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The Rise and Fall of the West German Left

Left politics in West Germany in the period 1945–90 were marked first by the rise of the SPD, leading to its participation in government in the years 1966–82, and then by a sequence of election defeats, each more serious than the last. The strength of SPD performance can be measured not only in its electoral support but also in terms of the clarity and coherence of the party's basic project and programme. The politics of the party were shaped, firstly, by a secular decline in the salience of class in political behaviour; secondly, from the end of the sixties, by the emergence into political life of a new Left; and, thirdly, throughout the period, by transformations in East–West relations. Whilst these phenomena were present to a greater or lesser extent in all advanced industrial countries, they were accentuated in the Federal Republic by the intensity of West German economic development and by the intimate impact of the Cold War on the very form of the state, with the looming presence of the 'other Germany' as a constant negative reference point. Nevertheless, the SPD was able to turn an adverse situation to its

advantage. Despite Christian Democrat insinuations that it shared a common philosophy with the ruling Socialist Unity Party (SED) of East Germany, the SPD became a pillar of the Federal Republic. Indeed Willy Brandt as mayor of West Berlin, and later as Chancellor, was successively the symbol of Western defiance of Stalinism and the architect of an Ostpolitik that sought, from a vantage point of Western strength, to replace confrontation with relaxation and reform. Success in the sixties and seventies, then, stemmed in part from skillful adaptation to a changing Federal Republic and a divided Germany; but here also was the seed of a future problem, of which more below. However, it was not only the Cold War which posed problems for the SPD and the West German Left.

In the fifties, unprecedented affluence, social mobility, and a consequent weakening of traditional social networks led to a rapid 'social democratization'. The social-democratic SPD rapidly established a monopoly of the Left; the Communist Party (KPD), weakened by its identification with the GDR, was practically extinct electorally by 1953. Within the SPD, the prewar neo-Marxist tradition was expunged, and left opposition marginalized. In programmatic, electoral and organizational terms, the SPD became the model of the social-democratic *Volkspartei* ('people's party' or 'catch-all party'), successfully exploiting this style of politics throughout the late sixties and the seventies. Although it retained an electoral base in the manual working class, the party transcended class divisions in the electorate. It identified socialism with 'progressive' elements in the liberal-democratic tradition using the slogans of freedom, justice and solidarity. However, these principles were difficult to reconcile with the emphasis on economic discipline and individualism which accompanied instability in the global economy after 1973, and consequently West German social democracy began to lose its intellectual and political coherence.

West Germany was also in the vanguard of the counter-cultural or 'new politics' movement which accompanied the affluence of post-industrial society. 'As a society makes substantial progress in addressing traditional economic and security needs, a growing share of the public shifts their attention to *post-material goals* that are still in short supply, such as the quality of life, self-expression and personal freedom.'[1] In embryonic form at least, a new sociopolitical division emerged which cut across the SPD's electorate and membership. The party's own educational and public-welfare programmes created new social forces prone to question both the forms of West German affluence and the liberal corporate ethos of the *Volkspartei*. Although the sixties student movement appeared quickly to exhaust itself, it left a cultural-political residue of lasting significance. Unable to resolve the dualism between old and new Left, the SPD failed to contain the new currents, and lost its monopoly left of centre. The rise of the Greens as a rival on the left seriously curtailed the SPD's ability to exploit its *Volkspartei* model, forcing the party to rethink many of its assumptions. However, programmatically and organizationally, the 'new politics' values were very difficult to reconcile with SPD orthodoxy.

[1] Russell J. Dalton, 'The German Voter', in W.E. Paterson, G. Smith and P. Merkl, eds., *Developments in West German Politics*, London 1989, p. 113.

Moreover, although it was evident that far-reaching social and political change was underway, it was less clear exactly where these changes were leading. Oskar Lafontaine appeared to offer a way of negotiating these problems, but just as he did so both the party and its leader found themselves wrong-footed by the speed of unification in 1990.

While all West German parties were historically committed to unification, the SPD of the 1970s became especially associated with an Ostpolitik of detente and improved relations between the FRG and the GDR. Nevertheless, the successful mobilization of the people of East Germany in 1989 set a new agenda to which the opposition SPD adjusted with difficulty. The Christian Democrats and the Free Democrats, as the parties in government, set their stamp on unification and have been the immediate gainers from it. Before considering recent events, however, it is appropriate to trace the distinctive character and evolution of the Left in the Federal Republic—bearing in mind also that unification has taken place under the aegis of the latter.

I Establishing the Social-Democratic *Volkspartei*

The SPD's course in the postwar era was set by the socioeconomic and political landscape of the early years of the Federal Republic. For a number of reasons, the decline of class politics experienced in other Western European countries was especially marked here. Firstly, observers have detected a double 'ideological trauma' arising from the experience of the Third Reich, on the one hand, and the installation of a repressive Communist regime in East Germany, on the other. A recoil from ideology was the reflex response, the consequences of which accentuated those social trends—increasing affluence and social homogeneity—that served to weaken class politics elsewhere in the fifties. Secondly, the early postwar years witnessed an unprecedented influx of refugees from the East (twelve million by 1947). Demographic movements on this scale inevitably weakened social tradition and class ties, 'an important precondition for the development of catch-all parties in West Germany'.[2] Thirdly, the success of the CDU–CSU (aided by the social geography of national partition) in re-establishing the tradition of political Catholicism, and augmenting it with a cross-confessional Christian alliance, extended their electoral base well beyond the middle class. The Christian Union parties became the prototype of Kirchheimer's model of the *Volkspartei*, in which class politics and overt party ideology were de-emphasized.[3] The logic of this model was such that Christian Democrat electoral success would force opposition parties to emulate their style.

Although it had long ceased to be a Marxist party of the working class, the post-1945 SPD remained bound by the socialist traditions of the pre-1933 era. After 1952, however, the Social Democrats undertook a rapid and clear-cut reorientation. Change was seen explicitly in terms of the transition from *Arbeiterpartei* (workers' party) to *Volkspartei*

[2] Eva Kolinsky, *Parties, Opposition and Society in West Germany*, London 1984, p. 20.
[3] Otto Kirchheimer, 'The Transformation of the Western European Party Systems', in J. La Palombara and M. Wiener, eds., *Political Parties and Political Development*, Princeton 1966.

(people's party), and meant transforming the SPD from its association with a dense and homogeneous social-democratic culture into 'a party which was not only attractive to those who believed in its programme *in toto*, but also to those who were broadly supportive even though there might be a few ideas to which they could not subscribe.'[4] The transformation had three dimensions: programmatic, organizational and electoral. The Bad Godesberg programme of 1959 explicitly disavowed the party's Marxist heritage, emphasizing instead eclectic philosophical sources of democratic socialism in the Christian ethic, classical philosophy, and the humanist tradition. It endorsed the liberal pluralism of the Federal Republic and its uncompromising Western orientation. Capitulating to the success of the bourgeois parties' social-market formula, the programme embraced unconditionally the axioms of Keynesian social democracy—arms-length interventionism and the management of economic growth.

In organizational terms the transformation represented a further step toward the dismantling of what Lösche has termed the social-democratic 'solidarity community',[5] the main features of which—social homogeneity and inner-party democracy—had been eroded long before the Second World War. With the opening up to the *neue Mitte* (new middle class), however, the social composition of the party began to change very rapidly (see Table I). Moreover, the streamlining and centralization of its structure narrowed the scope for inner-party democracy as the party was geared increasingly to electoral mobilization.

Table I.
New SPD Party Members by Occupation 1958–1982 (%)

Social Group	1958	1966	1972	1982
White collar employees/civil servants	21.0	27.5	34.0	33.1
Manual workers	55.0	49.4	27.6	21.1
Housewives	11.2	9.0	9.0	13.7
Pensioners	5.4	4.1	3.7	9.2
Students	–	–	15.9	12.8

Electoral breakthrough in the sixties and early seventies was due largely to the party's new-found ability to exploit the changing composition of the electorate—the decline of the manual working class and rise of the *neue Mitte*. While in fact the manual-worker vote remained stable during this period, its relative weight in the SPD's electorate was reduced as the party increased its share of the burgeoning new middle-class constituency. This effected a significant change in the class balance of SPD support.

The identity and political behaviour of the new middle class has been explained by some as 'the proletarianization of new social layers'. In consequence, it has been argued, 'there is no reason to change the old

[4] Kurt Klotzbach, *Der Weg zur Staatspartei; Programmatik, praktische Politik und Organisation der deutschen Sozialdemokratie 1945 bis 1965*, Berlin 1982, pp. 417–18.
[5] Peter Lösche, 'Ende der sozialdemokratischen Arbeiterbewegung?', *Die neue Gesellschaft/Frankfurter Heft*, no. 5, 1988, pp. 453–63.

[class party] scheme'.[6] However, the new middle class is more complex and nuanced than this viewpoint suggests: '[It has] a position in the social structure and a life style that places it between the working class and the old middle class. As a result its loyalties are divided between these other two strata, and its votes are split between the parties of the left and right.'[7] Therefore, although the SPD established a relatively stable electoral relationship with the *secular/trade-union member* stratum, the new middle class as a whole was more ambivalent in its identifications, and volatile in its voting behaviour. Volatility was especially marked amongst the *secular, non-union member* sector, a source of SPD strength in the 1965–72 elections.[8]

The Conditions of Electoral Success

In the decade after 1959 the main objectives of the Godesberg strategy —electoral expansion and the acquisition of government power— were achieved. Steady advance in the middle to late sixties culminated in the election of 1972 in which, for the only time in the history of the Federal Republic, the SPD polled more votes than the CDU–CSU. Thereafter, into the early eighties, the SPD vote remained stable at the level of 1969. The party thus entered government, first in the Grand Coalition with the CDU–CSU (1966), then in the Social-Liberal Coalition with the liberal FDP (1969–82). Social-democratic government was marked by its pragmatism, accentuated after Helmut Schmidt succeeded Willy Brandt as chancellor in 1974. Party cohesion and government stability depended on the leadership's ability to manage and contain left opposition.

