

The Communist Party of Sweden and the Comintern.
1919 - 1943.
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THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL SITUATION

From the last decade of the 19th century until the outbreak of World War I, Sweden underwent a radical economic, social and political transformation as a consequence of the industrialisation. At the end of the 19th century the majority of the Swedish population made its living in the agricultural and forestry sectors. At the end of the 1930s, the majority of the inhabitants of the country made its living in manufacture, commerce and the service sector. At the end of the 19th century, the political power in the country was primarily in the hands of big landowners, farmers and to some extent the owners of manufacturing firms. Forty years later the working class in conjunction with related social groups had taken over the political power in Sweden. At the end of the 19th century and for a period of approximately twenty years, the issues of democracy, parliamentarism together with the national defence issue were at the top of the political agenda. In view of the menace from Nazism and Fascism and the threat of war, the national defence issue remained important during the 1930s, but the burning political issue of the time was the high rate of unemployment that followed in the wake of the deep economic recession of the early 1930s. At the end of the 19th century, the Sveriges Sociademokratiska Arbetarparti, (SAP) [the Social Democratic Labour Party of Sweden] in a struggle against the police, the military and conservative political forces had gained recognition and taken its first steps in the Swedish parliament. By the end of the 1930s, the country was governed by a Social Democratic government who, in agreement with the trade union movement and trade and industry, were in the process of building up the Swedish welfare state.

The process of industrialisation and the emergence of the working class took place over a period of fifty years which, seen as a whole, reflects an ever increasing level of prosperi-

ty. However, the trend towards a better social order, towards the welfare state, is regularly replaced by periods of recession, in some instances of very deep recessions accompanied by social and political unrest.

The great industrial conflict in the Swedish labour market of 1908/1909 which began by a lockout at a time when the pre-war business prosperity stagnated for a while, turned into a strike involving close on 300,000 workers. The outcome was that the workers were defeated. The employers had been well prepared and the Conservative government declared its intention not to intervene. The defeat was appreciable. The labour movement lost a great deal of its members. It was only by the end of World War I that the political and trade union organisations could boast the same high numbers as before the conflict.

During the early phases of World War I, the labour movement pursued a policy of truce with the government in office, a conservative Civil Service Administration. During the second half of the war, following the Russian February Revolution and at a time when the food shortage in the country had become critical, Swedish public opinion became more radical. Several places in the country saw the outbreak of hunger riots. Some scholars have claimed that never before in Swedish history was the social order faced with a similar revolutionary threat as in the spring of 1917. In that particular political situation, the issue of democracy and parliamentarism became crucial. Parliamentarism was finally sanctioned after the general election to the Riksdagen, the Swedish parliament, in September that year, and the long process towards democracy was completed in 1921 in the middle of a deep economic recession.

The deep recession which hit Sweden in the early 1920s followed a post-war boom. Together with the depressed business trends unemployment grew rapidly - some national unions registered a rate of unemployment of a quarter of their membership. Severe conflicts were raging in the labour market, the political stability of the country was precarious. One minority government replaced another throughout the 1920s.

From the mid-1920s there was a period of temporary stability, but the severe recession of 1930 which hit Sweden, too, forced a very large number of wage and salary earners back into unemployment. Class antagonism was intensified and frequently the workers' extraparliamentary actions were countered by armed military force, at times in violent clashes involving casualties.

When the Social Democratic Labour Party with the political support of the political party of the agrarians, the Bondeförbundet [the agrarians' union] had taken over the government in 1932, a great deal of attention was given to the unemployment problem. It was the government's intention to stimulate the economy of the country and create jobs by means of public funding. The SAP attempted to carry out a policy through which the country would work its way out of the recession. A long time ago, the Central Organisation of Trade Unions, the LO, and the SAP had abandoned any radical rhetoric on the revolution to dispose of capitalism. The policies of the 1930s were shaped in a spirit of cooperation between capital and labour; since the end of the 1920s, the SAP had consciously endeavoured to widen its political basis - here was the idea of turning the Social Democratic Party into a party of the people with its ideological foundations in what was called the welfare state ideology. In this concept, the SAP, the LO and the Svenska Arbetsgivarföreningen (SAF) [Association of Swedish Employers] constituted the factors of cohesion. Here was found the explicitly stated objective of reducing conflict in the Swedish labour market. The legislation enacted in 1928 concerning collective bargaining and industrial tribunals and the so-called General Accord of 1938 between the parties to the labour market were perceived as preparing the ground for a stable and harmonious labour market in Sweden.

The Swedish Communists enter the political arena during the transitional period between the post-war boom and the deep recessionary trough of the early 1920s. The new party, which was established in 1921, faced serious difficulties - at several levels. The Communist Party of Sweden (SKP) was the fourth

party to base its activities on the working class. However, it was quite impossible to intrude upon the leading position of the SAP in the labour movement; only for a few years in the late 1920s was the SKP influence on trade unions seen as a threat to the unity of the trade union movement and to its close relations to the SAP. The high rate of unemployment in the early 1920s and 1930s seems also to have made it more difficult for the Communist parties to gather the workers under Communist leadership and carry out extra-parliamentary actions. In a situation with weak business trends, strikes became a troublesome weapon to handle and the class-against-class slogans of the 1930 were countered by the SAP anti-Communism and "new economic policy".

