächtnis haften wird." KV, December 5, 1918, #957.

¹⁵⁷ An official of Münster commenting on this remark, said that he doubted

But the spark enkindled by Hoerber and Froberger and fanned to a blaze by Rhineland separatists was not destined to flare up so brightly again. Though Rhenish Centrists fought and expounded, other political parties refused to become involved. Grossly exaggerated was the Kölnische Volkszeitung's assertion that the movement had been accepted with "enthusiastic agreement by all parties."¹⁵⁸ Even within the Center there had been little encouragement.¹⁵⁹ When the inhabitants of Westphalia agitated for an independent Ems-Republic, and similar movements of separatist minorities followed, support for the Rhenish-Westphalian movement grew even weaker. Serious-minded Centrists began to question the advisability of the whole separatist program. The Münstersche Anzeiger on December 8, warned against a "hasty decision,"¹⁶⁰ and two days later Adolf Schmedding, a Münster Centrist, reinforced this admonition by speaking out vigorously against any immediate Los von Berlin movement.¹⁶¹ Like sentiments were expressed at Hamm on December 11 by Karl Herold, the chairman

whether the Bishop of Münster would be of the same opinion. Cited in Schulte, Münstersche Chronik, p. 222. Later the KV, December 12, 1918, #976, explained that the resolution represented the wishes of individual Centrists and was not a movement of the Center Party. For this reason, neither Trimborn nor Marx as leaders of the Party had commented on the resolution. At a Rhenish Centrist Parteitag on September 16, 1919, Father Brauns reemphasized this when he pointed out, "in the name of the Party directors," that the Rhineland movement had not been staged by the Party but expressed the wishes of individuals. Reports as cited in Morsey, Zentrumspartei 1917-1923, p. 122.

¹⁵⁸ Morsey, "Zentrumspartei," p. 262.

¹⁵⁹ No references were made to such proposals in the various discussion meetings formulating programs for the Center's new platform. The future state structure was to be decided by the National Assembly.

¹⁶⁰ Cited in Schulte, Münstersche Chronik, p. 246.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 254-258.

of the Westphalian Centrist committee. He counselled his companions to remain aloof, declaring that such a decision ought to be made by the National Assembly not by one party.¹⁶² Stegerwald and Erzberger were also strong in their opposition to the separatist movement. Erzberger in particular favored a strong centralization of power and had little sympathy with any particularist sentiments--a view that was in contradistinction to that of most of his fellow Centrists. Similar feelings were entertained by Hans Bell, a Centrist Reichstag member from Düsseldorf who, on December 13, withdrew his support from the movement and joined the opposition.¹⁶³

That same December 13 was made noteworthy by the convocation of a general meeting at Elbfeld, under the auspices of the Prussian government, for the purposes of investigating and settling separatists' contentions. Important officials of the Rhenish provinces were present, as well as the representatives of local communities, political parties, and the press. Trimborn as Centrist representative in explaining his position repudiated the Kölnische Volkszeitung's whole idea of separation, and said that Berlin's mismanagement had alienated the West.¹⁶⁴ He noted, furthermore, that with France striving to win Rhenish Catholic sympathy for an Anschluss, the formation of a separate Rhenish-Westphalian republic was simply an alternative to foreign annexation. The mayor of Cologne, Konrad Adenauer, called the separatist proposal "the

¹⁶²Ibid., pp. 266-267.

¹⁶³Ibid., p. 273.

¹⁶⁴Trimborn remarked that in Trier, people were saying, "We would rather be French, than bow to Hoffmann." Ibid.

greatest stupidity" ever heard of, and pointed out that the proposal had never been wholeheartedly accepted by the Center Party.¹⁶⁵

The Elberfeld conference sounded the death knell to the Rhenish republic movement for the moment, although the Kölnische Volkszeitung continued to publicize it. Erzberger, Gröber, and a Centrist leader from Münster, Karl Herold, repeated their condemnations of the Los von Berlin plans at the national Centrist convention held in Frankfurt on December 30.¹⁶⁶ But Trimborn and Wilhelm Marx as leaders of the Rhenish Centrists had already buried the issue when on signing the Party's general election manifesto on December 28, they confirmed publicly: "The Reich's unity must under all circumstances be maintained."¹⁶⁷

The Berlin Centrist leadership had neither sanctioned the separatist movement nor become involved in the controversy. Its efforts had been concentrated rather on the business of constructing a new Party platform and on joining with the Church in its bitter campaign against the Prussian revolutionary Kulturpolitik.¹⁶⁸ In these interests, Berlin Centrists had joined with Rhenish-Westphalians in a series of committee meetings during the month

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 271-274.

¹⁶⁶ KV, January 2, 1919, #3; Germania, January 2, 1919, #2.

¹⁶⁷ The Los von Berlin issue was to be resurrected again after the National Assembly convened. In Westphalia the idea of a separate Ems-Republic never really died and was a cause of embarrassment to the Centrist leadership during the election campaign. See Schulte, Münstersche Chronik, pp. 293, 303, 308-314, 319-322.

¹⁶⁸ On November 23 Bishop Karl Joseph Schulte of Paderborn fearing future conflicts for the Church over cultural-political affairs, requested secretary-general Pfeiffer to see that the Center enter boldly into the fray with "rückhaltlos katholischer Führung," as cited in Morsey, Zentrumspartei in 1917-1923, p. 110.

of December attempting to resolve the differences between the two groups. After four weeks of "difficult transactions"¹⁶⁹ a set of new policies had gradually evolved combining the main points of both programs.¹⁷⁰ These were then submitted on December 20 to the national committee for final approval.¹⁷¹ The committee held a conference at Frankfurt on December 30 under the direction of the Party leader, Adolf Gröber. Among the thirty-six leading members of the Party present were: Ersberger, Karl Herold, Richard Müller-Fulda, Fürst Löwenstein, Graf Praschna, K. von Savigny, M. Pfeiffer, L. Gerstenberger, O. von Bretano, and F. X. Bachem. Representatives of the Catholic Women's League of Germany, Hedwig Dransfeld and Mrs. Hessberger, also attended.¹⁷² After a careful study of the preliminary program, the committee sanctioned it as the new Party platform for the coming election campaign.¹⁷³

The provisional character of the new Party directives and its emphasis on "new principles" hinted at basic changes in the Party's policies which actually were not presented. True, acceptance of the republic,¹⁷⁴ the Party's

¹⁶⁹Bachem, Zentrumsparlei, VIII, 263.

¹⁷⁰For a coverage of some of the topics discussed, see Maximilian Pfeiffer, Zentrum und politische Neuordnung (Flugschriften der Deutschen Zentrumsparlei, #2, Berlin: December, 1918).

¹⁷¹KV, December 20, 1919, #997.

¹⁷²Bachem, Zentrumsparlei, VIII, 263.

¹⁷³The new program, authorized by Gröber, was published in KV, January 2, 1919, #4; Germania, January 2, 1919, #2.

¹⁷⁴The "torturous question" of the restoration of the monarchy was excluded from the discussions at Frankfurt and from the Party program. The Württemberg Centrists, however, had definitely declared that a restoration of the monarchy was "impossible." See Bachem, Zentrumsparlei, VIII, 264.

strong emphasis on democracy, and its demands for a more centralized Reich evidenced a reversal of some of the tenets of the previous July program.¹⁷⁵

But beside this, there was little changed in the basic Center Party's principles.¹⁷⁶ The "new" Party platform contained provisions culled from various former programs "as well as some new proposals, resulting from the last weeks of discussion."¹⁷⁷ The platform was divided into three parts. There were various provisions concerning the formation of a new political constitution, a section on foreign policies, and a long catalogue of domestic procedures covering cultural, social, economic, and financial policies. An introduction in the form of a manifesto (signed by Gröber) stated that the goal of the Party was to strive in a true Christian spirit to attain social justice for all. The revised platform recognized the new democracy, but attacked class rule, materialism, mammonism, and anarchy.¹⁷⁸

Concerning the political reorganization of Germany, it advocated three measures. First, acknowledging that the new republic was to be democratic and

¹⁷⁵ The new program called for "Wahrung der Reichseinheit, Stärkung des Reichsgedankes" while at the same time it asked for the "Erhaltung des bundesstaatlichen Charakters des Reichs zum Schutz der Eigenart der deutschen Stämme." See "Leitsätze der Deutschen Zentrumspartei vom Dezember 1918," in Ursachen und Folgen, III, 197.

¹⁷⁶ At the second Parteitag at Berlin on January 16, 1922, Emil Ritter told the assembled Centrist that the directives of July 1918 and the program proposed by the West German and Berlin groups were combined into an official election program. Report as cited in Morsey, Zentrumspartei 1917-1923, p. 129.

¹⁷⁷ Some ideas of the Jesuit Heinrich Pesch's doctrine of Christian Solidarism were proposed as an alternative to the evils of capitalism and socialism. See Heinrich Pesch, Nicht kommunistischer, sondern christlicher Sozialismus! (Flugschriften der Zentrumspartei #4, Berlin: December 23, 1918).

¹⁷⁸ "Leitsätze der Deutschen Zentrumspartei (Christliche Volkspartei) von 30. Dezember 1918," in Ursachen und Folgen, III, 196.

not socialist, it required that a new constitution for the Reich and the Bundesstaaten be immediately framed. Furthermore, it called for the immediate removal of the National Assembly to a "safer place than Berlin," and the stationing of a volunteer guard to insure the safety of the new Assembly's proceedings. Second, it insisted that the unity and federal character of the Reich be maintained. "The settlement of defensive and foreign policies is to be reserved to the Reich while the settlement of Church and school is reserved to the Bundesstaaten. Third, it asked for universal suffrage with proportional representation; popularly elected governments in states and the nation; availability of all offices in the federal government and in municipalities to people of all classes; and the adoption of a bill of rights guaranteeing to all citizens, "regardless of political and religious affiliations," freedom of speech, press, and assembly.¹⁷⁹

In regard to foreign policies, the platform deliberately incorporated many of the ideas of Wilson's Fourteen Points. The Center wanted the "immediate conclusion of a preliminary peace and the agreement and reconciliation of all people." As a deterrent to future war, it called for "the establishment and execution of an international law founded on Christian principles and the realization that permanent peace could be achieved if based on mutual recognition of states rather than on the force of power." It desired "the creation of a league of nations with equal recognition of both large and small states," with obligatory arbitration, disarmament, and abolition of secret treaties. Other provisions merely reiterated traditional Centrists demands:

¹⁷⁹Cited in Ursachen und Folgen, III, 197.

"the protection of national and religious minorities" in all nations, economic freedom of development and freedom of the seas, international regulation of labor legislation and insurance laws, popular education for the understanding of foreign questions, and finally, the maintenance of a German colonial empire.¹⁸⁰ The third section of the Center's platform covered internal or domestic policies. Here, again, the program proposed policies similar to its previous demands: "the maintenance and strengthening of cultural and of religious exercises with cooperation between Church and State, and "the protection and strengthening of the religious character of marriage and of the family." Besides this, it advocated a campaign for the suppression of immoral art and literature, adequate religious instruction for all schools as well as the maintenance of the "confessional public school," "a free career for the advancement of the talents" of people from all walks of life, and equality of opportunity for all women.¹⁸¹

In economic and social affairs, the Party insisted upon the maintenance of the right of private property, but at the same time it championed the development of national economy in the service of social justice.¹⁸² It

¹⁸⁰Ibid., pp. 197-198. Commenting on the Party's desire to maintain a colonial empire, Leo Schwering in an article, "Zentrum und Aussenpolitik," published in Germania, February 7, 1919, #61, noted that the Party thereby showed itself not only "sensitive" to "national" interest but was also "far-sighted" and "optimistic."

¹⁸¹Ibid., pp. 198-199.

¹⁸²This was based on one of Pesch's ideas which was incorporated in article 24: "Geordneter Aufbau Volkswirtschaft im Dienst der sozialen Gerechtigkeit und des Gemeinwohls auf Grundlage der produktiven Arbeit. Grundsätzliche Erhaltung der auf persönlichem Eigentum beruhenden, nach dem Solidaritätsprinzip dem Gesamtwohl der Gesellschaft untergeordneten Privatwirtschaft." Ibid., p. 199.

demanding the effective care of all the wounded as well as the support of veterans of the war. Regarding financial affairs, the Party sought to win the support of the bourgeois group by circumventing the flight of capital abroad, by preventing depreciation in the value of war loans, and by advocating that taxes be apportioned according to each citizen's ability to pay.¹⁸³

Armed with the new Party platform, the "Christliche Volkspartei" as the Center was now called¹⁸⁴ entered the election campaign for the National Assembly. A flood of campaign material--posters, circulars, manifestoes, news articles, pamphlets--issued from the general secretariat in Berlin to rouse the interest of the new class of voters created by the revolutionary government.¹⁸⁵ For the first time in the history of Germany, women would exercise

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ After much discussion concerning a change of names for the Party the Frankfurt conference on December 30 adopted the name "Christliche Volkspartei" as the official name in order to indicate the interconfessional character of the Party. Bachem, Zentrumspartei, VIII, 264. A few days before, Peter Spahn at a Party conference at Berlin had protested changing the old name, but agreed to acquiesce if "wider circles" within the Party would demand it. Germania, December 20, 1918, #594. The name "Zentrum" was never really relinquished since it was always printed in parentheses behind "Christliche Volkspartei." Shortly after the January election, "Christliche Volkspartei" was abandoned and the Party reverted to the old title of "Zentrum."

¹⁸⁵ The general-secretariat issued a series of Flugschriften to explain the Center's views on the campaign issues. The first two by Maximilian Pfeiffer, Zentrum und neue Zeit and Zentrum und politische Neuordnung, gave the Party's opinion of the revolution and its stand on the present political situation. The third by Alexander von Brandt, Staat und Kirche, reviewed the Center's traditional stand on Church-State relations and showed that the Party still did not favor a separation of Church and State. The fourth by Heinrich Pesch, Nicht kommunistischer, sondern christlicher Sozialismus! developed a socio-economic theory which recognized the dignity of man, harmonized freedom with authority, and aimed at a maximum distribution of private property. It favored the idea of collective farming and cooperatives. The last three publications, Kampf um die heiligsten Güter! by Maximilian Pfeiffer; Revolution und Kultur by Martin Fassbender; and Der Kampf um die Schule by Adolf Gottwald, dealt with the religious conflict in the schools and clarified the issues.

the right of suffrage, for in the coming election of the National Assembly to be held on January 19, not only men, but all women twenty years of age or older would be entitled to cast their ballots. The Center Party, though traditionally against woman suffrage, lost no time in soliciting feminine votes.¹⁸⁶

Posters were geared to awaken womanly sentiment, particularly the maternal instinct.¹⁸⁷ Germania frequently referred to the responsibility of women to be

well-informed on political questions and urged them to take part in patriotic and political activity. It was hoped that the influence of women would enoble and enrich the political life of the nation.¹⁸⁸ Every woman interested

"in the weighty questions of the home and family, the school and education, law and charity, work and professional activity" was urged to vote.¹⁸⁹ Miss

Ehlert, a speaker for the Catholic Women's Union, in an ardent appeal to the women at the Party's big election rally on January 1, 1919, told the women "to give back to the world Christian faith, Christian standards, and Christian charity."¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁶ Already on November 16 Felix Porsch, the Prussian Centrist leader, proposed the nomination of women delegates at a Breslau meeting. See Germania, November 20, 1918, #543. Two days later at a Cologne assembly, the Centrist executive committee made a provision for the "organization of women voters," KV, November 18, 1918, #909. At a Centrist gathering on December 1, the members were told "to exert untiring recruiting efforts" in winning the women's votes. Cited in Schulte, Münstersche Chronik, p. 16.

¹⁸⁷ "Starke Frauenherzen werden über schwachen Männerwillen"; "Die Herzen in die Höhe!" for reproductions of similar posters, see Heilfron, op. cit., I, 150-168.

¹⁸⁸ December 13, 1918, #481. This same idea was expressed by the Jesuit Peter Lippert, "Der Zug der Frauen," Stimmen der Zeit, XCVI (December, 1918), pp. 394-402.

¹⁸⁹ Germania, November 15, 1918, #436.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., January 2, 1919, #2, p. 4.

The tremendous crowd which attended the Center's rally at the Zirkus Busch in Berlin on January 1 was a good indication of the support the Party was receiving.¹⁹¹ Dr. Pfeiffer, who welcomed the large gathering, stressed the seriousness of the times and the necessity for upholding Party solidarity.¹⁹² The keynote address was given by Dr. Anton Höfle, the director of the Technicians' Union, who emphasized the need for social and economic reform. While encouraging employees and employers to unite their interests and mutually respect each other's rights, he noted that the Party was concerned that provisions be made for adequate wages and decent standards of living. The Party, he said, retained its policy of recognition of personal ownership of property, but while private initiative was to be encouraged, private monopolies were to be replaced by communal administration. The ideal of a socialist state, he pointed out, "is the equitable distribution of goods." He stressed, therefore, the Party's need to give more consideration to social and economic reforms in order to offset the false promises of the Socialists. To win in the coming election, he concluded, the Party must "enter into a new modern 'Sozialpolitik.'"¹⁹³

The whole tone of the rally centered on an open attack of Socialism. Both Catholic and Protestant speakers told the interdenominational assembly to unite forces in an attack against the enemy of Christianity. Dr. Carl Sonnenschein urged all to demand the historic rights of the Church and

¹⁹¹The rally was the greatest the Center had ever experienced. Over 20,000 people attended indoors and another 40,000 heard the speeches broadcast in the Lustgarten. Ibid.; KV, January 2, 1919, #3.

¹⁹²Ibid.

¹⁹³Ibid.

religious organizations, for, if the Social Democrats were to win the election, the degeneration of Germany would follow. Religion and Christian ideals, he told his audience, would be suppressed by the radical Socialists. "The new Center wants freedom of religion, the right to regulate culture, the guarantee of freedom of conscience, freedom of education, and religious instruction in all schools--elementary and secondary."¹⁹⁴

In the several short addresses given by clergymen, God-fearing men of all denominations were advised of the necessity of providing a united front against a common foe. Dr. Carl Sonnenschein's fears of a future socialist state were echoed by Dr. Karl Dunkmann, a Protestant theologian and university professor. He referred to the November Revolution as a "scourge of God," and encouraged Catholics and Protestants to stand united in this time of crisis against the Socialist threat to the religious interests of all Christians. Father Bernhard Lichtenberg, speaking for the Catholics, voiced the same ideas. He underscored the importance of the religious issue in the forthcoming election. In a rather florid speech, interrupted by frequent applause, Dr. Theodor Haecker, a Lutheran pastor, emphasized the importance of joining forces in the attack on religion and culture. "We do not intend to change our ideas; we have charity for all our brethren. We would reach over high fences to shake hands with our brethren. . . . We need to be united on our battlefield against bold, endless, insane paganism."¹⁹⁵ Other speakers had similar messages to give. Each emphasized the fact that Party solidarity and unity of all faiths

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

were necessary concomitants for safeguarding Christian ideals and breaking the strength of the Social Democrats.

At the conclusion of the rally, the entire gathering--approximately sixty thousand persons--poured out into the street and, amid the waving of banners and singing of religious and patriotic songs, marched toward the Ministry of Culture to protest against Hoffmann's policies.¹⁹⁶ Although the demonstrators did not succeed in obtaining a personal confrontation with Hoffmann, the impact of their crusading spirit could not have been lost upon their opponents. The Socialists were forced to recognize that the new Center ("Christliche Volkspartei") was something to be reckoned with.

Similar rallies and demonstrations were held on a smaller scale in local areas. At Breslau the Party solgans railed against the "Reds" and the "chaos" of the times.¹⁹⁷ Several rallies held at Cologne protested the "atheistic policies"¹⁹⁸ of the Berlin government and called for both "active and passive resistance."¹⁹⁹ Reviewing the policies of the Socialists, the Cologne Centrists lashed out against them and in contrast lauded the policies of the "Christliche Volkspartei."²⁰⁰ The archdiocesan union of Catholic Workers' and Apprentices' Associations pledged the support of all its members to the "Christliche Volkspartei."²⁰¹

¹⁹⁶Descriptive accounts of this demonstration are found in Berliner Tageblatt, January 2, 1919, #3; KV, January 4, 1919, #9; January 5, 1919, #12; Tremonia, January 4, 1919, #4, referred to the demonstration as a "true crusade."

¹⁹⁷Germania, November 21, 1918, #554.

¹⁹⁸KV, December 27, 1918, #1013.

¹⁹⁹Ibid., December 28, 1918, #1015.

²⁰⁰Ibid., January 4, 1919, #11.

²⁰¹Ibid., January 7, 1919, #18.

From all sides the Party received tremendous support. Hoffmann's radical Kulturpolitik brought out the Catholic hierarchy in full support of the Center. In an official declaration from the Archbishop of Cologne, Cardinal Felix Hartmann, the Catholics were told to support the "Christliche Volkspartei" in its struggle against the "godless efforts" of the Socialists.²⁰² Other bishops from Trier, Paderborn, Münster, Osnabrück, and Hildesheim joined with Cardinal Hartmann in issuing a pastoral letter in January to all the members of their flocks condemning the "enemy of Christendom--Socialism" which was "attempting to bring the disorders of the day into Catholic districts."²⁰³ Bishop Adolf Bertram of Breslau warned against a new Kulturkampf led by the Socialists and forbade any "Anschluss" with the Socialist parties.²⁰⁴

The election campaign was the same one-sided affair as the New Year's Day rally and similar rallies had been. Instead of taking a wide view of the situation, the Center narrowly levelled its opposition against the Social Democrats whether they were Majority Socialists or Independents.²⁰⁵ Practically ignoring other political parties, the Center singled out the SPD as the "only enemy of the German people," and the perpetrators of the revolution.²⁰⁶ The

²⁰²Ibid., January 1, 1919, #1.

²⁰³Ibid., January 21, 1919, #31; Germania, January 13, 1919, #20; cited also in Schulte, Münstersche Chronik, pp. 69, 100.

²⁰⁴Germania, January 23, 1918, #26.

²⁰⁵While the left-wing of the Center might have favored some of the social reform ideas of the Majority Socialists, Centrists on the whole were suspicious of socialistic philosophy.

²⁰⁶KV, January 18, 1919, #48.

cry was "gegen Klassenverhetzung und Anarchie."²⁰⁷ Germania's January issues carried a number of articles highly critical of the Social Democrats' program. One editorial called the Socialists the Center's "arch-enemy" because they wanted a strong socialist state, abolition of religion, and state ownership of property and the means of production. The Center, Germania pointed out, desired equality for all states and recognition of states rights, the maintenance and strengthening of Christian culture and education, as well as freedom of conscience and religious toleration. It wanted also to help the farmer and protect the laborer.²⁰⁸

To bolster its arguments about the irreligious and anti-Christian attitudes of the Socialists, Germania printed a special article entitled, "What the Social Democrats Say about Themselves."²⁰⁹ Pointing to some irreligious activities and attitudes of the Minister of Culture, the article noted that these were typical of the inherent policies of atheistic socialism. It quoted such statements of their leaders as: "To be a Socialist is to be anti-Christian," and Kautsky's claim, "Above all else I have represented the opinion that every religion should be opposed." Bebel was quoted as saying, "Christianity and Socialism are as opposed as fire and water."²¹⁰ A later

²⁰⁷ For other anti-socialist slogans, see Schulte, Münstersche Chronik, pp. 153, 163, 167, 170; Heilfron, op. cit., I, 154-168.

²⁰⁸ January 7, 1919, #10, p. 2.

²⁰⁹ January 9, 1919, #11, p. 2.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

editorial asked, "Can a Catholic Be a Social Democrat?" Replying in the negative, it used Bebel's statement as its proof.²¹¹

In the week prior to the election a whole series of short articles was published in Germania explaining clearly and concisely the major planks in the Center's platform and contrasting them with those of the Social Democrats.²¹² The final article in the series appearing on the eve of election summarized in bold print what the Center considered the most important questions to be decided on the morrow's election. They were listed under three headings: state politics, culture, and economics. The first choice was Germany as a democratic republic or a classless society under a proletariat dictatorship. The alternative for the second choice was a Christian Germany or a Germany mastered by a modern pagan authority which would suppress Christian beliefs. Finally, the voter was to decide whether he would "uphold the highest principles in maintaining the right of private property," or choose "red socialism which would lead quickly to the elimination of personal property and to Communism."²¹³

It was a hard-fought campaign--a battle between Christianity and atheistic Socialism. Issues rather than personalities had been stressed. As the campaign came to an end there could be no doubt as to what the Center ("Christliche Volkspartei") stood for. Having assumed leadership in the

²¹¹Germania, January 13, 1919, #20, p. 2.

²¹²Ibid., January 12, 1919, #17, p. 2; January 13, 1919, #20, p. 2. January 14, 1919, #21, supplement; January 15, 1919, #23, supplement; January 16, 1919, #25, supplement; January 18, 1919, #30.

²¹³Ibid., January 18, 1919, #30.

crusade against Socialism, the Center had merited for itself the backing of three important religious groups. First of all, it had won the wholehearted support of the German Catholic hierarchy and the heads of the various Catholic associations. Secondly, by converting to an interconfessional body, the Center Party had gained the favor of several Protestant groups.²¹⁴ One such group, the "Bund christlicher Demokraten-Evangelischer Zweigverein des Zentrums," founded in Berlin under the leadership of the Protestant pastor Johannes Haecker²¹⁵ worked with the Center because it alone "under the chaotic conditions" offered "a political abode."²¹⁶ The Jews were the third religious group bound in friendship to the Center Party. On January 5, 1919, at a large assembly in Cologne, Rabbi Scheftelowitz spoke publicly in favor of the Center's program and encouraged all Jews to vote for it because the Party guaranteed "a democratic and social program based on equal rights and justice for all people."²¹⁷

In the course of the two months since the November 9 upheaval, the Center Party, while retaining the basic principles of the old Soest program, had revolutionized its political theories. But its social and economic principles remained the same. Hence, it reflected the Revolution of November

²¹⁴A manifesto of January 7, 1919, signed by "evangelical supporters" hailed the cooperation between the two great Christian confessions in the "war" against Socialism and pledged support to the Center Party in its political work. See Johannes Linneborn, "Die Kirschenpolitik des Zentrums," in Nationale Arbeit, p. 198.

²¹⁵Haecker founded this organization with the cooperation of Professor Karl Dankmann, Arno von Rehbinder, and the banker, Albert R. Weidner.

²¹⁶KV, January 18, 1919, #50.

²¹⁷Schulte, Münstersche Chronik, p. 210.

only in the single area of politics. It had abandoned the monarchy and entered the campaign as a supporter of a democratic republic. As a defender of Christian ideals, it had fought "with the old banner in the new times."²¹⁸ By capitalizing upon the religious issue the Party had managed to submerge local differences and to present a united front. But the image was deceiving. Party unanimity did not actually exist. The conservative wing, content for the time being to remain in the background, awaited post-election developments. The Center had been forced out of its "tower"; time would tell whether it was equipped to meet the challenge of a new era.

²¹⁸ Schofer, Mit der alten Fahne in die neue Zeit.

CHAPTER II

ELECTION TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

ANALYSIS OF CENTRIST RETURNS AND ATTITUDES

In the minds of most Germans, it was the National Assembly alone which could achieve the political stability for which the nation yearned. To it, therefore, all of Germany looked for the restoration of the religious, economic, social, and political equilibrium so woefully upset by the recent upheaval. But hope for the future was not without misgiving, for there still remained the crucial decision of the German electorate which would determine whether the National Assembly would be democratic or socialistic; whether, therefore, the revolution would be restricted to the political area only, or be extended to the social and economic areas as well.

Germany waited anxiously for the election of this National Assembly. The promise to convene such an assembly had been made on the first day of the Revolution. When, however, no further steps were taken in the matter, the Center Party united its demands with other conservative and bourgeois liberal parties, reminding the revolutionary government of its promises. In a reply to a letter of Cardinal Hartmann of Cologne expressing concern over the revolutionary government's anti-clerical program, Erzberger wrote on November 21, 1918, pledging the Center's support to fight Hoffmann's schemes. Erzberger pointed out, though, that this could be done only after a Constituent Assembly had restored some kind of order to political life: "The decisive

task of the moment is to secure a bourgeois majority for the National Assembly. This goal can be attained if the bourgeois strata of the population pull themselves together."¹ Erzberger informed the Cardinal that he was pressing the government to call for early elections. In fact, Ebert's promise to do so had been the prerequisite of Erzberger's willingness to continue as Armistice Commissioner under the Socialist government.² On November 30, 1918, the Council of People's Commissars issued an edict providing for the election of a constitutional National Assembly, but it, too, failed to specify when the election should take place. Two more weeks of waiting followed. At last on December 16, the announcement was made that the election would be held in the first month of the new year; namely, on January 19, 1919.³

Voting procedure, though provided in the November 30 edict, was traceable to an earlier law enacted on August 2, 1918.⁴ According to this procedure, Germany was divided into thirty-seven electoral districts. Each party in the district was to present a general ticket with its list of delegates. Electors voted for the general party ticket, not for individuals. In other words, a ticket could not be split. In areas where a party's constituency was small, parties of similar political background or parties who

¹Erzberger to Cardinal Hartmann, November 21, 1918, replying to a letter dated November 18 as cited in Epstein, Matthias Erzberger, p. 286.

²Erzberger, Erlebnisse, p. 304.

³Heilfron, Die deutsche Nationalversammlung, I, 105. The election was delayed due to the reluctance of the Independent Socialists who did not favor an early election.

⁴The edict of November 30, 1918, as cited ibid., I, 105-109; also in Ursachen und Folgen, III, 239-242.

supported similar platforms were allowed to unite and present a common list.⁵ A total of 433 deputies was to be elected—one deputy for every 150,000 persons.⁶ Distribution of seats was based on proportional representation, whose basic purpose was to allow each political party a percentage of votes.⁷

The important process of drawing up the list of candidates in each electoral district was entrusted by the respective parties to their local party committees. All trades, professions, and classes were represented. The Center Party, moreover, demanded that nominees on its ticket be active registered members capable of carrying through the election campaign in their districts. Much of the campaign material—manifestoes, slogans, posters, pamphlets—came from the general secretariat in Berlin. (Prior to the war this had been transacted by the Centrist local board of commissioners.) It was up to the local nominees to disseminate campaign literature and to speak at Party rallies in their vicinity.⁸

Under the proportional representation system in Germany, loyalty was to the Party, not to the candidate. Rarely did the voter know the candidates

⁵In the Hanoverian electoral district the Center ("christliche Volkspartei") and the German Hanoverian Party ("Deutsch-hannoverschen Partei") combined their candidates on a common ticket. Bachem, Zentrumsparlei, VIII, 267.

⁶In the end only 421 deputies were elected since the twelve deputies provided for Alsace-Lorraine were not allowed to participate. Heilfron, Die deutsche Nationalversammlung, I, 110.

⁷For an explanation of the havoc wrought by proportional representation on the Weimar Republic, see Ferdinand A. Hermens, Europe Between Democracy and Anarchy (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1951), Chapter IV.

⁸Paul Prange, "Die Organisation der Zentrumsparlei," in Nationale Arbeit, pp. 445-458.

listed on the ticket. Indeed, as one German citizen referring to this election remarked, "Fortunate was the voter who knew the face of the leader of the ticket to which he gave his vote."⁹ Usually, the most influential party members were placed at the top of the list to assure their election. Thus Matthias Erzberger, who because of his duties as German Peace Commissioner was not able to participate actively in the National Assembly campaign, was assured of his election by being placed second on the Württemberg ticket.¹⁰

As election day drew near, final efforts were exerted by all parties to gain supporters for their political programs. Fear of an anti-Christian socialist regime had impelled Catholics and other bourgeois Christian groups to work untiringly to curb the growing power of the Socialists and prevent them from gaining a majority of seats in the National Assembly.¹¹

A fairly reliable barometric reading of the political strength of the German electorate was indicated in the results of the various elections for local constituent assemblies held in the weeks just previous to the national election. The January 5 election held in Baden, for example, offered a good omen for the Center Party. In that area the Centrists gained the largest number of seats—39 out of 107. Close behind were the Majority Social Democrats with 36 seats. Next were the Democrats with 25 seats, and finally

⁹Erich Eyck, *A History of the Weimar Republic*, trans. by Harlan P. Hanson and Robert G. L. Waite (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), I, 70.

¹⁰Epstein, *Erzberger*, p. 287.

¹¹All Socialists were looked upon as "einzigem Feind" of the German people and the cause of the chaotic revolutionary times. *KV*, January 18, 1919, #48.

the German Nationals with merely 7 seats. The Independent Socialists alone failed to score a single gain.¹² Similarly, the January 12 election for the Bavarian Landtag proved a victory for the Bavarian People's Party, the Centrist counterpart in Bavaria. At this election, the Centrists were able to obtain 66 of the 180 seats.¹³ Likewise in Württemberg's election held on the same day, the results were encouraging, for the Centrists emerged as the third strongest party, winning 31 of the 150 mandates—an increase of five more members over the last election held in 1912.¹⁴

Although the prospects for preventing a Socialist majority in the National Assembly seemed bright, no one could predict the outcome of the national election with any accuracy. The extension of suffrage to women and the lowering of the voting age to twenty had increased the electorate to such an extent that results were utterly unpredictable. Nevertheless, with the passing of the grave uncertainties of the immediate post-revolution weeks, Centrist leaders recovered some of their self-confidence as they found themselves

¹²Schofer, Mit der alten Fahne in die neue Zeit, pp. 124-125. The author, one of the energetic Baden Centrist leaders, referred to the election campaign as "the most fatiguing task" of his life.

¹³Morsey, "Zentrumspartei," p. 269. There is a discrepancy between Morsey's figures and those given in Bachem, Zentrumspartei, VIII, 405. Morsey lists 66 BVP deputies elected in the Bavarian election in contrast to the 58 listed by Bachem. Morsey's figures correspond to those listed in Zeitschrift des Bayerischen Statistischen Landesamts, II (1919), 247, as cited in Ursachen und Folgen, III, 120.

¹⁴Morsey, "Zentrumspartei," p. 269; Bachem, VIII, 422. The Prussian electoral returns of January 26 were equally rewarding with the Centrist gaining the second highest returns—85 out of 401 seats, Morsey, p. 270. Here again Bachem's figures are slightly different; he lists 88 seats for the Centrists. See Bachem, VIII, 384. Ursachen und Folgen, III, 92, lists 86 Centrists elected in Prussia.

receiving considerable backing from the local elections.

The dry, clear day of January 19, 1919, enabled over 30,500,000 German men and women to go to the polls and vote in the national elections. Law and order were generally maintained, though a few minor disturbances in the form of street-fighting and demonstrations occurred at Berlin, Hamburg, the Ruhr, and Cassel. The Spartacists, contrary to expectations, made no concerted efforts to impede the election.¹⁵ Against the advice of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, the radicals had threatened to boycott the elections, but later abandoned their project. Thus the day passed without serious incident in any sector of the country.¹⁶

Notwithstanding, feverish activity exerted by campaign committee members was evidenced everywhere. On the way to the polls voters were either waylaid and harangued by political zealots or burdened with campaign literature. One eye-witness left this description:

The voters were overwhelmed with handbills. Every fence, every empty shop window, every street corner was plastered with campaign posters. One party excitedly ripped down the notices of another, or pasted over them in such a fashion as to distort the original message. All political passions were exerted, using group gatherings, as their special means of rendezvous. In the street, on the corners, wherever groups clustered, passionate speeches were delivered, especially by the Spartacists who used this occasion to bring their ideas to the people.¹⁷

¹⁵Ralph Haswell Lutz, The German Revolution 1918-1919; Stanford University Series: History, Economics, and Political Science, I (Stanford, California: University Press, 1922), p. 106

¹⁶Wilhelm Ziegler, Die deutsche Nationalversammlung 1919/1920 und ihr Verfassungswerk (Berlin: Zentralverlag, 1932), p. 28.

¹⁷Ferdinand Runkel, Die deutsche Revolution (Leipzig, 1919), p. 231, cited ibid., 29-30.

Not since the election of the French National Assembly in 1871 had Europeans witnessed such an exciting election.

With the exception of the religious issue there was little basic difference in the avowed political platforms; all denounced anarchy and championed democracy. Nevertheless, the controversy over Christianity and "atheistic" Socialism led by the Centrists was strong enough to turn the tide away from a Socialist victory. With 82.7% of the eligible Germans voting, the election returns were as indicated in Table I.¹⁸

TABLE I
ELECTION RETURNS FOR THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, 1919

Party	Number of votes (approx.)	Mandates	Per Cent Voting
Majority Socialists	11,509,100	163	37.9%
Centrists ^a	5,980,200	91	19.7%
Democratic Party (DDP)	5,641,800	75	18.6%
Nationalists (DNVP)	3,121,500	44	10.3%
Independent Socialists	2,317,300	22	7.6%
People's Party (DVP)	1,345,600	19	4.4%
Miscellaneous	484,800	7	1.5%

^aThis group included the eighteen members of the Bavarian People's Party, the eight members of the Catholic People's Party in Upper Silesia, and the two members of the Hanoverian People's Party elected on the Centrist ticket.

¹⁸The figures listed in Table I are taken from Wilhelm Mommsen, Deutsche Parteiprogramme (München: Isar Verlag, 1960) I, 794. They are the same as those listed in Ursachen und Folgen, III, Appendix I. Not all authors give the same figures for the Center and SPD. Morse, Zentrumspartei 1917-1923, p. 147, lists 89 Centrists and 165 SPD (p. 147); Treue, Deutsche Parteiprogramme 1861-1956, p. 389, gives 91 Centrists and 165 SPD; Koppel S. Pinson, Modern Germany: Its History and Civilization (New York: Macmillan Co., 1964)

The election figures provided an interesting commentary on the political picture of the German nation. Basically, it seemed, the people were in agreement with the political developments that had taken place since November. The Centrists were seen to have achieved their immediate goal: prevention of a Socialist majority.¹⁹ The Majority Socialists were still making the best showing; yet they lacked a sufficient number of seats to control the National Assembly. (Even with the 22 seats held by the Independents, the Socialist parties together had won only 185 seats!) It was obvious, too, that only a diminishing part of the electorate favored the idea of a dictatorship of the proletariat and a system of soviets. Just as clearly was it evident that the people were reluctant to return to monarchy. Only 44 seats had been won by the Nationalists—the outright advocates of royalty, and to the People's Party, which proposed keeping the royalty question open, only 19 seats had gone. As it stood, the National Assembly represented neither the old ruling class, nor big business, nor the extreme revolutionaries; its major emphasis rather was on middle class interests, with a leaning in the direction of democratic socialism. "Its center of gravity was just left of center."²⁰

Appendix B, gives the same figures as Treue. Those listing 91 delegates for the Centrist returns are including two members of the German Hanoverian Party that were elected on a combined list with the Centrists. Those charts which list 165 SPD are including two SPD deputies elected by soldiers on the eastern front who were not included in electoral districts.

¹⁹Bachem, Zentrumspartei, VIII, 272-273, placed great emphasis on the role the Center Party played in hindering a Socialist majority.

²⁰Louis L. Synder, The Weimar Republic: A History of Germany from Ebert to Hitler (Princeton, New Jersey: D. van Nostrand Co., Inc., 1966), p. 35.

It was apparent that the Center Party was to retain its traditional pivotal position in German politics; hence, the Centrists had grounds for rejoicing over their election returns. Furthermore, considering the fact that the inhabitants of the territories of Alsace-Lorraine, Eupen, Malmédy, St. Vith, the Saar area, as well as the other recently lost German eastern areas of Upper Silesia, Posen, and West Prussia were not allowed to vote and that some of these areas contained strong Centrist backing, the Center Party had done exceptionally well.²¹ It had emerged from the first national electoral ordeal of the new democratic state as an important political factor. Its 91 seats in the National Assembly made it second only to the Majority Social Democrats. In reviewing the Centrists' gains both in the local as well as the national elections, Germania felt justified in referring to the Party as "a strengthened victor" ("gestärkter Sieger").²² Once before, it is true, in the 1912 Reichstag election, the Center also held 91 seats; however, it must be remembered that the electorate then included people from densely Catholic rural areas which were lost to Germany in 1919.²³ Nevertheless, as the Centrist news organ commented, the election showed that the Party had the support of "the truest and most reliable electorate" which had managed to procure for it "a favorable representation."²⁴

²¹Bachem, Zentrumspartei, IX, 504.

²²January 28, 1919, #43.

²³For a comparison of the voting strength of the 1912 and 1919 election, see Mommsen, Deutsche Parteiprogramme, p. 794; Treue, Parteiprogramme, p. 389.

²⁴Germania, January 23, 1919, #35.