Economic stability was the first priority, pursued initially through Keynesian counter-cyclical instruments, but with an increasing emphasis on monetary policy after 1974.[9] Social reform, with which Brandt had personally identified himself, was frustrated by the veto of the coalition partner, or by the exigencies of economic restraint. After an initial period of limited domestic reform and a dramatic reorientation of West Germany's Ostpolitik, the internal and external security of the state became an overriding preoccupation. A condition of the Grand Coalition had been SPD support for the Emergency Laws (1968), whilst the Social–Liberal coalition was responsible for the Radical Decree (1972) restricting the entry of leftists into public-service employment, and anti-terrorist legislation which aroused protests against the erosion of civil rights. In the late seventies, Chancellor Schmidt committed the government unequivocally to the NATO decision to upgrade its INF weaponry with the deployment of cruise and Pershing missiles.

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[6] Günther Minnerup, 'West Germany since the War', NLR 99, September–October 1976, pp. 3–44.
[7] Kendall L. Baker, Russell J. Dalton and Kai Hildebrandt, *Germany Transformed: Political Culture and the New Politics*, Cambridge, Mass. 1981, p. 172.
[8] Hans-Dieter Klingemann, 'West Germany', in I. Crewe and D. Denver, eds., *Electoral Change in Western Democracies*, London 1985, p. 252.
[9] Fritz Scharpf, 'Economic and Institutional Constraints of Full Employment Strategies: Sweden, Austria and West Germany', in J.H. Goldthorpe, ed., *Order and Conflict in Contemporary Capitalism*, Cambridge 1984, p. 284.

This exercise of state power precipitated a mobilization of the Left, both inside and outside the SPD. The rise of the *Ausserparlementarische Opposition* (Extraparliamentary Opposition) in the late sixties was, of course, part of the international movement of the New Left. In West Germany, however, the formation of the Grand Coalition and the passage of the Emergency Laws were issues that crystallized an otherwise formless movement. The response of the SPD leadership—opposing the radical movement while seeking to attract its sympathizers[10]—followed a pattern established in the late fifties in relation to the extraparliamentary opposition to German rearmament. There was much sympathy for this opposition in the rank and file of the party, and the presence of a significant APO enclave in the SPD's youth wing, the JUSOS. Moreover, it raised the danger of an electoral challenge from the Left. Whilst distancing the party from APO, the SPD leadership, led by Brandt, attempted to integrate the participants. Thus, demarcation was combined with a defence of the SPD's electoral monopoly of the Left.

The impact of the APO movement on the SPD was far-reaching. An influx of radical youth changed the composition of the party and completed the radicalization of JUSOS, which became a vehicle for the Left. Concerned above all with the issue of participation, their presence in the party *Basis* (grass roots) had the effect of revitalizing moribund participatory structures. Their ambitions, however, went further: they advocated the doctrine of the imperative mandate, by which elected representatives would be tied to decisions of the membership. Here they anticipated one of the organizational principles of the Greens. Though successful in displacing the old-guard leadership in some big city *Unterbezirke* (sub-district) organizations, they largely failed at the key level of the *Bezirke* (districts). Thus, despite considerable factional conflict at the local level, the balance of power between the central party machine and the district enabled the leadership to maintain control of, among other things, parliamentary-candidate selection and the party congress.[11]

The capacity of the leadership to head off the Left's challenge stemmed from the organizational structure of the party, which enables an optimization of inner-party management. Power is concentrated in dual leadership bodies, the executive and the presidium. The executive comprises the party leader and two deputies, plus thirty-six members elected by the congress. Meeting monthly, it elects in turn the presidium, a more streamlined body that meets weekly. Since its inception in the overhaul of 1958, the presidium has effectively become the party's supreme policy- and decision-making body. Presidium decisions pass to the executive for formal approval, usually without amendment, though sometimes after debate. Indirect election ensured that the presidium has been less permeable by the Left than has the executive. During the Social–Liberal coalition era, the

[10] Stephan Gorol, 'Zwischen Integration und Abgrenzung; SPD und studentische Protestbewegung', *Die neue Gesellschaft/Frankfurter Heft*, no. 7, 1988, pp. 601–7.
[11] Stephen Padgett and Tony Burkett, *Political Parties and Elections in West Germany: The Search for a New Stability*, London 1986, pp. 71–4.

presidium identified closely with the government, endorsing policy which had usually originated with the chancellor or in government ministries. The executive, however, more closely reflected the political composition of the party, and the Left was able to secure between a quarter and a third of seats. Thus, the executive sometimes adopted an adversarial position, as it did in 1977 when advocating a moratorium on the government's nuclear-energy programme. However, it was more usual to find it mediating between government and party, attempting to reconcile government policy with social-democratic principles.

Elite domination in the SPD is compounded by the structure of the party congress. Although in party statutes the congress is the sovereign policy-making organ, the reality is quite different. The executive largely controls the agenda and usually secures support for policy decisions emanating from the party leadership. Delegate selection is carried out by district congresses. In the Social–Liberal coalition years, SPD chancellors were usually able to manipulate party congresses: both Brandt and Schmidt repeatedly invoked their electoral mandate, national responsibilities and prestige to free themselves from accountability, although Schmidt faced increasing opposition in the later years of his chancellorship.

While the Left was thus prevented from exercising significant influence at the federal level, the leadership made an attempt to integrate the JUSOS and the Left into the party mainstream by involving them in the formulation of a new medium-term programme. The first programme draft under the chairmanship of Helmut Schmidt was shelved in the face of left criticism. Under Peter von Örtzen, identified with the strategy of integrating the Left, a new draft was produced, and approved in 1975. However, the programme failed to fulfil the demand for the overall perspective which the Left had advocated.

Left mobilization also took place at parliamentary level. With the growth of the party's *Bundestagsfraktion* (parliamentary party) in 1969 and 1972, the Left achieved a significant presence in the *Fraktion* for the first time. Organized initially in the Group of the Sixteenth Floor (their location in the Bundestag building) and later in the Leverküsener Circle, the Left numbered around thirty to forty deputies, with occasional support from about twenty others.[12] The main objective was to offer support when members defied the party whip, to win the support of the Centre-Left, and to promote members in contests for *Fraktion* posts. It has been argued persuasively that factions have performed a stabilizing function in the SPD, structuring the careers of their members and integrating them into the party mainstream.[13] Certainly the mobilization of the Left in the Bundestag never seriously challenged the domination of the Right during the Social–Liberal coalition era, and there existed none of the bitter factional conflict characteristic of the local level of party life.

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[12] Gerard Braunthal, *The West German Social Democrats 1969–82; Profile of a Party in Power*, Boulder, Colorado 1983, p. 209.

[13] Ferdinand Müller Rommel, *Innerparteiliche Gruppierungen in der SPD; eine empirische Studie über informell-organisierte Gruppierungen von 1969–1980*, Opladen 1982, p. 267.

Factional conflict in the SPD as a whole receded for a period after 1973. Sectarianism within JUSOS eroded its organizational vitality and reduced its strength to the point where the party leadership felt sufficiently confident to expel its more militant leaders.[14] The failure of JUSOS—whose orientation was predominantly academic—was its inability to build bridges with the party's labour wing, which remained uniformly hostile. In the late seventies, however, conflict resurfaced over the new issues of the environment, and in particular nuclear energy. Opposition to the government's nuclear programme included JUSOS, but was much more broadly based. At successive congresses it was narrowly but consistently defeated, heightening disillusionment on the left, especially amongst the young. For many, the fast-growing *Bürgerinitiativen* (citizens' initiative) movement represented a more congenial political home than the SPD. The success of the Greens after 1980 was due largely to their ability to exploit the ambivalence of the young towards the Social Democrats.[15]

Crisis of Identity

The break-up of the Social–Liberal coalition with the FDP (1969–82) culminated two years of deteriorating relations between the parties. The Bundestag election saw the FDP increase its share of the vote whilst SPD support remained stagnant. Its self-confidence bolstered, the FDP became more assertive within the coalition. As the international recession finally hit the Federal Republic, Lambsdorff, the FDP Economics Minister, advocated budgetary austerity in the face of mounting state debt, whilst Genscher, the Foreign Minister, pressed for a more unequivocal stance on NATO strategy in relation to the deployment of cruise and Pershing II missiles. The shift to the right had been under way since the mid 1970s, but the party had been inhibited from a coalition switch by a number of factors, including the electoral popularity of Chancellor Schmidt, and the harmony that had existed between the SPD and FDP on defence and economic issues. As Schmidt's authority in the SPD and among the electorate waned, the FDP found less and less reason to remain in the coalition. The denouement took place in Summer 1982, with the FDP crossing the floor of the Bundestag and joining the CDU–CSU to install Helmut Kohl as chancellor. The new centre-right coalition was confirmed in government by the elections of March 1983, January 1987, and December 1990.

Although the new coalition often displayed instability, and the FDP held its coalition options open, the prospects for a renewal of the Social–Liberal coalition were remote. The appearance of new-left and anti-Atlanticist politics in the SPD made it a more problematic partner for the FDP. Effectively this condemned the SPD to permanent opposition during the 1980s, since the electoral landscape dictates that neither major party can hope to win a mandate to govern alone. The potential for a Left coalition was limited by key policy differences between the SPD and the Greens and by the latter's unpredictability. Moreover, the SPD was uncertain where its long-term

[14] Braunthal, pp. 85–102.
[15] Wolfgang Michal, *Die SPD—Staatstreu und Jugendfrei*, Hamburg 1988, pp. 61–8.

preferences lay. Faced with the choice of coalition with the FDP or of consolidating relations with the Greens, the SPD sat on the fence. To many, this was tantamount to an admission of strategic bankruptcy, only marginally relieved by the elaboration after 1987 of the objective of a 'structural majority'—a situation where electoral arithmetic would make the SPD an indispensable component in coalition-building.

The exodus of much of the SPD's 'activist left' to the Greens, and the in-built domination by party elites, prevented the sharp swing to the left experienced by the British Labour Party after 1979. Although Schmidt went into opposition in 1982, there was more continuity than change in the political composition of the top leadership bodies. A steady leftward shift in the party at large did not prevent 'old guard' figures like Hans-Jochen Vogel and Johannes Rau from retaining their authority. The most significant change took place in the *Länder*, with the emergence of Oskar Lafontaine in the Saarland, Gerhard Schröder in Lower Saxony, and Björn Engholm in Schleswig-Holstein. However, their 'new-left' image was tempered with a strong streak of pragmatism. The advance of the Left at district level increased its weight in the congress, and in 1986 a more left-oriented executive was returned. For the most part, however, new entrants like Heidi Wieczorek-Zeul were more intent on playing down their radical left reputations than on bringing about fundamental policy change.

The demise of the Social–Liberal coalition in 1982 was widely regarded in the SPD as a watershed, bringing to a close the post-Godesberg era. West Germany's ability to insulate itself from the instability of world markets was exhausted. Schmidt's *Modell Deutschland* had been achieved through the introduction—partly at the behest of the Bundesbank—of monetary caution and pay discipline. It had entailed an explicit renunciation of the axioms of post-Godesberg social democracy. Presenting the 1981 budget, Finance Minister Hans Matthöfer had announced that the state could no longer underwrite full employment, that its capacity to influence economic development had to be more modestly assessed, and that ultimately it was not state spending but entrepreneurial vitality that was decisive for economic success.[16] Predictably, such a shift in economic policy caused widespread disquiet in the party and ultimately created a schism with the labour movement, which had become unbridgeable by 1982. The 'growth management' conception of social democracy also came under attack from 'post-materialist' quarters. The unqualified assumption of economic growth as a primary objective was challenged, as was the belief implicit in the Godesberg model that science and technology provided objective answers to social and economic problems. In defence and security also, SPD orthodoxy became unsustainable amongst a party membership greatly influenced by a newly resurgent peace movement.

This abandonment of the social-democratic model was accompanied

[16] Douglas Webber, *German Social Democracy in the Economic Crisis; Unemployment and the Politics of Labour Market Policy in the Federal Republic of Germany from 1974 to 1982*, Ph.D. thesis, University of Essex, 1984, pp. 99–100.

by a decomposition of the SPD electorate; consequently programmatic renewal became a necessary precondition of electoral revival. Central problems requiring redefinition included: the relationship between state and market; reconciling the values of industrialism and post-industrialism; establishing a balance between social solidarity and individualism; combining peace and detente with defence and security. The party was faced with a crisis of identity. This crisis also had an organizational dimension. Bureaucratic control by the leadership had maintained internal stability in the seventies by suppressing or neutralizing left opposition, but at the cost of sterility and passivity at the party base. Bureaucratization and an attenuation of democratic inner-party life were tendencies inherent in the SPD almost from its inception, but they were greatly accentuated in the social-democratic *Volkspartei*. Consequently, the capacity for electoral mobilization and for the diffusion of social-democratic values was weakened. It proved particularly difficult for the SPD to counter the attractions of the participatory style adopted by the Greens.

II A Changing Electorate: Between Old and New Left

Electoral trends in the Federal Republic reflect the general tendencies in Western Europe towards the de-alignment and realignment of the electorate. *Realignment* implies the break-up of old electoral coalitions between socioeconomic groups and parties, and their replacement by new alignments. *De-alignment* suggests a general weakening in partisanship resulting from a more sophisticated and issue-oriented electorate. In practice it is hard to distinguish between these patterns of electoral change, and there is disagreement over causation.[17] Divergent views also exist concerning the extent of change in the West German electorate.[18] However, certain general trends are beyond doubt: 'the evidence of increasing fluidity in voting patterns is clear ... the influence of social class in voting preferences has substantially weakened.'[19] Additionally, the evidence points to a weakening of the traditional left/right division and the emergence of an old politics/new politics dimension—tendencies unfavourable to the SPD.

One clear pattern in voting behaviour has been a polarization between the sunrise-industry states and the rust-belt states. Table II shows the wide disparity in SPD performance between these two groups of states. The party has been quite successful where it has been able to project an appeal to the classical manual-worker strata left behind by affluence elsewhere in the Federal Republic. Its success in early 1990 enabled it to renew governments in the Saarland and North-Rhine/Westphalia, and form a new government in Lower Saxony. However, the inability of the party to gain electorally in those states that have adapted successfully to industrial change—such as

[17] Dalton, pp. 99–121.
[18] Franz-Urban Pappi and Michael Terwey, 'The German Electorate', in H. Döring and G. Smith, *Party Government and Political Culture in West Germany*, London 1982, p. 193; Baker et al., *Germany Transformed*, p. 193.
[19] Dalton, pp. 107, 119.

Baden-Wurttenberg and Bavaria—is perceived as a serious problem, and one which became a major focus of attention in the course of the SPD's programme review.

Table II.
SPD Voting Behaviour in State Elections 1986–90 (%)

State	SPD Vote/Total	Change since Last Election
Bavaria (Oct 1986)	27.5	–4.4
Hessen (April 1987)	40.2	–6.0
Rheinland-Pfalz (May 1987)	38.8	–0.8
Hamburg (May 1987)	45.0	+3.3
Bremen (September 1987)	50.5	–0.8
Baden-Wurttemberg (March 1988)	32.0	–0.4
Schleswig-Holstein (May 1988)	54.8	+9.6
Berlin (Jan 1989)	37.3	+5.0
Saarland (Jan 1990)	54.4	+5.2
Lower Saxony (May 1990)	44.2	+2.1
North-Rhine/Westphalia (May 1990)	50.0	–2.1

The decline in the cohesion and relative size of the manual working class has whittled away the party's core electorate. This class had accounted for 79 per cent of employees in 1950, dropping to 58 per cent in 1969 and to 42 per cent in 1986, implying large-scale social mobility; moreover, a significant proportion of the remaining manual workers were *Gastarbeiter* with no vote in the federal elections. The increase in the size of the politically differentiated and electorally volatile new middle class was accompanied by the growth of a 'new Left', conditioned by the unprecedented affluence of the sixties and seventies and defined in terms of post-materialist issues.

The party's dilemma was twofold. Firstly, it had been apparent from the mid seventies that 'the SPD with its electoral strongholds in the working class and the post-materialist section of the new middle class was effectively two parties in one.'[20] However, with the rise of the Greens it faced an increasingly successful rival for the new-left electorate. Free from government responsibility after 1982, the SPD was able to make policy adjustments (on nuclear weapons for instance) which made the party a more congenial political home for this constituency. Nevertheless, there was a clear conflict of values and policies between its old and new left constituencies. Secondly, an internal analysis of the results of the 1987 election detected in sections of its manual-working-class and new-middle-class electorate a shift towards individual economic and social achievement, at variance with the traditional party ethos of social solidarity. Electoral strategy in the eighties revolved around attempts to resolve these dilemmas.

[20] Wolfgang G. Gibowski and Max Kaase 'Die Ausgangslage für die Bundestagswahl am 25 Januar 1987', *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte; Beilage zur Wochenzeitung Das Parlament*, B 48, 1986, p. 5.

Initially, the impact of social and electoral change on the SPD was masked by the popularity of Chancellor Schmidt and the absence of a rival party of the Left. In the Bundestag election of 1983, however, the party experienced an electoral haemorrhage, losing 1.6 million votes to the CDU–CSU and 750,000 votes to the newly emerged Greens.[21] The SPD share of the vote, at 38.2 per cent, was the lowest since 1961. In 1987 it dipped still lower, to 37.0 per cent. Notwithstanding a slight reversal of previous losses to the CDU–CSU, a further 600,000 votes were lost to the Greens.[22] In spite of a 'greening' of SPD policy at the Nürnberg Congress of 1986, the party was still unattractive to the post-materialist new Left.

The party's responses to electoral change revealed a lack of strategic clarity. Abortive attempts to regain the youth vote whilst simultaneously consolidating the manual working class and attracting the upwardly mobile, resulted in confused and confusing appeals. This reached its apogee in the campaign for the 1987 election when a chancellor candidate identified with the SPD's traditional working-class supporters was obliged to stand on an incongruous new-left platform, nevertheless rejecting any possibility of cooperation with the Greens.[23]

Table III.
Breakdown of Party Support by Social Class (%)

Party	Old Middle Class		New Middle Class		Working Class	
	1980	*1987*	*1980*	*1987*	*1980*	*1987*
CDU–CSU	64	63	39	46	35	36
SPD	28	13	47	31	58	54
FDP	7	18	13	14	6	4.5
Greens	1	5	1	9	1	6

Source: Karl Cerny, *Germany at the Polls*, Durham, North Carolina 1990, p. 284.

Table IV.
Breakdown of the West German Electorate 1950–85 (%)

	1950	1961	1970	1979	1981	1985
Working Class	51	48	46	42	42	40
New Middle Class	21	30	38	45	46	48
Old Middle Class	28	22	16	13	12	12

Source: Karl Cerny, *Germany at the Polls*, Durham, North Carolina 1990, p. 274.

Note: The categories used here are based on standard occupational definitions. The 'working class' refers to manual workers and their families; the 'old middle class' to proprietors, professionals and self-employed; the 'new middle class' to white-collar workers and their families.

[21] INFAS, *Report für die Presse*, 26 January 1987.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Stephen Padgett, 'The West German Social Democrats in Opposition 1982–86', *West European Politics,* vol. 3, no. 10, 1987, pp. 351–2.

The shock of a second successive electoral setback lent greater urgency to the task of redefining strategic objectives. The postmortem into the 1983 defeat had included an electoral study commissioned from the market-research organization INFRATEST. Emphasizing the heterogeneity of the SPD's electorate, the study classified the voters into social-psychological types, recommending the targeting of two electoral groups defined as the 'upwardly mobile' and the 'technocratic liberal' milieus, which constituted some 32 per cent of the electorate and contained a very high concentration of uncommitted voters. The study outlined a political strategy for the purposes of 'addressing groups with highly differentiated conceptions and value orientations . . . The capacity for winning a majority here does not lie at the level of ideological debate . . . since the target groups themselves are too highly differentiated at this level. The chance for the SPD lies much more at the level of competitive problem solving.'[24]

Conflicts over Policy Renewal

The exercise in programmatic renewal on which the SPD embarked in 1984 showed a striking contrast with the Bad Godesberg programme review. (The programme revision of the fifties had a very clear strategic aim: the electoral exploitation of the new middle class alongside the party's traditional manual worker constituency on the lines of the *Volkspartei* model.) The programme-drafting exercise was—at least until its final stages—tentative and lacking in direction. The party's dilemma, and indeed the crux of the project of 'redefining social democracy', was expressed as follows: '[The party] knows that in these changing times a reorientation appears necessary, but change itself makes change hard to accomplish. Science offers no diagnosis of the age (*Zeitdiagnose*), no common understanding of what is happening and what future developments will be. It is very difficult to draw decisive and firm conclusions on the basis of uncertain evidence. Therefore there is a succession of problems in the programme review which it is very difficult to rectify.'[25] The first phase was characterized by confusion (and some conflict) over whether the objective was to supersede the Bad Godesberg programme or merely update it. The Left saw an opportunity to remake the party's identity by constructuing a social-democratic *Weltanschauung* drawing on the best of the new-left emphases.[26] The Right, shunning ideology, advocated a more cosmetic approach to programme drafting. The Left's impact on the first programme draft, published in 1986, was, however, subsequently much reduced.