Whether Centrist attempts to break from the party's confessional character had strongly affected the election is quite doubtful. While credit for the enlargement of the electorate could be ascribed to the new policy, non-Catholic gains were not truly noticeable in any marked degree except perhaps in Berlin.²⁵ The Catholics in Germany represented only 29.5% of the whole German population. Of these, 62.8% had voted for the Center.²⁶ Thus, regardless of its brave endeavors to come out of its "tower," the Center still remained largely a party of Catholics.²⁷ Even among its representatives in the National Assembly, all but three delegates were Catholics.²⁸

²⁵Bachem, Zentrumsparlei, VIII, 279. Bachem drew his statistics from Hillger's Handbuch der Verfassunggebenden Deutschen Nationalversammlung, 1919.

²⁶Johannes Schauff, Die deutschen Katholiken und die Zentrumsparlei (Köln: J. P. Bachem, 1928), p. 70. This author indicated in his study that in the subsequent Reichstag elections of 1920 and 1924 there was a decided decline in the Catholic vote for the Center. In 1920, the Center had carried 60.3%; in 1924 it polled only 56.4%. A breakdown of the 1919 Catholic vote in some of the major states is as follows:

<u>Prussia</u>	<u>Bavaria</u>	<u>Württemberg</u>
58.1% for Center	44% for BVP (Centrists)	71.9% for Center
17.8% for the Right	16.6% for the Right	13.9% for the Right
24.1% for the Left	39.4% for the Left	14.2% for the Left

Baden
 60.5% for Center
 15.6% for the Right
 23.9% for the Left, Ibid., 112-113.

²⁷Heinrich Striefler, Deutsche Wahlen in Bildern und Zahlen: Eine soziografische Studie über die Reichstagwahlen der Weimarer Republik (Düsseldorf: Wende-Verlag, 1946), p. 49, indicates that 85% of the Catholic vote came from Aachen, Trier, Schwaben, Oberbayern, Niederbayern, Oberpfalz, Konstanz, and Oberschlesien. In Trier, Konstanz, Donaukreis and Freiburg the Centrist backing was proportionately stronger than in the predominantly industrial area of Düsseldorf, Südwestfalen, Köln, and Wiesbaden.

²⁸The non-Catholics were Heinrich Langwost, Hanoverian, Johann Richter from Pfalz, and Alexander Schneider from Unterfranken. See Table IV for the religion of each member.

On the other hand, the Center Party did benefit from woman suffrage. At least 10% of the Party's gains was due to women voters.²⁹ In certain areas, 70% of the Centrist votes had come from women.³⁰ It is a fact that women, eager to use their newly gained suffrage privilege, were a vital force in the January elections. One study indicated that of the number of eligible voters who actually voted, 83% were women while 82.4% were men. Of the twenty-year-old males only 59.6% voted, whereas of the young women 80.5% of the same age cast their votes. Among electors between the ages of twenty-one and twenty-five years, 70% of the men and 80.9% of the women voted. Among those past twenty-five years, the percentage was more evenly matched with 84.8% men and 82.6% women voting.³¹ The feminine impact was also seen in the number of women entered on the various party tickets. Thirty-nine women were elected delegates; of these, six belonged to the Center Party.³²

In surveying the relative strength of the Centrists in the electoral districts as found in Table II, one finds that in nine of the thirty-seven districts the Center Party carried the highest number of votes.³³ Centrist

²⁹Schauff, *op. cit.*, p. 102. This study shows that the percentage of women voters was higher in proportion to the stress placed on religious or patriotic ideas.

³⁰Bachem, Zentrumspartei, VIII, 271. In some areas women and men voted separately.

³¹Rene Brunet, La Constitution Allemande du 11 Aout 1919 (Paris: Payot, 1921), pp. 140-141.

³²The Centrist women elected were: Hedwig Dransfeld, directress of the Catholic Women's League; Agnes Neuhaus, widow of a government official and social worker for wayward girls; Maria Schmitz, high school teacher; Christine Teusch, teacher and chairlady of the women workers' secretariat of the Christian Workers' Association; Helene Weber, high school teacher; and Marie Zettler, county secretary of the Bavarian State Association for the Catholic Women's League.

³³Statistics on Table II are compiled from charts given in Heilfron,

TABLE II

ELECTION RESULTS FOR NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, JANUARY, 1919, ACCORDING TO DISTRICTS

	Center (Christian People's Party	German National Party (National- ists; INVP)	German People's Party (DVP)	German Democratic Party (DDP)	Social Democrats (SPD)	Independent Socialists (USDP)	Other
	Man- Votes dates	Man- Votes dates	Man- Votes dates	Man- Votes dates	Man- Votes dates	Man- Votes dates	Man- Votes dates
1) East Prussia	92,523 1	108,032 2	72,194 1	171,108 3	419,201 7	45,872 0	- -
2) West Prussia	79,041 1	127,411 3	158,508 3	- -	161,075 4	28,189 0	- -
3) City of Berlin	56,053 1	103,720 1	61,876 1	177,555 2	404,604 5	306,672 4	45 ^a 0
4) Potsdam (1-9)	19,872 0	109,047 1	65,476 1	180,351 2	363,049 5	128,859 1	- -
5) Potsdam (10)	33,358 0	117,647 2	95,621 1	186,218 2	317,967 3	138,007 1	- -
6) Frankfurt on Oder	10,554 0	113,143 2	19,037 0	132,869 2	308,653 4	4,235 0	- -
7) Pomerania	4,830 0	194,145 3	88,102 1	174,716 2	331,523 5	15,403 0	- -
8) Posen	33,640 1	110,502 5	54,883 3	72,266 3	53,297 2	- -	- -
9) Breslau	187,339 2	137,595 2	- -	139,188 2	432,006 6	208 0	- -
10) Oppeln	321,334 ^b 8	47,516 1	- -	45,780 1	216,970 5	32,517 0	- -
11) Liegnitz	53,640 1	77,687 1	- -	152,805 2	286,855 4	42 0	- -
12) Magdeburg and Anhalt	12,899 0	72,583 1	26,703 0	214,016 3	491,740 7	24,905 0	- -
13) Museburg	6,573 0	76,797 1	17,831 0	161,272 2	109,058 ^c 1	294,317 5	- -
14) Schleswig-Holstein-Lübbeck	8,107 0	61,819 1	62,950 1	219,519 3	370,384 5	27,301 0	57,913 ^d 1
15) Aurich and Osnabrück	135,017 2	12,167 0	68,974 1	130,732 2	149,304 2	22,848 0	13,545 ^e 0
16) Hanover, Hildesheim, Lüneburg, Brunswick	270,776 ^f 4	32,313 0	106,673 1	160,624 2	535,215 7	82,556 1	56,858 ^g 1
17) Münster, Minden Schaumburg, Lippe	418,017 6	86,009 1	65,102 1	96,930 1	303,440 4	21,040 0	664 ^h 0
18) Arnberg	328,818 ⁱ 5	117,095 3	- -	115,692 1	479,021 7	59,952 0	- -
19) Hesse-Nassau	187,579 3	106,078 1	64,465 1	230,132 3	463,113 7	42,980 0	- -
20) Köln and Aachen	579,212 8	31,071 0	33,471 1	74,000 1	247,114 3	5,806 0	- -
21) Koblenz and Trier	475,269 8	17,566 0	- -	142,103 2	185,367 2	- -	- -
22) Düsseldorf (1-5)	262,252 4	148,846 ^j 2	- -	116,391 1	244,044 3	177,160 2	- -
23) Düsseldorf (6-12)	348,294 7	41,025 0	66,584 1	49,324 ^k 0	188,029 3	5,767 1	- -
24) Oberbayern and Schwaben	425,766 ^k 6	- -	129,798 1	- -	382,352 6	43,614 0	172,833 ^l 2 11,914 ^m 0 640 ⁿ 0
25) Niederbayern and Oberpfalz	274,790 ^k 5	- -	30,358 0	- -	142,715 2	2,513 0	102,289 ^o 2
26) Ober, Mittel, and Unterfranken	320,566 ^k 5	- -	228,467 3	- -	415,253 5	69,348 1	107,007 ^m 1
27) Pfalz	124,207 ^k 2	88,352 1	- -	59,417 1	170,215 2	7,229 0	- -
28) Saxony (1-9)	16,477 0	120,283 2	97,157 1	167,898 2	465,069 7	46,976 0	- -
29) Saxony (10-14)	3,199 0	72,055 1	- -	177,447 2	128,094 2	230,858 3	- -
30) Saxony (15-23)	3,627 0	117,074 1	- -	188,875 3	518,955 8	56,068 0	- -
31, 32) Württemberg	303,096 4	- -	- -	331,963 4	470,204 7	36,371 0	182,509 ^p 2
33) Baden	381,135 5	78,976 1	- -	226,836 3	366,824 5	- -	- -
34) Hessen	110,853 2	43,359 0	73,349 1	124,202 2	289,211 4	12,638 0	- -
35) Mecklenburg-Schwerin, Mecklenburg- Strelitz, and Lübeck	- -	58,335 1	19,839 0	135,700 2	222,496 3	- -	10,901 ^q 0
36) Thüringer and number of smaller areas	55,748 0	176,187 2	- -	246,984 4	387,056 5	251,754 3	- -
37) Hamburg, Bremen, and cities	12,316 0	I -15,994 0 II- 6,661 0 III-11,053 0	80,016 1	I -156,056 2 II- 95,757 1	447,172 6	83,527 1	63,680 ^r 1

^aSocial Reform Party
^bCalled Catholic People's Party
^cCalled Old Social Democrats
^dSchleswig-Holstein Peasant and Farmer Democrats
^eGerman Hanoverian Party
^fCombined list of Center and German Hanoverian Party
^gBrunswick Farmers' Union (Landeswahlverband)
^hChristian-Social Party
ⁱCalled Christian Democratic Party
^jCombined list of Nationalists and People's Party
^kCalled Bavarian People's Party
^lBavarian Peasants' Party
^mBavarian Middle Party and National Liberals
ⁿMiddle-class Party
^oBavarian Peasants' Union
^pWürttemberg Citizens', Peasants and Winegrowers
^qMecklenburg Village Union
^rCalled Christian Democratic Party

strongholds were located in the west, south, and southwestern parts of Germany: Münster (District 17), Köln (District 20), Trier (District 21), the two districts (22-23) comprising Dusseldorf, Baden (District 33), Oberbayern (District 24), and Niederbayern (District 25). There as well as in Oppeln (District 10) in Upper Silesia the Party had made "astonishing progress."³⁴ But, on the whole, the east and northeastern Protestant sections with their small Catholic population lacked Centrist representation. In contrast, "red Berlin" for the first time in the party's history had elected a Centrist delegate: Maximilian Pfeiffer. Karl Sonnenschien reporting on this happy incident in the Kölnische Volkszeitung enumerated three reasons which accounted for this victory: first, the change in attitude toward the Center in "Protestant circles"; second, the "emotional evolvment" ("gefühlsmässige Herausarbeitung") of its anti-capitalistic and Christian democratic motives"; and lastly, "the awakening of the youthful, academic Catholic intelligence."³⁵

Another important factor in Centrist gains, and one which would vitally affect Centrist trends in the future, was the abolition of the Prussian three-class system of voting. This innovation allowing for a stronger industrial electorate bore fruit particularly in the Catholic industrial areas of Düsseldorf, Münster, Cologne, and Trier. The new type of representation brought about by the increase of delegates from this class of constituents is more readily seen when one compares the socio-economic representation of the Center Party for the 1912 Reichstag election with that of the 1919

Nationalversammlung, I, 169-194.

³⁴Bachem, Zentrumspartei, VIII, p. 271.

³⁵January 24, 1919, #69.

election for the National Assembly as given in Table III.³⁶

TABLE III
OCCUPATIONAL BREAKDOWN OF CENTRISTS DELEGATES

Occupations	1912	1919
Landed proprietors	16	2
Small farmers	4	5
Government employees	20	20
Clergy	13	10
Artisans	1	5
Writers and journalists	3	4
Professional men and women	15	11
Labor representatives	8	25
Businessmen	10	3
Miscellaneous	1	6

To obtain a definite classification of the entire socio-economic representation of the Center Party is difficult due to myriad factors involved in such a study. Table III does attempt, however, to give an occupational breakdown of the delegates, but it is important to note that there is considerable overlapping since only the principal occupation of the delegates is the criteria for this delineation. (Most clergymen were also newspaper editors or leaders of various Catholic societies; labor leaders were also journalists, or vice versa.) On the chart, moreover, government officials were frequently engaged in the legal and juridical departments of the Reich and state governments. School employees are listed as professional men or women; artisans

³⁶The statistics for the 1912 election are taken from Bruce Bradford Frye, "Matthias Erzberger and German Politics, 1914-1921" unpublished Ph. D. dissertation (Stanford University, 1953), p. 46. Those for 1919 are formed from the biographical sketches given in Heilfron, Die deutsche Nationalversammlung, II, Appendix, 1-52.

denote self-employed skilled craftsmen; small farmers are those who actively farmed their own property.³⁷

For a further breakdown or overlapping of occupations, see Table IV, which also indicates the age and religious affiliation of each Centrist.

As the tables indicate, the gradual growth of the liberal left-wing faction and the steady democratization of the Center Party which had slowly developed during the war years bore fruit in the change-over of the Centrist representation in the 1919 election. Many of the local Centrist committees in arranging the Party's electoral ticket, seemed to have reshuffled some of the former Reichstag members and substituted a group of younger, more democratic and liberally inclined Centrists for the older more conservative members.³⁸ As a result, the number of landed proprietors traditionally known for their conservative aristocratic outlook was drastically reduced from the sixteen members of 1912 to two members in the 1919 election. The industrial businessmen of the Rhineland district also received a reduction in their representatives. These two groups constituted a large part of the right-wing faction of Centrist leadership prior to the revolution. The decrease in their strength was indicative of the shifting to the left which was to be

³⁷Morsey, Zentrumspartei 1917-1923, p. 156, has a more definitive occupational breakdown which differs slightly from Table III. The KV, February 8, 1919, #108, lists the delegates to the National Assembly according to professions in a more definitive manner also but the listing is not complete for the Centrist delegates.

³⁸At the local meeting of the Rhenish Centrists in Cologne on January 8, 1919, Brauns and Stegerwald demanded that the Center nominate candidates who would indicate a "sharper separation" from the old right-winged elements in the Party. "Alles, was in der Vergangenheit nach rechts vorbelastet ist, muss heraus!" Unpublished Papers of Bachem, as cited in Morsey, Zentrumspartei 1917-1923, p. 140.

TABLE IV

CENTRISTS ELECTED TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, 1919

Delegates	Former Reichstag Member	Age	Religion	District	Occupation
Allekotte, Joseph	-	51	Cath.	21. Koblenz	Official postal secretary
Andre, Joseph	-	40	Cath.	31/32 Württemberg	Labor secretary; newspaperman
Astor, Jakob	X	51	Cath.	21. Koblenz	Merchant
Becker, Johannes	X	44	Cath.	18. Arnsberg	Labor union secretary; editor
Becker, Josef	-	43	Cath.	19. Hesse	Secretary of construction union; editor
Bell, Johannes	X	50	Cath.	23. Düsseldorf	Minister for Reich
Bergmann, Theodor	-	50	Cath.	23. Düsseldorf	Manufacturer
Beyerle, Konrad	-	45	Cath.	26. O., M., & Unterfranken	University professor; historian
Blank, Lorenz ^a	-	56	Cath.	16. Hanover	Labor secretary
Blum, Johannes	-	61	Cath.	20. Köln	Farmer in Krefeld
Bolz, Eugen	X	37	Cath.	31/32 Württemberg	Government official
Brauns, Heinrich von Brentano di Tremezzo, Otto	-	51	Cath.	20. Köln	Cleric; director of German Volksverein
Bitta, Joseph	-	63	Cath.	34. Hesse	Ministerial director
Burlage, Eduard	-	62	Cath.	10. Oppeln	Privy Councillor in Breslau
Burlage, Eduard	X	61	Cath.	15. Aurich	Council for Supreme Court of Justice
Colshorn, Herman ^b	X	65	Luth.	16. Hanover	Landed proprietor
Dies, Carl	X	42	Cath.	33. Baden	Farmer
Dransfeld, Hedwig	-	48	Cath.	23. Düsseldorf	Writer; Chairlady of Cath. Women's League
Erhardt, Franz	-	38	Cath.	10. Oppeln	Trade union secretary
Ersing, Joseph	-	37	Cath.	33. Baden	Labor association secretary
Erzberger, Matthias	X	43	Cath.	31/32 Württemberg	State Secretary; armistice commissioner
Farwick, Wilhelm	-	55	Cath.	20. Köln	Mayor in Aachen
Fehrenbach, Konstantin	X	67	Cath.	33. Baden	Lawyer; councillor
Fleischer, Paul	X	45	Cath.	1. East Berlin	Union secretary
Frerker, Wilhelm	X	60	Cath.	17. Münster	Pensioneer; former master baker

TABLE IV--Continued

Delegates	Former Reichstag Member	Age	Religion	District	Occupation
Gerstenberger, Liborius	X	54	Cath.	26. O, M, & Unterfranken	Cleric; editor
Giesberts, Johann	X	54	Cath.	22. Düsseldorf	Labor secretary
Gilsing, Anton	-	43	Cath.	18. Arnsberg	Labor secretary
Gröber, Adolf	X	65	Cath.	31/32 Württemberg	State Secretary
Grunau, August	-	39	Cath.	9. Breslau	Trade-union secretary
Hagemann, Joseph	-	43	Cath.	15. Aurich	Labor secretary
Hebel, Benedikt	X	53	Cath.	24. Upper Bavaria	Cleric; cathedral dean
Heim, Georg	X	53	Cath.	25. Lower Bavaria	Association director of Bavarian center
Herold, Karl	X	70	Cath.	17. Münster & Minden	County economic councillor
Herschel, Johannes	-	43	Cath.	10. Oppeln	Lawyer
Hitze, Franz	X	67	Cath.	23. Düsseldorf	Cleric; university professor; labor leader
Hofmann, Hermann	-	38	Cath.	27. Pfalz	High School teacher
Imbusch, Heinrich	-	40	Cath.	18. Arnsberg	Union official and editor
Irl, Martin	X	59	Cath.	24. Upper Bavaria	Master painter
Jaud, Josef	-	40	Cath.	24. Upper Bavaria	Blacksmith
Joos, Josef	-	40	Cath.	23. Düsseldorf	Author and editor
Kaas, Ludwig	-	37	Cath.	21. Koblenz	Cleric; Professor in Trier
Koch, Johann	-	45	Cath.	17. Münster	Post office supervisor
Kossmann, Bartholomew	X	35	Cath.	21. Koblenz	Labor secretary
Kreutz, Franz	-	49	Cath.	17. Münster	Railroad conductor
Kubetzko, Joseph	-	44	Cath.	10. Oppeln	Carpenter
Langwost, Heinrich ^a	-	44	Luth.	16. Hanover	Editor
Legendre, Peter	-	52	Cath.	21. Koblenz	Director of Association of Trier
Leicht, Johann	X	50	Cath.	26. O, M, & Unterfranken	Cleric; cathedral dean
Lensing, Felix	-	59	Cath.	23. Düsseldorf	Farmer
Marx, Wilhelm	X	56	Cath.	22. Düsseldorf	Privy councillor of Justice
Mausbach, Josef	-	58	Cath.	17. Münster	Cleric; cathedral prior; university professor
Maxen, Wilhelm	-	51	Cath.	16. Hanover	Cleric; School inspector
Mayer, Wilhelm	X	44	Cath.	24. Upper Bavaria	Legal adviser

TABLE IV--Continued

Delegates	Former Reichstag Member	Age	Religion	District	Occupation
Müller, Richard	X	67	Cath.	19. Hesse-Nassau	Pensioneer and manufacturer
Nacken, Josef	X	58	Cath.	20. Köln	Merchant and mayor
Neuhaus, Agnes	-	64	Cath.	18. Arnsberg	Widow of county court official; social worker
Neyses, Matthias	-	46	Cath.	21. Koblenz	Farmer
Ollmert, Karl	-	44	Cath.	21. Koblenz	Editor; labor leader
Otte, Waldemar	-	39	Cath.	11. Leignitz	Cleric; County secretary of Volksverein
Pfeiffer, Maximilian	X	43	Cath.	3. City of Berlin	Secretary-general of Center Party
Puschmann, Alois	-	36	Cath.	9. Breslau	President of Labor Exchange
Rheinländer, Anton	-	52	Cath.	18. Arnsberg	Rector; chairman of Catholic Teachers Union
Richter, Johann	X	44	Luth.	27. Pfalz	Tax inspector
Sagawe, Robert	-	42	Cath.	8. Posen	Trade-union secretary
Schefbeck, Josef	X	59	Cath.	25. Lower Bavaria	Baker
Schiffer, Mattias	X	49	Cath.	17. Münster & Minden	Trade-union chairman
Schirmer, Karl	X	54	Cath.	25. Lower Bavaria	Labor secretary; author
Schlack, Peter	-	43	Cath.	22. Düsseldorf	Associate director of Consumers Union
Schmitt, Adam J.	X	63	Cath.	34. Hessen	Privy councillor; Dr. jur.
Schmitz, Maria	-	44	Cath.	21. Koblenz	High school teacher
Schneider, Alexander	-	36	Prot.	26. O., M., & Unterfranken	County Court secretary
Schummer, Wilhelm	-	36	Cath.	2. West Prussia	Labor secretary
Schwarz, Jean Albert	-	45	Cath.	19. Hesse	Teacher--intermediate schools
Schwarzer, Rudolf	-	39	Cath.	24. Upper Bavaria	Labor-union secretary
Spahn, Peter	X	72	Cath.	20. Köln and Aachen	Prussian minister of justice
Stapfer, Michael	-	47	Cath.	25. Lower Bavaria	Farmer
Stegerwald, Adam	-	44	Cath.	20. Köln	General secretary of Christian Trade Union
Strzoda, Franz	X	61	Cath.	10. Oppeln	Farmer
Szceponik, Thomas	-	58	Cath.	10. Oppeln	Rector at Myslowitz; teacher at seminary
Tauscher, Eugen	-	55	Cath.	25. Lower Bavaria	Lawyer; councillor
Teusch, Christine	-	30	Cath.	20. Köln	Labor-union secretary
Tremmel, Peter	-	44	Cath.	26. O., M., & Unterfranken	Labor assoc. secretary; union chairman; longshoreman

TABLE IV--Continued

Delegates	Former Reichstag Member	Age	Religion	District	Occupation
Trimborn, Karl	X	64	Cath.	20. Köln and Aachen	Royal-Privy councillor
Ulitzka, Karl	-	45	Cath.	10. Oppeln	Cleric; pastor at Ratisborn-Altendorf
Weber, Helene	-	37	Cath.	22. Dusseldorf	High school teacher
Wieber, Franz	-	60	Cath.	23. Düsseldorf	Union chairman
Wirth, Joseph	X	39	Cath.	33. Baden	Professor in Freiburg
Zawadzki, Konstantin	-	32	Cath.	10. Oppeln	Master carpenter
Zehnter, Johann	X	67	Cath.	33. Baden	President of Court of Appeals
Zettler, Maria	-	33	Cath.	24. Upper Bavaria	County secretary of Catholic Women's Union

^aMember of the German Hanoverian Party

^bMember of the German Hanoverian Party; "Hospitant" of the Center

an important factor in subsequent Centrist policies in the first year of the Weimar period.

On the other hand, the threefold increase in labor representation heralded a stronger liberal trend within the Party leadership which likewise would have its impact, especially on the Party's decision to enter into a coalition with the Socialists and the Democrats. Among the labor representatives were energetic leaders who were not averse to cooperating with the Social Democrats. During the last two years of the war, men like A. Gröber, M. Erzberger, Joseph Wirth,³⁹ Wilhelm Marx, Johann Giesberts,⁴⁰ and Eugen Bolz had indicated in the Reichstag their left-wing tendencies and their acceptance of some of the milder social and liberal reforms of the Majority Social Democrats and other democratic parties.⁴¹ Moreover, A. Gröber, M. Erzberger, and K. Trimborn as ministers in the cabinet of the previous government of Prince Max

³⁹Joseph Wirth (1879-1956) was educated at the University of Freiburg; later in 1908 he returned to teach at the university. Wirth was elected to the Reichstag in 1914 and to the National Assembly in 1919. He succeeded M. Erzberger as minister of finance in March 1920. Wirth also assumed leadership of the left-wing faction of the Center after Erzberger's death. In May 1921 Wirth became chancellor with an avowed policy of the fulfillment of the obligations of the Versailles Treaty. Because of increased opposition to the policy of fulfillment, he was forced to resign on October 22, 1921, but resumed office four days later. Unable to carry out the necessary financial measures to stop the depreciation of the mark, Wirth resigned as chancellor in November 1922. From 1929-1930 he served as minister for the provinces occupied by the Allies. In 1930 he became minister of the interior but retired in October 1931. After Hitler came to power he went to Paris and afterward to Switzerland.

⁴⁰Johann Giesberts (1865-1938) was elected the first Centrist labor representative in the Reichstag in 1905. From 1892-1918 he also served as city representative in München-Gladbach, and in the Prussian Landtag from 1906-1918. In 1919 he was elected to the National Assembly. He was appointed a Reich minister in 1919 serving as under-secretary in the Economic Council until 1922.

⁴¹See the Introduction to this paper, pp. 23-24.

had already demonstrated that collaboration with the Social Democrats and the Democrats was possible.

For the most part, the Centrist delegates were comparatively young men and women eager to employ their talents in reconstructing Germany. While ages among them ranged from thirty years (Christine Teusch) to seventy-two years (Peter Spahn), over half the representatives were nevertheless under fifty years of age. Approximately sixteen per cent of the members were in their thirties; thirty-three per cent were in their forties (mostly in the early forties); thirty per cent in their fifties; eighteen per cent in their sixties. Only two members were in their early seventies.⁴² All Centrist delegates whether entering the national political arena for the first time or returning as veteran parliamentarians displayed a sincere interest in and a "holy enthusiasm" for their work in the "spirit of Windhorst."⁴³

The party was fortunate in its retention of delegates who were experienced parliamentarians. At least thirty-seven members had previously served in the Reichstag while thirty others had served in their state Landtag, some serving in both political bodies at the same time. Many of the old-time vigorous Centrist leaders were among this group: M. Erzberger, K. Fehrenbach, Johann Giesberts, A. Gröber, Karl Herold, Franz Hitze, Richard Müller-Fulda, Peter Spahn, and K. Trimborn. Others entering national politics for the first time and soon to become leading figures in the Party were Karl Beyerle, Heinrich Brauns, Joseph Ersing, Josef Joos, Ludwig Kaas, Josef Mausbach, Adam Stegerwald, and Karl Utizka.

⁴²See Table IV, pp. 98-101, for the various ages of the delegates.

⁴³Dr. Wilhelm Maxen, "Enthusiasm for Work," Germania, February 6, 1919, #60, p. 2.

The Center faction in the National Assembly undoubtedly was a heterogeneous group, but hardly ineffectual because of a lack of homogeneity. As the subsequent events in the National Assembly were soon to demonstrate, Centrists motivated by their Christian Weltanschauung were not to shirk responsibility in assuming some of the herculean tasks that were to confront the constituent assembly. In the arduous and lengthy debates and discussions facing the constitutional committees and subcommittees the Center would manifest its best strength and energy.

Despite the increased liberal representation in the Centrist National Assembly delegation, the Party remained basically a middle class party. This was especially apparent in the number of government officials, clerics, and professional men and women found among the Centrist deputies. These along with farmers, artisans, and self-employed businessmen favored a democratic government which would protect their vested interests. This middle class group formed the backbone of the Party and acted as a moderating influence on the extremes within the Party. Indeed one of the strengths of the Party's election program had been its traditional bourgeois attitude toward the retention of private property and the maintenance of an economic system based on social justice. The moderately conservative group in its ranks would continue to champion the Party's fundamental principles concerning the maintenance of a Christian Weltanschauung, the safeguarding of marriage and the family, the retention of Christian education in the public schools, and confessional private schools.

Although the middle class, like the aristocratic landowners and wealthy industrialists, were staunch supporters of the monarchy prior to the Revolution, they were not unwilling to recognize both the necessity of adapting to

the "changed circumstances" and the advantage which such change would bring. The labor leader Stegerwald who was sympathetic to this middle class political mentality, typified about-face from monarchy to the acceptance of the republic in a statement made at the end of 1918: "Today we know that the old order does not allow for the attainment of the proper welfare of all. Therefore, we determinedly cross the threshold and enter upon the new order."⁴⁴

It had been difficult for all Centrists to accept the November Revolution. Like true realists, however, they had squarely faced the fact that the situation in Germany at the end of World War I was grim and that there was no easy or painless way out of it. Order had to be restored and a new structure for the state developed; peace terms had to be achieved and the nation's economy rebuilt. As the Baden Centrist spokesman Father Josef Schofer indicated, many Centrists came to see their duty as: "Rettung des Staatsordnung, Rettung des Reiches, Rettung des Volkes, Abwehr der Anarchie, Abwehr des Bürgerkrieges."⁴⁵ Cooperation with the government majority was deemed a "historic necessity."⁴⁶

But the middle class Centrists were suspicious of the Social Democrats and the direction they might take in the new government. Germania, reflecting their concern, printed an article entitled, "The Middle Class and the National

⁴⁴"Heute wissen wir, dass die alte Ordnung uns das wahre Volkswohl nicht erreichen liess. Darum treten wir entschlossen auf den Boden der neuen Ordnung." Cited in Deutz, Adam Stegerwald, p. 75. The author calls Stegerwald a "Real-politiker" who was able "to cast aside his emotional adherence to the past and mobilize every power in mastering the difficult times."

⁴⁵Mit der alten Fahne, p. 120.

⁴⁶Buchheim, Geschichte der Christlichen Parteien, p. 327, considered the Centrist decision a "progressive step."

Elections."⁴⁷ The article voiced a fear for the continued existence of the middle class. It pointed out that the Erfurt program of the Socialists called for the elimination of the bourgeois group. The Socialists had welcomed the war because it supported their theory that war, coming as a result of the capitalistic developments, would cause the disappearance of the small industries. Now it was feared that the Socialists intended to utilize the economic unrest after the war to establish a dictatorship of the proletariat. It was imperative, therefore, in the opinion of Germania, that the Center Party assume a positive role in the new government and strive to prevent such a catastrophe from developing.⁴⁸

The possibility of forming a coalition government became obvious, when, after the publication of the election results, the absence of a one-party majority in the National Assembly became apparent. The Majority Socialists had won a majority in only a third of the thirty-seven districts; the bourgeois parties or non-Socialists had control of two-thirds of the electoral districts.⁴⁹ The period of exclusive Socialist control of affairs came to an end.

Quick to grasp at least some remnant of political existence the Majority Socialists then extended an invitation to the Independent Socialists to join with them in forming a government on the condition that they accept parliamentary democracy and renounce any attempt at a coup d'etat. This offer was rejected by the Independent Socialists. The Majority Socialists were, there-

⁴⁷January 21, 1919, #33.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Bachem, Zentrumspartei, VIII, 272. The Social Democrats got 13,779,000 votes while the non-Socialists gained 16,485,000.

fore, compelled to invite the Center Party and the Democrats to join with them in establishing a government for Germany.

Such was the situation when the Centrist delegates met at Weimar in a Party caucus on February 5 to formulate its program and elect officers to carry on the business in the National Assembly. At Erzberger's suggestion, Adolf Gröber, the previous chairman of the Reich's Centrist committee and faction leader, was elected as the first chairman and director of the Center Party. Elected as vice-chairmen were Karl Trimborn of Cologne and Wilhelm Mayer of Upper Bavaria. When A. Stegerwald, general-secretary of the Christian Trade Union, was suggested as a nominee for the post of third vice-chairman, Erzberger vetoed him because of his wartime chauvinism and close association with the industrialist Walter Rathenau. Instead, Johannes Becker of Arnsberg was elected.⁵⁰ All four chairmen had been previous members of the Reichstag. With the election of the labor representative Johannes Becker Germania saw not only a continuation of the faction leadership as regards the "Oktober-Politik," but a strengthening also of the intention to advance resolutely on "jenem Wege."⁵¹

At another Party caucus held on February 18, the board of directors of the Center Party was extended further by including more of the left-oriented, social progressive wing into the Party leadership. Of the thirteen board members not less than ten had already belonged to the previous Reichstag, eight of them were representatives of the Christian Trade Union, and two were

⁵⁰Report of the Center meeting of February 5, 1919, in Erzberger Papers, cited in Epstein, Erzberger, p. 287.

⁵¹February 8, 1919, #64.

priests. The new board members included: Josef Becker from Nassau, chairman of the Christian Workers Association Cartel of Greater Berlin, Father Brauns, Erzberger, Giesberts, Father Hitze, Martin Irl, master painter from Upper Bavaria, Karl Schirmer, author and labor secretary from Lower Bavaria, and Stegerwald. Older Party leaders also on the board were Bell, Herold, Marx, Müller-Fulda, and P. Spahn.⁵² The inclusion of several members of the Bavarian People's Party⁵³ among the Party chairmen and on the board of directors indicated the reestablishment of rapprochement between the Center Party and BVP.⁵⁴

One of the most serious problems facing the Centrist delegates at the first Party Caucus of February 5-6 was to decide whether or not they should accept the invitation of the Social Democrats and enter into a coalition government with them and the Democrats. The Centrists understood fully the significance of such a coalition and the important responsibility which the new government would have to assume both in foreign and domestic affairs. The decision of entering into such a coalition with the Left was a weighty and momentous one and was, therefore, carefully viewed from all angles by the delegates. On the one hand, it meant aligning themselves with their traditional enemies. Not that this was impossible; such a condition had already existed since July, 1917. But the election campaign had stressed so forcefully the difference between the Centrist Christian Weltanschauung and "atheistic" Marxist socialism of the SPD that cooperation with them at this moment

⁵²KV, February 18, 1919, #138. No women delegates were included in the board of directors.

⁵³Wilhelm Mayer, Martin Irl, and Karl Schirmer.

⁵⁴Germania, February 8, 1919, #63, praised the reestablishment of an "Einheitsfront."

seemed illogical and impossible. For this reason, some of the representatives of Catholic Workers' Association favored a coalition with the Right.⁵⁵ On the other hand, a majority of delegates felt that in view of the seriousness of the times and especially of the foreign situation, the Party could not afford to be swayed by emotionalism. The times demanded a strong united government, not a weak divided one. A fairly workable government could be achieved if the Center joined with the SPD and the Democrats; a stronger majority could be attained with such a coalition. The decision lay with the Center.⁵⁶

It took two days of serious, soul-searching deliberation before the Party could arrive at a decision, and then it was not unanimous.⁵⁷ One of the most energetic members strongly in favor of a coalition with the Left was Erzberger. He felt that it was imperative for the Centrists to collaborate with the SPD, not thereby to assist them in carrying through their own wishes, but rather to hinder them from striving after too extreme a program.⁵⁸ He hoped that the Majority Socialists would be properly tamed by their bourgeois coalition partners, and so he resisted the new idea of forming an anti-Socialist coalition extending from the Nationalists to the Democrats. The Center Party had more to gain by cooperating with the government than by joining the opposition.⁵⁹ Erzberger's view was supported by many of the

⁵⁵Josef Mausbach, Kulturfragen in der Deutschen Verfassung: Eine Erklärung wichtiger Verfassungsartikel (M-Gladbach: Volksverein-Verlag, 1920), p. 13.

⁵⁶KV, February 6, 1919, #103.

⁵⁷Germania, February 8, 1919, #63.

⁵⁸Erzberger's argument at the Party caucus, February 5-6, 1919, as cited in Bachem, Zentrumspartei, VIII, 273; KV, February 8, 1919, #108.

⁵⁹Bachem, Zentrumspartei, VIII, 274-275. Later, Mausbach pointed out that

older members of the Party as well as the newly-elected academicians.⁶⁰

After a "lengthy discussion"⁶¹ the caucus voted sixty-four to five, over the opposition of some Bavarians, to enter into the coalition government with the Left.⁶² Cooperation with the new government was looked upon as a "responsibility to the fatherland" ("vaterländische Pflicht"),⁶³ as a "civic duty."⁶⁴ The decision was not an easy one. Nevertheless, the Center had agreed with "schweren Herzen"⁶⁵ to place under "all circumstances and regardless of its cost, the interest of the fatherland above the interest of the Party"⁶⁶ and so, entered into the coalition government with the SPD and the Democrats.

As a warning, however, to his fellow Centrist deputies before the actual convening of the new coalition government, Erzberger urged them all to be tough

the Center could serve its country more profitably and best achieve the Party's cultural and religious ideals by joining the coalition government. KV, February 27, 1919, #163; March 10, 1919, #193.

⁶⁰Unpublished Memoirs of Wilhelm Marx," cited in Morsey, Zentrumspartei 1917-1923, p. 168.

⁶¹Erzberger, Erlebnisse, p. 367.

⁶²Ibid. Bachem, Zentrumspartei, VIII, 276, stated that nine-tenths of the Centrists voted for collaboration. The Bavarian extremist, Georg Heim, however, was adamant in his opposition.

⁶³Albert Lauscher, "Der Arbeit an der Weimarer Verfassung," in Nationale Arbeit, p. 158.

⁶⁴Germania, February 8, 1919, #63.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Johannes Bell at the Rhenish Centrist "Parteitag" September 15, 1919, Report, as cited in Morsey, Zentrumspartei 1917-1923, p. 169.

in coalition bargaining. They were to insist upon a program of three points: first, the creation of an army that could break any resistance that the Soldiers' and Workers' Councils might offer to the Constituent Assembly; second, a constitution under which the rights of the Catholic Church would be safeguarded; and third, the preservation of the federal structure of Germany in opposition to the Socialist and Democratic demand, headed by Preuss, for the unitary-centralized state.⁶⁷

Once the decision to enter a coalition government had been reached, Party leaders felt obliged to justify the Center's position to its supporters. During the month of February, therefore, a series of articles appeared in Germania, designed to accustom readers to the idea that, regardless of divergent philosophies, cooperation between the Social Democrats and the Center was necessary to obtain a workable government.⁶⁸ Germania explained how the Center had worked with the Socialists during the war in seeking peace, but at the same time had consistently and successfully avoided siding with the Socialists in anything that would have compromised basic party principles.⁶⁹ Admission and defense of the great ideas of Christianity, Germania stated, had never yet

⁶⁷Erzberger Papers, as cited in Epstein, Erzberger, p. 287. Germania February 9, 1919, #65, referred to a four-point program which the Centrist offered as prerequisite for entering into the coalition government: "protection of our cultural heritage" ("Schutz unserer kulturellen Güter"); guarantee of private property; protection against radical socialism; and maintenance of the federal character of the Reich.

⁶⁸February 8, 1919, #64, p. 2. Buchheim, Geschichte der christlichen Parteien, p. 324, noted that what the two parties when acting alone had been unwilling to concede to each other, they were now willing to compromise. The liberalism of the "Paulskirche" became prominent again in the establishment of the Weimar Coalition.

⁶⁹Germania, February 22, 1919, #88, p. 2.

shamed a party or a people despite the prejudice exerted against them, nor in this coalition had the Center ever contemplated a denial of its principles. It would seek as much as possible to take anything of value from socialism (certain social reforms); nevertheless, it would continue to fight the evils of socialism. The article concluded by pointing to the successful leadership role taken by the Center Party and the Catholic press against the atheistic policies of Hoffmann and Haenisch.⁷⁰

Perhaps the most accurate public statement for the acceptance of the Revolution as well as the Centrist collaboration with the parties of the Left was voiced by the Party chairman on the floor of the National Assembly on February 13, 1919. Gröber, speaking for the Center Party, stated that the members of his Party could not recognize the Revolution as being either an inner necessity or a boon to the development of political conditions in Germany. He thought that the reforms of Prince Max in October, 1918, had achieved all that was required, and that a republic was not essential for a guarantee of democratic rights. Centrists, he said, would take their stand on the basis of existing facts and recognize the full consequence of each situation. For the present, he conceded, the democratic republic was "the only possible vehicle with which to get out of the chaos of the revolution."⁷¹ Cooperation among the majority parties was now the sole and necessary movement to solve the difficult problems facing Germany.

Justification of these Centrist policies prompted Erzberger to write a

⁷⁰Ibid., February 23, 1919, #89, p. 2.

⁷¹Verhandlungen der Verfassunggebenden Deutschen Nationalversammlung. Stenographische Berichte (Berlin: Druck und Verlag der Norddeutschen Buchdruckerei und Verlags-Anstalt, 1919), CCCXXVI, 53-54 (micro-card).

lengthy letter to his friend, Archbishop Pacelli, on February 24, 1919. In the letter Erzberger enumerated the reasons which impelled the Party to choose a position of participation in the new government rather than that of opposition.

The Center is predestined by its entire history to be a party of positive work rather than negative opposition. It cannot refuse to undertake responsible work for the Fatherland in the present period of difficulty. The specific reasons [dictating coalition with the Socialists] were the following: foreign policy considerations require Center participation in the governing coalition. Its participation will impress all the enemy states with the stability of the German government, as it will be supported by more than 75 per cent of the National Assembly. Our enemies cannot impose new burdens upon us on the plea that the German government is not strong enough to guarantee the implementation of its pledges. I have been informed by English sources that the entry of the Center into the government will have considerable influence upon the course of the peace negotiations.