Progress was achieved in two areas. A formula for 'qualitative growth' was developed, aimed at reconciling the potentially conflicting objectives of economic advance and environmental protection. The 'ecological modernization of the economy' involved research and

[24] INFRATEST, *Sozialforschung wurde vom SPD Parteivorstand mit der Durchführung der Studie 'Planungsdaten für eine Mehrheitsfähig SPD' beauftragt*, n.p., copy in SPD Parteivorstand, Abteilung Wahlen, Bonn 1984.
[25] Kurt Sontheimer, *Vorwärts*, no. 4, 28 January 1989, p. 29.
[26] Thomas Meyer, 'Grundwerte—idealistisch und nutzlos? Grundsatzfragen im Irseer Entwurf', *Die neue Gesellschaft/Frankfurter Heft*, no. 2, 1988, p. 173.

investment into clean and sustainable technologies, aimed at fostering a dynamic new growth sector able to create export and employment opportunities. The credibility of the concept depended upon the support of the party's labour wing, important sectors of which had previously been hostile to the 'greening' of policy. Endorsement by the Chemical Workers' Union[27] was a significant breakthrough, and henceforward it became one of the party's front-line policies—'the centrepiece of a social-democratic reform programme for the rest of the century.'[28]

In defence and security, programme drafting proceeded from the decisions of the Cologne and Essen Congresses of 1983–84 condemning the deployment of cruise and Pershing missiles and calling for a reform of NATO strategy. Although the new stance rejected unilateralism, linking the withdrawal of NATO weaponry to a Soviet withdrawal of SS20 missiles, in other respects it amounted to a non-nuclear policy, advocating a nuclear-weapon-free zone in central Europe and rejecting NATO strategies of 'forward defence'. The themes of 'security partnership' and East–West confidence-building were prominent, coupled with a vision of the ultimate dissolution of the two alliance blocs.

The SPD's association with Ostpolitik and with the opening up of contacts between the Federal Republic and GDR had redounded to the party's credit in the seventies and helped to consolidate its position in government. As opposition to cruise missiles grew there was a natural inclination to offer more of the same. The SPD's optimum scenario was for the new detente to lead to increasingly relaxed relations between East and West, including East and West Germany. There was a hope that reform and democracy would advance in the East, but general agreement that German unification was a quite unrealistic and remote project.

While the party's foreign-policy and defence stance revealed differences, these were not unbridgeable. But in other respects, programme drafting indicated deep division, notably in economic policy. The first draft was distinguished from previous programmes by its antagonism towards market capitalism and an emphasis on state intervention: 'Democratic socialism aims not only to improve capitalism but also to put in its place a new social and economic order . . . the economy must have clear framework conditions set for it.'[29] Reflecting sharp conflict between Left and Right, prescriptions for the relationship between state and market in particular lacked definition. These features drew criticism from the Right and became the focus of an intervention from the party's chief economics spokesmen late in the drafting process. Critical of the 'woolly conceptions and outdated formulas which no longer bear any resemblance to reality',[30] they dissociated themselves

[27] *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 2 May 1985.
[28] SPD Parteivorstand, *Politik: Aktuelle Information der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands*, no. 7, July 1985.
[29] SPD Parteivorstand, *Entwurf für ein neues Grundsatzprogramm der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands*, Bonn 1986, pp. 7, 25.
[30] *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 6 January 1989.

from the draft's hostility to the market and its idealistic trust in the state, advocating instead a more positive appraisal of the market and a greater measure of 'economic realism'.

The Rise of Lafontaine and the *Enkel*

The most radical intervention in the review took the form of an unprecedented attack on SPD orthodoxy from a group of relatively young, up-and-coming party leaders from the *Länder.* Protégés of Brandt, this circle was known as his *Enkel* (grandchildren). Broadly speaking of the 1968 generation, a number had been leaders of the radical JUSOS movement of the seventies. Their chief characteristic, one that they deliberately sought to project, was their radical chic image and modern lifestyle. Most prominent of the *Enkel* was Oskar Lafontaine, charismatic and electorally successful minister-president of the Saarland. Immediately after the 1987 election, Lafontaine launched his bid for the chancellor candidacy in 1990. His growing dominance was reflected in his elevation to the party vice-chairmanship and to the co-chairmanship of the Programme Commission. Strategic flexibility was now his hallmark, amply demonstrated in his attempt late in the programme-drafting exercise to make the party more attractive to the 'affluent majority' which contained the 'target groups' identified by electoral analysis.

This initiative broke radically from the tradition of left politics in the SPD. Indeed, the ensuing debate cut across orthodox Left–Right divisions, as the old Left, the labour wing and the Right combined to oppose the attack on tradition from the 'new revisionists'. Among other proposals, they advocated a more welcoming approach towards economic restructuring and technological change. The centrepiece of their agenda was a new order in working practices, combining a reduced working week with labour-market deregulation. 'The European Left has at its disposal, if only it can grasp the opportunity, a concrete Utopia which can move millions; a shortening of work time, not only as a technocratic instrument but as a human idea capable of integrating and binding together different strata in society . . . bringing work and leisure into a new balance.'[31] There was cunning in this choice of issue. On the one hand, a shorter working week appealed to post-materialist and home-centred concerns. On the other, it connected with a classic labour demand. Indeed the mid eighties witnessed a campaign, including strikes waged by the Metal Workers' Union, in favour of a statutory 35-hour week. But the plan provoked a sharp clash with the DGB trade unions, who also opposed his advocacy of flexible hours with no overtime rates. This attack on trade-union orthodoxies was, however, part of a deliberate attempt to distance the party from the labour movement. The party had to be 'responsive to the whole of society, and that meant entrepreneurs, professionals and higher-grade civil servants as well as trade unions'.[32]

[31] Peter Glotz, *Wirtschaftswoche*, 29 April 1988.
[32] Gerhard Schröder, *Wirtschaftswoche*, 29 April 1988.

Some of Lafontaine's proposals were included in the programme agreed at the Berlin Congress of December 1989, although they were hedged around with qualifications and concessions to the trade unions. Compromise was possible because the unions were aware that plant-level agreements on the lines advocated by Lafontaine had already proved successful. Moreover, they recognized that in order to preserve the historic ties between social democracy and the labour movement they had to keep in step with the party and with social change. This willingness for compromise underlined the unreservedly social-democratic character of the West German trade unions.[33]

Formally, the West German Union Federation, DGB, was from the outset committed to political neutrality. Nevertheless, at least four fifths of its leading officials have been members of the SPD. There exist two bodies which transmit union concerns to the party: the Union Council (*Gewerkschaftrat*), set up in 1967 and representing trade-union leaders, and the AfA (*Arbeitgemeinschaft für Arbeitnehmerfragen*, the Working Group for Workers' Issues), established in 1972 to represent trade-union organizers and members who support the party. The SPD leadership has used these bodies as a sounding board for trade-union opinion and as a counterweight to new-left influences from the JUSOS and local parties. It should be borne in mind, however, that German trade unions have no 'block vote' at the SPD congress. Moreover, their necessarily indirect financial contributions are of little account compared with the large funds received by the SPD from the state according to its share of the popular vote. The unions are listened to as an important constituency, but they do not have the decisive role of unions in the structure of the British Labour Party.

Notwithstanding continuing trade-union reservations, the intervention of the economics spokesmen was incorporated unconditionally into the programme. The ambivalence of the first draft towards market capitalism and its overtones of interventionism were expunged. Instead emphasis was on the humanization of a dynamic, competitive market economy. The Godesberg credo, 'as much competition as possible; as much planning as necessary', was explicitly reiterated.[34] Despite the elaborate search for new values, the programme thus ended up echoing familiar phrases.

Prior to 1987 this centre-oriented strategy had not been fully embraced for two reasons: chancellor-candidate Rau was identified with the traditional electoral base, and some in the party still aspired to 'a majority left of the Union parties'. Thereafter, the strategy gained ground among key sections of the leadership, notably its economics spokesmen and the group around Oskar Lafontaine who had previously favoured an opening to the new Left. Programmatic renewal assumed a sense of purpose and a focus hitherto lacking. The attractions of the strategy may have been boosted by international developments—as glasnost blossomed in the East, it became easier to envisage the FDP returning to the Social–Liberal orientation.

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[33] Minnerup, pp. 3–44.
[34] SPD Parteivorstand, *Entwurf für ein neues Grundsatzprogramm*, p. 20.

Discipline versus Decentralization

Conflict between leadership autonomy and an ethos of inner-party democracy is endemic to most social-democratic parties. In the SPD, a long tradition of centralized bureaucratic control, and a highly pronounced 'vocation for government' has ensured that the former has invariably prevailed. The revival of the participatory ethos in the seventies was contained relatively easily through the mobilization of the formidable resources of the party elite. However, the victory of discipline and control had its price: organizational sclerosis and the ossification of inner-party life. Ultimately, the 'threat' of the participatory culture associated with the new Left was merely externalized, resurfacing in the eighties in the form of the Greens.

The government vocation of the leadership and its identification with the state was also reflected lower down the party hierarchy. The intimacy of party–state relations in the Federal Republic is particularly pronounced in the SPD. An overrepresentation of civil servants has earned the party the unwelcome sobriquet of *Partei des öffentlichen Dienstes* (party of the public service). Moreover, the premium attached to expertise has led to a professionalization of party life. Public administration, law, journalism and the universities are the reservoirs that feed the party hierarchy.