To this must be added that the Center can do nothing to champion the rights of the Holy See at the peace conference if it is not a participant in the government.

The domestic reasons are the following: The Cabinet would stand on very precarious foundations if the Center were in opposition. Partisan struggles would increase in vigor, and the country would not quiet down. . . . The National Assembly would soon be reduced to impotence and the nation would become victim to anarchy. The entry of the Center into the government has, on the other hand, already yielded good results.⁷²

In concluding his letter Erzberger pointed out that in its present position, the Center could prevent great harm to the Church and that the Party would do its best "to continue to champion the rights of the Church and the confessional schools in the coming constitutional debates."⁷³

Nevertheless, despite the efforts of the Center Party to justify its

⁷²Erzberger to Pacelli, February 24, 1919, as cited in Epstein, Matthias Erzberger, p. 288.

⁷³Ibid., p. 289.

decision to enter into the coalition government, the fact that the Center, traditional opponent of socialism, should condescend to consort with the Majority Socialists and liberal Democrats in such a political union caused surprise and alarm. An article in a conservative Catholic publication referred to the Weimar Coalition as a "politische Mischehe mit Häresie."⁷⁴ Yet the months to come would indeed reveal the wisdom of such a step. In the policy-making decisions facing the new government, the Center leadership would certainly exert its influence and fulfill its responsibility.

⁷⁴Petrus Blätter, March 11, 1919, #24, p. 189, cited in Morsey, Zentrumspartei 1917-1923, p. 172.

CHAPTER III

THE CENTER PARTY IN THE WEIMAR COALITION

PROBLEMS OF THE PEACE NEGOTIATIONS

February 6, 1919, was set as the date for the opening of the National Assembly which was to meet not at Berlin but at Weimar. The capital city, disturbed by the unrest consequent upon Communist and Spartacist strikes and street-fighting, was considered unsafe for the convention, and bourgeois parties had demanded that it be held elsewhere.¹ Berlin, moreover, was the embodiment of Prussian hegemony which many parts of southern and western Germany had resisted when they sounded the cry, "Los von Berlin."² The choice of Weimar from among such other possible locations as Bayreuth, Nürnberg, and Jena, seemed altogether appropriate to those who felt that the new republican Germany might take inspiration from this cultural center, home of the classical tradition of Goethe and Schiller.³

¹The Centrists made this one of the planks in their campaign program.

²Representatives from the governments of Bavaria, Württemberg, Baden, and Hesse met at Stuttgart on December 27-28 to demand that the National Assembly convene at a place other than Berlin. They repeated this demand again on January 9, 1919, see Ziegler, Nationalversammlung, p. 27.

³An article in the KV, January 22, 1919, #59, indicated that Weimar was selected only after a long verbal battle waged by the Prussian government. The paper noted jubilantly that the rejection of Berlin was a major success in the Los von Berlin movement.

At 3:15 on the appointed day, the newly elected Centrist delegates assembled along with the other delegates in Weimar's National Theater amid great pomp and ceremony. The historic building itself was decorated in holiday array. Within the assembly room, "fresh garlands of laurel and spruce interspersed with sprays of carnations and lilies of the valley added a festive touch in keeping with the exultant mood of the auspicious occasion."⁴

The Centrists listened with rapt attention as the Majority Socialist Friedrich Ebert delivered the opening speech. After first welcoming the delegates to the constituent assembly, he set the tone for the work of the assembly by announcing:

We have done forever with the old kings and princes by the grace of God. (Loud applause on the Left; hisses on the Right; renewed loud applause on the Left; cries from the Right, "Wait!") [sic] We deny no one his sentimental memories, but as surely as this National Assembly has a great republican majority, so surely is the old God-given dependence abolished forever. The German people is free, remains free, and governs itself for all the future. . . . We have lost the war; this is not the consequence of the revolution . . . it was the Imperial government of Prince Max of Baden which began the armistice which made us defenseless. . . . The revolution declines the responsibility for the misery into which the evils of the old autocracy, and the arrogance of the military threw the German people.⁵

He went on to protest the "unheard of" and "ruthless" armistice terms. His denouncement of the expulsion of Germans from Alsace and of the 800,000 German prisoners of war still held in captivity won a "tumultuous" reaction from the Centrist section in the Assembly.⁶ Ebert's concluding advice that

⁴Ibid., February 7, 1919, #105.

⁵Verhandlungen, February 6, 1919, CCCXXVI, 1.

⁶Ibid., p. 2.

all move forward in the spirit of the Weimar philosophers and poets toward the erection of a government of justice and truth likewise received a strong affirmation from the Center.⁷

Wilhelm Pfannkuch, a Majority Socialist delegate, voiced the opinion of the delegates in praising the democratic sentiments expressed by Ebert. "The National Assembly is not only a symbol of German democracy, it is the German democracy itself," said Pfannkuch; and he added a warning: "He who will not recognize this, who seeks to belittle its authority [the National Assembly], insults the majesty and the freedom of the German people; he is an enemy of the German democracy, a counter-revolutionary."⁸ To this statement not only the Socialists, but also the Centrists gave a vehement "sehr richtig!"⁹

After similar patriotic expostulations by various members, the assembly settled down to the business before it—that of erecting a provisional government to stabilize the political, social, and economic conditions of Germany. The work of the first few days involved the business of electing the presiding officers of the National Assembly. Principal nominees for president of the National Assembly offered by the major parties were: Konstantin Fehrenbach by the Center and Eduard David proposed by the Majority Socialists.¹⁰ When the votes were tallied the Majority Socialist Eduard David was elected with a vote

⁷Ibid., p. 3.

⁸Ibid., p. 4.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Conrad Haussmann was nominated by the Democrats and Herman A. Dietrich by the National People's Party.

of 374 out of the 399 cast. The other nominees were elected as vice-presidents by acclamation vote upon the proposal of the Centrist Gröber.¹¹

Next on the agenda were the proposal and discussion on the provisional constitution which was to serve as the source of legal authority pending construction and adoption of a new democratic constitution. Accordingly, on February 8, 1919, Hugo Preuss, an academic authority on constitutional law and a member of the Democratic Party, presented a provisional draft for the consideration of the National Assembly. The plan called for a division of power among four departments of the Reich: the constituent National Assembly, a State Committee, the Reich's president, and the Reich's ministry. To each was delegated specific duties. The National Assembly was given the right to draw up a permanent constitution and to vote for "other urgent laws for the Reich" with the consent of the State Committee. The State Committee, made up of a designated number of representatives from the individual German states, was to administer justice and to collaborate with the National Assembly in passing legislation.¹² To the president was given the power to nominate his chancellor who in turn was to choose a cabinet of ministers. The entire provisional program was to become effective immediately upon its adoption.¹³

Preuss' provisional draft was elaborately debated and amended in the National Assembly during the next two sessions and formally adopted on

¹¹Ibid., February 7, 1919, CCCXVI, 7-10.

¹²This committee of states was similar in some respects to the old Bundesrat, but differed fundamentally as to the matter of authority. See Brunet, La Constitution Allemande, p. 51.

¹³Verhandlungen, February 8, 1919, CCCXVI, 12-14.

February 10, 1919.¹⁴ The Majority Socialists had intended a unified and centralized Reich to include Austria; what was achieved was a decentralized federation of republics. Particularism, strongly evident in the case of Bavaria,¹⁵ proved too deeply ingrained, and the German Reich was once again revealed as a loose federation of jealously individualistic states. Prussia retained its leadership in the States Committee with safeguards against domination, while Bavaria, Württemberg, and Baden reserved their special right by declaration.¹⁶

The provisional draft received the support of all members of the Center Party except the Bavarian representatives. Gröber as the Centrist faction leader tried to gloss over this disagreement in the Party's views by pointing out to the delegates of the National Assembly on February 8, "For us the most significant action at this moment is to expedite as quickly as possible the conversion from a revolutionary, lawless state of affairs to an orderly, legal situation."¹⁷ But Germania, usually rather moderate in its criticism, was caustic in reprimanding the Bavarian People's Party and asked if they were trying to be "more popish than the Pope" in insisting upon maintaining their special state privileges.¹⁸ Thus, already in the very beginning of the

¹⁴Ibid., February 10, 1919, CCCXXVI, 20-35.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 21. George Heim as spokesman for the Bavarian People's Party (Centrists) declared against the centralizing provisions in the draft and demanded the retention of his state's privileges.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 20. See Praeger's proposal on "Sonderrechte." Ebert tried to impress upon all the "provisional character" of the draft in order to obtain its speedy acceptance.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 26.

¹⁸February 11, 1919, #68; KV, February 11, 1919, #116, p. 2, criticized this action on the part of the Bavarian Centrists and demanded an explanation for their negative position.

National Assembly friction was evident among the Centrist delegates—a situation which was to be further accentuated as various issues were proposed.

Once the provisional constitution was legally adopted, Philipp Scheidemann as spokesman for the People's Commissars turned the rudder of the ship of state over to the constituent National Assembly.¹⁹ The new government had taken its first major step out of the revolutionary chaos. "We are no longer a revolutionary government, but an orderly, legal administration," Germania commented.²⁰

In accordance with the provisional constitution, the National Assembly elected Friedrich Ebert president of the new government by a vote of 277 to 379.²¹ His office as head of the cabinet was then left vacant and a new prime minister was to be named. As chancellor of the new government, Ebert chose his right-hand man, Philipp Scheidemann, to form a ministry with representatives from the Center Party and the German Democratic Party.

Plans concerning the arrangement of a cabinet had been discussed almost immediately after the two bourgeois parties on February 5 agreed to enter a coalition with the Majority Socialists.²² Originally, there were to have been eight ministers taken from the Majority Socialists and four members selected from each of the two other parties.²³ But neither the Centrists nor the

¹⁹Since the National Assembly is in session and the provisional constitution is adopted, the historic mission which had been entrusted to us as a provisional government is terminated. We return the powers which we have received from the Revolution into the hands of the National Assembly," Verhandlungen, February 10, 1919, CCCXXVI, 36.

²⁰February 11, 1919, #68.

²¹Verhandlungen, February 11, 1919, CCCXXVI, 40.

²²Centrist views concerning this decision were discussed in the previous chapter.

²³KV, February 11, 1919, #117.

Democrats were in favor of allowing the Majority Socialists maximum representation in the cabinet in addition to such key positions as president of the Reich, chancellor, and president of the National Assembly. The Center Party, especially, felt that it was being deprived of a fair share of the spoils of victory.²⁴ Finally, after "lengthy discussions and vacillations" ("Schwanken") with the SPD, a compromise was reached whereby Dr. David's place as president of the National Assembly was vacated by offering him a post in the cabinet,²⁵ thus allowing for a re-election for the presidency of the National Assembly and clearing the way for the election of the Centrist nominee on February 14.²⁶

The formation of the government ministry aroused much speculation in the daily press. An unofficial ministerial list circulated on February 8 carried the names of four Centrists—Erzberger, Richard Müller from Fulda, Stegerwald, and Bell—as possible ministry heads.²⁷ Stegerwald's name was listed at the suggestion of the SPD. But he refused to accept a position.²⁸ Later, it was reported that Karl Herold was asked to head the newly-created Ministry of Foods, Johannes Becker of Arnsberg to be undersecretary in the Labor Ministry, and Johannes Herschel to be undersecretary in the Economic Ministry.²⁹ Herold,

²⁴Ibid. See also Scheidemann, Memoirs, II, 360.

²⁵KV, February 11, 1919, #118; Germania, February 9, 1919, #65, indicated that, at the time, the Centrists were bidding for either the presidency of the National Assembly or the presidency of the government.

²⁶Fehrenbach was elected with 295 of the 334 votes cast. Verhandlungen, February 14, 1919, CCCXXVI, 65.

²⁷Germania, February 9, 1919, #65.

²⁸Ibid., February 13, 1919, #72. Stegerwald noted, "I was originally named as Postmaster-General, later as Minister of Foods, and finally as a State Secretary for the Labor Ministry. But I refused. Adam Stegerwald, Aus Meinen Leben, p. 15, as cited in Morsey, Zentrumspartei 1917-1923, p. 170.

²⁹Ibid., February 12, 1919, #69.

however, also refused the government post; this left the Party without a suitable nominee to head the Ministry of Foods.³⁰ The Center was compensated by the promotion of Bell from a minor post in the Colonial Office to the head of that ministry.³¹

When the cabinet was finally constituted it included three members of the Center out of a total of sixteen ministers. The Center's representatives were Matthias Erzberger as minister without portfolio, Johannes Bell as Colonial Minister, and the trade-union leader, Johann Giesberts, as Postmaster-General.³² Despite denunciatory speeches from both Right and Left, the cabinet received a vote of confidence.³³

The Center could find cause for genuine rejoicing when Scheidemann announced the aims of the new coalition government, since the aims coincided quite closely with those of the Center Party. For example, the government was determined to work for peace in accordance with Wilson's Fourteen Points. It favored the admission of Germany to the League of Nations, and supported such resolutions as the disarmament of all nations, compulsory arbitration of international disputes. It looked forward to the restoration of Germany's colonial territories, and the immediate repatriation of German prisoners. Other goals which the new government hoped to achieve concerned a democratic

³⁰Ibid., February 13, 1919, #72.

³¹Ibid.

³²Besides the Centrists, the coalition ministry consisted of eight Majority Socialists, four Democrats, and Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, a man without party affiliations.

³³Verhandlungen, February 13, 1919, CCCXXVI, 42-43.

army, collective bargaining, freedom of speech, press, religion, learning, art, and educational opportunities for all Germans.³⁴

The Centrists were pleased with the program and offered their whole-hearted support.³⁵ As spokesman for the Center Party, Gröber indicated this in his speech acknowledging the cooperation of the Party in the coalition government.³⁶ He noted that the chief responsibility of parliament toward the achievement of a regulated and productive state of affairs was the attainment of "peace and order" ("Friede und Ordnung") and of "bread and work" ("Brot und Arbeit"). The Center favored the government's views on an immediate peace, the return of war prisoners, self-determination, Wilson's Fourteen Points; but it denounced the armistice provisions concerning French annexation of the Saar region and the trial of war criminals. Gröber welcomed the idea of incorporating "fundamental rights" into the constitution; nevertheless, he insisted emphatically that regulation of Church-State affairs should be left to the individual states. He criticized severely revolutionary symptoms concerning Church-State relationships and warned that they augured no good.³⁷

³⁴Ibid., pp. 44-49.

³⁵Germania, February 14, 1919, #74, pledged its support to Scheidemann's program.

³⁶It is Gröber not Erzberger, who emerges as the dominant figure of the Center Party in the National Assembly and provides the principal leadership for the Party's domestic policies. Erzberger at this period is preoccupied with the negotiations and implementation of the successive armistice agreements and devotes little time to the constitutional questions being discussed at Weimar.

³⁷Verhandlungen, February 13, 1919, CCCXVI, 49-51.

In reference to the authority of the new government, the chairman of the Center noted that all authority, whether monarchial or republican, comes from God. The Party supported a democratic type of government such as was provided by the October reforms of Prince Max's government; the revolution had been unnecessary, bringing "no happiness to the German people." A republic was not essential for the guarantee of democratic rights, but the Center Party had taken its stand on the basis of the existing facts and recognized the full consequences of the situation. Gröber alluded to the need of a federated basis for the Reich and rejected "unhealthy unitarianism." He anticipated an early annexation of German-Austria to the Reich. In conclusion, he called down God's blessings and protection upon the new German government.³⁸

As the Centrist leaders surveyed the work of the first days of the National Assembly they had reason to look with satisfaction upon their achievements. They had rejected their former policy of non-participation and entered into fruitful cooperation with the Socialists and Democrats. Moreover, one of their own members, Konstantin Fehrenbach, had been duly elected president of the National Assembly on February 14.³⁹ Fehrenbach had held the office of president for a year in the previous Reichstag and was well qualified for the new position, but in the opinion of the Party this was not as important as the fact that his election meant a major strengthening of the Party's position and prestige.⁴⁰

³⁸Ibid., pp. 51-54.

³⁹Ibid., February 14, 1919, CCCXXVI, 65.

⁴⁰Germania, February 15, 1919, #75.

Once launched, the new government braced itself for the months of hard work ahead. In subsequent sessions the National Assembly turned to the myriad problems facing it. The outlook was almost overwhelming. There was much social unrest and the economic situation was precarious. Because of the enemy blockade there was a perilous shortage of every necessity.⁴¹

That the political parties were keenly aware of these social and economic problems is attested to by column upon column of speeches preserved for posterity in the account of the discussions of the National Assembly. Proposals for solving the varied pressing problems of the day—obtaining sufficient nourishment, raising the blockade, caring for the orphans and other needy, the widows, the wounded war veterans—were proffered by members of the National Assembly. In practically all of these proposals could be found one or more Centrist signatures. Already on February 8 Gröber protested before the National Assembly against the unjust Allied retention of German war prisoners.⁴² Criticism of the severe hunger blockade facing Germany was

⁴¹Zeigler, *op. cit.*, p. 50, gives the following description of the plight of the German people immediately after the war: "Hardly a ton of provisions or a ton of raw material was allowed the Germans; neither a package of chocolate, a sack of flour, a can of lard, nor a bar of soap was permitted them. . . . There was a shortage of potatoes, bread, fat, sugar, and meat. . . of all necessities of life, clothes, shoes, stockings, coal, oil, benzene, fire-wood—everything needed for daily living." See also Marion C. Siney, The Allied Blockade of Germany (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1957); and Suda Lorena Bane and Ralph Haswell Lutz, ed. The Blockade of Germany after the Armistice, 1918-1919: Selected Documents of the Supreme Economic Council, American Relief Administration (California: Stanford University Press, 1942) XVI, 430-570.

⁴²Verhandlungen, February 8, 1919, CCCXXVI, 11. A few days later on March 1, 1919, Frau Neuhaus made a similar protest and asked for government assistance for the families of war prisoners, *Ibid.*, p. 410.

offered by a Centrist woman delegate, Hedwig Dransfeld, on February 13.⁴³ Maria Schmitz protested the plight of the Germans in Alsace and asked for government assistance.⁴⁴ Concern for widows and orphans was evidenced in a speech by Frau Neuhaus in the Assembly on July 16.⁴⁵ Throughout the Weimar period the Centrist delegates gave witness to their traditional concern for Christian social justice.

But the importance of these problems was overshadowed by the imminence of the pending peace negotiations. The Germans had hoped that the change of regime in their country following upon their defeat would elicit from their victors a favorable attitude, and that their nation would be received as a penitent member into the new world community. But the unfriendly Entente powers were made of sterner stuff, and the National Assembly, confronted with the problem of obtaining acceptable peace terms, spent more than half its time on peace preliminaries and discussions of the treaty terms.

The involvement of the Centrist Party in these peace negotiations was in a sense unique. Their recent victory had given them partnership in the coalition government, but besides this one of their own leaders, Matthias Erzberger, had the distinction of being head of the armistice commission. Both in negotiating the armistice as well as in implementing successive armistice agree-

⁴³Ibid., February 13, 1919, ⁴⁴. Other Centrist proposals for the food and nourishment for the needy were made by Gröber on March 7, 1919, Ibid., p. 540; March 10, 1919, Ibid., 617; and by Peter Schlack on April 14, 1919, Ibid., CCCXXVII, 1024.

⁴⁴Ibid., February 27, 1919, CCCXXVI, 410; on May 10, Frau Weber deplored the plight of the people in Malmedy and Eupen, Ibid., CCCXXVII, 1105.

⁴⁵Ibid., CCCXXVIII, 1601-1602.

ments, Erzberger had worked indefatigably. Among his Centrist colleagues, even prior to the November Revolution, he had been pressuring for a peace settlement based on the Fourteen Points. As spokesman for the Centrist left-wing, he had tried to convince dubious associates that such a peace would be to the best interests of Germany. He had appealed to President Wilson's idealism as a counter-weight to the demands of Britain and France, and he had emphasized the threat of Bolshevism to all of Europe if Germany were weakened by a vindictive peace. He had pointed out that the Germany of October 1918 was a new Germany—democratic, peace-loving, and devoted to the idea of a league of nations to which all the states of the world would belong.⁴⁶

Erzberger's views, on the one hand, were instrumental in winning his Party to support acceptance of peace terms (not without a struggle within the ranks); the Party, on the other hand, was called upon to defend the actions of this vigorous leader. The extent of its discomfiture over Erzberger can be measured by the violence of the Nationalists' attacks on him when the full effect of the armistice terms was realized. What had been merely deplored by the general press as the harsh conditions to which he had agreed,⁴⁷ became after December 16, 1918, the basis for personal attacks by the military and the Right who went so far as to seek the removal of Erzberger from the armistice commission.⁴⁸

⁴⁶For Erzberger's activities prior to the Revolution, see Epstein, Erzberger, Chapter XI.

⁴⁷KV, November 11, 1918, #889; November 13, 1918, #897; Germania, November 11, 1918, #528; November 12, 1918, #530, p. 2. For an apology of Erzberger's role, see Ibid., November 17, 1918, #539.

⁴⁸For Erzberger's own description, see Erlebnisse, p. 340.

Inseparable from the matter of peace negotiations was the testy business of foreign policy. In this area, too, the views of Erzberger and those of his Party coincided—a circumstance due not so much to the fact that Erzberger agreed with the Party as that he dominated and shaped its thinking decisively. An article by Dr. Leo Schwering published in Germania on February 7, 1919, gives a run-down of the Center's policies on foreign affairs.⁴⁹ It is worthy of a summary glance, since it sets forth the very program for which Erzberger pleaded during the meetings with the Entente.

Schwering begins by stating the importance of a party's role in defending foreign policy. He proceeds to point out that a party as committed to the interests of Germany as the Center cannot disregard its obligation nor withdraw in silence; it must declare itself and stand by its principles. He then notes that the Center, in sanctioning Wilson's Fourteen Points, has made a decision which it must abide by. Chauvinism and power politics must be renounced in favor of the principle of self-determination for emerging peoples. As for the colonies, the article continues, Germany must never let that "most terrible peace" ("schlechtesten Friede") rob her of them; they must continue to be maintained as necessary assets to her economy and her position as a world power. It must remain a memorable tribute to the Center that in these "dark times" it has come forward with this demand.⁵⁰

The Center Party enunciated its foreign policy in the election program of December, 1918. It incorporated many of the ideas of Wilson's Fourteen

⁴⁹"The Center and Foreign Policy," February 7, 1919, #61, Supplement.

⁵⁰Ibid.

Points. The Party wanted the "immediate conclusion of a preliminary peace and an agreement and reconciliation of all people." As a deterrent to future war, it wanted "the establishment of an international law based on Christian principles." Among other provisions it called for the return of the German colonies and a union between Austria and Germany.⁵¹

Such were the principles on peace and foreign affairs for which Erzberger fought as he confronted the Allied Powers in three special armistice conferences held at Trier in mid-December, January 15-16 and on February 14-15. The conferences dealt with the inability of Germany to fulfill the armistice terms on schedule, grievances over harsh Allied policies, the lifting of the blockade, and the establishment of a demarcation line between the Germans and the Poles in the East. The Allied Powers were, obviously, loath to compromise on these stipulations, and they continued to hold the upper hand by threatening Germany with the maintenance of the blockade, the retention of German prisoners of war, and the threat of further occupation of German territory.⁵²

To forestall a resumption of hostilities which Germany could ill afford, Erzberger was forced to accept the terms of the Allied Powers. When, at the National Assembly on February 17, 1919, he presented the final draft of the armistice,⁵³ both the document and his position as head of the armistice were

⁵¹"Leitsätze, der Deutschen Zentrumsparlei vom 30 Dezember 1918," cited in Ursachen und Folgen, III, 197-198.

⁵²The best brief account of the three Trier conferences is in Erzberger, Erlebnisse, Chapter XXIV. Epstein, Erzberger, p. 291, notes that the Allied threat to march into unoccupied Germany when Germany was in no condition to resume hostilities hung like a sword of Damocles over Erzberger's head.

⁵³KV, February 18, 1919, #136, reported Erzberger's speech under the title, "Der Eindruck in Weimar." The paper was not too pleased with the terms of the armistice and referred to the previous day's session in the National Assembly as a "sad Day."

bitterly attacked by the delegates on the Right in a formal interpellation.⁵⁴ Albert Vögler, an industrialist and member of the German People's Party, denounced the armistice as heralding a violation of Wilson's Fourteen Points in the coming peace treaty. He censured Erzberger particularly, for the arrangements affecting the steel industry and shipping, declaring that the Centrist leader had negotiated in an autocratic manner without seeking the advice of experts. Vögler ridiculed Erzberger's plea that Germany could not secure better terms because she was negotiating from a position of weakness. Quoting from the influential Frankfurter Zeitung, Vögler stated:

Mr. Erzberger constantly seeks to prove that Germany cannot secure better terms. It is, of course, difficult to show ex post facto that the presence of experts would have affected the end result. But Erzberger is responsible for the fact that the experts were not even given a chance. Erzberger, with his habitual delusions of grandeur, believes he can do everything better than anybody else.⁵⁵

Erzberger defended himself against Vögler's jibes with a lengthy rebuttal in which he reviewed the history of the armistice negotiations.⁵⁶ Repeatedly he denied the allegations which were distorting the true nature of the shipping arrangement, and emphasized what seemed to have been nearly forgotten—that these arrangements had originally been made to secure badly needed food stuffs. He attested further that he had done everything in his power to lessen the demands on Germany and that he had achieved some amelioration. He also stressed that at every step of the negotiations, he had been supported by the government

⁵⁴Verhandlungen, February 17, 1919, CCCXXVI, 130. The Nationalist, A. Graefe, was most derogatory.

⁵⁵Ibid., February 18, 1919, CCCXXVI, 132-136, gives Vögler's attack.

⁵⁶For Erzberger's lengthy defense, see Ibid., pp. 137-145.

and the military so that he had acted not as an individual or as an expert, but merely as an agent of the government. Erzberger accused his assailants of failure to understand the difficulties of the situation. "One thread was apparent throughout Vögler's speech. He forgot the inconvenient fact that we have unfortunately lost the war."⁵⁷

Despite his skillful arguments which, during the months ahead, answered his opponents point by point in many hours of debate, Erzberger continued to be blamed personally for the plight of Germany. The attacks begun in the National Assembly were taken up by the newspapers of the extreme Right and Left.⁵⁸ Germania and the Center Party defended Erzberger, contending that the major question still facing Germany was whether it wanted Wilson or Lenin.⁵⁹ Gröber found the interpellation of the Right aimed at Erzberger's labors a "groundless attack." "It was," the chairman of the Center announced, "a harsh attack of heavy industry—false in its point of departure, false in its weapons, and false in its objective. . . . We are happy to have in our midst one who with such extraordinary ability and with such tremendous diligence performs for the Fatherland what no other is able to perform."⁶⁰

One of the armistice terms deplored in the outraged speeches voiced on the floor of the National Assembly concerned the loss of German colonies. This issue presented a unique complication for the Center, since the Ministry

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 144.

⁵⁸The Frankfurt Zeitung and the Berliner Tageblatt frequently called for Erzberger's removal, see Alma Luckau, The German Delegation at the Peace Conference (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941), pp. 96-102; 117-121.

⁵⁹February 19, 1919, #81; February 19, 1919, #82. p. 2.

⁶⁰Verhandlungen, February 18, 1919, CCCXXVI, 148-149.

of Colonial Affairs in the government was occupied by a Centrist, Dr. Johannes Bell. In his ministerial capacity Bell had to denounce the surrender of Germany's colonies at the same time that his party colleague endorsed the proposal. Bell solved his dilemma, however, and simultaneously defended Erzberger by attributing the objectionable surrender to the Allies' greed. They were nothing but thieves and robbers, he insisted.⁶¹

In a speech delivered at a Colonial Association meeting, Bell remarked, "We must not allow this robbery to go unchallenged. . . . We must offer burning words of protest that we have merited them [the colonies] not only by providing for, but also through establishing a respected culture in these areas."⁶² He expressed similar sentiments in the National Assembly on March 1 when he denounced the peace proceedings concerning the loss of colonies and the economic hardship which such a loss would impose on Germany.⁶³ Dr. Bell continued to wage an unremitting verbal battle both in the National Assembly and out of it for retention of the colonies, later adding to the economic arguments the claim that the defense of national honor depended upon a colonial future.⁶⁴ At the Allies' suggestion that the colonies be relinquished as part of the payment of the war indemnity, he told the National Assembly that Germany would have to refuse such an offer since the two questions had nothing in

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²A report of this speech is given in Germania, February 20, 1919, #83.

⁶³Verhandlungen, March 1, 1919, CCCXXVI, 411-416.

⁶⁴"Against the Robbery of Our Colonies," article by Dr. Bell, Germania, April 12, 1919, #168, p. 4.

common. "Our colonies are part of our national honor," he stated, "which cannot be sold nor estimated in money."⁶⁵

Erzberger had also found Article 19 of the armistice terms mandating German colonies to England and France "completely offensive and against German principles."⁶⁶ In a stirring speech delivered before the Prussian Herrenhaus in Berlin on March 16, Erzberger spoke out against this and many of the other "unjust" restrictions he had been forced to accept in the armistice terms. He upheld the idea of a peace based on Wilson's Fourteen Points, but acknowledged that the President of the United States had faced difficulties in view of the imperialism of the other strong powers. He regretted that Wilson had not favored Germany's entrance into the League of Nations. He saw in the expulsion of Germans from Alsace and the sequestration of their property the denial of their right of self-determination. As for Poland's aspirations on German territory, he rejected both that country's pretensions to Danzig and its maneuvers to obtain a Polish corridor by annexation. Although he admitted Germany's moral obligation to pay for war damage to Belgium, he balked at the idea of placing full responsibility for the war and its indemnities upon Germany. Germans, he felt, should refuse to allow themselves to be led into economic and financial slavery. He insisted that the return of German prisoners of war was a sine qua non condition in the peace proceedings. In conclusion, Erzberger appealed to the German people and the rest of the people of the world not to perpetuate the estranged feelings brought about by the war, but

⁶⁵See the article "The German Colonies and War Indemnity," Ibid., April 29, 1919, #192, p. 4.

⁶⁶Ibid., March 17, 1919, #122, p. 4.

to attempt to build a European unity of understanding based upon cultural, political, and economic cooperation. He reminded the Allies of a statement made by Wilson to the U. S. Congress in January, 1918: "We do not wish to do an injustice to Germany; we wish to give her an equal position within the nations of the world." What Germans wanted, Erzberger affirmed, was "justice and equality . . . no more, no less."⁶⁷

The Polish-German relationship touched upon earlier in Erzberger's speech was another of the very trying difficulties the German government had to contend with and was discussed by the National Assembly on March 5, 1919.⁶⁸ Erzberger's views on Poland which were shared by his own Centrist colleagues were reviewed by Germania in an article entitled, "Erzberger on the Polish Question."⁶⁹ The eagerness of the Poles to establish a Polish state was described by Erzberger as an attempt to "rush things," and the interests of the Allies, particularly of France were motivated, according to Erzberger, not by humanitarian reasons but by the desire to weaken Germany by strengthening Poland. Wilson's demands regarding the establishment of a new Polish Republic, Erzberger was willing to recognize, but he inveighed against attempts to take from Germany territory which was rightfully hers. "Germany will not be robbed of its inalienable rights of national unity," he said.⁷⁰ A peace providing for annexation of the densely German-populated city of Danzig, part of West Prussia, and a part of Upper Silesia could not be

⁶⁷The complete speech is reprinted in Germania, March 17, 1919, #122, pp. 3-4.

⁶⁸Verhandlungen, March 5, 1919, CCCXXVI, 507-509.

⁶⁹March 24, 1919, #134, pp. 2-3.

⁷⁰Ibid. See also Erzberger, Erlebnisse, pp. 363-365.

accepted by the German people.⁷¹

During the month of April the delegates at Weimar in vehement speeches gave vent to their deep concern over the pending peace terms that were being formulated by the Allied powers at the Paris Peace Conference. The Centrist secretary-general, Maximilian Pfeiffer, in one of the more passionate speeches delivered on the floor of the National Assembly on April 10, 1919 protested against the "current of power politics" of the day. Spurred on by the wholehearted encouragement of his colleagues, he continued:

The peace which is being concluded ought not to be filled with the spirit of power, for if it is filled with this spirit of power, it undeniably contains within itself the germ of a new war. . . . Therefore, in this precise moment, we raise our voice in admonition, in this moment when fate compels us to decision. And I say this in unison with the entire constituent National Assembly, that that which we have proclaimed is the anguished cry of a people tormented to the extreme. (Loud agreement). . . . If peace is given to us, then we demand that we be allowed to give our opinion honorably, and, therefore, we offer three requests without which there can be no agreement. The three requests we place before the conscience of the world, before friends and foe, are: evacuation of occupied territory immediately at the conclusion of peace. (Very right! Bravo!); second, the return of our captive soldiers (lively agreement and applause); thirdly, lifting the blockade (renewed lively agreement and stormy applause). . . . In view of these convictions and opinions we look forward to the peace discussions and its conclusion. I say emphatically—peace discussions! If this peace be not born of a spirit of justice and reconciliation, then it will not fulfill its goal. I warn our enemies in all earnestness in this decisive hour of our people: the time can come when we will be forced to exclaim, No! To a peace of power and force we will not subscribe. (Stormy applause.)⁷²

This piece of oratory was typical of the sentiments expressed by other members of the National Assembly, and came as the climax of a day of emotional

⁷¹Germania, March 24, 1919, #134, p. 3

⁷²Verhandlungen, April 10, 1919, CCCXXVII, 916-924.

speech-making.

One practical piece of business accomplished at this session (April 10) was the passage of a bill requesting the formation of a Committee for Peace Negotiations. Submitted jointly by Adolf Gröber the Centrist and the Majority Socialist Paul Löbe and representatives of other major parties the bill proposed that "The National Assembly should resolve to form a Committee for Peace Negotiations and to delegate to it a president and twenty-eight members."⁷³

On April 14, Konstantin Fehrenbach, the Centrist president of the National Assembly, was named the chairman of the peace committee—an indication of its importance. The Center Party's six members on the twenty-eight-man committee included the Party chairman, Gröber; Franz Ehrhardt, a trade-union secretary from Upper Silesia; Georg Heim, spokesman for the Bavarian People's Party; Wilhelm Mayer from Upper Bavaria; the veteran parliamentarian Peter Spahn; and the Rhenish leader, Karl Trimborn.⁷⁴

Much of the preliminary work for the Paris Peace Conference had been prepared by Count Johann Bernstorff who headed a special section within the Foreign Office created for this purpose. With him, Erzberger collaborated in friendly fashion until May when a dispute on policy began to set the two men at odds.⁷⁵ Erzberger and Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, the foreign minister,

⁷³Ibid., p. 961.

⁷⁴Ibid., April 15, 1919, CCCXVII, 1030. Other members on the committee included 11 Majority Socialists, 5 Democrats, 3 Nationalists, 2 Independent Socialists, and 1 from the German People's Party.

⁷⁵Erzberger describes this common work in Erlebnisse, pp. 366-367.

were also at variance, but this was due to a clash of personalities.⁷⁶

The first session of the parliamentary peace committee met at Weimar on April 15, 1919, to prepare itself for the peace conference.⁷⁷ Count Brockdorff-Rantzau himself headed the German peace delegation which left for Paris in the latter part of April to receive the terms worked out by the European powers. The delegation consisted of five members, one of whom was the Centrist Johann Giesberts.⁷⁸ Erzberger was not a member, since his controversial handling of the armistice negotiations had made it desirable to leave the delegation uncompromised by his membership.

In a brief ceremony at Versailles on May 7, 1919, the document of peace was handed to the Germans. In a letter to his wife, Walter Simons, the commissioner general of the delegation, described the shocked reaction of each of the members of the German delegation.⁷⁹ He depicted the Centrist delegate, Giesberts, as staggering into a delegation conference on the evening of May 7, yelling:

Gentlemen, I am drunk. That may be proletarian, but with me there was nothing else for it. This shameful treaty has broken me, for I had believed in Wilson until today. When I talked to him in America that Puritan said to me that the parochial schools in America were the best. From that day I believed him to be an honest man, and now that scoundrel sent us such a treaty.

⁷⁶For an explanation of the difference in character and views of the two men, see Epstein, Erzberger, pp. 300-303.

⁷⁷Minutes of the meeting of April 15, 1919, as translated in Alma Luckau, The German Delegation at the Paris Peace Conference (New York: Columbia University Press, 1946, pp. 182-188. For a description of the first session of the peace committee see ibid., 44-46.

⁷⁸The German peace delegation included two Majority Socialists, Otto Landsberg and Robert Leinert; one Democrat, Carl Melchior; and Walter Schucking of the People's Party.

⁷⁹Walter Simons to his wife, May 30, 1919, translated ibid., 124-128.

Right now if I had those fellows sitting opposite me—Wilson, Lloyd George, and Clemenceau—they would hit the ceiling so hard that they'd stick to it. But I am telling you this, gentlemen . . . if those fellows think that the German laborers are going to work hard for that capitalist gang, they're wrong, and when they march into the mining district, the few hand grenades that'll be needed to flood every mine, will be on hand!⁸⁰

Such an outburst was not an untypical reaction. German public opinion was angered and surprised by the terms of the treaty.⁸¹ President Ebert proclaimed a week of mourning during which the state governments were asked to suspend public amusements for a week.⁸²

On May 8, Fehrenbach opened the session of the committee for peace negotiations with the words, "The incredible has happened; our enemies have laid before us a treaty which surpasses by far the fears of our greatest pessimists." The president went on to express consternation at the fact that Wilson, who had promised the world a peace of justice and equity, could have endured being present when this treaty was accepted. Surely, the treaty which meant enslavement of the German people was dictated by hate. Scheidemann, voicing the opinion of the cabinet, made a comparison between the Fourteen Points and those articles of the treaty which he considered irreconcilable with President Wilson's peace program. He closed the session with a unanimous resolution to the effect that the conditions of peace were "unbearable and unfulfillable." He recommended that the government endeavor to secure genuine negotiations, and he called for a plenary session of the National Assembly on

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 124.

⁸¹Flags were flown half-mast in Cologne as a sign of mourning, KV, May 10, 1919, #365.

⁸²Printed in Germania, May 9, 1919, #208.

May 12 in Berlin.⁸³

On May 9, Dr. Pfeiffer published a declaration to the members of the Center Party in which he expressed his fear that the "hate-clenched fist" of a darkened peace would crush out all life. "As pawns of humanity," the German people were being abused by the Allied powers and condemned to a lasting servitude. "Our earnest desire for peace on the basis of reconciliation and justice has been disregarded and trampled upon," he said.⁸⁴ In this hour of need, he urged the Centrists to stand firm and unite behind their leaders to preserve peace and concord.⁸⁵ The next day Pfeiffer explained his ideas of the peace in an article entitled, "A Blow ("Faustschlag") in the Face of Mankind," in which he noted: "It is apparent that our enemies hate us and wish to see us crushed politically and economically. We will not accept such disgrace impassively."⁸⁶ He criticized the complacent attitude of France and England in regard to Germany's economic plight, warning that they would feel the repercussions, for they "have killed the hen that lays the golden egg."⁸⁷

Everywhere voices were raised in bitter disappointment at having been denied a treaty based on Wilson's Fourteen Points. In a message to all the electors of the Center Party, the Party's board of directors described the

⁸³A report of the committee was printed in Germania, May 9, 1919, #208, p. 3; also in KV, May 10, 1919, #363.

⁸⁴Germania, ibid. In the same issue, Germania carried an editorial highly critical of the treaty. It felt that the whole proceedings of the Peace Conference depicted a complete bankruptcy of Wilson's peace offerings, see. p. 1.

⁸⁵Ibid.; also KV, May 11, 1919, #366.

⁸⁶Germania, May 10, 1919, #209, p. 2.

⁸⁷Ibid.

peace terms as "unbearable, unfulfillable, and insincere" ("unerträglich, unerfüllbar, und unaufrichtig"). Such a peace meant impoverishment, servitude and national dismemberment, for the financial stipulations were "unfulfillable," and the territorial demands were "unbearable." Insisting that the Allied powers had broken their word about a just peace, the Center demanded new peace terms—a peace of "reconciliation and justice."⁸⁸

The German National Assembly met on May 12 in special session at Berlin to discuss the terms of the treaty. The Chancellor opened the proceedings with a savage attack on the treaty, using the terms that had been on the tongues of Germans ever since its publication. It was a "terrible and murderous 'Hexenhammer'"; no honorable man would accept these "unbearable, unfulfillable, and unacceptable" terms. He warned that "the hand should wither which signed a treaty placing Germany in such intolerable fetters."⁸⁹ For five hours speakers from all parties criticized the treaty severely. Gröber, speaking for the Center, expressed similar sentiments against "forced peace" but was careful to avoid using the term "unacceptable,"⁹⁰ since Erzberger had impressed upon him the importance of avoiding the word.⁹¹

During this session of the National Assembly, two other Centrists denounced the harsh terms of the treaty in the name of the people of the enemy-occupied territories. Joseph Bitta was delegated to speak for the people of

⁸⁸"An die Zentrumswähler," ibid., May 11, 1919, #211.

⁸⁹Verhandlungen, May 12, 1919, CCCXVII, 1082-1084. Erzberger and Germania criticized Scheidemann's emotional rejection of the treaty as "unacceptable" as leading the nation into a position from which it would find it difficult to retreat. See Erlebnisse, p. 368; Germania, May 13, 1919, #213.

⁹⁰Ibid., pp. 1087-1089.

⁹¹Erzberger, Erlebnisse, p. 369.

Upper Silesia and Helene Weber for those in Eupen and Malmedy.⁹² After similar protests from delegates speaking in the name of inhabitants of other territories lost to Germany, President Fehrenbach closed the day's discussion with a fiery extemporaneous speech.⁹³ He declared that the power and unanimity of the delegates' demonstrations against the treaty was "a great consolation." He summed up the session's proceedings in the following words:

The course of today's proceedings is a great comfort in these trying times. It is a powerful, united, solid demonstration of the entire representation of the German people against the violent peact treaty that they [Allies] wish to dictate to us. One can hardly speak of different shades, of different moods; no, the mood of all the speakers was equally ardent! This peace we cannot accept.⁹⁴

Fehrenbach expressed the hope that the German people in their parliament as well as in spontaneous mass meetings throughout Germany might convince the Allied and Associated powers of the necessity of a thoroughgoing revision of the terms of peace. He thanked all those in neutral countries who had raised their voices on behalf of Germany. But, as a devout Catholic, he said, he felt surprise that not a single bishop or clergyman in the world had condemned this treaty as "having no part in a Christian era."⁹⁵ In his final sentence, Fehrenbach addressed the Allies and urged them to think of

⁹²Ibid., pp. 1094-1095; 1105.

⁹³Gustav Stresemann praised the speech as being the greatest of the day in sincerity and effect. See Gustav Stresemann, Von der Revolution bis zum Frieden von Versailles: Reden und Aufsätze. (Berlin: Staatspolitischer Verlag, 1919), pp. 170-171.

⁹⁴Verhandlungen, May 12, 1919, CCCXXVII, 1110-1111.

⁹⁵Cardinal Hartmann, Archbishop of Cologne, later requested Pope Benedict XV to intervene on behalf of Germany in order to save her from the complete foreign breakdown which menaced her. He also addressed the Catholics of the world for help, understanding, and justice. See "The German Catholics to the Catholics of the World," Germania, May 15, 1919, #217, p. 3.

their own children and grandchildren, for the concomitant hardships of this treaty would create a generation in Germany in whom "the will to break the chain of slavery would be implanted from childhood on."⁹⁶ The dramatic session was brought to a close with all the members rising and singing: "Deutschland über alles!"⁹⁷

The immediate response to the manifold appeals for protest demonstrations was nationwide; it was expressed by means of mass meetings and vindictive newspaper articles. The Catholic social unions and associations in Berlin and other cities of Germany whose leaders were Centrist delegates staged mass demonstrations. Criticism centered generally on the economic restrictions placed on Germany and the blockade which was still in force. All demanded a new peace based on "justice and reconciliation."⁹⁸ On May 11 fifteen prominent politicians, parliamentarians, and representatives of various Catholic social unions and associations met in Berlin to protest in the name "of justice, of Christian morality, and of culture" against the "forced peace."⁹⁹

On the same day, Johannes Bell, the Centrist minister of colonies, addressed a large assembly in Berlin on the subject of Germany's foreign colonies. In a stirring speech he reiterated many of his previous arguments for retention of the German colonies. He stressed the humanistic, cultural, and scientific advantages that had come to the colonies as a result of Germany's

⁹⁶Verhandlungen, May 12, 1919, CCCXXVII, 1111.

⁹⁷Ibid.

⁹⁸Germania, May 13, 1919, #213, Supplement: May 14, 1919, #215; May 15, 1919, #217; May 20, 1919, #225.

⁹⁹Ibid., May 13, 1919, #213, contained a manifesto drawn up by this group. They also published a second manifesto Ibid., May 15, 1919, #217.

efforts in the colonial world.¹⁰⁰ The loss of German colonies was a cause of great concern to German Catholic Missionary Societies.¹⁰¹ The Catholic Church feared for the fate of the Catholic missions in the German colonies.¹⁰²

The last hopes of the German delegation lay in a carefully prepared, comprehensive study of the treaty. While this work was being compiled, members of the delegation and the government cabinet met on May 18 and May 22 at Spa in Belgium to arrive at a concensus of opinion on the policy to be pursued. Erzberger had arranged the meetings after unsuccessfully attempting to influence the course of negotiations at Versailles through his Party colleague, Giesberts.¹⁰³

Between the two meetings Erzberger experimented in a characteristic piece of amateur diplomacy and attempted to negotiate with President Wilson without the knowledge of Rantzau and the German peace delegation.¹⁰⁴ Erzberger's offer secured no reply from President Wilson who probably disdained engaging in negotiations behind the back of the Allies. Though keenly disappointed at the total failure of his diplomatic efforts Erzberger, nevertheless, clung to his fundamental conviction that the treaty must be signed.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰Germania, May 16, 1919, #219.

¹⁰¹See the editorial in Germania, May 20, 1919, #225. Erzberger, Erlebnisse, p. 368.

¹⁰²Rome hoped to be able to preserve the Catholic German missions and sent a papal nuncio to Versailles to intercede in behalf of the German missions. See KV, June 10, 1919, #447.

¹⁰³Erzberger, Erlebnisse, pp. 371-375.

¹⁰⁴For an account of the Conger mission, see Fritz T. Epstein, "Zwischen Compiegne und Versailles," Vierteljahrshäfte für Zeitgeschichte, III (Stuttgart, 1955), pp. 412-445.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 443-445. Erzberger was later criticized severely for negotiating with the Allies behind the back of Rantzau. By posing as the leader of

At the second conference between the cabinet members and the members of the peace delegation held at Spa on May 22, Erzberger's proposal that the acceptance of the disarmament of Germany be made contingent on general disarmament was rejected by Rantzau. Other elements of disagreement were also evident; nevertheless, many of Erzberger's proposals won the day.¹⁰⁶ The final drafting of Germany's counterproposals, however, was left to the plenipotentiaries at Versailles.¹⁰⁷

The German delegation's last appeal, considered by the Allies between May 29 and June 2, was not without effect, so that for a time it appeared that an equitable settlement might ultimately be reached. However, the reply of the President of the Paris Peace Conference delivered at Versailles on June 16 together with the revised treaty soon dispelled this hope.¹⁰⁸

Erzberger, nonetheless, fearing that Rantzau and his delegation would recommend rejection of the treaty after their return to Germany, determined that the final decision would be undertaken by the cabinet made without the pressure of a time limit set by the Allies. Therefore, on June 3 and 4, while the German delegation was still exchanging notes with the Allies at Versailles, he forced a cabinet discussion of the question, "to sign or not to sign." The

the group for acceptance of the treaty, he exposed the internal dissention of the German cabinet. For a valiant defense of Erzberger's actions, see Klaus Epstein, Erzberger, pp. 309-313.

¹⁰⁶Stresemann, in reference to the decisive treatment of the peace terms noted that if the history of that period were ever written, it should rightly be called "the Erzberger era." See Stresemann, Von der Revolution, pp. 172-175.

¹⁰⁷Erzberger, Erlebnisse, pp. 369-370.

¹⁰⁸Luckau, German Delegation, p. 89. The revised treaty was a copy of the draft of May 7 in which changes had been made with red ink.

basis of these discussions was a written memorandum of his own views made at the request of Scheidemann. If the treaty were signed, Erzberger's notation advised, heavy burdens would be placed upon Germany. Taxes, for example, would be crushing but business would be opened.¹⁰⁹ Other advantages would be gained: prisoners of war would return. Poland would be forced to terminate its aggressive designs. The unity of Germany would be preserved. If, however, the treaty were not signed, the rejection would result in three major catastrophes:

1. The dissolution of national unity and the establishment of several German states. The hatred of the various states against Prussia, which is widely blamed for the present catastrophic situation, would make the separation a permanent one.
2. Peace eventually would have to be made, but it would be signed by the several different states separately. They would be obligated under imposed terms to pledge themselves not to enter into any future German national state. Such a peace would be still worse than that now proposed.
3. The overthrow of the government and its replacement by Independent Socialists and Communists, dissolution of the army, and anarchy throughout the entire country.¹¹⁰

The majority of the cabinet members on June 3-4 were sharply opposed to acceptance of the treaty. Neither were Erzberger's opinions shared by his Centrist colleague, Giesberts, in the peace delegation. Nevertheless, the adamant leader insisted that there was no alternative to acceptance short of a renewal of hostilities and an enemy invasion in the Southwest.¹¹¹ To his opponent's arguments that the treaty would be dishonorable, Erzberger replied that:

¹⁰⁹Erzberger, Erlebnisse, pp. 371-372.

¹¹⁰Ibid., pp. 372-373.

¹¹¹Ibid.

There was no dishonor if we signed under clear duress, provided we announce the fact that we were signing under duress. Suppose someone tied my arms and placed a loaded pistol against my chest, and asked me to sign a paper obligating me to climb to the moon within forty-eight hours. As a thinking man I would sign to save my life, but would at the same time say openly that the demand simply could not be fulfilled. The moral situation presented by the Entente demand to sign the treaty was exactly of the same kind.¹¹²

But this argument did not prevail with the cabinet; only three members, namely the Majority Socialists Eduard David, Wolfgang Heiner, and Gustav Noske, agreed with Erzberger. The Democrat ministers were in vehement opposition to ratification. Erzberger's party colleagues, Giesberts and Bell, also opposed.¹¹³

With the coalition cabinet divided over the issue, the position to be taken by the Center Party assumed great importance. As so often before in German history, the Center Party's decision would prove to be the act which would shift the parliamentary balance. A Socialist-Center coalition could obtain a majority for ratification, while an anti-treaty majority coalition could reach from the Center to the Nationalists. Erzberger worked untiringly at a series of Party meetings at Weimar beginning on June 13, to rally the Center faction to the cause for ratification. Erzberger repeated his argument that there was no alternative to acceptance short of a renewal of hostilities and an enemy invasion in the Southwest. This was instrumental in winning over some of his colleagues, especially those who came from areas which would suffer most from a resumption of hostilities.¹¹⁴ Nearly all agreed that renewed

¹¹²Ibid., p. 374.

¹¹³The cabinet sessions of June 3-4 are described in Ibid., pp. 372-375; Scheidemann, Memoires II, 368-372; Stresemann, Von der Revolution, pp. 172-175.

¹¹⁴Erzberger, Erlebnisse, p. 375.

military resistance was unthinkable, but many of the Centrists felt that they could not bring themselves to vote for a treaty which included the dishonorable Articles 227 and 231.¹¹⁵ On June 14 a "well-known representative" of the Party refused to accept the treaty because he felt acceptance would shame the honor of the nation for "all eternity."¹¹⁶ Gröber, however, supported Erzberger's views on acceptance and declared, "May the Party perish, if it does not support the Reich."¹¹⁷

On June 16, 1919, the Entente presented Germany with a seven-day ultimatum either to accept the treaty or to face invasion. Humiliated and embittered the German delegation left Versailles determined to reject the treaty. But the grim defiance of the delegation was no longer representative of the German people. The Allied blockade had been exacting its toll, and the possibility of renewed hostilities hung heavily over the German nation. The people were disgruntled with the prolonged peace parleys and were interested only in their termination. Under the influence of this change in the popular attitude, government proceedings were taking a turn.¹¹⁸ Erzberger's strenuous efforts to organize a majority in favor of acceptance were bearing fruit. The cabinet meeting of June 18 indicated the gains he had made among his colleagues.

¹¹⁵Ibid.

¹¹⁶Germania, June 15, 1919, #267, the article reporting the Party caucus on June 14 did not name the "well-known representative."

¹¹⁷Erzberger, Erlebnisse, p. 375. Erzberger does not name Gröber as the one who made the statement, but Morsey, Zentrumspartei 1917-1923, p. 185, cites statements from seven Centrists who verified that the statement was made by Gröber.

¹¹⁸Richard Kuenzer, "Die Aussenpolitik des Zentrums," in Nationale Arbeit, p. 86. The author was a prominent Centrist and a contemporary of the period.

Whereas the vote in early June had been 10 to 4 against ratification, it was now 7 to 7. Two Centrists, Bell and Giesberts, and one additional Socialist now converted to Erzberger's views. The cause for ratification was further strengthened by the virtually unanimous support of the premiers of the various German states, especially those from the South who feared the French invasion.¹¹⁹

By June 19 Erzberger was able to muster four-fifths of the Centrists to favor acceptance if the Articles 227 and 231 were expunged from the treaty;¹²⁰ but sixteen of their number opposed this compromise despite Erzberger's assurance that the Allies would not insist upon the retention of the "points of honor."¹²¹

Since the Center leadership was not able to rally their entire membership, it was decided that in view of the grave responsibility, the Party would not require the customary vote en bloc, but would allow each member to vote on the treaty and be answerable only "before God, his conscience, and the German people."¹²²

As a result of the vote in the various party caucuses, Scheidemann resigned as chancellor. Centrists and the Majority Socialists agreed to accept the treaty provided Articles 227 and 231 were withdrawn. The Democrats were adamant in their complete rejection. This inability to come to terms brought

¹¹⁹ Erzberger, Erlebnisse, pp. 376-378.

¹²⁰ Germania, June 20, 1919, #275.

¹²¹ Memorandum of Wilhelm Mayer and Johann Bell, as cited in Alma Lackau, "Unconditional Acceptance of the Treaty of Versailles by the German Government, June 22-28, 1919," Journal of Modern History, VII (September, 1945), pp. 218-219.

¹²² Erzberger, Erlebnisse, p. 375; also Report of the Meeting, June 19, 1919, as cited in Kuenzer, "Aussenpolitik des Zentrums," p. 86; KV, June 21, 1919, #479.

the short-lived Weimar coalition to an abrupt end.¹²³ A new government amenable to a conditional acceptance of the Versailles Treaty had to be arranged. In the Center faction meeting held on June 21, Gröber emphasized the urgent need for the Centrists to cooperate immediately with the Majority Socialists in forming such a government: "We have a moral duty, a responsibility before God and the German people, for whose destiny we are responsible . . . to save what can be saved. Therefore, we must seek to form a government with the Majority Socialist alone if others refuse."¹²⁴

The Centrists thought that Scheidemann's successor would be the SPD chairman Hermann Müller and that perhaps Giesberts would not be able to return as minister in the new cabinet.¹²⁵ But once organized the new government established on June 21, 1919, with the SPD Gustav Bauer as chancellor included four Centrists in the cabinet. Erzberger was appointed Vice-Chancellor as well as Minister of Finance. Since the Democrats were against acceptance, the ministry was composed only of Centrists and Majority Socialists.¹²⁶ The other Centrists were Giesberts as Minister for Postal Affairs, Bell as Minister

¹²³See Eugen Schiffer's speech in the National Assembly, Verhandlungen, June 22, 1919, CCCXVII, 1118-1120; Erzberger, Erlebnisse, pp. 379-380; Germania, June 22, 1919, #278; also editorial "Was nun?" in KV, June 20, 1919, #475.

¹²⁴Report of the meeting, June 21, 1919, as cited in Kuenzer, "Aussenpolitik des Zentrums," p. 89.

¹²⁵Germania, June 20, 1919, #275.

¹²⁶The Democrats resented the role taken by the Centrists and were extremely critical. Germania defended the Centrist position and stressed that the Center voted for acceptance only under protest. The new organ felt confident that if despite the heavy difficulties facing Germany, the people united behind the concerted efforts of the government, they would find a way to surmount all obstacles. See the editorial in June 21, 1919, #276.

for Colonial Affairs, and Wilhelm Mayer-Kaufbeuren as Minister of Treasury. Erzberger would have liked to include individual Democrats in the ministry not as delegates of their party, but as private individuals; however, his plans did not materialize. He had also hoped to head a new ministry of transportation in order to effect the great work of railroad nationalization contemplated by the National Assembly.¹²⁷ In this, too, he was disappointed. His position as head of the finance ministry he accepted with reluctance knowing how difficult a post it would be.¹²⁸

The government immediately set to the task of persuading the National Assembly to ratify the Versailles Treaty. On June 22, just twenty-four hours before the expiration of the Allied deadline, Bauer called upon the delegates of the National Assembly to rise above party politics in their action on the treaty and support the new government.¹²⁹ "The government of the German Republic is ready to sign the peace treaty," Bauer announced, "but without acknowledging thereby that the German people are the responsible authors of the World War, and without accepting Articles 227 and 231."¹³⁰ In the ensuing parliamentary debate the Centrists and the Majority Socialists stressed the necessity for responsible leadership in the period of crisis. The treaty was to be accepted conditionally only in order to prevent continued suffering and to preserve the unity of the nation.¹³¹ The Right reiterated its refusal.

¹²⁷Erlebnisse, p. 378.

¹²⁸Ibid., pp. 378-379.

¹²⁹Verhandlungen, June 22, 1919, CCCXVII, 1113-1115.

¹³⁰Ibid., p. 1115.

¹³¹Ibid., pp. 1115-1122. Gröber spoke for the Center and Paul Löbe spoke for the Majority Socialists. The Independents consistently supported acceptance, see Erlebnisse, pp. 379-380; Germania, June 22, 1919, #278.

When the question was put to a vote, 237 deputies voted for the acceptance and 138 opposed it. The Center's vote was: acceptance, 78; refusal, 9; abstaining, 2; absent, 2. Most of those who opposed conditional acceptance were from eastern districts which were to become Polish or which would border Poland. Those Centrists who refused acceptance included Karl Ollmert, an editor from Saarbrücken; Maria Schmitz, a school teacher from the Rhineland; Wilhelm Schümmer, a labor secretary from Danzig; Thomas Szczeponik, a school official from Posen; Joseph Bitta, a jurist from Breslau; Bartholomew Kossmann, a labor secretary from Coblenz; Johannes Herschel, a lawyer from Breslau; Alexander Schneider, a government official from Bavaria; and Herman Colshorn, a large landowner and "Hospitant" of the Center Party.¹³²

Despite the hopeful expectations of the new coalition government, the Allies rejected Germany's conditional acceptance and demanded unconditional acceptance within twenty-four hours. The ultimatum was received at 9 P.M. on June 22; the deadline for acceptance was set for 7 P.M. on June 23, 1919.¹³³ Many deputies had already left Weimar convinced that the conditional terms would be accepted. At 11 P.M., leaders of the Weimar Coalition, including the Democratic Party's leaders, met in President Ebert's rooms to discuss the turn of events. As the evening wore on, other leaders joined the gathering. By 1 A.M. of June 23, the two Centrist leaders Trimborn and Gröber, who had rushed back to Weimar, joined the meeting. At 8 A.M. a cabinet meeting was held. Gustav Noske, Minister of Defense, and General Maercker informed the members that in case of rejection the army was too small to maintain order.

¹³²Verhandlungen, June 22, 1919, CCCXXVII, 1136-1138.

¹³³Erlebnisse, p. 380.

Acceptance might bring a military coup or a mass resignation of army officers. The leaders retired to hold party caucuses.¹³⁴

Erzberger and his Centrist colleagues were shaken by the Entente's reply and by rumors of an officers' revolt should Germany sign the treaty. A Center meeting held on the morning of June 23 reversed the Centrist previous stand and declared, by an overwhelming majority (against only fourteen votes), that the treaty must be rejected in view of the Allied intransigence.¹³⁵ The Bavarians Georg Heim and Alexander Schneider left the Party as a protest against even considering acceptance.¹³⁶ Erzberger was forced to acquiesce in a decision he felt powerless to change.¹³⁷

A dilemma was created for the government by the Center's new position, for the Center's vote provided a theoretical majority opposed to the ratification of the Versailles terms. The coalition government formed for the purpose of accepting the treaty was already dissolving, and an alternate government was unavailable since both the Center and the Democrats were unwilling to form a coalition with the Nationalists against the Socialists.¹³⁸ The Allies were to march into Germany in the early evening if the treaty was not unconditionally ratified by that time. A conference of party leaders met at noon with

¹³⁴Memorandum, as cited in Luckau, "Unconditional Acceptance," p. 218.

¹³⁵KV, June 23, 1919, #484; Germania, June 23, 1919, #279; June 24, 1919, #281.

¹³⁶Germania, June 23, 1919, #279. A few days later Schneider returned.

¹³⁷Erlebnisse, p. 380; the best account of the Center's meeting is in the Memorandum prepared by Mayer and Bell, cited in Luckau, "Unconditional Acceptance," p. 218. Later Erzberger remarked, "It seemed to be Germany's fatal hour: anarchy by ratification, anarchy by rejection." Erlebnisse, p. 381.

¹³⁸Ibid., p. 381-383; Payer, Von Revolution, p. 300.

President Ebert to resolve the issue. Erzberger asked the opponents of ratification if they were willing to form a new government that would face renewed hostilities. The Democrats, the German People's Party, and the German National People's Party all replied in the negative.¹³⁹

Conditions seemed to have reached an impasse when a decision in favor of unconditional ratification was promoted by two unexpected developments. General Groener of the Supreme Command when asked by Ebert whether the treaty should be ratified, replied that he recommended acceptance not as an officer, but as a German. He assured Ebert that the officers would remain at their post even if the treaty were accepted.¹⁴⁰ Groener's assurance was instrumental in calming one of the two apprehensions that had influenced the Center's caucus vote against unconditional acceptance.¹⁴¹

The other difficulty concerning the points of honor was solved for the Centrists by a proposal made by Karl Heinze, leader of the People's Party. He suggested a parliamentary maneuver whereby the authorization given to the government the previous day to sign the treaty conditionally would be enlarged to convey an authorization to sign unconditionally as well. Heinze also suggested that the parties opposing ratification agree to make declarations in which they would affirm their faith in the national loyalty of the deputies who voted for acceptance even though their own parties would reject the treaty.¹⁴²

¹³⁹ Erzberger, Erlebnisse, p. 383; Payer, Von Revolution, 301-304.

¹⁴⁰ Telegram of Groener to the Reich President Ebert, June 23, 1919, cited in Ursachen und Folgen, III, 386.

¹⁴¹ Erlebnisse, p. 381.

¹⁴² Ibid., pp. 382-383.

The plenary session of the National Assembly was opened in the afternoon of the same day (June 23) by Bauer. The chancellor raised his voice in a final protest: "At the hour of life and death, under the menace of invasions, for the last time I raise in free Germany a protest against this mockery of self-determination, this enslavement of the German people, this new menace to the peace of the world under the mask of a treaty of peace."¹⁴³ Bauer, nevertheless, realized that protesting was useless since Germany's power of resistance was broken and they had no means of averting the treaty. The only gleam of hope was "the handle" given by the treaty, namely, the Entente's solemn promise of June 16, 1919, that the treaty could be revised from time to time and adapted to new conditions. This was one of the few terms in the treaty "breathing the real spirit of peace."¹⁴⁴

Chancellor Bauer's reading of Clemenceau's rejection of Germany's conditional acceptance provoked considerable reaction in the assembly. Fehrenbach's firm leadership kept the German Nationalists from obstructing action by demanding a new vote.¹⁴⁵ The Democrats and the German People's Party cooperated to avoid a new vote and, as agreed, publicly reiterated their confidence in the patriotism of the government parties. Everything was carried off smoothly. Gröber spoke a few words pointing out that his Party accepted the treaty because "a new war above all must be avoided." The Party still asserted that the proposals were "unbearable" and "unfulfillable," but they had no other

¹⁴³Verhandlungen, June 23, 1919, CCCXXVII, 1139.

¹⁴⁴Ibid.

¹⁴⁵Ibid., p. 1141.

alternative. The Party placed the welfare of the nation above Party interests. In view of the circumstances, acceptance was an "absolute necessity." There would, at least, be some benefits, for the treaty would bring back a hundred thousand war prisoners. "Millions of our relatives wait with eagerness for the moment their fathers, husbands, and brothers will again be in their midsts."¹⁴⁶ Fehrenbach rose to the occasion with a brief but noble declaration made all the more effective by his emotional delivery. In the throes of deep emotion, he closed the session with a prayer which recommended "our unfortunate Fatherland to the protection of the merciful God."¹⁴⁷

The Centrist Dr. Bell and Dr. Müller, a Majority Social Democrat, undertook the fateful mission to Versailles.¹⁴⁸ The treaty was signed on June 28, 1919. On July 8, 1919, it was ratified despite the bitter denunciations of the delegates from the extreme Right.¹⁴⁹ Spahn speaking for the Center noted that his Party accepted only as a last resort to save Germany from complete chaos and destruction.¹⁵⁰

The reaction of the Centrist news organs, Germania and the Kölnische Volkszeitung, was moderate compared to the Rightist newspapers. The Centrist

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 1139-1140.

¹⁴⁸ Bell was reluctant to become a signer because of a conflict of conscience, and accepted the odious assignment only after repeated supplications by Ebert and his cabinet. See Bell's Memorandum, cited in Luekau, "Unconditional Acceptance," p. 219.

¹⁴⁹ Verhandlungen, July 9, 1919, CCCXXVII, 1421-1423. The Center Party cast 65 votes for acceptance, 10 for refusal. None abstained in this vote, but there were 13 absent and 3 listed as ill.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 1409; Germania, June 25, #282.

press counseled sober acceptance of the hard realities, a slow process of regeneration for Germany, and international understanding. The KV wrote:

We stand today upon the threshold of an historic and significant event. It matters little when and where the treaty is signed, or who places his signature to it. . . . We finally have received a peace for which we have waited since November 11 . . . one for which we have waited so long, so painfully as no other people on earth, for never has an armistice of such difficulty and such duration ever been inflicted before.¹⁵¹

Germania considered the event a black period of history, but it stressed that it was not the time to waste on useless vindictiveness. A new period had opened before the German people. They must work untiringly to surmount the obstacles ahead. Germany was now free to take stock of the future and begin to look ahead to a period of reconstruction and hard work.¹⁵²

The deep nationalist resentment over the treaty discussion, however, left a profound mark on the German mentality. The vow not to forget was reiterated on all sides.¹⁵³ The acceptance of the Versailles Treaty spared Germany a further Allied invasion, but it brought upon the accepting parties the opprobrium of the nationalists. The Center Party had accepted the harsh terms of the treaty only after serious and responsible consideration of the desperate alternative confronting Germany.¹⁵⁴ Erzberger defended the view of the parliamentary majority in the National Assembly by stating: "The peace

¹⁵¹June 24, 1919, #485.

¹⁵²July 9, 1919, #307.

¹⁵³Verhandlungen, July 9, 1919, CCCXVII, 1408-1409.

¹⁵⁴Centrist delegates were inspired by "the honorable conviction" that they were fulfilling their duty by acceptance. See Braun's speech in the National Assembly ibid., July 25, 1919, CCCXXVIII, 1892.

had to be concluded in order to save the unity of the Reich."¹⁵⁵ But neither Erzberger nor his supporting colleagues had any way of knowing at the time that the consequences of acceptance would be so catastrophic for Germany. The conscientious Centrists who had placed love for the Fatherland higher than Party interests and personal concern and signed the treaty were now grouped with the "November criminals," and placed high on the German Nationalists' "black list" as "traitors of the Fatherland."¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵Ibid., p. 1942.

¹⁵⁶Lutz, Demokratie im Zwielficht, p. 75.

CHAPTER IV

DELIBERATIONS ON THE WEIMAR CONSTITUTION

CENTRIST VIEWS ON POLITICAL ASPECTS

While the peace negotiations were being carried on at Versailles, the National Assembly gathered at Weimar was engaged in another project of major significance; namely, the work of drawing up a constitution for the new republic of Germany. Begun in January, deliberations on this important document were destined to drag on over a period of nearly seven months. Before the final acceptance of the constitution by the Constituent Assembly on July 31, 1919, there would be endless proposals and counter-proposals as well as rejections and compromises, in all of which the Center Party would be uniquely involved.

On February 24, 1919, a draft constitution was presented to the Assembly by Dr. Hugo Preuss, a distinguished jurist and member of the Democratic Party.¹ In explaining his proposed document, Preuss touched upon two basic theoretical questions of particular concern to the Centrists: the degree of centralization

¹Preuss' article, "Volksstaat oder verkehrter Obrigkeitsstaat," in the Berliner Tageblatt, November 14, 1919, #583, proposed plans for a democratic constitution to be drawn up by a universally elected National Assembly. The article attracted much attention. On November 15 Ebert entrusted Preuss with the task of formulating such a preliminary constitution. This draft was then submitted to a conference of States' representatives appointed by Ebert which met from January 26 to February 21, 1919, and made several adjustments. See Konrad Beyerle, Zehn Jahre Reichsverfassung, (München: Verlag Max Hueber, 1919), pp. 17-18.

in the new government structure, and the plan for the dismemberment of Prussia.² Much of the deliberations in Weimar in the next months concerning the political aspects of the constitution would revolve around these two questions. The Center would be called upon to choose between a republic or monarchy for Germany, to select a new flag or retain the old, to support a federal or unitary government, to divide Prussia or to continue Prussian hegemony over German affairs, to support or to check the separatist movements in Prussia. These and other political issues which Preuss formulated in his original constitutional draft were laid before the Assembly.

Following the first reading of the draft constitution, there began on February 28 a long session of speech-making which continued on through March 3 and 4, as spokesmen for the various parties expressed their views on the liberal, democratic document. Speaking for the Center, Dr. Peter Spahn accepted the idea of a republic for the Reich and told of his Party's desire to work for a new order that would be "honorably democratic" and "reasonably social," an order with "a Christian character for all Germans."³ He spoke of the state as an "ethical organism" which emanated from the nature of "voluntary authority." This voluntary authority was the "state power." It was the government. Therefore, he challenged Preuss' statement that "Die Staatsgewalt liegt beim Volke."⁴ Parroting much of the tradition party line in his speech, Spahn noted that as traditional advocates of a Bundesstaat, the Center Party could not accept Preuss' proposal for an Einheitsstaat. The Party would favor

²Verhandlungen, February 24, 1919, CCCXVI, 284-294.

³Ibid., February 28, 1919, CCCXVI, 379.

⁴Ibid.

strengthening the Reich's central authority in some areas, but it insisted that control over religious, educational, and cultural affairs should be retained by the States.⁵

Because of the conflicting views on the constitutional draft expressed in the National Assembly, it was deemed necessary to establish a constitutional committee drawn from members of the Assembly to consider the draft point by point. The committee was expected to resolve party differences on major provisions before returning the document to the National Assembly for a second and third reading.⁶ It comprised twenty-eight members selected from the five leading parties in the National Assembly. Six were Centrists,⁷ of whom four held permanent assignments: Gröber, Spahn, Trimborn, and a newcomer to parliamentary life, Konrad Beyerle.⁸ These four Centrists played prominent roles in formulating different sections of the constitution, each man serving as a Berichterstatter for his respective section: Spahn on legislation, Gröber on Church and school affairs, Trimborn on administration of justice and division on the Länder, and Beyerle on the section on "Fundamental Rights." The other two

⁵Ibid., pp. 376-383.

⁶Germania, March 5, 1919, #105.

⁷Besides these members, there were twelve Socialists, five German Democrats, three German Nationalists, and two members of the People's Party. For an assessment of the competency of these members, see Beyerle, Reichsverfassung pp. 11-15; Ziegler, Nationalversammlung, pp. 111-112; Bachem, Zentrumspartei, VIII, 288-289.

⁸Konrad Beyerle (1872-1933) studied at the universities of Munich and Heidelberg, receiving his Doctor of Law degree in 1893. He taught at the University of Göttingen in 1906, the University of Bonn in 1917, and was professor of history at the universities of Freiburg, Göttingen, Bonn, and Munich. He served as vice-president of the Görres-Gesellschaft for a number of years and edited its Supplement for Law and Social Science.

appointments were held interchangeably by other prominent Centrist delegates-- the three clerics: Franz Hitze, Heinrich Brauns, and Joseph Mausbach;⁹ a school director, Anton Rheinländer; a social worker, Frau Neuhaus; and the labor leader, Adam Stegerwald. These members, paired as teams, worked on the sections in which they were most experienced: Rheinländer and Mausbach in the area of religion and Christian education; Father Brauns and Frau Neuhaus on the social aspects of the constitution; and Hitze and Stegerwald on the social-economic sections of the constitution.¹⁰

Deliberations by the constitutional committee began immediately on March 4. Proceeding systematically yet not without an occasional digression, the committee considered the paragraphs and articles of Preuss' constitution in the order of sequence.¹¹ The first of the sections considered had to do with the relationship between the Reich and its member states ("Das Reich und seine Gliedstaaten").¹² Since this was a problem of long-standing in German

⁹Joseph Mausbach (1861-1931) studied at the universities of Münster and Eichstätt. From 1884-1889 he served as chaplain in Cologne and teacher of religion. In 1889 he became professor at the University of Münster and an active leader of the Görres-Gesellschaft. In 1916 he was appointed chairman of a labor committee in Münster. His many literary works demonstrate his precision and discernment of the cultural problems of the Weimar Constitution. See Konrad Beyerle, "Mausbach in Weimar," Hochland, 28/II (1931), pp. 93-97.

¹⁰Bachem, Zentrumspartei, VIII, 289-290; Beyerle, Reichsverfassung, pp. 13-14.

¹¹The section on "Fundamental Rights" was set aside for later deliberation. The debate on the Reich's flag was deferred until the second reading. See Zeigler, op. cit., for a coverage on the work of the constitutional committee. (Since the writer of this paper did not have access to the Protocol of the constitutional committee, the following were used as sources of information: Reports of the work of the committee published in Germania and KV; Beyerle, Reichsverfassung; Albert Lauscher, "Die Arbeit an der Weimarer Verfassung" in Nationale Arbeit; Ziegler, Nationalversammlung; Morsey, Zentrumspartei 1917-1923.

¹²For Articles 1-17 in Preuss' original draft, see Ursachen und Folgen.

history, it was not to be resolved without much effort and controversy.¹³

Article 2, of Section I concerned the principle of a democratic republic.¹⁴ Little time was needed to deliberate on this provision, for the January election had been certain proof that the overwhelming majority of people favored a republic. The Center Party in voting for the acceptance of this provision was simply taking its cue from Gröber's speech in the National Assembly on February 13. In depicting the Party's desires for the new government, Gröber had pointed out that under the circumstances the republic was the "best vehicle with which to get out of the chaos of the revolution."¹⁵

Not that all the Centrist parliamentarians were confirmed republicans; as a matter of fact, they were only realists who accepted the election results as a mandate for the establishment of a republican form of government.¹⁶ Never did the members of the Center Party betray more than a mild enthusiasm for the republic; yet neither did they in future committee discussions or on the floor of the National Assembly take an official position for or against the monarchy.¹⁷ On the other hand, Centrist delegates did give full support to the

III, 429; in the final constitution they are Articles 1-18, Ibid., pp. 464-468.

¹³Considered one of the most fundamental problems by the committee, it was likewise one of the most time-consuming, involving not less than seventeen days of deliberation. Ziegler, op. cit., p. 112; Beyerle, Reichsverfassung, p. 19.

¹⁴In the final document the provision was embodied in Article 1.

¹⁵Verhandlungen, February 13, 1919, CCCXXVI, 54.

¹⁶Lauscher, op. cit., p. 159, notes that "undoubtedly there were many in the Center Party and even in its parliamentary representation who were fundamentally and theoretically monarchists," but they refrained from expressing their views publicly at this time. (Lauscher was a prominent member of the Rhenish Center and a contemporary of these events.)

¹⁷An opportunity to do so presented itself when on July 2 Hans Delbrück,

republican idea once it had been accepted by the National Assembly. The alternative discussed by the committee during the first weeks, therefore, was not whether the German government should be monarchical or republican, but whether the new republic of Germany should be socialistic or democratic.¹⁸ The Centrists along with the coalition parties in the National Assembly supported Preuss' provision for a democratic, parliamentary republic, as Dr. Spahn indicated when he spoke for a new order that would be "honorably democratic."¹⁹

The Center Party confirmed its acceptance of a democratic republic by voting in favor of the second sentence of Article 1 which states: "Political authority emanates from the people."²⁰ Lest its position be misunderstood, however, the Party hastened to point out that sovereignty exercised by the people was not the same as an absolute popular sovereignty.²¹ In an earlier session of the National Assembly, Gröber had noted that all authority, whether exercised by a monarchy or a democratic republic, derived its power from God.²²

DNVP, declared emphatically that he and his colleagues preferred a constitutional, parliamentary monarchy to a republic government; see his speech in Verhandlungen, July 2, 1919, CCCXXVI, 1242.

¹⁸The Independent Socialists strove to establish a dictatorship of the proletariat, but this met with extreme opposition from the bourgeois parties as well as the Majority Socialists both in the constitutional committee and later in the National Assembly. See the speeches on July 21, 1919, ibid., CCCXXVIII, 1750-1786.

¹⁹Ibid., February 23, 1919, CCCXXVI, 379.

²⁰"Die Deutsche Reichsverfassung vom 11. August 1919," Article 1: "Die Staatsgewalt geht vom Volke aus." Ursachen und Folgen, III, 464.

²¹Joseph Mausbach, Kulturfragen in der Deutschen Verfassung: Eine Erklärung wichtiger Verfassungsartikel (M-Gladbach: Volksvereinsverlag, 1920), pp. 23-26. See also Spahn's speech, Verhandlungen, February 28, 1919, CCCXXVI, 397.

²²Ibid., February 13, 1919, CCCXXVI, 54.

Article 1, the Centrists emphasized, was not to be construed as Rousseau's idea of absolute popular sovereignty.²³ Both in the constitutional committee and on the floor of the National Assembly,²⁴ the Centrists made special efforts to clarify their Party's position on this point. Despite precautions, the question of sovereignty would be sadly misconstrued in Centrist circles and among the Catholic hierarchy after the adoption of the Weimar Constitution.

Once it had been established that the Reich would have a republican government, the question arose about the position of the monarchy in the individual states. If the Reich was to have a republican constitution, reasoned the Center, then must the constituent states follow that pattern of government? This question was discussed in the second reading of the constitution on July 2. One of the Center's delegates, Joseph Andre, told the Assembly that it was "unthinkable" to "have a republic in the Reich and allow the individual states to provide for a constitutional monarchy."²⁵ At his proposal, Article 17 in Section I (Reich and States) which states: "Each state must have a republican constitution,"²⁶ was inserted into the constitution and adopted by the Assembly.²⁷

In keeping with the country's "conversion" from monarchy to a democratic

²³ Mausbach, Kulturfragen, p. 26.

²⁴ See Spahn's speech, Verhandlungen, February 26, 1919, CCCXXVI, 279.

²⁵ Ibid., July 3, 1919, CCCXXVII, 1261.

²⁶ Cited in Ursachen und Folgen, III, 464. All further articles of the Weimar Constitution are cited from this source.

²⁷ Verhandlungen, July 3, 1919, CCCXXVII, 1261.

republic, Preuss proposed a new flag for Germany.²⁸ He did not include this in his original draft but suggested it in his speech to the National Assembly on February 24.²⁹ Pointing to the parallel between the 1848 and the present National Assembly, Preuss proposed reviving the flag of 1848 to symbolize the liberal and democratic spirit of the "new times." Acknowledging that it might be difficult for some to abandon the old national colors, he argued the necessity of having a symbolic banner to signify the establishment of a new republican government. He also emphasized the fact that black, red, and gold were the colors of the Grossdeutschland movement and, therefore, would appeal to the Austrians who favored a union with Germany.³⁰

His suggestion for a black, red, and gold flag merely evoked a jesting comment from Spahn who preferred to retain the present flag for the German Reich.³¹ But the debate in the Assembly aroused by the proposition was very serious and vehement, for the delegates felt strongly about changing the colors of the national flag. When the topic was discussed in the National Assembly in July, there ensued a lively dispute arousing deep-seated national feelings.³²

Three alternative flag choices had been set down by the constitutional

²⁸Ibid., February 24, 1919, CCCXXVI, 285.

²⁹Ibid., p. 287. Preuss proposed that the provisions be inserted in Article 1, but in the final draft of the Weimar Constitution a separate article (Article 3) provided for the new flag.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Spahn said the colors reminded him of a ditty he learnt in childhood: "Schwarz ist das Pulver, rot das Blut, golden flackert die Flamme!" Ibid., p. 33.