The make-up of the SPD functionary corps varies considerably between local branches and localities. In industrial areas party-office holders are, typically, drawn from the ranks of labour-movement officialdom. In localities dominated by the service sector, the new middle class is dominant. Motivated by a desire for participation, the new members were very successful in acquiring party posts. Although they gave the SPD more of a new-left orientation their assimilation did little to inject a more participatory ethos. Significantly, a decline in SPD membership in 1978–82 was most marked in areas dominated by the new middle class and where the new Left was strongest, as in South Hessen. The profile of lost members here is also revealing: losses were highest amongst the under-thirties, non-union, non-officeholding membership.[35] Thus, even when the SPD had been permeated by the new Left it was ill-equipped to confront the demands for political 'self-realization' articulated by the post-materialist generation.

Organizational sclerosis has been a concern of the party since the late seventies when internal studies found that local branches were self-contained and remote from society, uninterested in local issues, and ineffective at electoral mobilization.[36] However, centre-led attempts to revitalize the grass roots only served to emphasize further the 'top–down' character of the party. This was revealed starkly by the conspicuous lack of involvement by local branches in discussions around the programme review.

The soul-searching of the review stimulated self-criticism within the

[35] Kolinsky, *Parties, Opposition and Society*, pp. 73–5.
[36] Meng, pp. 97–8.

party—'the *unter uns gesagt* [between ourselves] mentality must be overcome'.[37] No aspect of party life was immune; the sterility of the top leadership bodies attracted criticism in the party's weekly press,[38] which was itself criticized for conformity with party orthodoxy.[39] Plagued by steadily falling sales, *Vorwärts* was finally closed down by the party executive, and the SPD now has no newspaper unequivocally identified with it. Some critics advocated a decentralization of the party structure, with a devolution of functions to regional and local levels and a greater measure of autonomy at the base.[40] However, it is hard to see how a meaningful decentralization of structure could be made compatible with the discipline inherent in a party geared to achieving government office. In short, the SPD's dilemma embodies the classic tensions between representative and participatory democracy.

III A New Electoral Landscape: The Rise of *Die Grünen*

The rise of the Greens heightened the crisis of identity in the SPD. Firstly, a rival on the left forced the party to re-examine its own first principles: 'inevitably the SPD has been drawn into a debate about its own aims and position in German society.'[41] Secondly, the party had to formulate an electoral strategy to restore its hegemony over the Left. Thirdly, since the electoral landscape in the Federal Republic exerts an ineluctable pull towards coalition government, the SPD has been under pressure to define its position in relation to other parties. In short, the Social Democrats have faced the dilemma of whether to seek an opening to the centre or to court the Greens.

At federal level, the response of the SPD leadership to the Green challenge can be divided into three phases. During the period 1980–84, conflict between the 'new politics' Left, around Brandt, and the old-politics Right, inevitably produced a certain ambiguity in relations with the Greens. Brandt advocated the reintegration of the SPD's 'lost children' through a greening of policy and a degree of cooperation with the new party—a strategy geared to the establishment of 'a majority left of the Union parties'. This was resisted by the Right who sought to reaffirm the historic roots of the party in industrial society, and who attacked the Greens as irresponsible Utopians. After 1984, Brandt's vision of the green *Volkspartei* receded somewhat. The SPD now sought to distance itself from the Greens, rejecting any suggestion of cooperation—a strategy taken to its limits in the 1987 election campaign. The objective—'a majority of our own'—was an illusion, however, encouraged by mid-term electoral successes, its strategic bankruptcy being exposed in the election result.

A third phase, adopted immediately thereafter, involved reorientation towards the centre. Tacitly, the SPD appeared to have conceived of an

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[37] Peter Glotz, *Wirtschaftswoche*, 29 April 1988.
[38] Peter Conradi, 'Wie wird die SPD geführt?' *Vorwärts*, no. 22, 1987, pp. 16–17.
[39] Sinus-Institut, *SPD Medienstudie*, cited in Michal, *Die SPD*, p. 222.
[40] Lösche, pp. 459–60.
[41] Gordon Smith, 'The Changing West German Party System; Consequences of the 1987 Election', *Government and Opposition*, vol. 2, no. 22, 1987, p. 137.

electoral division of labour that would concede the post-materialist Left to the Greens. Implicit was a less competitive relationship with the new party. Coalition strategy was now geared to acquiring a 'structural majority'. The spread of electoral volatility to the right, the weakening of the CDU–CSU, and the rise of the ultra-right *Republikaner* had opened up the landscape, creating new coalition opportunities. Electoral consolidation would enable the SPD to occupy a pivotal role in coalition-building. In its choice of partner, the party sought to maintain the maximum possible flexibility. Sitting on the fence in relation to the Greens, formerly indicative of a bankrupt strategy, now acquired a semblance of strategic relevance.

Relations between the Social Democrats and the Greens at state and municipal level are rather more complex, being conducted independently of the federal SPD leadership. Coalition behaviour is heavily dependent on the local electoral landscape, and on the composition of the local party. Analysis at these levels reveals very sharply the social and political cleavages in the SPD's membership and functionary corps. Where new-middle-class hegemony in the party organization provides a social base for new-left politics there is a strong inclination towards coalition with the Greens.[42]

Assessments of the experience of red–green coalitions in the *Länder* and municipalities, or of the prospects for similar coalitions at the federal level must be sensitive to the roots of the relationship between the two parties. In particular, a distinction should be made between an opportunistic readiness on the part of the SPD to form ad hoc and pragmatic coalition arrangements where the party landscape allows or even dictates such a course, and a commitment to establishing a stable working relationship with the Greens. Such a commitment entails bridging a wide gulf in terms of programme and organizational style. Analysis of municipal coalitions suggests this is only possible where the new Left is securely dominant in the SPD, where the new politics has been embraced by the local party from an early stage, and where as a consequence there exists a clear-cut preference for a red–green coalition over other available options.[43]

At federal level these conditions have never been present. In the *Länder* the position is more complex. Certainly, the red–green 'experiment' in Hessen (1985–87) was the product of political circumstance, and approached by the SPD from a basically pragmatic perspective. Hessen was in a sense an unlikely setting for a red–green coalition, since the SPD premier, Holger Börner, was strongly identified with the Right, and his previous SPD–FDP administration had been in sharp conflict with the Greens. On the other hand, Börner saw the new coalition as part of a long-term strategy for establishing a credible political alternative to the Conservative–Liberal trend.[44] Although the Hessen experiment was characterized by instability and collapsed in acrimony,

[42] Thomas Scharf, 'Red–Green Coalitions at Local Level in Hessen', in E. Kolinsky, ed., *The Greens in West Germany, Organisation and Policy Making*, Oxford 1989, pp. 159–87.
[43] Scharf, pp. 165–6.
[44] Ibid., p. 171.

this level of cooperation represents an important testing ground for the red–green axis. The red–green coalition formed in Berlin in Spring 1989 initially appeared more promising than the Hessen experiment because of the more disciplined disposition of the Greens; but with its collapse in November 1990 prospects took a downturn. They were revived, however, by the relaunch of the Hessen coalition after the state election of 1991.

Ambiguity in the attitude of the federal SPD towards the Greens was accentuated by conflicting perspectives amongst the leadership, arising from uncertainty over how to read the logic of electoral and party-system change. On the one hand, there were signs of a two-bloc party system, with a gulf between the parties of the Left and the 'bourgeois parties'. On the other, however, there clearly remained common ground between them, suggesting that a centre–left coalition could be restored. Perhaps most importantly, the electoral arithmetic did not add up to a left majority. In the Bundestag election of 1983 the combined vote of the SPD and the Greens was 43.8 per cent, increasing to 45.3 per cent in 1987. Although the entry into the Bundestag of the *Republikaner* (politically ineligible as coalition partners for the bourgeois parties) might redress the balance, the SPD leadership was unlikely to commit itself to a red–green coalition under these circumstances. It was easier to see the Greens as rivals than as partners; though, as we have seen, this did imply making a programmatic appeal to Green-minded constituencies.

The Greens 1980–1990

At this point it is appropriate to pause in our account of the rise and fall of the SPD in the years 1945–90 to consider the development of the German Greens in the years 1980–90. The decision to found the Greens in 1980 was the culmination of almost a decade of extraparliamentary activity. The Far Left of the SPD and a number of Maoist groups abandoned their opposition to an ecological perspective (earlier seen as a diversion) given popular opposition to the nuclear-energy programme of the Schmidt government. Disaffected members of the SPD provided most of the organizational skills for the subsequent action. By the late 1970s extraparliamentary opposition seemed unlikely to halt the expansion of nuclear energy, and some began to contemplate running for office at the state level. The decision of a number of right-wing ecological groups to contest state and local elections added further pressure in favour of an electoral strategy. At the federal level potential support had been greatly increased by the dramatic growth in a peace movement attendant upon NATO's adoption of the dual-track resolution which envisaged the large-scale stationing on German soil of cruise and Pershing missiles should the Soviets fail to withdraw their SS20s from Eastern Europe. A more immediate incentive was provided by the first direct election to the European Parliament in 1979. For the Greens, participation held out the promise of enough financial support to maintain a permanent organizational infrastructure, since any party competing would receive DM 3.50 from state subsidies for every vote gained. A federal congress of the Greens was held in Frankfurt in March 1979 at which it was agreed to launch a proto-party, the *Sonstige*

Politische Vereinigung; Die Grünen (SPV). To conform with West German electoral law the party elected an executive committee, but no agreement was reached on an electoral programme or a formal organizational framework.

The SPV achieved 3.2 per cent of the vote in the European election, and at a conference in Karlsruhe in January 1980 a decision to form a Green Party was taken by over 90 per cent of the delegates, though it took a further conference at Saarbrücken in March 1980 to adopt an agreed formula. During these discussions the Left—who argued in favour of a party that was both ecological and generally left-wing on other issues—triumphed, and the final programme clearly placed the Greens to the left of the SPD. This outcome forced conservative environmentalists like Herbert Gruhl, an ex-CDU MdB who had been joint chairman of the SPV executive, to withdraw.