³²Ibid., July 2-3, 1919, CCCXXVII, 1224-1235; 1244-1245.

committee on June 3 after it had been unsuccessful in solving the flag question, and these were now submitted to the National Assembly for consideration. The choice of the Independent Socialists was a red flag. The Majority Socialists and Democrats wanted a revival of the black, red, and gold colors as a "symbolic expression" of the desire "to complete the unfinished work of the Frankfurt Assembly of 1848."³³ The Centrists were in favor of retaining the old black, white, and red flag of the Bismarckian Reich, for as Gröber pointed out there was no purpose in changing flags at a time when occupied German territory was under an alien flag. France had retained her flag, he argued, despite her change of governments; Germany should not be too hasty now.³⁴ In their desire to retain the old flag the Centrists sided with the Right.

The selection of flags by the Party did not necessarily represent unanimity of choice. Among the Centrists, for instance, there was a goodly number who preferred the flag of black, red, and gold. Others, furthermore, though agreeing with the Right for the retention of the old flag, had not remained insensible to the remarks of the Austrian representative to the National Assembly, Ludo Moritz Hartmann, who had pointed out that the old black, white, and red flag was viewed by Austrians as an historic symbol of a Kleindeutschland. The proposed black, red, and gold flag, he had suggested, was more acceptable to the German Austrians and its adoption would make it easier for Austria to join the German Reich.³⁵ Liberal Centrists who had favored the

³³Protocol, cited in Lauscher, op. cit., p. 161; Ziegler, op. cit., pp. 145-146; KV, June 4, 1919, #432. See also Preuss' speech in the National Assembly, Verhandlungen, February 24, 1919, CCCXVI, 287.

³⁴Ziegler, op. cit., p. 146; KV, June 4, 1919, #432.

³⁵Cited in Lauscher, op. cit., p. 162; Ziegler, op. cit., p. 147.

black, red, and gold flag from the start were confirmed in their choice by Hartmann's remarks.³⁶ Supporters of Gröber's views gave the matter second thought so that between June 3 and July 2-3 when the three flag proposals were presented to the National Assembly for consideration, nearly two-thirds of the Center had been won over to the Left's viewpoint while only slightly more than one-third of the Party still sided with the Right.³⁷

All parties except the Center delivered numerous speeches of patriotic fervor both for and against the three flag proposals during the sessions of the National Assembly on July 2 and the day following.³⁸ The proposal for the red flag was rejected by an overwhelming majority.³⁹ The black, white, and red flag also failed to receive a sufficient majority.⁴⁰ The acceptance, finally, of the black, red, and gold flag was due to a proposal submitted jointly by Gröber and Majority Socialist Max Quark who suggested that black, red, and gold be adopted as the national colors, but that the merchant flag continue as

³⁶Lauscher, *op. cit.*, p. 162; Ziegler, *op. cit.*, p. 147. This was a strong argument for the Center Party since a union with Austria had always been a Centrist desire. Religious ties with Catholic Austria were a determining factor in the Centrist program. During the early weeks of the Weimar coalition the Centrists worked assiduously toward this union. Shortly after the opening of the National Assembly, Pfeiffer, secretary-general of the Center, was sent by the government to Vienna to discuss the possibilities of such a union. *Germania*, February 11, 1919, #69; February 13, 1919, #73; February 17, 1919, #79 carried special Supplements with articles listing historic, religious and economic reasons for this union. The Party was keenly disappointed later when the union was forbidden by the terms of the Versailles Treaty.

³⁷*Germania*, July 9, 1919, #307.

³⁸*Verhandlungen*, July 2-3, 1919, CCCXXVII, 1224-1245.

³⁹*Ibid.*, July 3, 1919, CCCXXVII, 1245.

⁴⁰*Ibid.* The vote was 110 for and 190 against with one abstaining.

black, white, and red with a display of the national colors in the upper left-hand corner.⁴¹ On the strength of this compromise about one-fifth of the Centrists who had voted previously for the black, white, and red flag, now gave their consent to the change.⁴²

Of all the proposals submitted to the National Assembly during the decisive month of July, this one concerning the change of national colors provides the most interesting study of the conflicting forces within the Center Party. From the very beginning, the Party was divided on the issue--the liberal faction favoring the change, the conservative clinging to the old. The Austrian views on this matter induced some of the more realistic Centrists to drop their allegiance to the old flag as a matter of expediency, while the compromise proposal enabled others to relinquish their allegiance. Nevertheless, the Party had not succeeded in the final show-down to rally its entire membership to the acceptance of the new banner. As Table V indicates, the Centrist vote on the compromise proposal was sixty-four in favor, five against,⁴³ and one abstaining.⁴⁴ More revealing still is the record of absence. Twenty-two delegates, representing one-fifth of the Party's membership, failed to appear. Three of these were ill, two were excused, the other seventeen were simply unaccounted for.⁴⁵

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid. The vote on this proposal was 211 for and 89 against with one abstaining.

⁴³Josef Becker from Hesse; the cleric, Ludwig Kaas; the leader of the Bavarian People's Party, Georg Heim; the trade union secretary from Posen, Robert Sagawe; and Herman Colshorn, the Hospitant of the Center from the German Hanoverian Party.

⁴⁴Heinrich Langworst of the German Hanoverian Party.

⁴⁵See Table V for the vote on the flag. The information in Table V is

Although Germania published a lengthy article on the change of the flag, it made no comment on the final vote. It observed that it was difficult for patriotic Centrists to give up the old flag, but it agreed that the new colors were more symbolic of the change in government. It was highly critical, however, of the adamant position of the ⁴⁴right and their press, accusing them of chauvinistic efforts to arouse patriotic sentiments against the flag compromise. In order to erect an enduring and stable constitution, Germania stated, it was necessary for the majority parties to compromise on some issues.⁴⁶

But the choice of national colors, while it evoked sentiments of patriotism and stirred the emotions of loyal Germans, was not as significant in its consequences as some of the other hard-core decisions facing the National Assembly. Chief among these was the "vielleicht schwierigste Verfassungsproblem,"⁴⁷ that most difficult problem of deciding whether the new republic of Germany should have a federal or unitary system of government. Should the constitution, in other words, abolish the special privileges of the individual states and centralize power in one unitary type of government similar to that of France; or should it retain the federated characteristics of the German States as they had existed under the old Bismarckian constitution of 1871? The Center Party had noted with apprehension that centralization was becoming increasingly stronger as the forces of liberalism and democracy which had traditionally espoused strong unitary tendencies became victorious over the forces

taken from the Verhandlungen, July 3, 1919, CCCXXVII, 1244-1245.

⁴⁶ July 9, 1919, #307; Mausbach, Kulturfragen, p. 30, also noted the difficulty with which the "greater majority" of the Center acquiesced to the change.

⁴⁷ Lauscher, op. cit., p. 162.

TABLE V

VOTE ON THE NEW FLAG, JULY 3, 1919

Delegates	District	Vote	Delegates	District	Vote
Allekotte, Joseph	Koblenz	Yes	Kubetzko, Joseph	Oppeln	Yes
Andre, Joseph	Wurttemberg	Yes	Langwost, Heinrich	Hanover	Abstained
Astor, Jakob	Koblenz	Yes	Legendre, Peter	Koblenz	Yes
Becker, Johannes	Arnsberg	Ill	Leicht, Johann	Franken	Yes
Becker, Josef	Nassau	No	Lensing, Felix	Düsseldorf	Absent
Bell, Johannes	Düsseldorf	Yes	Marx, Wilhelm	Düsseldorf	Absent
Bergmann, Theodore	Düsseldorf	Absent	Mausbach, Josef	Münster	Yes
Beyerle, Konrad	Franken	Yes	Maxen, Wilhelm	Hanover	Yes
Bitta, Joseph	Oppeln	Absent	Mayer, Wilhelm	Bavaria	Yes
Blank, Lorenz	Hanover	Yes	Müller, Richard	Fulda	Ill
Blum, Johannes	Köln	Yes	Nacken, Josef	Köln	Yes
Bolz, Eugen	Wurttemberg	Yes	Neuhaus, Agnes	Arnsberg	Yes
Brauns, Heinrich	Köln	Yes	Neyses, Matthias	Koblenz	Yes
von Brentano di Tremezzo, Otto	Nassau	Absent	Ollmert, Karl	Koblenz	Yes
Burlage, Eduard	Aurich	Yes	Otte, Waldemar	Leignitz	Absent
Colshorn, Herman	Hanover	No	Pfeiffer, Maximilian	Berlin	Yes
Diez, Carl	Baden	Yes	Puschmann, Alois	Breslau	Yes
Dransfeld, Hedwig	Düsseldorf	Excused	Rheinländer, Anton	Arnsberg	Yes
Erhardt, Franz	Oppeln	Yes	Richter, Johann	Pfalz	Absent
Ersing, Joseph	Baden	Yes	Sagawe, Robert	Posen	No
Erzberger, Matthias	Wurttemberg	Yes	Schefbeck, Josef	Bavaria	Yes
Farwick, Wilhelm	Köln	Yes	Schiffer, Mattias	Münster	Yes
Fehrenbach, Konstantin	Baden	Yes	Schirmer, Karl	Bavaria	Yes
Fleischer, Paul	East Berlin	Excused	Schlack, Peter	Düsseldorf	Yes
Frerker, Wilhelm	Münster	Yes	Schmitt, Adam J.	Hessen	Absent
Gerstenberger, Liborius	Franken	Yes	Schmitz, Maria	Koblenz	Yes
Giesberts, Johann	Düsseldorf	Yes	Schneider, Alexander	Franken	Yes
Gilsing, Anton	Arnsberg	Yes	Schummer, Wilhelm	Prussia	Absent
Gröber, Adolf	Wurttemberg	Yes	Schwarz, Jean Albert	Nassau	Yes
Grunau, August	Breslau	Absent	Schwarzer, Rudolf	Bavaria	Yes
Hagemann, Joseph	Aurich	Absent	Spahn, Peter	Köln	Yes
Hebel, Benedikt	Bavaria	Yes	Stapfer, Michael	Bavaria	Yes
Heim, Georg	Bavaria	No	Stegerwald, Adam	Köln	Absent
Herold, Karl	Münster	Yes	Strzoda, Franz	Oppeln	Yes
Herschel, Johannes	Oppeln	Absent	Szceponik, Thomas	Oppeln	Yes
Hitze, Franz	Düsseldorf	Yes	Tauscher, Eugen	Bavaria	Yes
Hofmann, Hermann	Pfalz	Absent	Teusch, Christine	Köln	Yes
Imbusch, Heinrich	Arnsberg	Yes	Tremmel, Peter	Franken	Yes
Irl, Martin	Bavaria	Yes	Trimborn, Karl	Köln	Yes
Jaud, Josef	Bavaria	Yes	Ulitzka, Karl	Oppeln	Yes
Joos, Josef	Düsseldorf	Yes	Weber, Helene	Düsseldorf	Yes
Kaas, Ludwig	Koblenz	No	Wieber, Franz	Düsseldorf	Absent
Koch, Johann	Münster	Yes	Wirth, Joseph	Baden	Absent
Kossmann, Bartholomew	Koblenz	Absent	Zawadzki, Konstantin	Oppeln	Yes
Kreutz, Franz	Münster	Yes	Zehnter, Johann	Baden	Ill
			Zettler, Maria	Bavaria	Yes

of militarism and autocracy at the end of 1918.⁴⁸ Now it viewed with alarm the revival in 1919 of the centuries-old problem of Bundesstaat versus Einheitsstaat.⁴⁹

Prussia, as a firm adherent of a centralized and unified state, attempted to embody these unitarian provisions in the constitution.⁵⁰ Within the constitutional committee itself there existed a strong tendency toward an Einheitsstaat which the six Centrist members tried to check. They were assisted by the strong opposition stemming from the representatives of the South German States in the States' Committee. Bavaria, especially, had no intention of surrendering rights and privileges which she had enjoyed for so long.⁵¹

Traditionally, the Center Party was federalist,⁵² preferring a Bundesstaat type of government that emphasized states' rights. Accordingly, Centrists had campaigned in the January election on a platform advocating "a stronger Reich" but one with a "bundesstaatlichen Aufbau." Later, on the floor of the National Assembly this same idea was reiterated by one of the Party's members.⁵³

⁴⁸See Richard Fischer's speech in Verhandlungen, February 28, 1919, CCCXXVI, 342, "Away with particularism and establish an 'Einheitsstaat' for Germany!"

⁴⁹See the editorial, "Bundesstaat oder Einzelstaat," Germania, March 5, 1919, #105.

⁵⁰Verhandlungen, February 24, 1919, CCCXXVI, 284-286. In Prussia's original draft the unitarian provisions were embodied in Section I (Reich and the States).

⁵¹Lauscher, op. cit., pp. 167-168.

⁵²The term "federalist" does not have the same meaning in Germany as it has in the U. S. Our word, "federalist," applies to advocates of a strong federal government, whereas the German term "Föderalist" was used for one who opposed all but the weakest federal government in favor of State independence. See Arnold Brecht, Federalism and Regionalism in Germany: The Division of Prussia (New York: Oxford University Press, 1945), p. 4.

⁵³See Beyerle's speech, Verhandlungen, March 3, 1919, CCCXXVI, 464-467.

By maintaining this traditional position, the Center Party repudiated any moves on the part of its coalition partners toward a fully unitary state. But here again unanimity of Party policies among the Centrists in the Assembly was not apparent. Within the Center's ranks a strong tendency toward centralization was evident in a minority faction comprising some of the newly elected labor and trade unionists from southwestern Germany who rallied around Erzberger's banner.⁵⁴ Though this minority group was unable to influence the view of the majority faction, especially the members of the Bavarian People's Party who clung tenaciously to the federalist principle,⁵⁵ it remained nonetheless a divisive factor in Party deliberations.⁵⁶

While the Party officially maintained its devotion to federalism, it did not repudiate the idea of strengthening the power of the Reich in certain areas. This it deemed opportune in order to place the Reich in a position where it would be able to meet the difficult reparations and war indemnities, and to prevent the centrifugal forces "which are necessarily present in every federal system" from becoming overwhelming.⁵⁷ Stegerwald pointed this out to the Assembly on February 21 when he told the delegates that the industrial power of western German territory was necessary to the general welfare of the whole

⁵⁴See Morsey, Zentrumsparlei 1917-1923, p. 200.

⁵⁵Schwend, Bayern, pp. 88, 102-103.

⁵⁶Erzberger's duties as Armistice Commissioner hindered him from taking an active part in the making of the constitution. Nevertheless, he did advocate a vigorous policy of centralization within the National Assembly and as a member of the ministry. The nationalization of the German railroad system and the complete reorganization of Germany's fiscal system on a centralized basis were largely Erzberger's achievements. See Epstein, Erzberger, pp. 327-329.

⁵⁷Lauscher, op. cit., p. 167.

Reich and that, therefore, every attempt to weaken the Reich's power in the West must be hindered.⁵⁸ A few days later on February 28, Spahn indicated the necessity of a "strong central power in the Reich," requesting that control over the armed forces, communications, and foreign affairs be placed in the hands of the Reich.⁵⁹ Again on March 7, Spahn declared that "an important task of the Reich's administrative officials" was to keep "guard over the Reich's unity."⁶⁰

Notwithstanding the increase in power which the Centrists were willing to concede to the Reich, they refused to acknowledge the Reich's power over certain questions, especially those concerning the privileged position granted by the individual states to the Church and Christian education as provided for in Article 10. The proposal debated in the constitutional committee on March 14, 15, and 16, granting the Reich jurisdiction over the regulation of religious associations and over a uniform educational system, brought the advocates of unitarism and federalism to loggerheads. The Centrists, in particular, were adamant in their resistance. Beyerle, supported by Gröber, called for a cancellation of the provisions. The two Centrists were not alone in their objection, however; the Baden Minister, Dr. Dietrich, protested in the names of both the Baden and Württemberg governments.⁶¹ In the heat of the debate over this controversial issue, Gröber remonstrated, ". . . as a Catholic

⁵⁸Verhandlungen, February 21, 1919, CCCXXVI, 264.

⁵⁹Ibid., February 28, 1919, CCCXXVI, 379.

⁶⁰Protocol, cited in Morsey, Zentrumsparlei 1917-1923, p. 200.

⁶¹Protocol, cited in Ziegler, op. cit., p. 117.

I cannot concede competency to the National Assembly to discuss religious questions."⁶²

The Bavarian People's Party, reflecting the age-old particularism of its native state, was much more conservative in its view of federalism than the rest of the Center Party. Dr. Georg Heim, director of the Bavarian People's Party, exemplified this attitude in an address delivered before the National Assembly on July 3 after the constitution had been returned to the Assembly for its second and third reading. Contesting the growth of the power of the Reich at the cost of the states as provided in Section I of the constitution, especially Article 7, Heim noted that: Bavarians have always striven "pre-eminently" against centralization for it is an "extraordinarily dangerous thing." Destroy federalism in Germany and you destroy the unique cultural particularism for which Germany is universally known. If government power over finance, communications, agriculture, religion, and culture be centralized, what autonomy, asked the Bavarian Centrists, will remain to the constituent states? "We don't fear unity itself," he said, "we fear the unity of Berlin domination." This all-too-vast centralization which the Democrats and the Majority Socialists advocate will by its very nature lead to the destruction of the "Reichsgedankes" (the idea of the Reich as a federal structure). It is a "dangerous game," he warned, "to assault" the constituent states, for the federal principle will survive. "The stronger you promote centralization in the Reich, the stronger will be the federalist echo."⁶³

⁶²Ibid. The problem of Church-State relations and education will be treated in the next chapter.

⁶³Verhandlungen, July 3, 1919, CCCXXVII, 1240-1243. Beyerle and Eduard Burlage also spoke against the strong centralizing power given to the Reich in Section I. See ibid., 1251-1254; 1270.

Closely allied with the strengthening of the power of the Reich was the struggle over Preuss' provision for a rearrangement of the German states, the "Länder."⁶⁴ It was not surprising that the Center Party agreed to Preuss' proposal calling for the amalgamation of smaller German principalities into larger units. Beyerle suggested in the constitutional committee that the disappearance of the dynasties presented an opportunity to do away with many of the smaller states.⁶⁵ But later Beyerle was not supported by his Bavarian colleagues who considered any tendency toward amalgamation as dangerous to federalism.⁶⁶

Deliberations on this point of division of Länder provoked varying views from all parties, to the point of shattering party fronts. Three days' debate in the constitutional committee (March 17-19) brought no real solution to the problem, for any rearrangement of states necessarily involved a partitioning of Prussia. Preuss favored the suppression of Prussian domination either by voluntary or enforced partition.⁶⁷ He argued that Prussia was not a nation, but an artificial formation resulting from political intrigues, purchases, marriages, and conquests.⁶⁸ The Rhenish Centrist leader, Trimborn, used this same argument in the constitutional committee on March 18. Prussia, he explained, was merely "an edifice of fortune." Only by suppression of Prussia

⁶⁴Articles 1-17,

⁶⁵Report of the constitutional committee KV, March 17, 1919, #213; Germania, March 20, 1919, #127; Lauscher, op. cit., p. 165.

⁶⁶See Heim's address of July 3, 1919, Verhandlungen, CCCXXVII, 1240-1243.

⁶⁷See Preuss' speech in the National Assembly on February 24, 1919, Verhandlungen, CCCXXVI, 284-294.

⁶⁸Protocol, cited in Ziegler, op. cit., pp. 118-120.

would the people of the Prussian provinces be able to secure equality.⁶⁹

Sentiment against Prussian hegemony was especially strong in the West where the cry "Los von Berlin" had been heard after the November Revolution.⁷⁰ While the western Centrists had repudiated earlier attempts to establish a separate Republic of the Rhine, they did not support in the first half of 1919 a movement for the formation of a West German Free State within the unity of the German Reich.⁷¹ Hence, for the Rhineland Centrist, the problem of the partition of Prussia was closely linked with the movement for a West German Republic as a member state in the federation of the Reich.

When the question of Prussian hegemony was discussed at a joint meeting of the constitutional committee and the States Committee on March 18, Trimborn spoke out emphatically in favor of greater autonomy for the Prussian provinces.⁷² Referring to Prussia control in Germany, he remarked, "The present state of Prussia gains the greatest profit from Prussian unity. . . . But today the interest of the Reich and that of a true, healthy organism require its

⁶⁹ Ibid., cited in Morsey, Zentrumspartei 1917-1923, p. 201; also in Lauscher, op. cit., p. 168.

⁷⁰ The Democrat Walter Schücking declared to his fellow delegates in the National Assembly: "Up to 1867 Prussia was against the Reich; from 1867 to 1918 Prussia was above the Reich; the Reich must hereafter be above Prussia." Verhandlungen, March 4, 1919, CCCXXVI, 324.

⁷¹ KV, February 2, 1919, #91; February 3, 1919, #95.

⁷² The Centrists in the Prussian provinces felt keenly the disproportionate representation they would receive if Prussia would be given a representation in the Reichsrat similar to what she had under the old constitution. On March 26, Trimborn told the constitutional committee: "It is unbearable for us to be forced to see that small states have influence on legislation from which we larger Prussian provinces are excluded; this position will become even more unbearable if the competence of the Reich is enlarged without tolerating our interests." Protocol, cited in Morsey, Zentrumspartei 1917-1923, p. 205.

[Prussia's] alteration."⁷³ Trimborn's proposal to establish the western province as a separate republic within the Reich brought a stinging retort from Prussian Minister of Justice, Wolfgang Heine, who "with vehemence, with witicism, and with sarcastic antagonism,"⁷⁴ accused all Rhinelanders, but especially the Centrists, of disloyalty and of deserting the Reich in its hour of need: "Now the rats are beginning to desert the sinking ship. They will no longer contribute to the cost of these poor lands Prussia's eastern provinces, but will retain all profit for themselves."⁷⁵

Trimborn replied that the arguments of Prussia were invalid; separation of the Rhineland from Prussia did not entail separation from the Reich. On the contrary, Rhineland would be more solidly and intimately welded to the Reich if it belonged to it directly rather than as a part of Prussia. Nor would Trimborn and his Centrist colleagues accept the argument that Rhineland should belong to Prussia to supplement economically the relatively poor eastern Prussian provinces. "The old cry of the poor East and the rich West is dead today," he insisted, pointing out that war and revolution had done more damage to the industrial Rhineland than to the rural eastern provinces. While he admitted that the creation of a new state in Germany might cause some disturbance for a brief time, he assured the assembly that the confusion would be less

⁷³ Protocol, cited in Ziegler, op. cit., p. 120.

⁷⁴ Ziegler, op. cit., p. 119.

⁷⁵ Ibid., pp. 119-120; also cited in Lauscher, op. cit., p. 170. Gröber was so incensed by Heine's invectives that he shouted out, "Don't you poison this situation any further."--a remark, Ziegler noted, "that had no parallel in the Protocol of the committee." Ibid., p. 120.

harmful than the permanent source of trouble which would result from indifference to the Rhineland situation.⁷⁶

The debate over the issue caused considerable conflict among the parties and at one point even erupted in a personal encounter between the German Nationalist delegate Gottfried Traub and the Centrist cleric Ludwig Kaas when Traub accused the Centrists of disloyalty to the Reich and termed the movement in the West a "Zentrumsmacht."⁷⁷ Emotional involvement over the problem of an arrangement of the Länder and the partitioning of Prussia went completely out of hand, splitting not only the Center, but also the parties along regional rather than party lines both in the National Assembly and in the constitutional committee. With the groups so divided among themselves it was difficult to arrive at any decision.⁷⁸

A compromise proposed by Trimborn was finally placed before the committee on June 4. According to its provision a territorial adjustment could be made by a simple law if the people in the area concerned voted in favor of the change. The compromise stipulated, however, that no territorial changes could be made until a two-year period had elapsed after the formal adoption of the Constitution.⁷⁹ On July 22 the National Assembly included this compromise in Article 18.⁸⁰

⁷⁶For a report of Trimborn's speech in the constitutional committee, see Germania, March 20, 1919, #127; KV, March 20, 1919, #222.

⁷⁷Protocol, cited in Morsey, Zentrumspartei 1917-1923, p. 204.

⁷⁸See committee reports in KV, March 25, 1919, #236; June 4, 1919, #432; Germania, June 2, 1919, #245.

⁷⁹KV, June 4, 1919, #432; Germania, June 4, 1919, #250.

⁸⁰Verhandlungen, July 22, 1919, CCCXXVIII, 1840-1842.

The latter provision of Trimborn's compromise was aimed at the unrest in the Rhineland. It was decided, on the one hand, that the Rhineland need a period of tranquillity to resolve its problems; on the other hand, it was argued that the period of Allied occupation was not a feasible time for making territorial adjustments.⁸¹ Thus, in the late spring of 1919 Allied pressure for a separate Rhine Republic had inadvertently contributed to the unity of Prussia.⁸² Pledging their loyalty to the Reich, the Centrist delegates from the West had united with the other delegates in protesting against Allied designs in the Rhineland area.⁸³ Now, following the lead of the Party's directors at Berlin, the Rhenish Centrists gave full support to Trimborn's compromise.⁸⁴

The Centrist involvement in the whole problem of the dismemberment of Prussia was quite complex. In the first place, opinions within the Center Party were divided over these issues. In the eyes of the Centrist leadership at Berlin a division of Prussia posed the danger of greatly weakening the Party's strength. The Party recruited about eighty per cent of its electorate from the Prussian provinces. A division of Prussia into different states could prove detrimental if by such a division the Center should "sink to the status of a regional party," too small in some areas to be effective.⁸⁵ Besides this

⁸¹ See editorial on Martin Fassbender's pamphlet, "Los von Berlin?" in Germania, April 20, 1919, #179, Supplement; May 27, 1919, #237.

⁸² Ibid., May 29, 1919, #241; June 2, 1919, #245. This issue called the establishment of a separate Rhine Republic a "political swindle" ("Hochstapelei").

⁸³ See editorial, "Protestbewegung," signed by the Centrist faction in Germania, June 3, 1919, #248; June 4, 1919, #249; KV, June 4, 1919, #432.

⁸⁴ The leaders of the Center Party pleaded with all Centrists to maintain Party unity in "this hour of danger." Anyone persisting in entertaining motives of separation would be expelled from the Party. Germania, June 3, 1919, #248.

⁸⁵ Germania, April 20, 1919, #179; Morse, Zentrumspartei 1917-1923, p. 201.

political problem, there existed a religious danger to Catholicism in the "Diaspora," for the privileges enjoyed by the Church under Prussia could well be ignored in an area of great Protestant domination once the provinces were separated from Berlin.⁸⁶ Concern for its Catholic interests had always been one of the strengths of the Center Party and one which it had no intentions of neglecting in this perilous time.

On the other hand, the Party could not remain indifferent to the wishes of its local factions in the Prussian provinces who were agitating for more autonomy or for complete separation from Prussia. In Preuss' constitutional provision for a new territorial arrangement of the Reich the Prussian provinces saw an opportunity to curtail or even to crush entirely Prussian hegemony. The cry, "Los von Berlin," was echoed not only in the Rhineland-Westphalian area, but also in Hanover and in Upper Silesia. In each of these provinces the Center Party had the backing of a large percentage of the electorate, and it was therefore obliged to assume the dominant role in separatist movements. Hence, the Centrists of the Prussian provinces found common interests both in the committee and in the National Assembly in agitating for a division of Prussia.

There seems to have been no definite directive from the Center's headquarters in Berlin concerning an official policy of the Party on this question. While defining the Party's views on the direction of the new government Gröber in his address to the National Assembly on February 13, avoided taking a definite stand on the issue. Vaguely he referred to the cry, "Los von Berlin,"

⁸⁶Morsey, Zentrumspartei 1917-1923, p. 201; KV, June 28, 1919, #198, took issue with those who claimed a separation of Prussian provinces would be harmful to the Party. It felt such views were "groundless."

which seemed to be leading to "unhealthy unitarism" and "overwhelming centralization"--goals which the Center Party rejected.⁸⁷ While recognizing the need for the "Stämme" to develop independently their own cultural characteristics, Gröber stressed the need to subject all development to the welfare of the whole Reich.⁸⁸ The cry of "Los von Berlin" was inopportune because of the danger of enemy occupation--a danger especially evident in borderland areas.⁸⁹ Advocates of separatism were told to recognize the evil designs of France who would benefit from the absence of a strong Prussia on her eastern border.⁹⁰

The provincials, in answer, claimed that they did recognize the danger of enemy encroachments upon their territory, but that more autonomy in their own affairs would enable them to meet the outside danger.⁹¹ The apparent silence of the Center Party's leadership in Berlin on the important issue involved in Article 18 was interpreted by Prussia's provincial Centrist factions as the signal to move ahead in their efforts to win a separate status within the Reich

⁸⁷Verhandlungen, February 13, 1919, CCCXVI, 54-55.

⁸⁸Protocol, March 17, 1919, as cited in Morsey, Zentrumspartei 1917-1923, p. 202.

⁸⁹Ibid.

⁹⁰Joseph Kuckhoff, "Um die westdeutsche Republik," Allgemeine Rundschau, VIII, (February, 1919), p. 103.

⁹¹Rhinelanders felt that an independent Rhineland would obtain milder peace terms for the entire German nation. For a thorough study of the Centrist role in the Rhineland movement, see Morsey, Zentrumspartei 1917-1923, chap. iv. Morsey challenges statements made by Peter Klein, Separatisten an Rhein und Ruhr: Die konterrevolutionäre separatistische Bewegung der deutschen Bourgeoisie in der Rheinprovinz und in Westfalen November 1918 bis Juli 1919 ([E.] Berlin: Rütten and Loening, 1961). Morsey maintains that Klein's work is based on falsified statements of Adam Dorten which implicate Adenauer in the separatist movement from the Reich. While Adenauer favored separation from Prussia, he never supported an independent movement from the Reich.

or, failing that, to strive for greater autonomy from Prussia in regulating their affairs.

In Upper Silesia the Centrist movement against Prussian domination was led by Father Carl Ulitzka, a pastor at Ratisborn.⁹² The political situation following the war had placed the citizens of Upper Silesia in a precarious situation, for the Entente powers wanted to annex part of this area to Poland. Under the leadership of the Center Party the people of Upper Silesia were fighting to remain in the Reich.⁹³ Although there was a movement to establish Upper Silesia as a separate state in the Reich,⁹⁴ Ulitzka and the Centrists were satisfied to agitate for more local autonomy within Prussia.⁹⁵ Ulitzka pointed to the danger of Polish encroachment if the territory would be given an independent status. In the National Assembly, Ulitzka and the Centrist delegates from Upper Silesia joined with the other Prussian Centrists in supporting Trimborn's compromise allowing for more local autonomy both within Prussia and the Reich.⁹⁶

The autonomous movement in Upper Silesia was merely a local Centrist

⁹²Carl Ulitzka (1873-) attended the University of Breslau before becoming chaplain at Kreuzburg in 1897. He was pastor first at Breslau from 1901-1910 and then was appointed pastor at Ratisborn. In 1918 he was director of the Catholic People's Party in Upper Silesia. He served in the National Assembly and the Reichstag.

⁹³Carl Ulitzka, "Der deutsche Osten und die Zentrumsparthei," in Nationale Arbeit, pp. 141-143.

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 143.

⁹⁵Ibid., p. 144.

⁹⁶Ibid., pp. 145-147. See Ulitzka's speech on Article 18 in the National Assembly on July 31, 1919, Verhandlungen, CCCXVIII, 2142. See also the editorial, "Eindruck aus Oberschlesien," Germania, May 31, 1919, #244. The article praises the efforts of the Center in fighting to keep Upper Silesia loyal.

project;⁹⁷ the separatist movements in the West were far more extensive and involved. The agitation in the Rhineland, for example, was neither completely Centrist-inspired nor Centrist-led, especially the movement in the spring of 1919 for the establishment of a West German Republic within the Reich. In this movement both Democrats and Majority Socialists were implicated.⁹⁸ Nevertheless, the strong backing received from the local Centrist factions, the leadership of prominent Centrist politicians, and the enthusiastic support of the electorate (the majority of whom belonged to the Center Party) tended to give the whole movement a definite Centrist character. In the constitutional committee and in the National Assembly the separatist movement was looked upon as a Centrist "power move,"⁹⁹ and it called forth taunts about the Center Party's "disloyalty" to the Reich from the German Nationalists.¹⁰⁰

As was noted above, the Rhenish Centrists designs regarding separation from Prussia were not given any official sanction from the leadership in Berlin. The local Centrists preferred to disassociate themselves from the Party in this political movement and to keep it a regional matter. On February 11, 1919, the secretary-general of the Rhineland Center Party, Josef Jörg, repudiated any "official" connection with the Rhenish separatist movement. Referring

⁹⁷Ulitzka, op. cit., p. 147.

⁹⁸In the "Kasinoversammlung" at Cologne on March 10, a number of representatives from the Center, Majority Socialist, and the Democratic parties assembled to pressure for a West German Republic as a "Friedenrepublik." The group published a manifesto signed by representatives of the Kölnische Volkszeitung, Cologne Centrists, and members of the other parties. KV, March 11, 1919, #197. A similar resolution had been passed by the Centrists in Orsabrück on March 7, demanding the establishment of a "West State with a firm anchorage in the unity of the Reich." This was published in the same issue of KV.

⁹⁹Protocol, cited in Morsey, Zentrumspartei 1917-1923, p. 204.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.; Lauscher, op. cit., p. 170; Ziegler, op. cit., pp. 119-120.

to one of the first "los von Berlin" proclamations made by the editors of the Kölnische Volkszeitung at a large Center Party convention held in Cologne on December 4, 1918, Jörg remarked, "I know full well that this action, particularly the assembly of December 4, has ruined us among other parties."¹⁰¹ In his article, "Zur Frage der Westdeutschen Republik," another leading Centrist, Joseph Hess, stated, "Never at any time or under any circumstances has the discussion over the West German Republic been used by us as a Party interest."¹⁰² He insisted that the whole issue was "a fateful one concerning all Germans" and had nothing to do with Party interests.¹⁰³ On another occasion, Trimborn explicitly pointed out that he did not represent any political party when he spoke about plans for the establishment of a West German Republic.¹⁰⁴

In their separatist movement from Prussia, the Rhenish Centrists loyally maintained their allegiance to the Reich. At no time did they support the simultaneous movement instigated by the French and led by the Wiesbaden official, Hans Adam Dorten, to establish an independent Rhine Republic separated from the Reich.¹⁰⁵ Dorten's abortive attempt to establish an independent Rhine

¹⁰¹ Federal Archives of Cologne, as cited in Morsey, Zentrumspartei 1917-1923, p. 251.

¹⁰² KV, February 19, 1919, #136.

¹⁰³ Ibid. A previous article by Leo Schwering entitled: "Zentrum und Reichseinheit," sought to prove that the separatist movements had no official Party backing, see ibid., February 16, 1919, #131.

¹⁰⁴ At a public assembly of representatives from the Center, Majority Socialist, and Democratic parties held at Cologne on February 1, 1919. Federal Archives of Cologne, as cited in Morsey, Zentrumspartei 1917-1923, p. 252.

¹⁰⁵ See Morsey's coverage of the Centrist activities on this issue, Zentrumspartei 1917-1923, pp. 246-265.

Republic on June 1, 1919, aroused bitter criticism from the Rhenish Centrists as well as from the whole Centrist Party.¹⁰⁶ When the Rhenish question ceased to be a regional issue and became one of national concern,¹⁰⁷ the Center Party came out with an official announcement.¹⁰⁸ It called upon all Party members to unite against the traitorous separatist movements in the West.¹⁰⁹ All Center factions--the Berlin faction as well as all local Rhenish Center organizations--united in their protestations of loyalty to the Reich and repudiated their former design of establishing a West German Republic within the Reich.¹¹⁰

Despite the bitter struggle exerted by the Rhenish Centrist faction for a division of Prussia, the state emerged from the constitutional conflict with her territory undiminished. Yet, the Centrists felt that the outcome of their struggle was valuable on at least three counts.¹¹¹ First of all, their efforts had provided not only a legal basis for obtaining greater provincial autonomy from Prussia,¹¹² but according to a concession won through Trimborn's efforts

¹⁰⁶ See editorial, "Hochstapelei," Germania, June 2, 1919, #245; June 3, 1919, #248.

¹⁰⁷ Morsey, Zentrumsparlei 1917-1923, p. 260.

¹⁰⁸ Germania, June 3, 1919, #248; June 4, 1919, #249.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., June 4, 1919, #250.

¹¹⁰ Ibid. See the speeches of Brauns and Hitze in the constitutional committee on June 5, 1919, Protocol, as cited in Morsey, p. 260; Hess' speech on June 27, 1919, in the Prussian Landversammlung, Session Report as cited in Morsey, Zentrumsparlei 1917-1923, p. 260.

¹¹¹ This is the opinion of a Centrist representative from Bonn, Professor Albert Lauscher, who had been an active worker in the Rhineland movement. See his "Weimarer Verfassung," p. 170.

¹¹² See Article 18 of the Weimar Constitution.

and embodied in Article 63, the Prussian provinces had been given a more direct voice in the Reich.¹¹³ Secondly, by advocating the establishment of the West German Republic within the Reich, the Centrist had "crippled" the efforts of the "traitorous" separate independence movement instigated by the French, and having rallied the citizenry under the Centrist's banner of loyalty, had preserved intact the unity of the Reich. Thirdly, the hard struggle over Article 18 proposing the dismemberment of Prussia provided a danger signal to that State, warning her not to "overstrain" her centralizing efforts in regard to the provinces but to allow them "freer elbow room" than they had enjoyed previously in developing their individual cultural achievements.¹¹⁴

Throughout the seemingly endless debates in the constitutional committee and in the plenary sessions of the National Assembly, the delegates of the Center Party had labored assiduously to establish a democratic republic based on a federal structure in accord with the promises made in their Party program of December 30, 1918.¹¹⁵ It was not always possible to attain these goals, for the Party had much opposition to contend with in preserving for its constituents those principles for which it stood. There were times, in fact, when, for the maintenance of principles so vital to its Christian Weltanschauung, the Center Party was forced to vote against policies advocated by its more liberal coalition partners. On the other hand, the Center could not always assume the

¹¹³Article 63 provided that the Prussian provinces be given half of the Prussian votes in the Reichsrat. "The States will be represented in the Reichsrat by members of their cabinets. Half of the Prussian votes, however, will be at the disposal of the Prussian provincial administrations in accordance with a State law."

¹¹⁴Lauscher, op. cit., pp. 170-173; Morsey, Zentrumspartei 1917-1923, p.206

¹¹⁵"Leitsätze der Deutschen Zentrumspartei," Ursachen und Folgen, III, 197.

attitude of an obstructionist, and, therefore, when issues of lesser importance allowed for compromise, the Party acquiesced in order to achieve some principle more important and more vital to the interests of the Party.

In lesser matters the Party offered noticeable resistance only to those articles which accorded increased power to the Reich at the expense of the States. The Bavarian People's Party spokesman, Heim, indicated such resistance when the articles dealing with the Reichsrat were read in the Assembly. He opposed the decreased power allotted to the Reichsrat by Articles 60 to 67.¹¹⁶ At the time of the final reading of the constitution in the National Assembly, Beyerle protested against the stipulation in Article 49 granting the exercise of the right of pardon to the President of the Reich.¹¹⁷ Bavaria, he stated, did not wish to concede this right to the Reich.¹¹⁸ In some areas Centrist intervention was successful in gaining certain desired results. Gröber, for instance, scored a victory on Article 23 by opposing in the constitutional committee the five-year term allotted to the Reichstag and succeeded in having the term shortened by a year.¹¹⁹ At the suggestion of Beyerle, furthermore, it was agreed that a religious affirmation could be added to the presidential oath.¹²⁰ All other political provisions passed the second and third reading without too much comment from the Center Party.

¹¹⁶Section IV of the first division of the Weimar Constitution.

¹¹⁷See Ursachen und Folgen, III, 473.

¹¹⁸See Beyerle's speech of July 5, 1919, Verhandlungen CCCXXVII, 1328.

¹¹⁹Gröber in the constitutional committee on April 5, Protocoll, as cited in Morsey, Zentrumspartei 1917-1923, p. 231. See also Beyerle's support of this article in the Assembly on July 4, Verhandlungen, CCCXXVII, 1281.

¹²⁰Article 42. See Beyerle's comment on July 5, 1919, ibid, p. 1318.

The area in which the Center Party offered the greatest opposition in dealing with the political aspects of the Weimar Constitution concerned the relation between the Reich and its member States. The Democrats and the Majority Socialists both favored an Einheitsstaat. But Preuss' constitutional draft providing for a unitary type of government was vehemently opposed by the Center Party, which had always advocated a Bundesstaat type of government. Although the Center was successful in hindering the establishment of a unitary government, it was not able to check the centralizing tendency. Not without an inch-by-inch struggle, however, had it conceded to the Reich an increase of the power at the expense of the member States.¹²¹ But once the question of the power of the Reich versus states' rights had been determined, the Center displayed only a minor interest in the formation of other provisions involving such regulations as executive or presidential power, ministerial responsibility, and the legislative powers of the Reichstag.

In summing up, therefore, the Center Party can be said to have acquiesced in the major political provisions of the constitution in all but two important areas. Its opposition to the establishment of a unitary state involved its traditional commitment to protect the religious and cultural rights of its constituents; hence, its resistance on this point remained adamant. On the question of Prussia, the Party's obligation to stand by its provincial Prussian membership left no alternative but to press for the curtailment of excessive power.

¹²¹ The Center eventually gave in on this issue after receiving instructions from the Reich's ministers, Erzberger and Bell, who promised the Party would eliminate all hindrance to the constitutional draft. See "Session of the Reich's Ministry, July 10, 1919," in State Archives, as cited in Morsey, Zentrumsparlei 1917-1923, p. 234.

CHAPTER V

DELIBERATIONS ON THE WEIMAR CONSTITUTION

CENTRIST VIEWS ON CIVIC, RELIGIOUS

AND CULTURAL ASPECTS

In its completed form the Weimar Constitution was divided into two main divisions, one dealing with political aspects of the Reich, the other defining the "Fundamental Rights and Duties of a German." The formation of the latter involved much concentrated effort on the part of the constitutional committee and was the product of many painful compromises. Originally, Preuss had not planned a separate section defining German rights, but at the instigation of the government--in fact, at a personal request from Friederich Ebert--he had included in his working draft a short list of traditional axioms.¹ It was this list which the constitutional committee, regarding very seriously, had judged inadequate and had replaced by the introduction of new provisions which would include within the constitution those guarantees which each political party considered essential.²

¹Ursachen und Folgen, III, 433-434. During the deliberations with the State Committee on February 8, Preuss told the state representatives that he preferred not to include a section on "Fundamental Rights" because he feared that an expanded and detailed consideration of the axioms would only delay work on the constitution and he hoped "to avoid the mistake of 1848." See also Protocol, as cited in Ziegler, Nationalversammlung, pp. 136-137.

²Ibid., p. 130. Four drafts were submitted on March 31, 1919.

The Center Party's particular concerns included the areas of Church-State relations, marriage, the family, confessional schools, and the teaching of religion. Provisions for these matters, embodied in a draft of rights presented by Gröber to the constitutional committee on March 31, 1919,³ were subsequently rejected by the committee in favor of the draft presented by the Democrat Friedrich Neumann.

After much deliberation on Neumann's draft the constitutional committee indicated what it considered the essential rights to be included in the constitution. These rights were further defined by a subcommittee consisting of nine members chosen from the constitutional committee. Three prominent Centerists, Gröber, Beyerle, and Mausbach, were part of this subcommittee.⁴

Although no official record was kept of the subcommittee's deliberations, their finished document evidenced the intensive effort exerted by the members during their several meetings.⁵ In the opinion of the historian Wilhelm Ziegler, none worked more diligently than Konrad Beyerle who is credited with "having saved Neumann's rather obscure draft of fundamental rights from the wastebasket" by formulating an acceptable draft of this second major division of the constitution.⁶ Ziegler describes Beyerle as laboring "quietly and

³Johannes Linneborn, "Die Kirchenpolitik des Zentrums," in Nationale Arbeit, p. 198; Lauscher, op. cit., p. 175; Mausbach, Kulturfragen, p. 38.

⁴Other members included the two Social Democrats S. Katzenstein and Frau Prülf; the two Democrats D. Ablass and E. Koch; P. Heinze of the German Peoples Party; and A. Düringer of the German National People's Party. Beyerle, Reichsverfassung, pp. 11-13; Ziegler, op. cit., pp. 138-140.

⁵Members of the subcommittee met on May 2, 3, 5, 6, and 28. See Ziegler, op. cit., p. 136.

⁶Nationalversammlung, p. 190.

unobtrusively" at the task of completing the final copy by applying, as he says, the "magnifying glass of the lawyer and the pen of the framing and scrutinizing editor" to the sketchy original text.⁷ Thus, by the end of the subcommittee's deliberations, the twelve original provisions on rights emerged as sixty articles, forming the constitution's Part II on "Fundamental Rights and Duties of a German." When presented to the full constitutional committee on May 28, 1919, this schema of Grundrechte was an impressive piece of work subdivided into five major areas dealing with the rights of individuals, community life, religion and religious societies, education and schools, and economic life.⁸

Discussion of the Grundrechte began immediately upon its presentation to the constitutional committee (May 28). Beyerle, reporting for the subcommittee, explained that the absence of a declaration of fundamental rights had been a major deficiency in the Bismarckian Constitution of 1871 and that an enumeration of certain rights was mandatory for the new constitution.⁹ Karl Heinze of the German People's Party opposed Beyerle and called for a drastic reduction of the articles enumerated in Part II of the constitution. Heinze even suggested the total elimination of this second major division since he

⁷Ibid. Ziegler praises the self-sacrificing labors of Beyerle in the subcommittee. Seldom in the lime-light, he was the "energetic spirit" behind the constitutional committee; "his scholarliness, thoroughness, and the objectivity of his civic office proved useful to him in his parliamentary function." Ibid. Adelbert Düringer (DNVP) paid a public tribute to the "excellent service" rendered by Beyerle in the subcommittee. See Düringer's speech in the National Assembly on July 11, 1919, Verhandlungen, CCCXXVIII, 1495.

⁸"Zweiter Hauptteil: Grundrechte und Grundpflichten der Deutschen," in Ursachen und Folgen, III, 482-493. All further citations from the constitution are taken from this edition.

⁹Protocol, as cited in Ziegler, op. cit., p. 141.

saw in it only a collection of "declarations and declamations" supplemented by legal maxims already present in other laws.¹⁰ In the midst of the heated debate, Preuss intervened to remind the committee members how imperative it was that the government "bring the constitution under roof as soon as possible" even at "the cost of the integrity of the Grundrechte."¹¹ On June 2, after four days of further deliberations, it was decided that the Grundrechte should be retained. Thereupon the constitutional committee began its second reading and subsequent discussion of the entire constitutional draft.¹² Chief among controversial issues studied in the forthcoming sessions were the question of the Reich's colors, the Church-State issue, and the confessional school problem--the two latter questions of great significance to the Center Party.¹³

Though the constitutional committee was able to bring its deliberations to a conclusion on June 18, work on the constitution was stalled for the next two weeks because of the crisis in the government concerning the acceptance of the Versailles Treaty. Consequently, it was not until July 2 that the plenary session of the National Assembly began its deliberations on the second reading of the constitutional draft. By July 11, the Assembly was ready to consider Part II on "Fundamental Rights and Duties." Once again this second division

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid., pp. 142-143. The second reading in the constitutional committee covered seven days, June 2, 3, 4, 5, 16, 17, and 18.

¹³Ibid., pp. 144-146; Germania, June 18, 1919, #272; June 19, 1919, #273; KV, June 20, 1919, #475; Mausbach, Kulturfragen, pp. 86-88.

was severely criticized as impractical by the DNVP Heinze and the Democrat Erich Koch.¹⁴ But Beyerle's lucid explanation of the subcommittee's arguments for retention overcame the opposition and Part II of the constitutional draft was accepted.¹⁵

A closer scrutiny of the Center's involvement with the Grundrechte reveals the extent of the protection demanded for the safeguard of personal liberty as well as the labor and anxiety attendant upon the struggle for each of the five areas included in the Constitution's Part II.

Section I, "The Individual," enumerated a list of individual liberties which included such matters as civil equality,¹⁶ the right to settle in any part of the Reich or to emigrate to a foreign country,¹⁷ and guarantees against arbitrary arrests, imprisonments, and other penalties.¹⁸ Rights to the inviolability of the home,¹⁹ to secrecy in mail, telephone, and telegraph communications,²⁰ as well as the right to freely express opinions through all media including motion picture films²¹ were also guaranteed.

This whole section on "The Individual" was accepted without too much debate once the constitutional committee had agreed to retain Part II on

¹⁴ Verhandlungen, July 11, 1919, CCCXVIII,

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 1503.

¹⁶ Article 109.

¹⁷ Article 111 and Article 112.

¹⁸ Article 114.

¹⁹ Article 115.

²⁰ Article 117.

²¹ Article 118.

"Fundamental Rights."²² Nevertheless, Beyerle did suggest a minor change on July 11 when he introduced the revised part to the National Assembly. He objected to the statement in the first article which read that this section was to act "as a guiding principle and a check on legislation, governmental power, and the judicial administration."²³ Beyerle thought that this article was "worthless and should be deleted."²⁴ At the next session of the National Assembly, Gröber also proposed eliminating the "useless" article.²⁵ When the majority of the delegates indicated by a standing vote their disapproval of Article 107, it was deleted from the constitutional draft.²⁶

Only two articles in this section received further attention in the National Assembly. Article 109²⁷ providing for civil equality and the abolition of titles of nobility had already engendered some discussion in the constitutional committee on June 2,²⁸ but it was not until it reached the floor of the Assembly on July 15 that a lively discussion developed. Referring to the provision for civil equality of men and women, Christine Teusch, a Centrist delegate, praised the article as a progressive and democratic step in the new Republic.²⁹ Her defense of civil equality won the support of the whole

²² Germania, June 19, 1919, #272; KV, June 20, 1919, #475.

²³ Article 107 of the constitutional draft. Since this article was later deleted, it should not be confused with Article 107 in the official Constitution.

²⁴ Verhandlungen, July 11, 1919, CCCXVIII, 1503.

²⁵ Ibid., July 15, 1919, CCCXVIII, 1557.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 1560.

²⁷ This article was referred to as Article 108 in the constitutional draft.

²⁸ Ziegler, op. cit., p. 142. Members of the Right did not favor the article.

²⁹ Verhandlungen, July 15, 1919, CCCXVIII, 1560.

Assembly. The second provision of Article 109 concerning the abolition of titles of nobility was championed by the Social Democrats. Surprisingly, this statement found a sympathetic supporter in the Bavarian People's Party spokesman, Heim. Commonly known as an arch-conservative, Heim amused his fellow Centrists and other delegates of the National Assembly by his vehement speech in favor of the proposal made by the Social Democrats.³⁰

The other article of Section I which brought a response from the Center was Article 114³¹ which states: "Personal liberty is inviolable. Curtailment or deprivation of personal liberty by a public authority is permissible only by authority of law."³² In the National Assembly on July 15 the Independent Socialists proposed that an exception be made in the case of prostitution to guarantee that under certain conditions it would not be curtailed by law.³³ This proposal was challenged by the Centrist delegate Agnes Neuhaus, who held that the Constitution "was not the place to legalize prostitution."³⁴ Frau Neuhaus was supported in her opinion by the majority of the Assembly and the proposal was dropped.³⁵

In Section II of the Grundrechte the constitutional committee dealt with

³⁰Ibid., p. 1567. Heim's comment, "On this question [abolition of titles of nobility] I am more radical than the most radical among you," evoked loud laughter from the Social Democrats. Ibid.

³¹Referred to as Article 113 in the constitutional draft.

³²Article 114.

³³Verhandlungen, July 15, 1919, CCCXXVIII, 1574.

³⁴Ibid., p. 1575.

³⁵Ibid.

matters social. Properly designated "Community Life," this section outlined the rights and duties of those groups and communities which played a particular role in society--the family, associations, municipalities, and civil service.³⁶ Keenly interested in all of these areas, the Center Party evidenced particular concern for the institution of marriage and the family. Since constitutional guarantees in this matter were as vital to the common good as the safeguards to education and religion, the Center was not remiss in bringing its influence to bear upon this area of the Kulturfragen. Earlier, in its December election program, the Party had advocated "the protection and strengthening of the religious character of marriage and the family."³⁷ Despite "difficult opposition"³⁸ from the SPD in the committee, the Centrists had again striven to secure "constitutional protection for monogamous marriage in the Christian sense."³⁹ When at length, the article on marriage was ready for discussion at the May 28 meeting of the constitutional committee, its Centrist overtones were unmistakable. "Marriage," it read, "as the foundation of family life and of the maintenance and increase of the nation, is under the special protection of the Constitution. The maintenance of the purity, the health, and the social advancement of the family is the task of the state and of the municipalities. Families with numerous children have a claim to equalizing assistance."⁴⁰

³⁶Section II, Article 119-134.

³⁷"Leitsätze vom Dezember 1918." Cf. above, pp. 69-72.

³⁸Lauscher, op. cit., p. 177.

³⁹Mausbach, Kulturfragen, pp. 38-39. On January 1, 1919, Dr. Sonnenschein had told the Berlin Centrists: "The question of divorce should not be one of indifference. The marriage bond must be respected." Germania, January 1, 1919, #2.

⁴⁰Article 119.

Credit for the acceptance of this marriage article by the constitutional committee was due in particular to the Centrist women delegates⁴¹ who, exerting every effort, had eventually forced the committee to recognize marriage and the family as the basis on which "social life reposes" and as the "primary source from which German customs and culture develop."⁴² This was not acceptable to the SPD who claimed this article discriminated against unwed mothers and illegitimate children.⁴³

The denunciation of the article⁴⁴ by the Social Democrats did not effect its deletion from the draft; nevertheless, the article came under fire again when it was read in the National Assembly on July 16. This time it was the Independents who opposed it.⁴⁵ The Centrist view, however, was ably defended by Frau Neuhaus and Eduard Burlage. Not only did they answer the criticism levelled at them by the SPD, but they also proposed enlarging the article to include other guarantees for the family.⁴⁶ Particular areas treated were the needs of large families, protection of motherhood, and the care of illegitimate offspring. In keeping with their traditional concern for human rights, the Center agitated for a constitutional guarantee of state assistance for large

⁴¹Mausbach, Kulturfragen, p. 39. Frau Neuhaus represented the Center as one of its members on the constitutional committee when the Kulturfragen were under discussion.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Protocol, as cited in Lauscher, op. cit., p. 176.

⁴⁴Article 113 in the constitutional draft.

⁴⁵See their speeches in the National Assembly, Verhandlungen, July 16, 1919, CCCXXVIII, 1598-1600.

⁴⁶Ibid., pp. 1601-1603; 1608-1609.

families.⁴⁷ Through the efforts of Frau Neuhaus and Herr Burlage, the proposal "Motherhood has a claim to the protection and care of the State," was affixed to Article 119.⁴⁸

Closely related to the privileges granted to motherhood and family was the prescription of Article 120, stating that "the physical, mental, and moral education of their offspring is the highest duty and the natural right of parents."⁴⁹ In his report to the National Assembly on July 16 Beyerle acknowledged Gröber as the author of the proposal made in Article 120.⁵⁰ Centrist inspired, it, too, was challenged by the SPD who considered education the task of society or the State and not primarily of the parents.⁵¹ Fearing the effect on Christian education which could result in areas dominated by the Socialists if the State should gain complete control of the education of children, the Centrists appealed to the delegates to retain Article 120.⁵² The success of their plea was seen on the following day when Article 120 received a favorable vote in the National Assembly.⁵³

The question of the status of illegitimate children was also brought up in the discussion of Articles 119 and 120.⁵⁴ However, the problem was too

⁴⁷ Helene Weber, "Kulturpolitik," in Nationale Arbeit, pp. 237-239.

⁴⁸ Verhandlungen, July 17, 1919, CCCXXVIII, 1620.

⁴⁹ Article 120.

⁵⁰ See Beyerle's speech, Verhandlungen, July 16, 1919, CCCXXVIII, 1597.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² See Burlage's speech, ibid., 1608-1609.

⁵³ Ibid., July 17, CCCXXVIII, 1627; Lauscher, op. cit., p. 178. See also the article in KV, July 17, 1919, #552.

⁵⁴ Verhandlungen, July 16 and 17, 1919, CCCXXVIII, 1608-1627.

heavily fraught with questions of private rights to allow for an easy solution; hence the Assembly decided to transfer legislation to a later date.⁵⁵ For the present, it established a guiding principle that illegitimate children would be provided "with the same opportunities for their physical, mental, and moral development as legitimate children,"⁵⁶ a stipulation accepted by the Centrists.⁵⁷

Section III and IV concerning the topics, "Religion and Religious Societies" and "Education and Schools," involved more controversial discussion than any other section in the Grundrechte. In preparing these articles, the delegates to the Weimar Assembly refused to limit themselves to any traditional declaration of rights containing general principles relative to religious liberty and the free exercise of belief. The question of Church and State formed an essential part of the program of both the Center and the Social Democrats, and neither group was willing to rush to easy solutions while basic differences remained to be satisfactorily resolved.

Adhering to the Erfurt Program of 1891, the Social Democrats continued to press for a complete separation of Church and State in the new German Republic. The Social Democrats, whose anti-clerical program during the past November and December had aroused alarm among both Catholics and Protestants alike, considered religion a private matter and, therefore, not the concern of State.⁵⁸

⁵⁵See the proposal of Frau Brönnner (SPD) in the National Assembly, ibid., July 17, 1919, CCCXVIII, 1620.

⁵⁶Article 121.

⁵⁷See Frau Neuhaus' speech on Article 121, ibid., pp. 1626-1627.

⁵⁸For a description of and reaction to the anti-clerical program of the socialists regime, cf. above pp. 77-80.

On this issue the Social Democrats stood diametrically opposed to the Centrists who considered religion a vital part of German culture which must be safeguarded by the State. From the time of its inception, the Center Party had been the chief exponent of religious freedom in Germany. Already in November 1918, the Party had indicated its intention to retain this role.⁵⁹ In its political program of December 30, 1918, the Center had stressed among other proposals of domestic policies, "the maintenance and strengthening of the cultural and educational ideals in the minds of the people," freedom of conscience and of religious exercises with cooperation between Church and State, the maintenance of "the confessional public schools," and "sufficient religious instructions in all schools."⁶⁰ In its election campaign the Center Party, supported by the Protestants, championed the rights of religion.⁶¹ Upholding the federal character of the Reich, the Center had proposed that certain powers, especially those concerning Church and school, be reserved to the Bundesstaaten.⁶² In so doing, the Party had hoped to secure the privileged position granted the Church under the old regime.⁶³ Fearing the "unhealthy

⁵⁹In the Center's manifesto on November 20, 1918, the Party promised to maintain its traditional stand on Church-State relations. See Germania, November 20, 1918, #544; KV, November 22, 1918, #919.

⁶⁰"Leitsätze der Deutschen Zentrumsparlei vom 30, Dezember 1918, cf. pp. 69-72.

⁶¹On January 7, 1919, a manifesto issued by the Evangelical Churches called on all Christians to join with the Center in its attacks on the anti-religious policies of the Social Democrats. Cited in Johannes Linneborn, "Die Kirchenpolitik des Zentrums," in Nationale Arbeit, p. 198. Written by a contemporary, this article gives the Centrist views on Church policies in the Weimar discussions.

⁶²Wilhelm Marx stressed this at the Centrist demonstration at Cologne on December 4, 1918. See KV, December 5, 1918, #957.

⁶³Linneborn, op. cit., p. 198; also Mausbach, Kulturfagen, p. 59.

unitary element" which was manifesting its "devastating action" in all cultural areas, it demanded that these affairs be left in the hands of the Länder.⁶⁴

On February 28, 1918, Spahn as Centrist spokesman repeated this same idea in the National Assembly, adding that every religious society should be allowed to manage its affairs autonomously as had been the case under the Prussian Constitution of 1850.⁶⁵

When the question of the Reich's competency over religious affairs came before the constitutional committee on March 14, 15, and 16, Gröber advised against "hasty changes" in the traditional policies and warned that granting such jurisdiction to the Reich would bring unrest.⁶⁶ Controversy swelled over the wording of Article 10 which tended to give the Reich jurisdiction over many areas formerly supervised by the individual states. Regulation of religious affairs and the establishment of a uniform educational system in Germany were attempts to further centralize authority in the Reich, and as such were contrary to the Center's federalist policies.

Both Beyerle and Gröber called for a cancellation of these provisions. "As a Catholic," Gröber remonstrated, "I cannot concede competency to the National Assembly to discuss religious questions."⁶⁷ But the Centrists were not able to check this centralizing force in the constitutional committee, for

⁶⁴Gröber in the National Assembly, Verhandlungen, February 13, 1919, CCCXXVI, 54.

⁶⁵Ibid., February 28, 1919, CCCXXVI, 379.

⁶⁶KV, March, 1919, #214. See also Ziegler, op. cit., p. 117; Linneborn, op. cit., p. 197.

⁶⁷Protocol, cited in Ziegler, op. cit., p. 117.

the majority of the members had decided that the Reich could "prescribe by law fundamental principles concerning the rights and duties of religious associations. . ."⁶⁸

On March 15 the committee turned its attention to a consideration of religious freedom as proposed in Preuss' draft.⁶⁹ This article, the only one in which Preuss dealt with religious affairs, provided for freedom of conscience and the free exercise of one's religious duties. It abolished the special privileged position of the Church in the State, guaranteeing religious societies the free exercise of their affairs, but subjecting them to the general law of the land.⁷⁰

In the ensuing debate over this article, Dr. Mausbach warned the Social Democrats that attempts to separate Church and State would arouse the antagonism of both Catholics and Protestants alike. He referred to the furor that had erupted in Christian circles in reaction to the Independent Socialist Hoffmann's anti-religious policies of November and December, 1918. The Center had always been a champion of states' rights and protector of religious freedom, he told the Social Democrats, and he insisted that in the new German constitution, guarantees be made to protect liberty of conscience. To cloud the issue with the slogan, "Religion is a private thing, and therefore, no concern of the State," was to court trouble, Mausbach declared. To a certain extent, he admitted, religion was a private matter, but not entirely, since it was

⁶⁸Article 10: "Das Reich kann im Wege der Gesetzgebung Grundsätze aufstellen für die Rechte und Pflichten der Religionsgesellschaften."

⁶⁹Originally Article 19 in Preuss' constitutional draft, cited in Ursachen und Folgen, III, 433.

⁷⁰Ibid.

also a powerful factor of public life and could not be divorced from it. Dr. Mausbach, moreover, advocated State encouragement of "the development of Christianity in the service of the welfare of all; a free world endeavor of all religious, educational, and social realities."⁷¹

But the Center's position was becoming precarious. It was while the committee was discussing Article 30⁷² during the latter part of March that they began to question the advisability of adhering to their traditional federalist view on religious affairs. Since the revolutionary governments in some of the Länder, especially in Prussia, Munich, Brunswick, and Gotha, had assumed an anti-religious attitude, the Center Party decided that perhaps it would be more desirable to choose a positive approach in order to be able to prepare an "acceptable course" regarding Church-State relations. The Party reasoned that since the Democrats and the parties of the Right had guaranteed religious tolerance and protection of Church interests in their election campaign, the Social Democrats would be unable to muster a majority in the National Assembly for their kulturkampf goals.⁷³ Hence, the Center Party reversed its previous negative attitude toward jurisdiction of the Reich

⁷¹For a report of the committee meeting, see Germania, March 16, 1919, #121. Mausbach had expressed a similar view in the National Assembly on March 11, when he told the delegates: "As history has shown and the culture of the German people has demonstrated, religion is also a powerful element in public life and it does not proceed from economic necessity, but rather from the depths of mankind's inner soul and his natural propensity toward God and eternity." Verhandlungen, March 11, 1919, CCCXXVII, 679.

⁷²This article was added to Preuss' draft to cover the Church-State relations. The subcommittee expanded into several articles by combining the various proposals of the constitutional committee until it became Section III, "Religion and Religious Societies," in the Grundrechte.

⁷³Lauscher, op. cit., p. 179.

in religious matters, and along with the other bourgeois parties sought to "anchor" more specifically in the constitution a basic policy of religious freedom.

This reversal of the Centrist position was first revealed by Beyerle on March 29 when he told the constitutional committee that the Center Party had accepted the initial provision of Article 10 granting the Reich competency over religious affairs and education.⁷⁴ Determined as they were not to "sacrifice" their religious goals,⁷⁵ the six Centrists on the committee⁷⁶ assisted by Wilhelm Kahl from the German People's Party had, however, formulated their own article as a counter-proposal to Preuss' article on religion.⁷⁷ To the Social Democrats' proposal, "separation of Church and State,"⁷⁸ for example, Gröber had retaliated with a series of supplementary proposals.

Freedom of associations in religious societies is guaranteed. Every religious society regulates and manages its affairs freely and independently and appoints its officials without State assistance. Religious societies and spiritual societies obtain legal rights after the Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch. Religious societies are entitled to the possession of their cultural institutions and endowments as well as their right of taxation. Religious instruction is a school subject under the usual direction of religious societies. The theological faculties will be continued.⁷⁹

⁷⁴Protocol, cited in Ziegler, op. cit., p. 172; Linneborn, op. cit., p. 200

⁷⁵For the Centrist views on the Church-State question, see Alexander von Brandt, Staat und Kirche: Zur Trennungsfrage in Preussen (Flugschriften der Deutschen Zentrumsparlei, Berlin: December, 1918).

⁷⁶The Centrists working on this section were Gröber, Beyerle, Mausbach, Rheinländer, Spahn, and Trimborn--prominent parliamentarians on the question of Kulturpolitik. See Linneborn, op. cit., p. 200.

⁷⁷Called Article 30 on "State and Religion" in the constitutional draft.

⁷⁸Protocol, as cited in Ziegler, op. cit., p. 124; KV, April 3, 1919, #263; Germania, April 4, 1919, #153.

⁷⁹Protocol, as cited in Ziegler, op. cit., pp. 124-125.

The Social Democrats resisted Gröber's proposals as contrary to their commitments and insisted upon a complete separation of Church and State which they considered the "core question."⁸⁰ The Centrists, for their part, reasoned that complete separation of Church and State would involve a decrease in economic protection and support given to the churches by the State and to this they would not consent.⁸¹ Because neither side would compromise, the situation met a hopeless impasse.

A few days later on April 14, Majority Socialist Johannes Meerfeld, calling Gröber's proposals "completely unacceptable," stated, nevertheless, that the members of his party wanted "no Kulturkampf." Indicating a change in the militant anti-religious socialist attitude, Meerfeld conceded, "My party knows from experience that one cannot fight against religion and expect success."⁸² The Socialists, he said, were willing to "recognize for the present the importance and the influence of religion . . . as an inner need for numerous men, and one must allow for this situation."⁸³ Separation of Church and State, he pointed out, could be accomplished in an "amicable fashion" and without harm to the respective Churches as had already been proved by many governments. "Separation is possible if it is accomplished with the good will of all concerned."⁸⁴ The Majority Socialists, he announced, had, therefore, reconsidered

⁸⁰ Linneborn, op. cit., p. 200.

⁸¹ KV, April 8, 1919, #276.

⁸² Protocol, as cited in Linneborn, op. cit., p. 201.

⁸³ Protocol, as cited in Ziegler, op. cit., p. 125.

⁸⁴ Ibid.; also cited in Linneborn, op. cit., p. 201.

the religious question and were willing to compromise with the Centrists and the parties of the Right.⁸⁵

In lieu of the change of attitude of the Majority Socialists, Mausbach announced, "I think that the opposition between our point of view and that of the Social Democrats is not incompatible in all parts as one might expect at first glance. The idea of a separation of Church and State is, as Dr. Kahl has already indicated, many-sided. My Party is now willing to go half-way."⁸⁶

Seizing upon these initial concessions, the two Centrist clerics Kaas and Mausbach worked with Meerfeld in forming a compromise on the religious issue. In place of Meerfeld's proposal, "There is separation of Church and State," Mausbach proposed the negative statement, "There is no State Church."⁸⁷ Having granted this much to the Social Democrats, the Center and the parties of the Right were now in a position to secure favorable concessions regarding religion and religious societies. Out of this spirit of compromise evolved the solution that there would not be complete separation of Church and State, but neither would there be a close union between them. The Churches would be emancipated from the State, but they would enjoy certain privileges.⁸⁸

To this end, the principle of liberty of belief and conscience and the free exercise of religion were immediately given constitutional guarantees. Ever since 1905 the Centrists had attempted, albeit unsuccessfully, to get the

⁸⁵ Protocol, cited in Ziegler, op. cit., p. 125.

⁸⁶ Protocol, cited in Linneborn, op. cit., p. 201.

⁸⁷ Mausbach, Kulturfragen, pp. 59-60; also cited in Linneborn, op. cit., p. 202.

⁸⁸ Germania, April 14, 1919, #170; KV, April 14, 1919, #295.

Reichstag to pass a toleration act for the protection of minority groups. They now saw the fulfillment of their desires in Articles 135 and 136. The first article stated: "All inhabitants . . . enjoy complete liberty of belief and conscience. The free exercise of religion is assured. . . ." ⁸⁹ In the second article, the political status of citizens was protected regardless of religious affiliation. Article 136 read: "Civil and political rights are neither conditioned nor limited by the exercise of religious liberty. The enjoyment of civil and political rights as well as eligibility to public office is independent of religious belief. . . ." ⁹⁰

Determined to insure religious associations and societies the right to administer their own affairs independently of the State, Gröber proposed: "Each religious society regulates and administers its affairs freely and independently; especially in regard to the appointment of its officials, it is an organization free to act without interference from the State or civic communities; the right of private patronage remains undisturbed." (Jede Religionsgesellschaft ordnet und verwaltet ihre Angelegenheiten frei und selbständig, insbesondere verleiht sie ihre Ämter ohne Mitwirkung des Staates oder der bürgerlichen Gemeinde; die Rechte aus dem Privatpatronat bleiben unberührt) ⁹¹

To the Social Democrats and Democrats, this provision appeared entirely too liberal. Some limitation or State supervision, they felt, was necessary to maintain public order and safety. Dr. Kahl then suggested adding to "freely

⁸⁹Article 135.

⁹⁰Article 136.

⁹¹Cited in Linneborn, op. cit., p. 205.

and independently" (frei und selbständig) the words: "but is subjected to general legislation" (bleibt aber den allgemeinen Staatsgesetzen unterworfen).⁹²

Meerfeld insisted upon the phrase "innerhalb der Schranken des Gesetzes."⁹³

The Center, realizing how dangerous a restricting phrase might be in the hands of an anti-clerical government, preferred no such limitation, but once again the Party was forced to compromise. Gröber, therefore, recommended adding "within the limits of a general law" (innerhalb der Schranken des für alle geltenden Gesetzes).⁹⁴ The recommendation was accepted by the committee in April.⁹⁵ The provision, later to be incorporated in Article 137, read, "Every religious society regulates and administers its affairs independently within the limits of the general law. It appoints its officers without interference by the State or the civil municipality."⁹⁶

A further development of this provision gave recognition to the social force and importance of Churches in public life and accorded to them privileges similar to those extended to public corporations. Gröber, Spahn, and Mausbach who were active in obtaining these concessions⁹⁷ not only secured for religious societies the privilege of being accorded the rights of public corporations,⁹⁸ but also won the constitutional guarantee of "property and other

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Ibid.

⁹⁵Ibid., pp. 205-206. The article, "Religion and the Church in the Constitutional Committee," in KV, April 17, 1919, #302, described the struggle.

⁹⁶Article 137, par. 3.

⁹⁷Linneborn, op. cit., p. 206.

⁹⁸Article 137, par. 4.

rights of religious bodies and associations for the maintenance of their cultural, educational, and charitable institutions, their foundations and other possessions."⁹⁹ Nor did the question of taxation escape the Center's notice. Under German law public corporations enjoyed both the legal standing that private law afforded and the special protection of the State. Their organizations were regarded indirectly as public agencies and had, therefore, the right to levy taxes. Spahn desired to set constitutional guarantees on this right of taxation. He told the constitutional committee when it was debating the issue of separation of Church and State that many individual States such as Saxony, Oldenburg, Saxony-Altenburg, Bavaria, and Baden, had already passed legislation in this regard.¹⁰⁰ Gröber also emphasized this point while at the same time stressing the social function of religious societies.¹⁰¹ As a result of the support the Center received from the other bourgeois parties, the constitutional committee accepted in its last reading in June the proposal that ". . . religious societies which are recognized by law as corporate bodies are entitled on the basis of the civil taxrolls to raise taxes according to the provisions of the laws of the respective States."¹⁰²

As a consequence of separation of Church and State, the parties of the Left insisted that the obligation of the State, stemming from the days of secularization, to participate financially in the expenses of the Churches no

⁹⁹ Article 138, par. 2.

¹⁰⁰ The Social Democrats wanted to prohibit this right, but Spahn was able to overcome their opposition when the provision was receiving its second reading in the constitutional committee. See Linneborn, op. cit., p. 206.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.; KV, June 2, 1919, #426.

¹⁰² Article 137, par. 6.

longer existed. The Democrat Naumann declared, "We no longer wish the State to support the Churches financially. The Churches must now say, 'We will pay our own expenses.'"¹⁰³ Since the Social Democrats were of the same opinion, Meerfeld and Naumann made a joint proposal to the constitutional committee which sought the "redemption of State payments" (Ablösung der Staatsleistungen) while guaranteeing at the same time the property of the Church.¹⁰⁴ The Center Party and the German National People's Party were fearful of the implications and complications such a proposal could have. Spahn argued that due to the post-war economic instability it was not a feasible time for redemption of State payments.¹⁰⁵ Kaas demanded more definite terms from the government before expecting the Churches to relinquish their legal titles and contracts.¹⁰⁶

In the end the committee compromised on this point.¹⁰⁷ It was agreed that payments due from the State to the Churches because of some law or legal title must be commuted by State legislation on bases fixed by the Reich.¹⁰⁸ Until then, these payments were to continue.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰³Cited in Linneborn, op. cit., p. 207.

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., p. 208.

¹⁰⁷KV, June 2, 1919, #426.

¹⁰⁸"State contributions to religious societies authorized by law, contract or any special grant, will be commuted by State legislation. . . ." Article 138, par. 1.

¹⁰⁹"Until the adoption of a national law according to Article 138, the existing state contributions to the religious societies, whether authorized by law, contract or special grant, will be continued." Article 174.

Other religious concessions were also incorporated into the constitution through the indefatigable efforts of the Centrist committee members and the DVP Kahl.¹¹⁰ Sunday, along with legal holidays, was set aside as "a day of rest and spiritual edification."¹¹¹ Theological faculties were to be maintained in the German universities.¹¹² Government approval of chaplains "for religious services and spiritual care in hospitals, prisons, and other public institutions" was also given a constitutional guarantee.¹¹³

The success of the Center Party in maintaining its traditional religious goals despite the strong opposition of the Socialists was highly commended. A special vote of thanks was given by the German bishops in recognition of the "unforgettable, great service" the Centrist had rendered the Church.¹¹⁴ Germania considered the conclusion of the "penetrating deliberations" over the question of Church and State a "principal achievement of the new government" allowing all "to work toward a harmonious whole." It praised "the spirit of freedom, conciliation, and understanding" in recognizing the important cultural significance of religion in all states of life, and was confident that

¹¹⁰ For a commentary of the Centrist work in the constitutional committee, see Mausbach and Gröber's speeches in the National Assembly at the time of the second reading of the constitutional draft. Verhandlungen, July 17, 1919, CCCXXVIII, 1661-1662.

¹¹¹ Article 139.

¹¹² Article 149, par. 3.

¹¹³ Article 141. For a commentary on these articles, see Mausbach, Kulturfragen, pp. 51-59; Bachem, Zentrumspartei, VIII, 295-300.

¹¹⁴ Cited in Bachem, Zentrumspartei, VIII, 303-305.

the final proposal of separation of Church and State would resolve itself without causing financial difficulties to religious communities.¹¹⁵

The relative ease with which the Centrists were able to achieve their historic policy of religious toleration allowed them to believe that they would meet with similar success concerning religious education and the retention of confessional schools in Germany. However, they underestimated the opposition of their liberal-minded coalition partners. Perhaps nowhere in the proceedings of Weimar was a divergence of opinion so evident as when the members of the National Assembly discussed the constitutional basis for a national educational system in the new republic. It was the earnest endeavor of most of the delegates to establish a liberal democratic system of education--one that would lead to physical, mental, and social fitness in the new order. To achieve this they realized that some marked educational changes were necessary.

In the first place, the old educational system was considered undemocratic. Although under the Empire education had been regulated independently by the various States, a common feature in all States had been its "two-class" system.¹¹⁶ There had been no common elementary school system as a basis for higher education and advanced studies. Children of wealthier parents began

¹¹⁵ Germania, July 4, 1919, #298. A few years later at the Second Reichsparteitag, January 17, 1922, Wilhelm Marx noted, "In the beginning of 1919 . . . no one in our group had thought it possible to have achieved the rights and freedom of the Church in such large measure." Official Report, as cited in Morsey, Zentrumspartei 1917-1923, p. 220.

¹¹⁶ The objective of education was to produce on the one hand a body of intelligent and highly-trained experts, leaders, and officers; and on the other hand, a vast army of capable, obedient, and well-disciplined followers. See John F. Cramer and George S. Browne, Contemporary Education: A Comparative Study of National Systems (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1956), p. 434.

their schooling in the Vorschule, a private preparatory school from which they could transfer to a higher level of education and eventually qualify for admittance into the university. Children of the lower classes while receiving a sound education in the Volksschule, had no opportunity of continuing into the university or professional studies. Denominational schools under clerical supervision were organized under the same system.¹¹⁷

Attempts to break the "two-class" system of education had been made prior to World War I, but they were unsuccessful.¹¹⁸ The November Revolution with its overthrow of the old empire and the establishment of a new republic had set the stage for reforms toward a more democratic system of education. Under the influence of Socialism the new government sought not only to control the educational system and centralize it, but also to oust denominationalism. In the National Assembly the Democrats also favored a uniform elementary school system devoid of denominationalism. Nevertheless, they wished to retain religious instructions but under State, not clerical supervision. This attempt to divorce public education from Church control aroused the antagonism of all Church authorities and religious-minded Germans.¹¹⁹ The Center Party as well as the German People's Party and the National People's Party had struck out against these secularistic tendencies. The publication of the Prussian Edicts

¹¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 434-436.

¹¹⁸ Clara Stratemeyer, Supervision in German Elementary Education, 1918-1933 (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1938, pp. 24-28.

¹¹⁹ Mausbach, speaking in the Assembly on March 11, 1919, declared: "These attempts . . . met with strong opposition from the Prussian bishops, the Evangelical Churches, and the mass of Christians." See his speech in the National Assembly, Verhandlungen, March 11, 1919, CCCXXVI, 677.

of Education of November 27-29 had brought furious repercussions.¹²⁰ In the election campaign, the Centrists had made these anti-religious reforms the target of their Party's criticism.

Shortly after the convening of the National Assembly, the controversial subject of education and religious instructions in public schools had been brought up. On February 24, 1919, an interpellation submitted by the German National People's Party was read,¹²¹ challenging the legality of new school laws established by the revolutionary governments in some of the Länder.¹²² The document was an attempt to initiate a debate on the school question in the National Assembly; however, the interpellation was not discussed until March 11. When the debate actually got under way it quickly became evident that the various parties aligned themselves into two opposing camps: those who favored secular public schools and those who demanded the retention of confessional public schools as well as private schools.

Prior to the revolution, the educational system of Germany had been regulated by the individual States. Because of their traditional states' rights, the Centrists would have preferred to keep this arrangement. However, as indicated in the Church-State question, the secularistic attitude exemplified by

¹²⁰Cf. issues of Germania, on November 28, 1918, #556; January 3, 1919, #4; January 4, 1919, #6; January 7, 1919, #10; January 15, 1919, #23; January 18, 1919, #30; KV, December 17, 1918, #988; December 27, 1918, #1013; January 4, 1919, #11; January 13, 1919, #34; January 14, 1919, #37.

¹²¹Arnstadt and Genossen interpellation, Verhandlungen, February 24, 1919, CCCXXVI, 293.

¹²²"Contrary to justice and law many individual Länder, such as Saxony, Hamburg, and Brunswick have denied the right of religious instruction or will do so in the beginning of the new school term after the Easter recess. Does the government intend to take a position on the legality of the existing school laws to protest such usurpation by individual governments?" Ibid.

some of the revolutionary state governments impelled the Center Party to reverse its stand and call for the Reich's protection of public confessional schools and the retention of private schools.¹²³

Already in the National Assembly's deliberations on March 11, suggestions for three types of educational structures emerged. One was the Socialist proposal for a secular school where no religion was taught. The spokesman for the Social Democrats, C. August Hellmann, defended the revolutionary secular educational system in Saxony claiming that it was not entirely irreligious. It was merely a reform of the old system which had been under clerical control. The teaching of religion, he noted, had degenerated to rote recitation, was therefore impractical, and should be eliminated.¹²⁴

The second proposal, supported by the Center Party and the parties of the Right, favored a confessionnal or denominational system of education whereby the public school would be supervised by religious denominations. Dr. Mausbach very ably defended the Center's views in the debate of March 11. In a lengthy address he emphasized the importance of the religious issue involved in the recent school reforms of some Länder. By way of example, he noted how in Bavaria by a "simple stroke of the pen," without consulting the Churches, clerical supervision of schools had been revoked and this in direct violation of a governmental guarantee given the various religious groups. While admitting differences between the Weltanschauung of the Center Party and the parties of the Right, Dr. Mausbach pointed out that they all agreed on the retention of confessionnal and denominational schools. He defended the idea of maintaining

¹²³Ziegler, op. cit., p. 150; Lauscher, op. cit., p. 179.