The CDU–CSU's choice of Franz Josef Strauss as chancellor candidate in the first federal election contested by the Green Party in 1980 squeezed the latter's vote as many potential voters switched their support to the SPD to help prevent a victory for Strauss. By 1983 the Greens had secured representation in a number of *Länder*; and in the federal election they polled 5.6 per cent of the votes, gaining twenty-seven seats in the Bundestag. In 1987 the party increased its share to 8.3 per cent and secured forty-two seats. In attaining these results the Greens had the support of a relatively stable electorate. Major features were its generational character (under thirty-five), a high level of formal education, a predominantly urban location, and relatively weak integration into the rest of society. The last federal election in 1987 showed a marked decline in the percentage of 18–24 year olds who voted Green, and some have since argued that the Greens represent the revolt of a particular generation rather than a decisive rupture with past values.[45]

The most active members in the Greens had invariably been so in the SPD, where they had attempted to move the party towards the agenda of '1968', only to be checked by the institutional sclerosis referred to earlier. They therefore determined to replace the top–down Bonn-centred model characteristic of the established parties by one centred on the lowest level of the party (*Basis*). 'The central idea is the permanent control of all office and mandate holders and institutions by the grass-roots (openness, time limits on mandates and party offices) and the permanent possibility of recall in order to make organization and politics transparent for all, and to counteract the estrangement of individuals from their grass-roots.'[46] They were also concerned to assert the legitimacy of, and accord an equal place to, extraparliamentary activity, since they did not accept parliament as the dominant locus of power in the Federal Republic.

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[45] W.E. Paterson, 'Environmental Politics', in Smith, Paterson and Merkl, pp. 267–88.
[46] Greens, *Federal Programme, 1980*.

New Structures, Old Problems

The structures devised by the Greens were novel, and intended to realize three aims: to prevent the emergence of a professional class of politicans and functionaries; to encourage participation; and to reduce drastically the autonomy of the parliamentary elite. The first of these aims was reflected in a number of provisions. Office-holding in the party was unpaid beneath the federal level. Parliamentary representatives were expected only to draw the salary of a skilled worker, with the considerable residue to be paid into party funds during their tenure of office. They were also expected to 'rotate' and make way for a designated successor at the midway point in a legislative session. Participation was to be encouraged by very loose membership structures. All meetings were in principle open and all party members could participate in the conferences. The holding of multiple party offices, widespread in other parties, was expressly forbidden. The autonomy of the group was to be constrained in a number of ways. Rotation was designed to refresh the parliamentary elite from the party base and the new social movements. The key concept, however, was the imperative mandate, a favourite idea of the Left in the SPD in the 1970s, which envisaged that MdBs should be bound by instruction from the local party that had sent them to the legislature.

The Greens' organizational principles represent a very optimistic reading of human nature, and putting them into practice has proved difficult. Rotation proved extremely problematic, though all but Petra Kelly and Gert Bastian—who resigned and rejoined the Greens—were eventually rotated in the Bundestag session 1983–87. Experience showed, however, that once replaced, MdBs rarely rejoined the extraparliamentary struggle. For example, Joschka Fischer, a notably reluctant rotatee, became a driving force to form a coalition between the Greens and the SPD in Hessen. The practice of having both members and their designated successors in the *Fraktion* simultaneously was not a happy one and led to intense rivalries. Rotation was eventually dropped at the federal level, although an expectation remained that members could not serve more than one term without a break. Eleven of the forty-four Green Party representatives in the pre-December 1990 Bundestag were former members. In some areas, like Frankfurt, rotation is still encouraged; in others it is ignored. It also proved difficult for the unpaid executive to control Green deputies who enjoyed the advantages of fully paid support staff. At the Münster Conference in March 1989, it was therefore decided to pay all eleven members of the federal executive, though the level fixed, in conformity with the anti-elitist mood of the party, was below that of parliamentary assistants.[47]

Participation has been no higher in the Greens than in other parties. The loose structures place little premium on joining, and the membership/voter ratio is by far the lowest of the parties in the Bundestag. Surveys also indicate that the proportion of the membership which is active is no greater. The problem of apathy in a 'participatory party' is illustrated by Kolinsky. In 1982, the Hesse *Land* Congress, called to formulate the election programme, was attended by only 80 of the

[47] *Grune Blätter*, vol. 4, 1981, p. 18.

2,500 members; moreover 10 of those were members of the *Land* executive.[48] Where Green members do wish to participate, this is often directed to a single issue and direct action. Notably, the major success in terms of participation is the much higher participation by women at all party levels including the *Bundestagsfraktion*.[49] This is discussed in detail below.

The attempt to reduce the autonomy of the parliamentary elite largely failed. The imperative mandate was soon ignored, because, while apparently binding MdBs to instructions from the local level, it was quickly perceived that due to the party's heterogeneous nature the instructions would conflict and the *Fraktion* would then be either unable to act or would simply ignore them. In any case, loose conditions for party membership subjects the base of activists to large fluctuations, which clearly militates against a consistent policy of directly accountable representatives. The federal executive was in fairly regular conflict with the *Fraktion* but had little or no success in curbing its autonomy. If anything, the autonomy and weight of the *Fraktion* actually increased as its members gathered experience. Of course, one would expect this in a party where resources and paid jobs are concentrated at the parliamentary level; but it also reflected the declining vitality of the new social movements, especially the peace movement, which lost momentum from the mid eighties, and no longer put the continuous pressure on the *Fraktion* they once did.

Collective Leadership and the Factional Rift

The Greens have had some success in maintaining a dispersion of power in the party by banning multiple office-holding. Their experiment with collective leadership has not been a happy one however. The party has had no single leader, but rather three chairpersons with equal rights. This practice has served to encourage rather than inhibit factionalism: there is a marked tendency to select those representatives of the most important party factions who continue to give their primary loyalty to their faction rather than to the party.

The recent history of the Greens has been dogged by a running battle between the 'Realos', the pragmatic wing, and the 'Fundis' or fundamentalists, reflecting opposing views on political activity and the party-political system. The realists, whilst not denying the importance of extraparliamentary activity, accorded a much higher place to parliamentary work. They were interested, where possible, in cooperation with the SPD to achieve the adoption of their political goals, and did not exclude the possibility of coalition, initially at *Land* level and then increasingly at the federal level. The fundamentalists were unimpressed by national parliamentary politics, arguing that the real centres of power in the Federal Republic lay outside the Bundestag and the *Länder* parliaments, in the centres of economic power and the bureaucracy. Accordingly, compromises to achieve

[48] Kolinsky, *Parties, Opposition and Society*, p. 310.
[49] For more detail, see W.E. Paterson, 'The Greens from Yesterday to Tomorrow', in P. Merkl, ed., *The Federal Republic at Forty*, New York 1989, pp. 340–66.

parliamentary victories should be avoided since they rest on the illusion that parliament itself is the site of the decisive encounters in an advanced industrial society. The faction was opposed to any arrangement with the SPD, arguing that since the latter's long-term strategy must be to absorb the Greens (drain the Green marshes), the party should not help the SPD to achieve this aim.

The boundary between these positions was not fixed and immutable, and individuals could move from one position to another. The open nature of Green decision-making bodies often meant, moreover, that participation in conferences and meetings changed fairly frequently; as a consequence the balance between the two positions changed from conference to conference. The majority of party members have in fact been Realos, who were also strong in the *Bundestagsfraktion*. The Fundis predominated in some areas, such as Hamburg, and in the executive. The tensions between the federal executive and the *Bundestagsfraktion*, and between the Realos and the Fundis, which had been a feature of the 1983–87 legislative period, grew more intense after the election success of 1987. The federal executive became even more identified with the Fundi wing.

Relations between the two wings deteriorated sharply throughout 1987 until a truce was agreed in December 1987. Jutta Ditfurth was defeated in December 1988 and removed from the party executive. Following the decision of the Green Alternatives in Berlin to form a coalition with the SPD in January 1989, the Realos were in the ascendancy, though the Fundis retained a number of important positions and the general climate remained rancorous. A third group identified with Antje Vollmer attempted to act as mediator. Many predicted a split, but this did not happen. While individual Realos went over to the SPD, the current as a whole was restrained by the knowledge that the Greens would have to clear the 5 per cent threshold. Financial dependence on state electoral subsidies and on the contributions of MdBs to Ecofunds for ecological activism by citizen-initiative groups ensured that the Fundis also had an important stake in parliamentary representation. The real danger was not so much a dramatic split as a deadening combination of inconsistency and immobilism. In the long run this factionalism threatened to provoke the desertion to the SPD of leading Realos like Otto Schily, who stood for the SPD in the 1990 election, and the onset of a downward electoral spiral. Although these evident weaknesses make the realization of any ambitious left project by the Greens unlikely, the party will undoubtedly continue to exert an influence on the German Left in two areas.

The Greens did not develop much of a party press, but their ideas are diffused by a variety of counter-cultural publications, local listings magazines and the *Tageszeitung*—a daily newspaper with a circulation of 100,000. The SPD also lacks media of its own and has had a dismal record with *Vorwärts.* On the other hand, the SPD does publish a good discussion journal, *Die Neue Gesellschaft*, edited by Peter Glotz, and receives support from about fifty trade-union newspapers, which have a circulation of 1.5 million. While the SPD, using state funds earmarked for political research, has built up the Ebert Foundation, with its impressive and far-flung research programmes, the Greens took time

to establish an equivalent, in the shape of the Heinrich Böll Foundation, and do not yet have a similarly consistent body of research bearing on their own project and proposals.

Women's Issues

Despite the criticisms to be made of the Greens as an organization, the party has nevertheless played a vanguard role with respect to women's issues in contemporary German politics. The centrality of these issues to the party is reflected in a number of ways, not least being the question of participation of women in the party itself. The lists of Green candidates for party and public office are ideally put together on the zip principle—that is, alternating female and male candidates—which was officially adopted at their party conference in May 1986. The policy certainly increased the representation of women—from 35.7 per cent of the 1983 *Bundestagsfraktion* to 57 per cent after the 1987 federal election. This quota has sometimes been exceeded, as in the 1986 Hamburg elections where all the Green candidates were women.

In the membership as a whole every third member is female, as compared with one in four in the established parties. The difference, though, lies less in the total participation rate than in the inversion of the normal rule of West German politics that female participation decreases as one ascends the party pyramid toward Bonn. Female membership in the *Bundestagsfraktion* has been strikingly higher than in the party as a whole: between 1985 and 1987 women held all the leadership positions in the *Fraktion*, and between 1988 and 1990 two-thirds of them. This record is all the more striking given that the almost complete absence of paid posts, apart from in the *Fraktion* itself, has made participation a very costly activity—a factor generally held to affect women more adversely since those who are mothers must invariably pay child-care costs while engaged in political work.

This success has, interestingly enough, been less apparent as an electoral effect. Paradoxically the FDP, which made no concessions towards women's representation, and the CDU–CSU, which made minimal concessions, attracted more female than male voters; whilst the SPD, which made considerable efforts to increase female representation, including a commitment to the introduction of the quota principle, and the Greens who made it a central organizational principle, both attracted more male than female voters in the 1987 election. However, the Greens did make significant gains in a key target group of women aged between twenty-five and forty-five, with a striking gain of 7 per cent among those between thirty-five and forty-five.

IV The Bombshell of Unification

The issue of German unification dominated the federal election of 2 December 1990. It is as well to remember that before the extraordinary events of late 1989 the most likely outcome had seemed a continuation in power of the present ruling CDU–CSU and FDP coalition, though there were uncertainties related to the degree to which the *Republikaner* would take votes from the bourgeois parties. Despite

Chancellor Kohl's personal low standing in the opinion polls, the Left seemed unlikely to make great advances given the steady upturn in the West German economy and the anticipated benefits of the tax reform, timed to bear fruit towards the end of the electoral cycle.

This scenario momentarily appeared to be called into question by the unravelling of events in the GDR and on the plane of German–German relations. As the drama unfolded it seemed just possible that 'the wild card' could lead to real gains by the SPD, or push the FDP to break with its coalition partner. But as it turned out, almost every section of the SPD and of the West German Left felt profoundly ambivalent about the prospect of unification—a feeling shared, interestingly enough, by trade-union organizers and intellectuals, reds and greens, functionaries and activists, Realos and Fundis. On the other hand, Kohl and Genscher acted swiftly to take advantage of the openings offered by the movement in East Germany.

The SPD had been more deeply affected by the division of Germany than the other Bonn parties, and in the period before the erection of the Berlin Wall in 1961 it had continually insisted on the lack of legitimacy of the GDR and seen itself as the major spokesman for reunification. The building of the Wall appeared to demonstrate that a policy of all-out hostility to the GDR would not precipitate its collapse but rather cause the GDR regime to restrict further the opportunities for communication between the two Germanies. The SPD policy, very much identified with Willy Brandt and Egon Bahr, became 'change through rapprochement', where the West Germans would try to persuade the GDR government to improve the conditions of its people, especially in the areas of human rights and freedom of movement, in return for West German acceptance of the status quo. This policy was extended in the 1980s by what is sometimes called a second Ostpolitik of active engagement with the governments of the GDR in pursuit of detente; and the SPD signed a number of agreements on chemical weapons with the GDR.[50]

In September 1989, as events gathered pace, the SPD leadership cancelled at short notice a routine exchange visit with its SED counterparts. Within the Federal Republic Oskar Lafontaine made himself a leader of opinion that was critical of pan-German aspirations. He had at various times suggested a revision of the German Nationality law, which in effect operated as a 'law of return' on the Israeli model, in favour of an emphasis on the separate citizenship of the GDR and the FRG. Lafontaine was also constantly critical of the social costs imposed on the Federal Republic by the inflow of 'ethnic Germans' from Eastern Europe encouraged by the Federal government.

In the early phase of the break-up of the Honecker regime, the running in East Germany was made by intellectuals and dissidents loosely grouped in the New Forum, whose aim was to reform the GDR rather than to demand unity with the Federal Republic. The West German

[50] See W.E. Paterson, 'Foreign and Security Policy', in Smith, Paterson and Merkl, pp. 192–210.

Left sympathized with this approach. But the momentum of the popular movement revealed a widespread aspiration to join up with the West. The opening of the Hungarian and Czech borders, and popular enthusiasm for unity expressed in growing mass demonstrations, especially in Leipzig, created inexorable pressures for unification.

The SPD in East Germany began to form itself only in October 1989 but soon attracted a body of support. However, from the beginning there existed a mismatch between the aspirations of the new members of the East German SPD, who were keen to press ahead to unity, and the Federal SPD, which was still uncertain of its response. A strong current of opinion in the West German party suggested it would be better to stablize the GDR, since unity in the prevailing circumstances would simply amount to an extension of the Federal Republic. At the SPD's Congress in December 1989 Willy Brandt pleaded with the party to accept a wholehearted commitment to German unity. While the principle was accepted, the practical difficulties continued to be stressed by the chancellor candidate, Lafontaine. The Greens, often accused by conservative opponents of being German nationalists, found it more difficult to develop a policy. They had close relations with many of those represented in New Forum, and most Green statements dwelt on the difficulties of unity. Their loose decision-making structure also made it more difficult for them to effect a rapid and comprehensive change of strategy than it was for the SPD.

Against expectations, the German issue at first looked set to work out well for the SPD. Lafontaine did not appear to suffer from his lack of enthusiasm for German unity, at least in the West, and it seemed that his views on the social costs, which also echoed those of the West German trade unions, might strike a chord with the electorate. Within the GDR events also looked to be going the SPD's way. The party had its founding congress (23–25 February 1990) and most early polls put it in a very strong position for the election of 18 March, with some predicting a majority.

The Price of SPD Ambivalence

The result, however, confounded such expectations, with a resounding success for the *Allianz für Deutschland*. Comprised of three independent parties—the East German CDU, *Demokratischer Aufbruch* (Democratic Awakening), and the *Deutsche Soziale Union* (German Social Union)—the Alliance was strongly identified with the West German conservative parties and the chancellor. Together these parties polled 48.1 per cent of the vote. As former members of the East German governing coalition, the Christian Democrats had the advantage of a strong party apparatus. With the SED (Communist Party) successor, the *Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus* (Democratic Socialist Party, PDS) polling an unexpectedly high 16.3 per cent, the SPD was confined to 21.8 per cent. In large part the vote for the Alliance parties was a vote for immediate reunification on the terms set out by the West German government (including a virtual promise of currency union at a highly favourable exchange rate of 1:1). The result showed that the historic roots of social democracy in eastern Germany had been seriously eroded over sixty

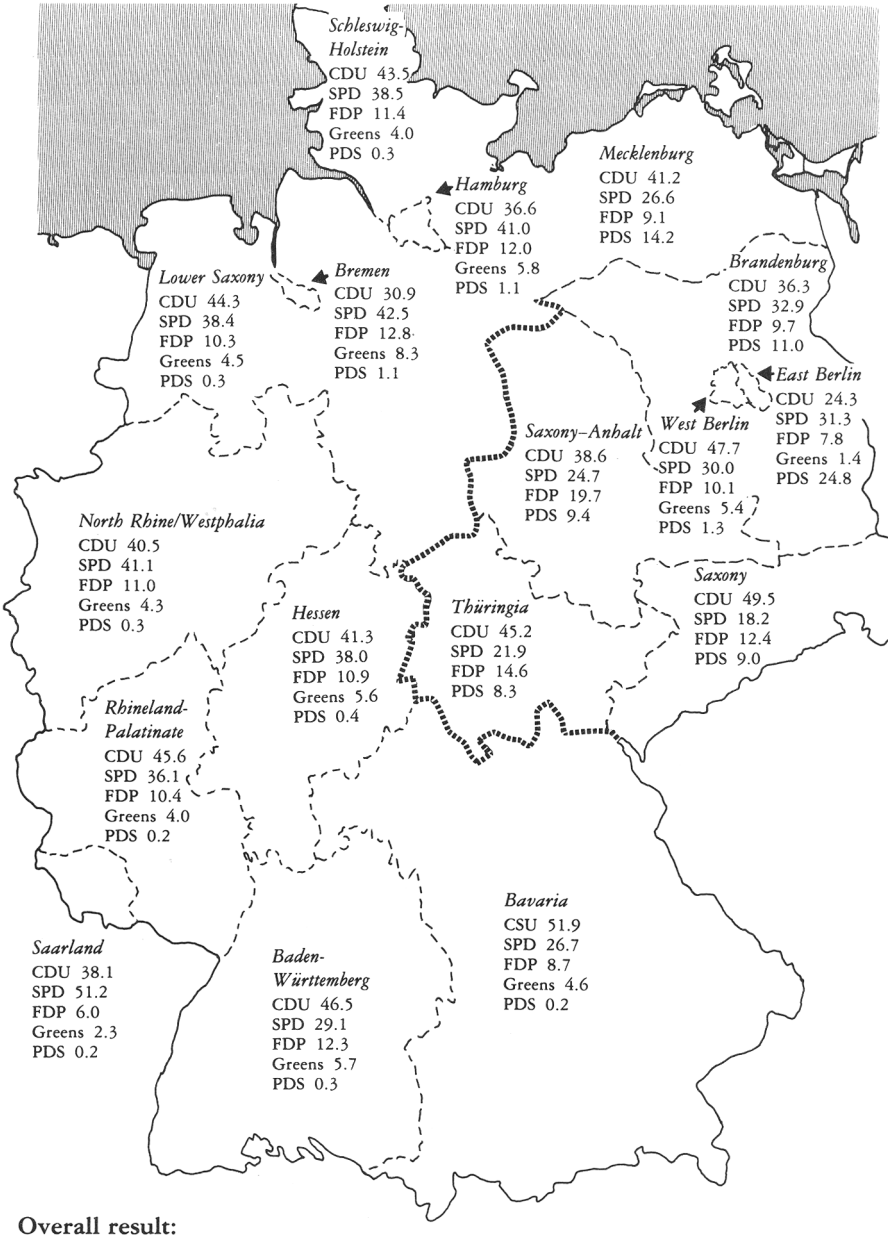
years, and that the advantage the SPD hoped to derive from this source was illusory. Analysis of the voting tends to confirm this conclusion, with a very high concentration of Alliance support (55 per cent) amongst manual workers.