¹²⁴Verhandlungen, March 11, 1919, CCCXXVI, 673-677.

religious instructions as a compulsory part of the public school curriculum and insisted that the Catholic and Evangelical instructions must logically be under the supervision of the respective Church community.¹²⁵

He noted further how the Center Party had placed Christian schools and educational ideals at the head of its domestic program. Next to personal liberty of conscience, the Party supported "freedom for religious organizations in the education of children."¹²⁶ Dr. Mausbach was highly critical of the attitude of the new revolutionary governments whose Church and school policies followed the pattern of Hoffmann's Prussian reforms. He considered these attacks on liberty of conscience as more insidious than the assaults of the old Bismarckian Kulturkampf because while the latter were done in the name of power and Realpolitik, the former were performed in the name of "freedom" and the "Free People's Republic."¹²⁷ Further on in his speech Dr. Mausbach pointed out that the Catholics who comprised the majority of the citizens along the western, southern, and eastern frontiers of Germany had always maintained a line of defense for the country and were willing to do the same for the new Republic of Germany. But, he reiterated, assurance of confessional schools and religious peace was a valuable proviso for the support of those inhabitants. In concluding his statements, Mausbach advocated a harmonious bridging of the gap forming between the Church and State, and proposed that the State encourage the development of Christianity in the service of the general public.¹²⁸

¹²⁵Ibid., p. 677.

¹²⁶Ibid., p. 678.

¹²⁷Ibid.

¹²⁸Ibid., pp. 678-680.

A proposal for a third type of school structure was offered the National Assembly on March 11 by Dr. Konrad Weiss, spokesman for the German Democrats. Agreeing with Mausbach that the relations between Church and State should be founded on the basis of friendly religious understanding, Dr. Weiss, nonetheless, rejected the "untenable position" of the SPD in proposing that the new government of the Reich be built solely on economic, political, social, and cultural ideals which would neglect the true significance of religious education. Complete development of the whole personality, he said, required religious education, and, therefore, the role that the Church plays in the formation of the moral character of the citizen should be recognized. Even from a social viewpoint, he argued, religious instruction has an essential place in the school. However, the Democrats were not so much concerned with religious instruction being a special responsibility of the Church, as they were in the complete omission of it in the elementary schools. He even agreed with Dr. Mausbach that no university should be without a theological faculty taught by the clergy. His Party favored the retention of religious instruction as a part of the school program on all levels, but most especially on the elementary level. Nevertheless, he pointed out that the Democrats wished the schools to be emancipated from Church control, to be secular. He proposed an undenominational or mixed school, the Simultanschule in which supervision of the schools and the regulation of religious instruction would be the task of the individual States, not of any particular Church. He advocated sweeping reforms in the teaching of religion, greater efficiency and effectiveness, and a dovetailing of the old with the new thoughts of pedagogy. Once these reforms would be achieved, Weiss saw no reason why religion as a moral guidance course could not be considered

an essential part of the school curriculum.¹²⁹

Like other controversial issues, the school question posed too many difficulties to allow for quick solution. It was handed over, instead, to the constitutional committee whose diverse membership gave no hope for an early settlement. Late in March the discussion in the constitutional committee got under way. Representatives of the Center supported by the delegates from the German People's Party and the German Nationalists demanded a constitutional guarantee for denominational or confessional schools while the Social Democrats and the Democrats held to their idea of the secular and uniform schools.¹³⁰ After serious deliberations, it appeared that a solution was forthcoming when the parties agreed that a uniform school system, Grundschule, be established as the basis for elementary education.¹³¹ But on April 2, tensions were increased as Gröber insisted that religion be considered an "ordentliches Lehrfach" under religious auspices and that private schools be allowed to exist alongside the public common schools.¹³²

The question of private schools caused some concern for the Centrists. In Protestant areas where Catholics were a minority, private schools allowed for the proper Catholic religious instruction. The Center wished to retain the right of establishment of such schools. The Social Democrats, on the other hand, demanded the abolition of all private schools. On this issue, the

¹²⁹Ibid., pp. 681-684.

¹³⁰KV, March 31, 1919, #254; Mausbach, Kulturfragen, p. 51.

¹³¹Lauscher, op. cit., p. 183.

¹³²Germania, April 2, 1919, #152; KV, April 4, 1919, #266; Lauscher, op. cit., p. 183; Ziegler, op. cit., p. 127; Mausbach, Kulturfragen, p. 51.

Democrats were willing to concede the right to establish private schools provided they conformed to the same educational standards as the public schools and were under state supervision.¹³³ This question found no satisfactory solution in the constitutional committee since the Centrists and Social Democrats could reach no agreement nor would the Centrists agree to the Democrats' proposal of state supervision.¹³⁴ In the end the Centrists were forced to lessen their demands regarding private schools in order to secure the retention of religious instructions in the public schools.¹³⁵ The solution to the private schools issue was to be finally settled in the compromise on confessional schools.

Maintaining confessional public schools in the German educational system was of paramount importance to the Center Party and the DNVP. Together they worked to gain a constitutional guarantee as proposed by Gröber.¹³⁶ But the Left refused to accept his proposals, pressing its demand for schools divorced from religious elements. For a time it seemed as if neither adversary would bend. Four more days of deliberation over the Kulturpolitik ensued. Then a compromise was proposed by the Democrat Neumann which was accepted by both Centrists and the SPD.¹³⁷ According to Neumann's proposal to the constitutional

¹³³ Lauscher, op. cit., p. 182; Mausbach, Kulturfragen, pp. 111-112.

¹³⁴ Lauscher, loc. cit.; Mausbach, Kulturfragen, p. 112. The Social Democrats spokesman, Quarck, insisted his party would never accept a provision for the retention of private schools. Ziegler, op. cit., p. 150.

¹³⁵ Lauscher, op. cit., Mausbach, Kulturfragen, p. 112.

¹³⁶ Ziegler, op. cit., p. 128; Mausbach, Kulturfragen, pp. 116-117.

¹³⁷ Germania, April 10, 1919, #164; Lauscher, op. cit., p. 181; Ziegler, op. cit., p. 128. KV, April 9, 1919, #281, noted that in the heat of the debate Rheinländer exclaimed, "Das deutsche Volk wird ein religiöses gerichtetes Volk sein, oder es wird kein Kulturvolk sein."

committee on April 4, the teaching of religion either as an "allgemeinen Moralunterricht" or "religionsgeschichtlichen Unterricht" was to be included in the curriculum of all schools except those which were completely secular.¹³⁸ To this proposal of Neumann's, Gröber added that in keeping with freedom of conscience, each teacher be permitted to decide whether or not he wished to teach religion so that no teacher would be obliged to do so against his will. This concession found a favorable acceptance with the SPD.¹³⁹ Satisfied with retaining religious instructions in the public schools, the Center thought it wiser to refrain from pressuring for any further constitutional guarantees for confessional schools and private schools, confident that in the second reading of the school articles it could achieve better terms.¹⁴⁰

While the school question was being discussed at Weimar, the Catholic electorate was staging demonstration rallies all over the country to back the Centrist efforts. Aroused by the prospect of losing confessional or denominational schools, Catholics of Germany protested in speech and press. Schools, they said, were second homes and must, therefore, be institutions capable of developing the spiritual as well as the mental capacities of youth. Religious education was a necessary element in the complete development of the child, the Centrist speaker Father Lichtenberg told an assembly of Catholics in Berlin.¹⁴¹ An article in Germania told the German Catholics that the choice of the type of education was a parental right, not a state right. To allow the state a

¹³⁸ Germania, April 10, 1919, #161; KV, April 9, 1919, #281.

¹³⁹ Germania, loc. cit.; KV, loc. cit.; Ziegler, op. cit., p. 128.

¹⁴⁰ Lauscher, op. cit., p. 184; Mausbach, Kulturfragen, p. 86.

¹⁴¹ Germania, April 10, 1919, #164.

monopoly over the school system would be to abrogate the parents' rights to choose between confessional or denominational and the secular schools. Not only that; the very establishment of private schools would be made impossible.¹⁴²

Lest they should seem impervious to the demand of the electorate,¹⁴³ Centrist delegates Mausbach, Rheinländer, Marx, and others published articles on the school question, reassuring Catholics that the Party would seek to obtain constitutional protection of confessional schools and the teaching of religion in the common public schools.¹⁴⁴

On June 16 at the second reading of the school articles,¹⁴⁵ the Centrists attempted to make good their promises. Gröber told the committee that the Center wanted the assurance that religious instructions would be given to children by teachers of their respective faith.¹⁴⁶ To achieve this, he argued, it was necessary to retain confessional schools.¹⁴⁷ His arguments gained nothing; the

¹⁴²

Ibid., April 13, 1919, #169.

¹⁴³Anton Rheinländer, Zentrum und Schulpolitik seit Weimar (Flugschriften der Deutschen Zentrumspartei, Berlin: 1924), pp. 8-9, claimed it was not "merely the duty concerning its program but the driving force of its responsibility to the electorate" which goaded the Centrists on to demand confessional schools.

¹⁴⁴

See article of Mausbach in Germania, March 16, 1919, #121; Dr. Sonnenschien, ibid., March 22, 1919, #131; Lichtenberg, April 10, 1919, #164; April 13, 1919, #169; June 18, 1919, #273; KV, March 15, 1919, #210; W. Marx, March 17, 1919, #214; March 31, 1919, #254; Rheinländer, April 8, 1919, #281; April 17, 1919, #302; April 19, 1919, #310; May 24, 1919, #404.

¹⁴⁵After the committee's deliberation of the various school proposals during March and April, the subcommittee formulated them into several articles comprising Section IV of the Grundrechte. This took place during the month of May. On May 28 the constitutional committee began its deliberations on the first reading of the newly-formulated Grundrechte. Much of the four-day discussion concerned other sections of the Grundrechte. The discussion on the school issue came only in the second reading.

¹⁴⁶

Protocol, as cited in Ziegler, op. cit., p. 149.

¹⁴⁷

Ibid.; see also Lauscher, op. cit., 184-185.

SPD remained adamant in their demands for secular schools devoid of religious instructions,¹⁴⁸ while the Democrats clamored for mixed or undenominational schools with the teaching of religion under State supervision.¹⁴⁹

After three days of heated debate, the problem seemed no nearer a solution than before.¹⁵⁰ Dr. Mausbach offered various arguments supporting the Center's position, but to no avail. Neither the reference to the "historic right" of denominational schools, nor the argument of religious freedom and parental rights, nor even the threat of a loss of the Catholic support in the border regions of the Reich seemed to move the Left in their position against confessional schools.¹⁵¹ It became apparent to the Centrists that they would have to compromise in order to win at least some concessions for confessional schools.¹⁵² The Democrats offered a proposal whereby the public schools would be undenominational or mixed; that is, the same religious instructions would be given to all the students regardless of their religious affiliation. But confessional or denominational schools would not be entirely excluded, for the law could allow for the erection of such schools "upon the wish of the parents of those entitled to education."¹⁵³ Unable to obtain a definite "anchorage" of confessional schools in the constitution, the Centrists "reluctantly" accepted

¹⁴⁸They wanted "Ausschaltung des religiös-konfessionellen Elements in den öffentlichen Schulen." See Lauscher, op. cit., p. 181.

¹⁴⁹Germania, June 19, 1919, #273; KV, June 20, 1919, #475; Ziegler, op. cit.

¹⁵⁰Ziegler, op. cit., p. 149.

¹⁵¹Protocol, as cited in Ziegler, op. cit., pp. 149-151.

¹⁵²Mausbach told the Centrists to compromise on "social matters" to prepare a favorable climate for acceptance of confessional schools. See Rheinland, Zentrum, p. 10.

¹⁵³Protocol, as cited in Ziegler, op. cit., p. 151.

this compromise.¹⁵⁴ By June 18 the constitutional committee had completed its debate on the second reading of the constitutional draft and it was ready to be sent back to the National Assembly.¹⁵⁵

The acceptance of this "totally unsatisfactory compromise"¹⁵⁶ by the Centrists illustrated the frustrating battle it was waging in the committee. The parties were so divided on all questions, especially religious ones that the five Democrats held a position which far exceeded their numerical strength in the constitutional committee. Without difficulty they could control the balance of any legislation by playing one party against another. Thus, for instance, by voting with the Socialists, they could negate the proposals of the Centrists. Under these circumstances, the Center's efforts to achieve a constitutional guarantee for confessional schools were futile and wasted.¹⁵⁷ Nevertheless, just when the situation looked the darkest for the Center Party, just when hope for its educational demands was about to vanish, a new situation arose which proved advantageous to the Center.

On June 20 the Democrats withdrew from the government to demonstrate their opposition to the Versailles Treaty. This circumstance presented a "completely new situation" for the Center.¹⁵⁸ Only the SPD and the Center formed the new coalition government. The political climate, now so favorable to the

¹⁵⁴Lauscher, op. cit., p. 185.

¹⁵⁵Due to the crisis over the acceptance of the Versailles Treaty the conclusion of the constitutional committee's work received little publicity in the newspapers.

¹⁵⁶Germania, June 18, 1919, #272; KV, June 20, 1919, #475.

¹⁵⁷Bachem, Zentrumspartei, VIII, 289.

¹⁵⁸Father Kaas' reference at the Centrist Parteitag at Cologne on September 16, 1919. Report, as cited in Morsey Zentrumspartei 1917-1923, p. 216.

Center Party, was "greatly utilized" by it in the matter of the Kulturpolitik.¹⁵⁹ There was much to be accomplished. The SPD needed the help of the Center to achieve a majority for the acceptance of the treaty and the Center wanted a change in the constitutional articles on education. At the suggestion of Gröber, the SPD agreed to cooperate with the Center on the school issue if the Center Party would cooperate with the SPD on foreign policy. Although the fundamental views of the Center and SPD were "diametrically opposed," the two parties agreed to compromise on the school issue.

During the first two weeks of July, the Center and the SPD held inter-party caucuses to formulate a new school proposal. To secure a constitutional guarantee for confessional schools, the Center wished to change the Democrats' proposal accepted by the constitutional committee at its last meeting. The Centrists Gröber, Hitze, Mausbach, Rheinländer, and Burlage collaborated with the SPD to achieve a new school compromise acceptable to the Center Party.¹⁶⁰ After "lengthy discussions" which involved consideration of at least sixteen different proposals,¹⁶¹ the two parties reached an agreement on July 15 which was referred to as the "first Weimar school compromise." According to this agreement, the constitution would allow for the erection of three types of schools: secular, denominational or confessional, and undenominational or mixed. All schools had to conform to the scholastic standards set by the State, but

¹⁵⁹Mausbach, Kulturfragen, p. 88.

¹⁶⁰Germania, July 8, 1919, #304.

¹⁶¹Later Mausbach in KV, April 28, 1924, #318, described the difficulties met with in attempting to reach an "acceptable" compromise. The discussion covered Articles 146, 147, and 149. A partial coverage of the discussions between the SPD and the Centrists was printed in Germania, July 11, 1919, #311. This article indicated that a final compromise was imminent.

parents were free to make their own choice in regard to their children's schools. As a concession to the SPD, the Center agreed that private preparatory schools were to be abolished. Private schools as a substitute for public schools would require State approval and were to be subject to State supervision.¹⁶²

The "first Weimar school compromise" was presented to the National Assembly on July 18.¹⁶³ Gröber, as spokesman for the Center, noted that the Center faction had declared "unanimously" in favor of the compromise.¹⁶⁴ He described how the Center had expanded the constitutional section on "Education and Schools" to include both a "pedagogical and social view." He admitted that the Party was not completely satisfied with Article 147¹⁶⁵ which placed limitations on private schools requiring State approval and State supervision, but he felt it was balanced by the "victory" of the Center in obtaining a constitutional guarantee for the erection of confessional schools in Germany.¹⁶⁶

The general reaction of the Center to the first Weimar school compromise was one of great joy.¹⁶⁷ The proposal was looked upon as a "noteworthy success" and "in view of the circumstances, the best which could have been achieved."¹⁶⁸ Mausbach felt that the "durchaus erträgliche Regelung" was "one of the best

¹⁶² Germania, July 15, 1919, #318, gives a report of the discussion.

¹⁶³ Verhandlungen, July 18, 1919, CCCXXVIII, 1678.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 1683; KV, July 19, 1919, #559.

¹⁶⁵ Article 147. "Private Schulen als Ersatz für öffentlich Schulen bedürfen der Genehmigung des Staates und unterstehen den Landesgesetzen. . . ."

¹⁶⁶ Verhandlungen, July 18, 1919, CCCXXVIII, 1683-1685.

¹⁶⁷ KV, July 17, 1919, #552; Germania, July 19, 1919, #324.

¹⁶⁸ Lauscher in a Party caucus, January 16, 1921, as cited in Bachem, Zentrumsparlei, VIII, 321.

formulas" the Center could have won.¹⁶⁹ But despite elation over its success, the plenary session of the National Assembly on July 18 indicated that the other parties, especially the Democrats, did not share the Centrists' enthusiasm.

As spokesman for the Democrats, Dr. Weiss indicated his Party's disapproval of the compromise. Some States, he pointed out, had already introduced undenominational schools as their common schools and would have to rearrange their systems to meet the new demands for the three types provided in the compromise. He expressed disappointment that the SPD had reneged on its original demands for a uniform secular system.¹⁷⁰ The Majority Socialist Heinrich Schulz called the section on education "a step in progress," but noted that it did not accomplish what the Socialists had aspired to. Even though the Socialists would support the Center with a favorable vote, said Schulz, the compromise would continue to be entirely unsatisfactory to them.¹⁷¹ The Independent Socialist Fritz Kunert lashed out against the whole section on education. His Party stood for "Einheitlichkeit, Unentgeltlichkeit, und Weltlichkeit." In their rejection of the complete school section, the Independents emphasized the opposition to the private confessional schools, especially convent schools.¹⁷² Kunert's criticism of the Centrists and Majority Socialists was matched by the Democrat Richard Seyfert who voiced his disapproval of the compromise and accused the Majority Socialists of deserting the Democrats on the issue of secularization of schools.¹⁷³ The whole temper of the day's discussion indicated

¹⁶⁹ KV, July 17, 1919, #552.

¹⁷⁰ Verhandlungen, July 18, 1919, CCCXVIII, 1673-1678.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 1679-1683.

¹⁷² Ibid., pp. 1697-1700.

¹⁷³ Ibid., p. 1709. Dr. Katzenstein (SPD) replied that the Democrats

the tenuous position of the school compromise.

Although it received a majority of votes in the second reading on July 18 the compromise passed by a very narrow margin.¹⁷⁴ The Centrists realized that if they wanted the constitutional guarantee of denominational schools, they would have to achieve a rapprochement with the Democrats before the third reading of the school section in the National Assembly.¹⁷⁵ This gave the advantage to the Democrats who "utilized" their unique position to change the first Weimar school compromise to their liking.¹⁷⁶

The greater part of the controversy unleashed in the last week of July mainly concerned the wording of Article 146. The first paragraph, establishing a common school system for all, remained unchanged. The constitutional committee had agreed already in the beginning of June that:

The public school system shall be systematically organized. Upon a foundation of common elementary schools the system of secondary and higher education is erected. The development of secondary and higher education shall be determined in accordance with the needs of all kinds of occupations, and the acceptance of a child in a particular school shall depend upon his qualifications and inclinations, not upon the economic and social position or the religion of his parents.¹⁷⁷

had no cause for complaint since in the "Fatherland's darkest hour," the Democrats had deserted the Majority Socialists by refusing to accept the peace terms. Ibid.

¹⁷⁴Germania, July 19, 1919, #324; Lauscher, op. cit., p. 185, noted that this was due to the absenteeism of the Democrats at this session. By a stroke of fortune, many of the Democrats had left for Halle to attend a Reichsparteitag for their party, and hence were absent for the vote on the second reading of the Constitution.

¹⁷⁵Rheinländer, Zentrum, p. 14.

¹⁷⁶Ibid.

¹⁷⁷Article 146, par. 1.

By this provision all parties agreed to break the two-class system of education existent under the old government.

It was the second paragraph of this article which the Democrats contested so vehemently. This paragraph, containing the so-called "first Weimar school compromise," provided for the erection of the three types of schools mentioned above. The Democrats argued that this would impose a heavy financial responsibility upon the government which the government could ill afford. Besides, those States which had recently established school systems with mixed or undenominational schools would be forced to overhaul their educational systems to meet the demand for the three types of schools.¹⁷⁸

The Social Democrats, dissatisfied with the first school compromise, sided with the Democrats against the Centrists. It was not until the evening of the last day before the National Assembly was to vote on the Constitution that the three parties reached a compromise. The so-called "second Weimar school compromise" was formulated by representatives of the three parties, the Centrist Gröber, Majority Socialist Paul Löbe, and the Democrat Eugen Schiffer.

According to the "second Weimar school compromise"¹⁷⁹ the undenominational or mixed schools were to be the norm for all States. Religious instructions would be given not by the clergy but by the regular school teachers according to the various denominational instructions issued by the government and approved by the clergy of each denomination. Separate denominational or confessional schools and secular schools could be erected as an exception upon the

¹⁷⁸ Lauscher, op. cit., p. 185.

¹⁷⁹ Germania, July 30, 1919, #344. The proposal of Gröber-Löbe-Schiffer was referred to as the "second Weimar school compromise" to distinguish it from the previous compromise presented to the Assembly on July 18.

request of parents in a particular locality, but these schools had to conform to the regular school standards.¹⁸⁰ Paragraph two of Article 146 containing the "second Weimar compromise" read as follows:

Nevertheless, within the municipalities, upon the petition of those entitled to instruction common schools shall be established of their faith or ethical system, in so far as this does not interfere with a system of school administration within the meaning of paragraph 1. The wishes of those entitled to instruction shall be considered as much as possible. Details will be regulated by State laws in accordance with principles to be prescribed by a national law.¹⁸¹

Article 149, which was included in the compromise, provided for the inclusion of religious instruction in all schools except in secular ones:

Religious instruction is included in the regular school curriculum, except in the nonsectarian (secular) schools. The imparting of religious instruction is regulated by the school laws. Religious instruction is imparted in accordance with the principle of the religious society concerned, without prejudice to the right of supervision of the State.

The imparting of religious instruction and the use of ecclesiastical ceremonies is optional with the teachers, and the participation of the pupils in religious studies and in ecclesiastical ceremonies and festivities is left to the decision of those who have the right to control the religious education of the child.¹⁸²

On July 31, the proposal of Grüber, Löbe, and Schiffer was presented to the National Assembly. The change in the school articles was given another consideration. Various spokesmen for the different parties presented their views. Heinrich Schulz, speaking for the Majority Socialists, noted that the goal of his party had not been attained. They preferred a uniform secular school system. Nonetheless, in view of the opposition of some parties, the

¹⁸⁰Article 146, par. 2.

¹⁸¹Ibid.

¹⁸²Article 149.

Majority Socialists deemed it advisable to compromise on the school issue and, therefore, the present proposal was acceptable to their party.¹⁸³ Hermann Hofmann spoke in the name of those Centrist delegates who were educators, and expressed their displeasure at the "second Weimar school compromise." "Now, as formerly, we consider confessional schools as the most ideal form for an educational system," he told the Assembly. Due to the moral disintegration concomitant upon four years of warfare, it was imperative that the German nation have a sound moral basis for its educational system. This he and his fellow Centrist teachers felt, could be attained only through confessional schools.¹⁸⁴ The DNVP's Dr. Mumm said his party, after examining the "various aspects for and against," would accept the compromise. But Ferdinand Runkel, spokesman for the German People's Party, expressed his party's dissatisfaction with the provisions and their refusal to accept the agreement. Likewise, the Independent Socialist Kunert also rejected the school articles as completely contrary to the socialist goal of uniform secular schools.¹⁸⁵

Gröber, official spokesman for the Center, was the last to speak on the school section. Emphasizing that Hofmann had expressed an individual opinion which did not represent the final conclusion of the Center Party, Gröber noted that the Center was disappointed that the "first Weimar school compromise" was supplanted by a new one. Although the new agreement required a "weakening" of their demands, at least confessional schools were still given a constitutional

¹⁸³Verhandlungen, July 31, 1919, CCCXXVIII, 2161-2163.

¹⁸⁴Ibid., p. 2163.

¹⁸⁵Ibid., pp. 2154- 2156; 2168-2171.

guarantee. Therefore the Center Party, to avoid further conflict, accepted the school articles as agreed upon in the second compromise.¹⁸⁶ Gröber's speech brought the discussion of the school section to an end. The section, article by article, was submitted to vote and accepted by the majority of the Assembly.¹⁸⁷

The Center Party came under sharp criticism outside of the Assembly because of its acceptance of the "second Weimar school compromise."¹⁸⁸ The critics were dissatisfied with it; they went so far as to ask why the Centrists had not fought to retain the first compromise at the price of a rupture in the government coalition.¹⁸⁹ Mausbach in the name of the Centrist delegates replied by pointing to the fact that at least in a limited sense they had attained a constitutional guarantee for confessional schools.¹⁹⁰ Germania, on the other hand, complimented the Center Party on its efforts to win concessions for confessional schools. Considering the opposition of the liberal parties and the SPD, this news organ felt that the Centrists had contributed toward the attainment of a "peaceful solution to the school problem."¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., pp. 2171-2172.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., pp. 2174-2175.

¹⁸⁸ KV, August 5, 1919, #605.

¹⁸⁹

Ibid., Later Lauscher in the Prussian Landtag assembly on December 3, 1919, explained that such a rupture was just what the Center wanted to avoid. Session Report VI, as cited in Morsey, Zentrumspartei 1917-1923, p. 215.

¹⁹⁰ Mausbach in the KV, August 6, 1919, #608. For a defense of the Centrist position regarding the school compromise, see Joseph Mausbach, Religionsunterricht und Kirche: Aus den Beratungen des Weimarer Verfassungsausschusses (Freiburg-im-Breisgau: Herder and Co., 1922).

¹⁹¹ August 1, 1919, #345.

CHAPTER VI

DELIBERATIONS ON THE WEIMAR CONSTITUTION

CENTRIST VIEWS ON ECONOMIC ASPECTS

Centrist interests in the Grundrechte extended beyond civic, religious, and cultural rights to include social and economic aspects of life as well. This was evident in their active participation in the formation of Section V on "Economic Life," which represented a compromise between socialist principles, to which the Majority Socialists continued to pay lip-service, and the bourgeois ideology of the Centrists and the Democrats. Prior to the Revolution Germany had neither political nor economic autonomy. The upheaval of 1918 had resulted in the establishment of a political democracy. But the German people, war-wearied, jobless, hungry, and discontented, awaited not only political reforms, but the rectifying of economic and social abuses as well.¹

As the traditional champions of Social Catholicism, the Center had promised in its December election campaign to strive for "the development of the national economy in the service of social justice."² Accordingly, the Party promised to strive toward the attainment of an agricultural policy benefiting the public welfare. It proposed a "systematic promotion of agricultural production." As a further incentive to the farmer, the Center favored the

¹Lauscher, "Weimarer Verfassung," p. 116.

²"Leitsätze vom Dezember 1918," as cited in Ursachen und Folgen, III, 197.

"requisition of community lands and partitioning of landed estates, but with compensation." It likewise promised "sweeping housing reforms," and colonizing of interior areas, the protection of "individual professional organizations as necessary members of a healthy economic body, especially of an energetic middle class." Reflecting its bourgeois mentality, the Center Party upheld the right of private property and proposed to further a social policy for all with a strong emphasis upon the individual and the recognition of the human dignity. It would work toward a continuation of the "administration of justice in the sense of increased social justice and increased economic protection against profiteering, unfair competition, cheating, and exploitation of all kinds." The Party demanded "the effective care of all the disabled and wounded war veterans and their families." Regarding financial affairs the Party sought to win the support of the bourgeois group by circumventing the flight of capital abroad, by preventing depreciation in the value of war loans, and by advocating that taxes be apportioned according to each citizen's ability to pay.³

Like the Social Democrats the Center fought against the evils of capitalism;⁴ unlike them, the Centrists rejected Marxist socialism as a solution to the social and economic evils of the day. They supported instead a form of "Christian Socialism" or "Christian Solidarism" as advocated by the Jesuit Father Heinrich Pesch. His economic and social philosophy was published in a Flugschriften issued by the Centrist secretariat in Berlin as campaign

³Ibid.

⁴During the election campaign, the Center demanded a critical review of the leading capitalist spirit of materialism. See Germania, January 7, 1919, #10.

material.⁵ The solution to the social problems of the day, Pesch stated, was to be found in a new approach to the socio-economic life. His program of "Christian Solidarism" was an alternative to both capitalism and socialism. Society must be reorganized in such a way that its institutions will foster individual liberty while securing the common good. The principles which would secure such a result must govern social thinking if the world was to be restored to order and peace. Solidarism disavowed absolute freedom in the economic spirit just as it rejected a compulsory planned economy. Unlimited, unrestrained freedom could be seriously harmful to the attainment of the goal of economy. At the same time, Pesch recognized in freedom "a major, stimulating motive animating the development of abilities; thus it demands and protects every freedom which is in harmony with the common welfare and which can further the most favorable possible attainment of the goal of economy."⁶ Nevertheless, he warned, freedom must postulate justice.

While recognizing the right of private ownership, he opposed the absolute, irresponsible concept of private ownership, just as he rejected the socialistic concept of State ownership of all property. Pesch's central notion of property was that "the goods of the earth must serve all mankind." He advocated maximizing the distribution of private property, postulating that the State had the right and the duty to see that the property was used for the benefit of the common welfare. As a key to industrial harmony, he proposed the idea of codetermination ("Mitbestimmungsrecht") and of cooperatives, not strictly limited to economic and business associations, but applicable to all phases of

⁵Heinrich Pesch, Nicht kommunistischer, sondern christlicher Sozialismus! (Flugschriften der Zentrumspartei #4, Berlin: Dezember 23, 1918).

⁶Ibid., pp. 1-6.

public life—"to the relation of one citizen to another and to the State, the relation of professional associations in the State, of international associations of peoples in a world community embracing the whole family of God." He also favored profit-sharing schemes based upon distributing stock among the workers, and collective farming as a stimulus to the agrarian economy.⁷

At the big Centrist election rally held in Berlin on January 1, 1919, Dr. Anton Höfle, director of the Technicians' Union, dwelt at some length on some of these ideas. Höfle expressed the need of a modern "Sozialpolitik" for "mutual cooperation" between employer and employee, wages for laborers to allow for decent living standards.⁸ In spite of its roots of socialism, he spoke in favor of an "equitable distribution." He accepted the fact of personal ownership of property and that private initiative should be encouraged, but he denounced the system which he declared must be replaced by "communal administration." The Party was not a newcomer to the socio-economic field. It had shown its interest in social legislation and fiscal policies by attempting to strike an equitable balance between the interests of industry and labor. For the years the Party had developed a sound and coherent social philosophy which its delegates at the National Assembly hoped to embody in the Weimar Constitution. The Center was "especially well prepared" to

⁷Ibid., pp. 7-23.

⁸For the text of this speech, see Germania, January 2, 1919, #2.

⁹Ibid.

oppose the economic liberalism of the day and to fight the cause of social justice.¹⁰ Among its outstanding parliamentarians were Hitze, Trimborn, and Giesberts, all experienced social politicians well versed in labor relations. Others, newcomers to the parliamentary scene, like Brauns and Stegerwald, also had special professional experience as labor spokesmen.

These Centrists in the National Assembly provided the moderating force necessary in checking the more radical requests of the Social Democrats who demanded a complete overhauling of the German economic life. The Socialists as the traditional champions of the working man scorned the socio-economic proposals of the Centrists as mere "curatives for the symptoms of the social and economic evils of society."¹¹ Socialism was the Social Democrats' answer to these problems of the day. They postulated the abolition of private property and the confiscation by the State of all means of capitalist production.¹² Already on November 15, 1918, the Socialist government established by the Revolution introduced labor reforms. "Arbeitsgemeinschaften" or labor boards were set up by a joint agreement between labor unions and employers' associations whereby the two groups promised to work together for the solution of all economic and social questions involving industry and labor.¹³

But these reforms were considered merely transitional. Not satisfied

¹⁰Lauscher, op. cit., p. 187.

¹¹Ibid., p. 186.

¹²See Ebert's speech of December 1, 1918, as cited in Ursachen und Folgen, III, 155-156.

¹³"Vereinbarung für die Übergangswirtschaft zwischen Arbeitgeberbänden und Gewerkschaften vom 15. November 1918," as cited ibid., pp. 14-15.

with recognition of workers' organizations and collective bargaining, the Social Democrats attempted to establish an economic democracy which would secure for the working class the constitutional right of participating actively in the regulation of all economic questions. However, the Socialists differed among themselves as to how this was to be attained. The Majority Socialists favored the evolutionary socialization of Germany, whereas the Independent Socialists demanded the immediate establishment of the "dictatorship of the proletariat."¹⁴

The attempts of the Social Democrats to establish a socialist society in Germany met with opposition from the Centrist and other bourgeois delegates at Weimar. On February 21, 1919, Adam Stegerwald, speaking in the National Assembly for the Center Party, denounced Marxist Socialism as detrimental to the human dignity of man and to the right of private property. Contrasting Marxist Socialism with Christian Socialism, which he advocated, Stegerwald pointed out that the former operated on the principle "what's yours is mine"; whereas the latter supported the notion "what's mine is yours." Secondly, he noted, Marxist Socialism held a "perverted notion of the omnipotent power of the State over economic life"; but Christian Socialism advocated a "healthy national power" in the sense of cooperative efforts in business and labor. Thirdly, Christian Socialism "encouraged and assisted individual initiative"; whereas the other form inhibited it. To convert to a state of Socialism as envisioned by the Social Democrats would be harmful to the whole German economic structure.¹⁵

¹⁴Lauscher, op. cit., pp. 186-187.

¹⁵Verhandlungen, February 21, 1919, CCCXXVI, 269.

Later on in his speech, Stegerwald indicated that he disagreed with Gröber who said that the November Revolution was unnecessary. Stegerwald personally felt that it was inevitable due to the deplorable conditions at the end of October and the beginning of November. Hence, he emphasized, it was imperative that the government prepare definite economic and social reforms to remedy these conditions. As economic goals he proposed that the government build better homes, provide for larger families, have more adequate child and mother care, social security for the sick and the aged, care for the war veterans and war widows, higher wages for teachers, favorable labor laws and better conditions for the farmers. With the right legislation Germany would be able to check the economic evils of the day. He suggested that the government utilize the "Arbeitsgemeinschaft" as a model for the further betterment of the economic life. "We have agricultural boards, trade boards, commercial and labor associations for employers and employees in industry, business, and agriculture," he told the Assembly. "These associations can offer worthwhile preparation for proper social legislation."¹⁶

Mindful, therefore, of its heterogeneous electorate, the Center Party proposed new forms of economic life that would "serve the general welfare" as Father Pesch had advocated. It could not remain oblivious to the unrest of the post-war period. The Revolution had intensified the conflict between capitalism and socialism. From January through April, strikes were reported all over Germany. In February a delegation of miners from the Ruhr area came to Weimar to protest against the economic conditions.¹⁷

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Germania and KV carried numerous accounts of these strikes, especially

On March 7, 1919, the government had hastily introduced two pieces of legislation to the National Assembly—one on general socialization of key industries and another on the regulation of the coal industry. The government's spokesman, Majority Socialist Rudolf Wissel, in a scathing denunciation of capitalism, demanded immediate socialization of Germany. He rejected the right of private property as detrimental to the economic betterment of Germany and insisted upon nationalization of all German industries. The German workers, Wissel noted, would not be satisfied until they had a voice in the arrangement of affairs. Therefore, he proposed the establishment of workers' councils to supervise production, distribution, and the economic life of the nation, to socialize enterprises, and to contribute towards bringing about nationalization.¹⁸

By attempting socialization experiments the government at Weimar hoped to "revive the sick economy."¹⁹ Since the socialization legislation passed by the National Assembly was to be used by the constitutional committee as the basis for the economic section in the Grundrechte, a study of the Centrist views will be helpful in determining the influence they exerted on the formulation of the subsequent articles in Section V of the Grundrechte.

The discussion on socialization carried on by the National Assembly during the month of March indicated the delegates' awareness of the magnitude of

during the months of March and April, when both papers carried daily commentaries on strikes and "bloody street-fighting" in Berlin, Halle, Düsseldorf, Lichtenberg, Middle Germany, Stuttgart, Frankfurt, Württemberg, Brunswick, Saxony, Upper Silesia, Munich, Hamburg, and practically every industrial area in Germany.

¹⁸ Verhandlungen, March 7, 1919, CCCXXVI, 541.

¹⁹ KV, March 7, 1919, #187.

Germany's post-war problems. Brauns intimated on March 7 that the Revolution would be incomplete without specific social and economic reforms. Workers had been exploited by industry. The masses wanted not only increased wages, but also to be recognized as human beings endowed with human dignity. They were entitled to certain rights which could not be denied; they sought such guarantees as individual liberty to engage in work, commerce, and industry as well as the right of private property.²⁰ Brauns said he could not accept the wholesale socialization and nationalization of all industries advocated by the Social Democrats. Moreover, he warned against extreme forms of socialization. "There are other ways of correcting the economic and social evils," he told the National Assembly. "We must leave the door open for various forms of socialization and avoid a one-sided program."²¹

Similar views expressed by Heinrich Imbusch, another Centrist labor leader addressing the National Assembly on the following day (March 8), indicated that he abhorred the evils of capitalism as much as the Social Democrats. As director of the Catholic Miners' Association, he demanded that the government rectify earlier mistakes regarding their lack of responsibility to the miners. Too often, Imbusch said, had the worker been thought of merely for what he could produce and not for what he was. Labor should no longer be treated as a commodity. Human dignity must be respected; laborers must not be exploited. The "unjust and unearned surplus revenue" gained by capitalist production must be abolished. Nationalization of the coal industry would secure

²⁰Verhandlungen, March 7, 1919, CCCXXVI, 551-552.

²¹Ibid., p. 553.

certain protection for the miners; therefore, he favored it. Nevertheless, he was not out for complete nationalization of all industries.²²

Giesberts, speaking on the same day, also emphasized his dissatisfaction with the economic conditions existent under the empire and spoke in favor of reforms. "If the existing economy had been satisfactory, then the desires for change would not have been so strong."²³ Moreover, he pointed out, "the changes of the Herrenstandpunkts in industry were too late in coming . . . and we now face a fait accompli, that the temper and demands of the masses must be met."²⁴ Nonetheless, like the other Centrists Giesberts rejected the proposals of the Socialists for a complete state-controlled economy. He agreed to support a general plan for nationalization of key industries but cautioned that it must be done slowly and that each case must be scrutinized very carefully before a decision was reached. He stressed the risks involved in such new socialist experiments and for the time being saw no immediate necessity for further nationalization.²⁵

Throughout the discussion of the socialization and nationalization laws the Centrists upheld the notion of human dignity and the liberty of the indi-

²²Ibid., March 8, 1919, CCCXXVI, 583-584.

²³Ibid., p. 591.

²⁴Ibid., p. 592.

²⁵Ibid., p. 591. Erzberger differed from his fellow Centrists on this point. He advocated a hasty nationalization of all public facilities. In the cabinet session of March 19, 1919, Erzberger advised that the gas, waterworks, electricity, and street cars be nationalized "as soon as possible." Charles Burdick and Ralph H. Lutz, ed. The Political Institutions of the German Revolution, 1918-1919 (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1966), p. 266.

vidual, and wanted no limitations placed upon this principle.²⁶ But the Majority Socialist Wissell rejected this notion; individuals had no rights except that of serving the State.²⁷ A coalition of all the representatives of the bourgeois parties organized against the Socialist proposal and introduced a provision concerning the principle of liberty of employment which was incorporated into the socialization law passed on March 23, 1919.²⁸ These provisions read:

Every German has without prejudice to his personal liberty the moral duty so to use his intellectual and physical powers as is demanded by the welfare of the community.

The labor force as the highest economic good deserves the special protection of the government. Every German shall have the opportunity to earn his living by economic labor. So long as suitable employment can not be procured for him, his maintenance will be provided for. Details will be regulated by special national laws. . . .²⁹

Where a need existed to benefit the general economy of the nation, the Center Party took a realistic view as in the case of the legislation for national regulation of the coal industry. Because the mining industry was the backbone of German economy, it was necessary that the government "come to the aid of the miners" to relieve their plight.³⁰ Hence, the Party supported the Social Democrats in nationalization of the coal industry. But even while it

²⁶For an appraisal of the Center's views, see KV, March 7, 1919, #187; also March 8, 1919, #190.

²⁷Verhandlungen, March 7, 1919, CCCXXVI, 541.

²⁸KV, March 10, 1919, #193.

²⁹Cited in Ursachen und Folgen, III, 267-268. Articles 157 and 163 of the Weimar Constitution were formed from these provisions.