Moreover, the SPD's ambivalence towards reunification could be perceived as simply an exercise in political opportunism. The issue came to a head in June 1990 over whether the SPD should support the inter-German State Treaty, the instrument of currency, and of economic, social and environmental integration. To oppose currency union on the basis that a 1 : 1 exchange rate contained economic risks was thought to have popular resonance in the West, since polls showed such fears to be widespread. On the other hand, opposition to the Treaty could be seen as undermining national purposes on an issue of historic moment. It would also create doubt in the East as to the SPD's priorities and intentions. At one point the SPD argued that elections in the West should precede unification; so it may at this point have been mainly orienting itself to the preoccupations of the Western electorate. At all events, the State Treaty publicly divided the party. Oskar Lafontaine advocated opposition to the Treaty in its given form, but party chairman Vogel, and economic spokesman Wolfgang Roth saw this as a mistake. The outcome of the conflict was a defeat for Lafontaine, underlined by the subsequent designation of Vogel as chairman of the 'new' all-German party. The episode inevitably undermined Lafontaine in the run-up to the December election, and suggested the party was divided and uncertain.

The SPD had hoped that its support for detente would become increasingly popular as Gorbachev set out to dismantle the Cold War. But they had reckoned without the time bomb of the unification issue. Within the NATO alliance the Kohl government urged a positive response to Soviet overtures. As mass civic opposition surfaced in the East, Kohl found that the historic Christian Democrat commitment to eventual reunification returned to the field of practical politics. As the chancellor could move decisively to do a deal with Gorbachev, he could also oblige the Bundesbank to fall in with a form of currency union that would consolidate Christian Democrat support in the East. The SPD was left appearing to carp and criticize a unification policy that could be presented as simultaneously generous and responsible, acceptable to the 'international community', and legitimately satisfying to the long-divided German nation. While the Left inclined to suspicions of nationalist sentiment, for many voters unification was, quite simply, a family matter. Perhaps the SPD, given its commitment to securing reforms from the federal state, was bound to feel more tied to existing structures than the bourgeois parties, linked as they are to the more mobile propensities of business enterprise.

The position of the SPD continued to deteriorate after their defeat in the East German election of March 1990, due in no small part to disarray over unification issues. For the German Left, the all-German election of December 1990 was to be a disaster. The only qualification to Kohl's triumph was that he had to share it with Genscher, his Foreign Minister and the leader of the FDP. The SPD vote fell to 33.5

Results of Bundestag Election 2 December 1990 by Länder (%)



Overall result:

CDU–CSU	43.8
SPD	33.5
FDP	11.0
Greens	3.9
PDS	2.4

per cent (35.9 per cent in the West; 23.6 per cent in the East). Its performance in the industrial areas of the five new *Länder*, and in its erstwhile strongholds in the industrial Ruhr region, was particularly disturbing. The Greens in the West polled 4.7 per cent, short of the 5 per cent required to qualify for representation in the Bundestag. In the five new *Länder*, the Greens (together with Bundnis 90) secured 5.9 per cent of the vote, giving them eight Bundestag seats. Under the new electoral law (amended for this election by the Federal Constitutional Court) Bundestag representation depended on winning 5 per cent of votes cast in *either* the *Länder* of the old Federal Republic *or* in the five new *Länder*. If the Greens in the West had not rejected the option of merging with their Eastern counterparts they would have qualified for representation on the basis of a joint list. The PDS, although polling only 2.4 per cent of the vote overall, won seventeen Bundestag seats by virtue of their poll of 9.9 per cent in the five new *Länder*. Despite being dogged by scandals, this party did attract support from some younger voters and found an able new leader in Gregor Gysi, who had acted as a lawyer for oppositionists in the days of the departed GDR. However, the SPD is very hostile to the PDS, because of the latter's roots in the SED. This partly reflects the memories of East German Social Democrats and partly their Western counterparts' determination to avoid any confusion between social democracy and Stalinism. The presence of the PDS in the newly elected Bundestag thus adds a new dimension to the Left's fragmentation. By contrast the Free Democrats and Christian Democrats have so far been able to take over, without public embarrassment, large numbers of party members and much valuable property from the former East German Christian Democratic and Free Democratic parties, the junior allies of Honecker. Indeed the East German members now comprise a majority in the FPD.

V A New *Volkspartei* for the Nineties?

The SPD remains a powerful political force in Germany, Europe's largest and richest state. In the past it has resourcefully adapted to seemingly adverse new conditions. But in the wake of the December 1990 election the party faces a profound challenge. It was a party that had negotiated a superb adaptation to the Federal Republic of the epoch of the economic miracle. Between 1965 and 1975 party membership grew from 710,000 to 998,000 to make the SPD the largest party in Germany. In 1985, it remained high at over 900,000. The SPD founded its own version of the *Volkspartei*, it pioneered Ostpolitik, and in the eighties even made a stab at taking Green politics on board. But in the fateful year of unification, as circumstance changed with bewildering speed, it became the victim of its earlier success. The party's characteristic policies no longer provided the guidance it needed. The perceived conflict between social solidarity and individual achievement undermined its electoral performance in the eighties. The SPD could still offer solutions that attracted support in the socially deprived rust-belt states. The values of social solidarity (however ill-defined) were the residue of the SPD's origins in the class politics of industrial society, and symbolic of the party's relationship to the labour movement. As such they remain central to the party's identity. But there was a growing belief in the SPD that the

redefinition of social democracy in response to modernity and mass affluence required the reformulation of these values in new terms. Tentative steps in this direction were taken in the 1984–89 programme review.

The conflict between individual achievement and social solidarity taxed the ingenuity of Oskar Lafontaine. At a programmatic level Lafontaine, urged on by his economic adviser Fritz Scharpf, has been the most prominent advocate of labour-market deregulation and an emphasis on individual achievement; but, as minister-president of Saarland, he has been adept at continuing to secure huge federal subsidies for the region's uneconomic mines and steelworks. This inconsistency reflected the difficulty of coming to terms with one of the central dilemmas of social-democratic politics. Lafontaine recently indicated his wish to stand down as chancellor candidate and may be replaced by Engholm, but the Saarlander could again seek centre stage if a favourable opportunity arises.

The SPD of the eighties worked out a response to the Greens that should stand it in good stead, though it will certainly need to be further developed. The party responded to the Green agenda with a commitment to phase out nuclear energy and a programme for the ecological renewal and modernization of the economy. The theme of ecological renewal commands increased force in the context of the environmental hazards of East German industry, and provides plausible opportunities for resolving some of its employment dilemmas. Moreover, at municipal and *Land* levels in the Federal Republic, a *modus operandi* for red–green cooperation still exists. However, the electoral collapse of the Greens reduces the pressure on the SPD, and may weaken the Left inside the party. On one occasion Lafontaine argued that the SPD should drive the Greens out of parliamentary politics by adopting some of their policies and attracting their supporters. With much help from the factional Greens themselves, this is one goal he did achieve in the otherwise disastrous December election. Although greatly weakened, the class basis of the SPD does still give the party a stable core around which other politics can develop. The party's link with organized labour has, perhaps, helped it to absorb what it wished of the new politics and to eclipse the Greens. Though it should be added that, for their part, the Green Fundis welcome the fact that the parliamentary distraction is now largely removed and they can devote themselves to the campaigns to which they always favoured giving priority.

With the party system and electoral dispositions in a state of flux, the SPD will maintain the option of exploiting openings to the centre as well as to the left. The FDP is now in a stronger position following its good showing in the election. But there are dangers if tactical dexterity assumes priority over electoral realignment, programmatic redefinition and organizational reconstruction. In the long term these are tasks the SPD must confront if it is to reassert itself as a potential party of government.

The advent of a unified Germany brought new allies to the Greens; this allows them at least indirect representation in the Bundestag. But

Bundnis 90, a civic-action group stemming from the former East German opposition, may have different concerns from the Western Greens. A further question raised is that the relatively harsh economic conditions in East Germany may make it barren territory for post-materialist values. The SPD's ideas for ecological renewal of industry seem a more plausible way of dealing with the appalling environmental problems of the GDR than Green ideas of an alternative economy. Moreover, in the new *Länder* the PDS has emerged as a third force on the Left at the expense of the Greens.

Ultimately, the prospects for the SPD and the German Left will depend on the speed with which the East German economy can be integrated with that of the West and brought up to West German levels of performance. Kohl was widely perceived in the East as promising that this could and would be done, with all necessary assistance from the Federal authorities; but he also assured the Western electorate that the process would not involve serious dislocation and higher taxes. The SPD could regain support if the chancellor fails to make good on these promises. By the beginning of 1991 unemployment in the East had reached nearly 800,000 or 8.9 per cent of the labour force, with nearly two million on short-time working and several hundreds of thousands looking for work in the West. The Federal government has refused support to many public services in the East. These problems have already provoked grass-roots resistance from a newly independent labour movement with almost daily strikes and demonstrations. The SPD clearly has a good chance of canalizing this discontent. The Metalworkers' Union has seen its membership rise from 2.5 to 3.5 million as it has won new members in the East. As Kohl is forced to raise taxes, the SPD could also regain support among the Western electorate. But like other parties the SPD will have to be careful to ensure that its message in the West does not undercut support in the East. It will also face competition in the new *Länder*, notably from the PDS and the FDP, both of which have a larger apparatus and membership there than the newly launched Social Democrats. The East German Greens and Bundnis 90 may also find ways of extending their support.

It remains just possible that within a couple of years the unavoidable problems of transition will be overcome and a second German economic miracle be in the making. Barring some deep-seated convulsion that would force the FDP to break with its coalition partners, Kohl has about three years in which to consolidate the new hegemony of the German Right, one which combines the gains of the eighties with the fruits of unification. The SPD has even less time to reinvent itself as the *Volkspartei* of the nineties, able to speak to both East and West, and with an appeal both to labour and to the post-materialist middle class. There can be no doubt that in their very different ways the old Left and the new Left of the former West Germany, the SPD and the Greens, have experienced abrupt fluctuations in their fortunes. The SPD is now in government in eight of the sixteen *Länder* of the new German state. And the fact remains that with or without alliance to other forces on the left, the SPD remains central to any alternative in Europe's largest and richest state.