³⁰Burlage in the National Assembly, March 12, 1919, Verhandlungen, CCCXXVI, 713.

did so, the Center explicitly stated that it did not favor State ownership of medium and small businesses.³¹

The socialization law of March 23 and the law for the nationalization of the coal industry passed on the same day were utilized by the constitutional committee as the basis of discussion on the economic section when the committee began its work on it at the end of March. Spahn and Gröber were apprehensive about the strong socialization tendencies exhibited by the Social Democrats and wished to check any further efforts towards socialization or nationalization of industries. The Centrists told the members of the committee that the laws of March 23 had sufficient provisions to satisfy the needs of social and economic reform. The Centrists also insisted that the regulation of economic life must be compatible with the principles of justice in order to provide decent living conditions for all.³² They feared the movement toward socialism would become too extreme and attempted to moderate the demands of the Socialists.³³

With the laws of March 23 as their guide, therefore, the constitutional committee began formulating the articles for the economic section. Article 151 provided: "The regulation of economic life must conform to the principles of justice, with the aim of attaining humane conditions of existence for all." The Center cooperated with the Social Democrats in checking the evils of eco-

³¹See Martin Irl's interpellation in the National Assembly on March 27, 1919, *ibid.*, p. 794.

³²Protocol, as cited in Morsey, Zentrumspartei, 1917-1923, p. 225.

³³See Lorenz Zach, 50 Jahre Zentrum: Wirtschafts-und-Sozialpolitik im Reichstag, 1871-1920 (Berlin: Germania, 1921), p. 240 for an evaluation of the Centrists' efforts in the constitutional committee. See also, Germania, "Social Democrats and Socialism," May 21, 1919, #228, p. 2.

conomic liberalism by guaranteeing "decent living conditions for all."³⁴ In its efforts to safeguard the right of private property, however, the Centrists clashed with the Social Democrats over Article 153. Hitze insisted upon retaining the provision in Preuss' original constitutional draft which said: "The right of private property is guaranteed."³⁵ The Social Democrats, nonetheless, placed limitations upon it by adding, "its nature and limits are defined by law."³⁶ They also added a paragraph to this article allowing for expropriation of property for "the benefit of the community." Hitze counter-balanced this by stipulating that it must be done "by due process of law," "with just compensation," and "only in case of extreme necessity."³⁷

As a result of this conflict, the constitutional committee formulated several articles involving property rights. In the beginning of June after the subcommittee had presented the completed Grundrechte to the constitutional committee for approval, Articles 153, 154, and 156 indicated the compromise finally arrived at by the members.

The right of private property is guaranteed by the Constitution. Its nature and limits are defined by law.

Expropriation of property may take place . . . by due process of law. There shall be just compensation. . . . The property of the States, municipalities, and associations of public utility may be taken by the Reich only upon payment of compensation.

Property rights imply property duties. Exercise thereof shall at the same time serve the general welfare.³⁸

Article 156 culled almost completely from the socialization law included

³⁴Lauscher, op. cit., p. 189.

³⁵See Preuss' original draft as cited in Ursachen und Folgen, III, 433-434.

³⁶Protocol, as cited in Lauscher, op. cit., p. 190.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Article 153.

Hitze's proposal "in case of extreme necessity":

The Reich may by law, without impairment of the right to compensation, and with a proper application of the regulations relating to expropriation, transfer to public ownership private business enterprises adapted for socialization. The Reich itself, the States, or the municipalities may take part in the management of business enterprises and associations, or secure a dominating influence therein in any other way.

Furthermore, in case of extreme necessity the Reich, if it is in the interest of collectivism, may combine by law business enterprises and associations on the basis of administrative autonomy, in order to insure the cooperation of all producing elements of the people, to give to employers and employees a share in the management, and to regulate the production, preparation, distribution, utilization and pecuniary valuation, as well as the import and export, of economic goods upon collectivistic principles. . . .³⁹

One of the biggest problems confronting the constitutional committee was the question of the Council system. Long before the November Revolution, the Social Democrats had advocated the establishment within factories of councils representing the workers and sharing with the employers the power to determine working conditions. The idea of a system of councils acquired a new impetus shortly after the establishment of the republic.⁴⁰ But it encountered the opposition of the trade union executives, especially the Christian Trade Unionists, who feared that the strong position which was theirs as a result of the capital-labor accord of November 15, 1918, might be jeopardized.⁴¹

Nevertheless, the labor strike crisis in March convinced the government that it must take steps to satisfy the discontented workers. Accordingly, on April 6, 1919, the government proposed that a specially constructed committee of economics be appointed to prepare a system of labor law based on the

³⁹Article 156.

⁴⁰The Reich economic minister Rudolf Wissel suggested it to the National Assembly on March 7, 1919, cf., p. 238.

⁴¹protocol, Ziegler, op. cit., pp. 57-58.

principles of social democracy. The committee was to concern itself with a number of matters. These included the creation of workers' councils in the factories, the establishments of labor courts, and the formulation of collective bargaining contracts. But before the special committee got under way, the constitutional committee took matters into its own hands and outlined provisions embodying the government's proposals of April 6 as the basis for Article 165.⁴²

While the constitutional committee was deliberating on the councils' system, a change became evident in the view of the Christian Trade Unionists. Although they feared a dictatorship of the councils, some of the more realistic members agreed that there was something just and legitimate in such theories and indicated their willingness to consider the possibilities of the councils' system. Giesberts, who held an important position in the Christian Trades Union, wrote near the end of April:

We have not sufficiently appreciated and, above all, we have realized too late the degree of sound truth in the idea of the councils. The reason for this is that this idea has come to us from Russia as a political conception, and also because it arrived accompanied by all the tragic manifestations of the Russian Revolution. If the system of councils assures to the workers the right to participate more completely in the organization and development of economic life, then it cannot help but contribute, if this is done in a reasonable manner, to the reawakening of the love of work and the establishment of a close community of interests between employers and employees.⁴³

The first big struggle over the councils' system came on June 2 after the subcommittee had returned the Grundrechte to the constitutional committee for its second and third readings. The Independent Socialist Hugo Haas argued for

⁴²Ibid., 142.

⁴³Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung, April 29, 1919, as cited in Brunet, op. cit., p. 243.

the "dictatorship of the proletariat" and rejected the notion of the councils' system as not going far enough on the road to the establishment of a socialist republic. He preferred substituting the soviet system for the councils' system.⁴⁴ The Majority Socialist Hugo Sinzheimer, on the other hand, dismissing the idea of party or class dictatorship as too impractical for the moment, pointed to the limitations of democratic forms of government and to the grave danger of tension between the political system and the social conditions. He strongly advocated the system of councils as a traditional stage to the attainment of a complete socialist state. He argued that political democracy required complementary social and economic institutions with the Reichstag as the organ of political democracy and the councils as the agencies of economic democracy.⁴⁵

Article 165 as outlined by the committee provided both for an Economic Council which was to be the supreme organ of the whole German collective economy, and for Work Councils which were to allow workers the right to participate in the shaping and determining of conditions of labor. Hitze, Brauns, and Stegerwald who represented the Center Party on economic affairs in the constitutional committee offered to accept the councils system as provided for in Article 165 on condition the system did nothing of which the unions disapproved. They wanted the assurance that the Work Councils would not replace the trade unions and labor associations. Hitze proposed that "the district economic councils and the National Economic Council shall be so constituted that all substantial vocational groups are represented therein according to

⁴⁴Protocol, as cited in Ziegler, op. cit., p. 142.

⁴⁵Ibid.

their economic and social importance."⁴⁶ In this way the Centrists gained for the trade unionists a constitutional guarantee that they would be given legal recognition as the voice of the workers. The completed form of Article 165 reads as follows:

Workers and employees shall be called upon to cooperate with employers, and on an equal footing, in the regulation of wages and working conditions, as well as in the entire field of the economic development of the forces of production. . . .

Workers and employees shall, for the purpose of looking after their economic and social interests, be given legal representation in factory workers' councils, as well as in district workers' councils . . . and in a Workers' Council of the Reich.

The district workers' councils and the Reich Workers' Council meet together with the representatives of the employers and with other interested classes of people in district economic councils and in a National Economic Council for the purpose of performing joint economic tasks and cooperating in the execution of the laws of socialization. The district economic councils and the Economic Council of the Reich shall be so constituted that all substantial vocational groups are represented therein according to their economic and social importance.

The national ministry shall, before proposing drafts of politico-social and politico-economic bills of fundamental importance, submit them to the Economic Council of the Reich. The Economic Council of the Reich shall itself have the right to initiate drafts of such bills. If the national ministry fails to assent, it shall nevertheless present the draft to the Reichstag accompanied by an expression of its views.⁴⁷

The complete Section V of the Grundrechte was accepted without change by the majority parties in the National Assembly when it was presented for deliberation on July 21, 1919. The Independent Socialists and the conservative parties rejected it, but for different reasons. The Right feared the gains made in socialization, while the Independent Socialists felt socialization had not gone far enough.⁴⁸ The Centrist Trade Unionists expressed their satisfac-

⁴⁶Protocol, as cited in Lauscher, op. cit., p. 190.

⁴⁷Article 165.

⁴⁸Verhandlungen, July 21, 1919, CCCXXVIII, 1755-1757.

tion with the provisions because they guaranteed the working class better conditions of labor.⁴⁹ Brauns praised the efforts of the constitutional committee in preparing articles which allowed for social and economic changes without violating the rights of private property. In the name of the Centrists he told of his Party's acceptance of the section as a "tremendous progressive step" in labor legislation which would work toward reconstructing the economic and social order in Germany.⁵⁰

Like many of the other sections in the Weimar Constitution, the economic section reflected the compromise made between the coalition parties. A number of provisions contained the more moderate views of the Centrists and the Democrats. Economic liberty of the individual was explicitly assured.⁵¹ Private property and the right of inheritance were guaranteed;⁵² expropriation was to be permissible only if it redounded to the public good: "The right of private property is guaranteed by the Constitution. . . . Expropriation of property may take place . . . by due process of law. . . ."⁵³

Nevertheless, a number of provisions in Section V reflected the doctrinaire radicalism of the country's strongest party. The exercise of property rights, it was stipulated, must be at the same time serving the public good.⁵⁴

⁴⁹See the speeches of Ehrhardt and Brauns, ibid., pp. 1784-1789; 1795.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 1795

⁵¹Article 151.

⁵²Article 154.

⁵³Article 153.

⁵⁴Ibid.

The distribution and use of the soil were to be controlled by the State in such a way as "to prevent abuse and to promote the object of assuring to every German a healthful habitation. . . ."55 The country's natural resources and "all economically useful forces of nature" were to be placed under the supervision of the State.⁵⁶ The Reich was authorized to transfer to public ownership "private economic enterprises suitable for socialization."⁵⁷ It was also empowered to combine them "in the interests of collectivism."⁵⁸ Every German was to be accorded an opportunity to earn a livelihood "by productive work."⁵⁹ The national government was to exert itself in behalf of the international regulation of labor's legal status "to the end that the entire working class of the world may enjoy a universal minimum of social rights."⁶⁰

Notwithstanding the strong efforts of the Social Democrats to give Germany a socialist republic, the Centrists and the Democrats had managed to check any extreme inroads of socialism. Many of the Centrist promises made in the January election campaign were fulfilled in the economic section of the Grundrechte. Later, Father Hitze, surveying the accomplishments of the National Assembly, referred to the cooperative idea expressed in the constitution as the "final fulfillment" of a long-standing desire of the Center's socio-econ-

⁵⁵Article 155.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Article 156.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Article 163.

⁶⁰Article 162.

omic program.⁶¹

After months of tedious discussion, debate, and struggle the Weimar Constitution had gradually emerged in its completed form. It was a document of compromises which indicated gains and losses sustained by each party.⁶² On July 31, 1919, it received the final vote of the National Assembly.⁶³ The final vote for acceptance was far from unanimous. The number of members present was 338. Of their votes, 262 were in favor, 75 were opposed, and 1 (Centrist Johann Richter's) withheld.⁶⁴ The Centrist vote was almost unanimous. Table VI shows that of the 90 Centrists listed,⁶⁵ 79 cast their vote for acceptance, 7 members were absent (1 because of illness), 1 was excused, and 1 abstained. The only dissenting vote was that of the Bavarian extremist, Georg Heim. The other Bavarians, while not too enthusiastic about the centralizing tendencies evident in the constitution, voted along with their fellow Centrists for acceptance in order not to break the united Party front.⁶⁶

In reporting the results of the vote and summarizing the achievements of

⁶¹KV, January 8, 1920, #19.

⁶²At the Parteitag of the Rhenish Centrists in Cologne on September 16, 1919, Joseph Hess announced, "Die Signatur der neuen Zeit ist nun einmal das Kompromiss, die Kompromisspolitik grossen Stils." Report, as cited in Morsey, Zentrumspartei 1917-1923, p. 230.

⁶³Verhandlungen, July 31, 1919, CCCXXVIII, 2197-2199.

⁶⁴Ibid. The German National People's Party, the German People's Party, and the Independent Socialists—the extreme Right and the extreme Left—voted against the Weimar Constitution.

⁶⁵Josef Kubetzka was not on the official list, although he was listed when votes were taken a few days previous to July 31.

⁶⁶Schwend, Bayern, pp. 103-104.

TABLE VI

CENTER VOTE ON THE CONSTITUTION, JULY 31, 1919

Delegates	District	Vote	Delegates	District	Vote
Allekotte, Joseph	Koblenz	Yes	Langwost, Heinrich	Hanover	Yes
Andre, Joseph	Württemberg	Yes	Legendre, Peter	Koblenz	Yes
Astor, Jakob	Koblenz	Yes	Leicht, Johann	Franken	Yes
Becker, Johannes	Arnsberg	Ill	Lensing, Felix	Düsseldorf	Absent
Becker, Josef	Nassau	Absent	Marx, Wilhelm	Düsseldorf	Yes
Bell, Johannes	Düsseldorf	Yes	Mausbach, Josef	Münster	Yes
Bergmann, Theodore	Düsseldorf	Yes	Maxen, Wilhelm	Hanover	Yes
Beyerle, Konrad	Franken	Yes	Mayer, Wilhelm	Bavaria	Yes
Bitta, Joseph	Oppeln	Yes	Müller, Richard	Fulda	Yes
Blank, Lorenz	Hanover	Yes	Nacken, Josef	Köln	Yes
Blum, Johannes	Köln	Yes	Neuhaus, Agnes	Arnsberg	Yes
Bolz, Eugen	Württemberg	Yes	Neyses, Matthias	Koblenz	Yes
Brauns, Heinrich	Köln	Yes	Ollmert, Karl	Koblenz	Yes
von Brentano di Tremezzo, Otto	Nassau	Yes	Otte, Waldemar	Leignitz	Yes
Burlage, Eduard	Aurich	Yes	Pfeiffer, Maximilian	Berlin	Yes
Colshorn, Herman	Hanover	Yes	Puschmann, Alois	Breslau	Yes
Diez, Carl	Baden	Yes	Rheinländer, Anton	Arnsberg	Yes
Dransfeld, Hedwig	Düsseldorf	Yes	Richter, Johann	Pfalz	Abstained
Erhardt, Franz	Oppeln	Yes	Sagawe, Robert	Posen	Yes
Ersing, Joseph	Baden	Yes	Schefbeck, Josef	Bavaria	Yes
Erzberger, Matthias	Württemberg	Yes	Schiffer, Mattias	Münster	Absent
Farwick, Wilhelm	Köln	Absent	Schirmer, Karl	Bavaria	Yes
Fehrenbach, Konstantin	Baden	Yes	Schlack, Peter	Düsseldorf	Yes
Fleischer, Paul	East Berlin	Excused	Schmitt, Adam J.	Hessen	Ill
Frerker, Wilhelm	Münster	Yes	Schmitz, Maria	Koblenz	Yes
Gerstenberger, Liborius	Franken	Yes	Schneider, Alexander	Franken	Yes
Giesberts, Johann	Düsseldorf	Yes	Schümmer, Wilhelm	Prussia	Yes
Gilsing, Anton	Arnsberg	Yes	Schwarz, Jean Albert	Nassau	Yes
Gröber, Adolf	Württemberg	Yes	Schwarzer, Rudolf	Bavaria	Yes
Grunau, August	Breslau	Absent	Spahn, Peter	Köln	Yes
Hagemann, Joseph	Aurich	Yes	Stapfer, Michael	Bavaria	Yes
Hebel, Benedikt	Bavaria	Yes	Stegerwald, Adam	Köln	Yes
Heim, Georg	Bavaria	No	Strzoda, Franz	Oppeln	Yes
Herold, Karl	Münster	Yes	Szceponik, Thomas	Oppeln	Yes
Herschel, Johannes	Oppeln	Yes	Tauscher, Eugen	Bavaria	Yes
Hitze, Franz	Düsseldorf	Yes	Teusch, Christine	Köln	Yes
Hofmann, Hermann	Pfalz	Absent	Tremmel, Peter	Franken	Yes
Imbusch, Heinrich	Arnsberg	Yes	Trimborn, Karl	Köln	Yes
Irl, Martin	Bavaria	Yes	Ulitzka, Karl	Oppeln	Yes
Jaud, Josef	Bavaria	Yes	Weber, Helene	Düsseldorf	Yes
Joos, Josef	Düsseldorf	Yes	Wieber, Franz	Düsseldorf	Yes
Kaas, Ludwig	Koblenz	Yes	Wirth, Joseph	Baden	Yes
Koch, Johann	Münster	Yes	Zawadzki, Konstantin	Oppeln	Yes
Kossmann, Bartholomew	Koblenz	Yes	Zehnter, Johann	Baden	Yes
Kreutz, Franz	Münster	Yes	Zettler, Maria	Bavaria	Yes

the National Assembly, Germania expressed some concern about the future of Germany under the new constitution. It wondered whether the majority parties would be influential enough to induce the 75 opponents to the constitution to accept or at least to acquiesce in the future legislation needed to supplement the basic law of the land.⁶⁷ The Center Party pledged its wholehearted support to stand by its coalition partners in upholding the Weimar Constitution; for, as Germania pointed out, the Center had always been a constitutional party and intended to remain one.⁶⁸

The Center Party had achieved essentially what it had set out to do at the beginning of the year. It had sustained the loss of some of its membership as a result of its realistic attitude towards the Versailles Treaty, and some of its conservative members, disgusted with the more liberal tendencies of the delegates at Weimar, began leaving the Party. Moreover, in late May and early June there appeared a rift in relations between the Protestant and Catholic members of the Center Party. The German National People's Party capitalized upon this rift and began luring the discontented element to their ranks. Many of the prominent Protestant members who had joined the Center after the Revolution, deserted to the DNVP. For example, the Protestant pastor of Berlin, Theodor Haecker, was quoted as referring to his support of the "Christliche Volkspartei" as a mistake.⁶⁹ Germania felt compelled to warn its readers to be on their guard against the concerted efforts of the DNVP to

⁶⁷August 2, 1919, #346.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹KV, June 29, 1919, #550.

win recruits from the Centrist camp. For all serious-minded Christians there was only one truly Christian Party based on sound principles and that was the Center Party which could never "accept the clear slogans of chauvinistic extravagance and unchristian revengefulness" of the DNVP.⁷⁰

True to its traditions, the Center had striven to incorporate its Christian Weltanschauung into the deliberations at Weimar. The delegates had cause for satisfaction "for they had fulfilled completely their duties and obligations."⁷¹ Tokens of gratitude and appreciation were offered the Center Party for its role in the Weimar deliberations. At the first Provinzialtag of the Berlin Center Party on September 21, 1919, Frhr. von Rechenberg gave a public tribute of "thanks and acknowledgement" to the delegates for their cooperation in the constitutional work, and approved the Party's position on "the questions of constitutional and cultural policies."⁷² The bishops of Germany, gathered at Fulda on August 20, 1919, for a Church conference, issued a public declaration thanking the Centrist delegates for their arduous work in defending Church principles despite strong opposition. Although the bishops spoke against a few specific articles concerning Church affairs and education which they did not favor,⁷³ they nevertheless acknowledged that through the sole efforts of the Centrist delegates, the original draft of the constitution regarding religious questions had been "improved and supplemented."⁷⁴

⁷⁰July 4, 1919, #298.

⁷¹Germania, September 22, 1919, #434.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Articles 10/1; 137; 138; 143-149.

⁷⁴"Bishops' Declaration of August 20, 1919," as cited in Bachem, Zentrums-
partei, VIII, 303-304.

Later, Mausbach at the first Reichsparteitag of the Center Party on January 22, 1920, referred to a statement he had received from "a high Church dignitary" which thanked the Centrist delegates of the constitutional committee in the name of the Church "for their earnest and honorable labor."⁷⁵ The Centrist delegates themselves spoke with satisfaction of their work. Wilhelm Marx in an article describing the Center's position on the Kulturfragen concluded it with the statement: "The Center can in truth and conscientious conviction say of itself that it has performed its entire duty and obligation (Pflicht und Schuldigkeit)."⁷⁶

⁷⁵Report, January 22, 1920, as cited in Ibid., p. 304.

⁷⁶"Hat die Zentrumsparthei in Kulturfragen versagt?" Westdeutsche Arbeiterzeitung, May 29, 1920, #22, as cited in Morsey, Zentrumsparthei 1917-1923, p. 233.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The Center's record of political achievement during the relatively short period from November 1918 to August 1919 is an impressive one. In the face of difficulties and obstacles, the Party labored to secure for its electorate guarantees for the adequate protection of civil and religious rights. Under its left-oriented leadership, it had adjusted realistically to the chaotic conditions of the immediate post-war period in Germany.

Prior to the Revolution, conservatism had always been a basic characteristic of the Center. Its leadership, consisting of bureaucrats, landowners, clergymen, and professional men, had supplied the political ideas for the Party. But a left-oriented faction within the Party, more closely attuned to the demands of the masses, gradually began to exert its influence. Assisted by the growing discontent, war-weariness, and demoralizing conditions in Germany in the last years of the war, this group under the leadership of Matthias Erzberger was able to veer the Party toward a coalition with the parties of the Left in July 1917. Conservative, aristocratic Centrist leaders, however, suspicious of the restless proletarian element and fearful of the outcome of democratic ideals, disapproved of parliamentary reforms and continued to support the monarchy and the parties of the Right. Later, in

October 1918, nevertheless, the left-wing faction of the Center Party succeeded in obtaining, albeit reluctantly, the Center Party's cooperation for constitutional reforms which converted Germany to a constitutional monarchy.

Unfortunately, these political reforms were too late in coming. Disorganized and demoralized, succumbing to riots and radical agitation, the imperial regime in Germany gave way. Within a few weeks the age-old thrones and dynasties came toppling down, and overnight, so to speak, Germany witnessed the establishment of a socialist republic with workers' and soldiers' councils in ascendancy.

Most of the conservative leaders of the Centrist Reich's committee were unprepared for these revolutionary events of early November 1918. Up to the very day of the Kaiser's abdication, they had stolidly supported the monarchy. Unable to reconcile themselves to the new German Republic this conservative "old-guard" withdrew from Berlin disillusioned and retired to their home states. They were no match for the type of leadership demanded by the perilous times.

In the midst of this crisis, the democratically oriented faction of the Center came to the fore, assumed the challenging position of leadership in the Party, and prepared for the coming election of a National Assembly which was to decide the political fate of Germany. To provide greater cohesiveness for the various factions within the Party, a reorganization of the Center's national structure was arranged by establishing a general-secretariat in Berlin. Following this, the Centrist leadership prepared to meet the demands of the "new times," proposing a reexamination of the Party's fundamental principles. Already by the middle of November, several plans for a new party program had been submitted to the Centrist Berlin headquarters for consideration.

Divergent shades of conservatism, liberalism, and radical social reform were evidenced in the proposals. The left-oriented Cologne Plan called for a completely new organization of the Center's program; the more moderate Berlin Plan suggested a readjustment of party principles to cope with the changing times. Both programs offered similar plans for a democratic interconfessional party structure. A further suggestion that the Party's name be changed to signify its intention to "come out of its tower," met with conflicting opinions within each group.

Internal tensions already apparent prior to 1918 were accentuated by the Revolution, thus making party solidarity and unanimity difficult to maintain. Due to its heterogeneous composition, the Center Party had to cope with problems in reconciling all its socio-economic interests into a single acceptable party program. The majority found it hard to relinquish allegiance to the old monarchy and accept a republican structure for Germany, but expediency necessitated submersion of emotional attachment to the old state structure. In order to save the Reich's unity and overcome the radical disruptive forces rampant in Germany, it was necessary to recognize the Republic as "the only possible vehicle to get out of the chaos of revolution." After a month's deliberation, a national Centrist committee drew up a list of "guiding principles" which was to serve as the Center's political program in the election campaign for the National Assembly. These Leitsätze of December 1918 revolutionized the Party's political theories while retaining the basic principles of the old Soest Program. Assuming a realistic view of the revolutionary events of November, the Center Party abandoned its traditional allegiance to the monarchy. Now called the "Christliche Volkspartei," the Party accepted the

Revolution as a fait accompli, and entered the election campaign as a supporter of a democratic republic.

A deciding factor in facilitating unanimity among the divergent interests of the Center was the radical anti-religious actions of the revolutionary government. The appointment of the Independent Socialist Adolf Hoffmann as Minister of Culture brought a stream of protest from the Catholic electorate. The Center as traditional champion of religious rights was forced to submerge its various social, political, and economic differences to meet the challenge of Hoffmann's new Kulturkampf. Capitalizing upon the religious issue, the Party had managed to forget local differences and to present a united front. But the image of solidarity was deceiving; Party unanimity did not actually exist. The right-wing conservatives, content for the time being to remain in the background, awaited post-election developments.

The results of the National Assembly election were gratifying to the Center Party. Despite the recent loss of Germany's densely populated Catholic frontier area, the "Christliche Volkspartei" emerged from the first national election ordeal of the new democratic state as an important political factor. Receiving the second highest number of votes, the Party obtained ninety-one seats in the National Assembly. As in previous election returns, the delegates represented a cross-section of the varied socio-economic composition of the Party. Yet, there was a marked difference in the strength of some of the groups represented. Conspicuous for its absence was the usual representation of the conservative wing. On the other hand, a definite gain was noted in the representation from labor. Nevertheless, despite an increase in liberal representation in the Centrist delegates to the Assembly, the Party remained basi-

cally a middle class party with a slight leaning toward the left in its socio-economic views.

If the Party membership displayed little enthusiasm for the republic, it was almost with repugnance that it viewed acceptance of an invitation from the SPD who, failing a majority of the election returns, were forced to ask the Centrists and Democrats to join with them in a coalition government. The election campaign had stressed so forcefully the difference between the Centrist Christian Weltanschauung and Marxist Socialism of the SPD that cooperation with them seemed illogical. But the Centrist delegates could not remain impervious to the seriousness of the times which demanded a strong stable government for Germany. Since this could be achieved only through a coalition of the three major parties, practical-minded statesmen of the Center Party advocated that civic responsibility and concern for the welfare of Germany be set above party interests, and that the delegates, despite their repugnance, take steps to join the coalition. The decision was not an easy one, nor did it win full acceptance; the vote of the reactionary Bavarian particularist remained negative even when the majority of delegates agreed to collaborate with their erstwhile enemies.

As an active member of the first Weimar Coalition, the Center Party was faced with the responsibility of obtaining favorable peace terms for Germany—a most difficult task in view of the truculent attitude of the victors. Although the Party's reaction to the harsh peace terms of the Allies was as vehement as that of the most avid Nationalist, the realistic appraisal given by the Centrists to the alternatives confronting defeated Germany, compelled the Party to side with the SPD and vote for acceptance of the Versailles Treaty. When others shirked the responsibility of negotiating with the Allies and

accepting the peace terms, the Center holding a pivotal parliamentary position brought about the end of the futile stalemate and saved their countrymen the horrors of further Allied occupation and the hardships of a continued blockade.

Another major responsibility assumed by the Centrist delegates was the task of cooperating in formulating a democratic constitution for Germany. The Weimar Constitution, adopted on July 31, 1919, and promulgated on August 11, 1919, was a unique document in many respects. Although the form of government was a republic, it was designated as the German Reich with all its imperial associations. Conflicting interests represented in the National Assembly were evident in the number of compromises upon which the Constitution was based. One of the issues was that of the centralized state versus the federal state. In the end the Centrist federative principle was retained. However, exponents of a unitary solution did not emerge empty-handed for the national government gained more power than held by its imperial predecessor. Legislative authority vested exclusively in the Reich was enormous, embracing such things as foreign relations, national defense, tariff and monetary policies, citizenship, and communication. Moreover, the Reich was given unlimited power to deal with a great many other matters, such as civil and criminal law, judicial procedure, poor relief, the press, the protection of mothers and children, public health, labor, expropriations and socializations, commerce, banking, industry, railways and internal navigation, and theaters. It could lay down "fundamental principles" in regard to education, the right of religious bodies, land distribution, housing, and the taxing of the Länder.

Executive power was vested in the president of the Reich who was to be elected directly by the people for a term of seven years with the possibility

of re-election. Any German at least thirty-five years of age was eligible for the office. The executive was given power to make treaties and alliances, appoint and remove the chancellor and other members of the national government, given supreme command of the armed forces, could dissolve the Reichstag, and subject any law enacted by parliament to a popular referendum. Above all, he was given broad emergency powers under Article 48. "In the event that the public order and security are seriously disturbed or endangered, the Reich President may take the measures necessary for their restoration, intervening, if necessary, with the aid of the armed forces."¹ For this purpose he could abrogate temporarily, wholly, or in part, the fundamental rights laid down in the Constitution.

Legislative power was vested in a bicameral body. Members of the lower house, the Reichstag, were to be elected for a maximum of four years by secret, universal suffrage and according to proportional representation. The Reichstag was the supreme expression of the popular will and the sovereign legislative power. It initiated and enacted laws subject to a suspensive veto. The cabinet was responsible to the Reichstag.

The Reichsrat, the upper house, represented the German states (Länder). Each state was to have at least one member in the Reichsrat. The memory of pre-war Prussian control of the Bundesrat had led to a stipulation that no one state could control more than two-fifths of the council—a provision fully supported by the Center Party. The Reichsrat could initiate legislation together with the cabinet. If it disapproved a measure passed by the Reichstag, it could return the bill to that body; the latter could override the veto, by

¹Article 48.

a two-thirds vote. The Reichsrat was to enjoy less power than it had in the Bismarckian Reich.

The most unique feature of the Weimar Constitution and one on which the Center exerted much effort and influence was the second major division—the Grundrechte. Looking back to the days of 1848, the makers of the constitution incorporated into their document the freedoms that had been sought in that revolutionary year. All Germans were declared equal before the law. They were free to travel or to emigrate from Germany. Freedom of speech was guaranteed and there would be no censorship. Communications and the home were guaranteed as sacred. The constitution went into detail not only on the critical question of civil rights but also on economic, social, and religious matters. Practically every facet of German life was treated in the constitution. A letter-perfect document, the Weimar Constitution was too unwieldy to be practical.

Unable to achieve its goals in all affairs, the Centrists compromised on lesser issues in order to gain concessions which the Party considered essential to its Christian Weltanschauung—avoidance of a complete separation of Church and State, protection of the Church privileges, a constitutional guarantee of confessional schools, and other fundamental rights which the Party sought over the opposition of its more liberal coalition partners. Much of the success of the Center Party during the nine months under discussion was due to the capable leadership of such men as: Gröber, Erzberger, Trimborn, Fehrenbach, Mausbach, Brauns, Spahn, Hitze, and Marx. Though representing different shades of political thought, these men generally united in a positive policy for the Party. Skilled in group diplomacy, occasionally ruthless, and always flexible, they were political realists, who never shirked responsibility regardless of

the price.

Despite dynamic leadership, unanimity within the Party was never fully attained. The discontented conservative monarchists within the Party subjected the leadership to sharp criticism, especially after the acceptance of the Versailles Treaty.² With the adoption of the Weimar Constitution on August 11, 1919, the storm of criticism broke with sudden fury. In Catholic circles, in the Party itself, everywhere, conflicting views on the Constitution were being aired.³ A new struggle had emerged, a Verfassungstreit, not unlike the Zentrumsstreit of a few years previous. The published document of the Constitution was subjected to close scrutiny, and every new discovery of compromise was greeted with the stinging lash of criticism.⁴

Staunch monarchists found it difficult to reconcile their former views on monarchical power to the new democratic ideals. The Center's acceptance of the compromise concerning the national colors was the focal point of controversy for disappointed monarchists' reproaches. These secret supporters of the monarchy saw the last symbol of the old stolid monarchical regime—"the proud old German flag under which millions of our best people have gone to victory

²A. W. Hopmann, "Das Zentrum von heute," Historisch-politische Blätter für das katholische Deutschland, CLXIII (1919), pp. 232-243. See also Das Zentrum auf Irrwegen? Auch eine Kriegsbilanz von einem rheinischen Zentrumsmann (Essen: Volksverlag, 1919,). Both articles by the same author are critical of the Center's role in the peace negotiations.

³Ferdinand Frhr. von Fürstenberg, a contemporary and severe critic of the Center's policies of 1918-1919, wrote recently of the difficulty conservative Catholics had in 1918 in accepting the "complete policy of reversal from conservative to liberal stand" taken by the Centrist leadership in 1918. Letter from Ferdinand Frhr. von Fürstenberg to the author, November 10, 1966.

⁴Hermann von Lüninck, "Das Zentrum am Scheideweg," reprint from Historisch-politische Blätter für das katholische Deutschland, CLXV (January, 1920), 9-17.

and to death"—replaced by the "flag of the revolution."⁵ The acceptance of the new flag signified for these conservative critics of the Centrists a rejection of the traditional fundamental principles of the Old Center Party as exemplified in the Soest Program of 1871.⁶

A still more important area of the Constitution which came under heavy criticism was the compromise on the school question. Despite the tremendous odds against the Center and their efforts to secure constitutional recognition of confessional schools, the critics of the Party felt that the Centrist delegates had reneged on their principles.⁷ Because of the large number of Centrist delegates on the constitutional committee (six out of twenty-eight), the Catholics in Germany and the members of the Center Party in particular overestimated the delegates' strength and expected that they should have been able to introduce their political program with ease, especially in regard to religious and school affairs.⁸

According to Hermann Freiherr von Lüninck, grandson of Hermann von Mallinckrodt one of the original founders and leaders of the Center Party, the

⁵Ibid., p. 24.

⁶See Hermann von Lüninck, Katholische Politik (Köln: Verlag des St. Josephs-Vereins, 1921), pp. 3-9.

⁷Lüninck, "Zentrum am Scheideweg," pp. 2-9. Mausbach, especially is criticized for "failing to take a definite stand in the constitutional committee for Christian ideals and principles...." Ibid., pp. 6-7.

⁸See Bachem, Zentrumspartei, VIII, 289. Mausbach, Religionsunterricht und Kirche, p. 26, wrote that those who raised criticism against the Weimar Constitution for its irreligious aspects would find it difficult to name a single modern constitution in the world which contained as many significant statements on religion as those found in the Weimar Constitution.

conservative element within the Party disapproved of the left-oriented Centrist leadership displayed at Weimar because of what they considered to be its betrayal of the Christian Weltanschauung.⁹ In their scrutiny of the Weimar Constitution, the critics singled out Article 1, which stated "political authority emanates from the people," as an example of the rejection of Christian principles and the acceptance of secularistic views on government.¹⁰

Criticism of the Center Party in its work at Weimar culminated in the assertion that the Centrist leaders had neither identified nor supported the Catholic principles of the Party in a satisfactory manner.¹¹ The prospect of taking the oath to support the Weimar Constitution caused such concern for the traditionalists that Mausbach sought to allay their fears by publishing two articles in the Kölnische Volkszeitung in which he showed there was no "moral hindrance prohibiting anyone from taking the oath."¹²

The Verfassungsstreit which was tearing the Center Party appeared to have been instigated by the diversity of opinion on the Weimar Constitution. This, however, was not the case. A cleavage within the Party had already been slowly developing since 1912 when the more liberally inclined left wing began its ascendancy to Party leadership. Unable to reconcile their nationalist views to the new leadership of the Party after 1918, many of the traditional conservatives felt compelled to "turn their back" on the Center Party

⁹Lüninck, Katholische Politik, pp. 4-8. Lüninck recently reaffirmed this view. Letter from Hermann von Lüninck to the author, September 3, 1966.

¹⁰Lüninck, "Zentrum am Scheideweg," pp. 9-17; Hopmann, "Das Zentrum von heute," pp. 285-292.

¹¹Lüninck, op. cit., p. 2.

¹²October 20, 1919, #824; November 25, 1919, #923.

and to seek refuge with the Right.¹³ In January 1920, the Bavarian particularists completely dissatisfied with the centralizing tendencies of the new government, broke with the Center Party over Erzberger's national finance program and went their own way. This was a great blow to the Party and weakened its strength. The more realistic members of the Party, on the other hand, recognized that the Weimar delegates had remained true to the Party's basic principles.¹⁴

Unfortunately for the future of the Center Party the dynamic leadership of 1918-1919 was short-lived. Within a few years many of the indefatigable Centrist delegates of the National Assembly had withdrawn from political life or died.¹⁵ The few Weimar leaders who remained were unable to cope with the strong conservative element which was again coming to the fore. Since a majority of the Center Party had never been fully committed to the Weimar Constitution and the Republic, the Center Party slipped back into its conservative and complacent roles once its energetic leadership had passed from the scene.

¹³Lüninck, *op. cit.*, p. 12, "It is now necessary to demand that the Center Party openly recognize the superiority of the monarchical system and declare itself for restoration of the monarchy as soon as political circumstances are favorable. If this is not done, then all those who are for monarchy are free to turn their backs on the Center." Agreeing with Lüninck was the anonymous author of Über die politische und parteipolitische Stellung der katholischen Deutschen von einem solchen (Breslau: Verlag von Kurt Kracese, n. d.), p. 1, who said, "For Christian-conservative Catholic there is no opportunity nor possibility to participate politically in the Center."

¹⁴See Giesberts' speech at a Center assembly in Düsseldorf on July 27, 1919, Germania, July 30, 1919, #341.

¹⁵Mausbach returned to his duties of teaching after the completion of the work of the National Assembly in May 1920; Gröber died in November 1919; Trimborn in July 1921; Erzberger was assassinated in August 1921. Hitze and Burlage likewise died in 1921. By 1925 Spahn, Fehrenbach, Gerstenberger, and Mayer had also died.

Lacking the realistic viewpoint of an Erzberger, Gröber, or Trimborn, the new leadership was doomed to failure. Quickly it abandoned its promising inter-confessional party basis and began to narrow its interest to strictly Catholic demands, especially concerning the partially unsolved school question. Anti-democratic forces again asserted themselves as the Party veered more to the Right, away from the Centrist's former liberal-democratic position.¹⁶ It was this alignment with the Right which eventually undermined the Center Party.¹⁷

The Centrist leadership in 1918-1919 had made a positive contribution toward pacifying and stabilizing the revolutionary elements of the post-war Germany. That the Weimar Republic succumbed after fifteen years of existence was not so much the result of failure on the part of the Center or the other bourgeois parties as it was the accumulation of extenuating circumstances during the post-war period. It is a moot question what might have happened if the Center had continued to be led by leaders of the same caliber as Erzberger, Gröber, or Trimborn.

¹⁶Morsey, Zentrumspartei 1917-1923, pp. 607-619, attributes the waning of the Centrist vitality after 1923 to its loss of adequate leadership and its abandoning of its interconfessional basis. Morsey repeats this same idea in his article, "Das Zentrum zwischen den Fronten," in Der Weg in die Diktatur 1918 bis 1933 (München: R. Piper & Co., 1963), pp. 95-120. See also Lutz, Demokratie im Zwielficht, pp. 67-71, who holds a similar view but places more stress on failure to retain the Party's interconfessional basis.

¹⁷Edgar Alexander, "Church and Society," in Church and Society, pp. 469-474, claims that the election of the cleric Ludwig Kaas as Party chairman in 1928 defeated the Party's trend of a realistic interconfessional Center policy on a broad front and steered the Party toward a "clear-cut coalition" with the Right. See also Joseph Rovin, "Le catholicisme Politique en Allemagne," in Histoire de la Democratie chretienne, II (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1956), p. 174, who compares the realistic attitude of the Center in 1918 with its complacent rightist attitude in 1933 and accuses the Center of dealing the death blow to political Catholicism by voting for the Enabling Act which delivered Germany to Hitler's terror.

From November 1918 to August 1919, the Center Party under able leadership played a prominent role in the development of the democratic government. True to its traditional position in German parliamentary life it exerted a moderating influence on the political extremes and strove throughout the period to uphold the Center's old slogan of "Truth, Justice, and Freedom!"

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APPROVAL SHEET

The dissertation submitted by Sister M. Marcella Ripper, S.C.C. has been read and approved by members of the Department of History.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

May 29, 1969
Date

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Signature of Adviser (PK)