The difficult external circumstances in which the newly formed Communist party found itself in regard to agitation and organisational efforts also complicated the relationship with the Communist International (CI). The SKP (Section of the 3rd International) was squeezed between the SAP and the CI. It turned out to be exceedingly difficult to find a political path, acceptable to the CI, close to SAP positions without abandoning what was considered the Communist profile. During the 1920s as well as the 1930s, the Communist organisations were forced to act in correspondence with the wishes of the Comintern. But in the 1920s there was still a minimum of political freedom of action. After 1928 the SKP was hit by the SAP's consistent anti-Communism, and at the same time the party's position was weakened by the new political line of the CI and the party split in 1929. During the 1930s the SKP was forced to act on the basis of political issues which were not central to the political situation of Sweden. At the same time the political space available to the Socialistpartiet (SP) [the Socialist Party], the party which after the split of 1929 was acting independently of the CI, was shrinking. In 1937 the majority of the SP members returned to the SAP, and in 1944 following the dissolution of the CI, the SKP supported the post-war programme of the SAP.

ON THE DIVISION INTO PERIODS OF THE HISTORY OF THE SKP
1919-1943

In terms of perspective and approach, the history of Communism in Sweden during the inter-war years through to 1943 can be divided into periods in various ways. Somewhat simplified, we can - on the one hand - tie the Communist movement of Sweden to the way in which we usually divide the development of the Communist International into periods, thus allowing the international perspective to prevail; on the other hand, it might be fruitful to apply a "domestic" perspective to Swedish Communism during the Comintern period, thus basing the analysis of the Communist parties which were politically active during varying periods of the inter-war years on the economic, social and political development in Sweden.

In writing its own history¹, the Communist movement in Sweden has attached great importance to the year 1917 with a preceding history going back to the years immediately following the turn of the century when an opposition within Sweden's Social Democratic Labour Party began to form and to make itself increasingly felt. The opposition, which grew rapidly within the Social Democratic organisation, was most strongly anchored in the Socialdemokratiska Ungdomsförbundet (SDUF)² [Social Democratic Youth Association]. By associating itself with the dramatic year of 1917, the Swedish Communist movement wanted to link its own history to the international developments in the labour movement, with firm ties to the Zimmerwald movement and the strong expressions of sympathy with the Russian Revolution as rhetorically important steps on the road towards joining the Communist International in March 1919. On the basis of this type of approach, the activities and positions of the Swedish Communist parties are mainly analysed against the background of the changes in the CI policies in which the line of demarcation

¹ See i.a. A. Wretling, *Revolutionens unga avantgarde. Blad ur den revolutionära ungdomens historia.* (Stockholm 1932), S. Linderot, "Den revolutionära traditionen" in *Mellan Världskrigen 1917-1942. Bidrag till Sveriges Kommunistiska Partis historia.* (Stockholm 1942).

² Knut Bäckström, *Arbetarrörelsen i Sverige. 2. Den politiska arbetarrörelsens sprängning och et nytt revolutionärt arbetarpartis uppkomst.* (Stockholm 1971).

between the first and the second period of the CI is usually drawn in 1924, the transition to the third period in 1928, and the fourth demarcation line is drawn at the time of the introduction of the Popular Front policy in 1934/1935. When analysing the changes within Swedish Communism on the basis of the international perspective, it follows that the changes in the CI policies are crucial to the understanding of Swedish Communism during the inter-war years.

Dividing the history into periods on the basis of a Swedish domestic policy perspective leads to a somewhat different picture in which the changes over time in Swedish society, in the industrial and political situation, and in the changing role played by the SAP in domestic politics become decisive for the understanding of the development of Swedish Communism during the inter-war years. The economic and political changes characteristic of each period of the '20s and '30s in Sweden are to some extent reflected in the international arena. But it becomes a decisive factor that the changes which take place in Swedish trade and industry and in the domestic policy which are presumed to influence the possibility of the political parties and the trade unions to act are attributed with a more universal ability to explain events. However, this does not mean that the resolutions passed at the Communist World Congresses can be dismissed as unimportant. Dividing the development of Communism in Sweden into periods up until 1943 can be seen as conforming to economic, social and political events in the following way:

1st phase. 1917-1920³. Favourable business trends following the war accompanied by revolutionary currents strengthened the working class. In May 1917 the Sveriges Socialdemokratiska Vänsterparti (SSV) [Sweden's Social Democratic Left-wing Party] was constituted. The SSV was a heterogeneous association whose left wing, which had joined the left wing of the Zimmerwald-movement - under the leadership of the SDUF

³ This division into periods is based on T. Olsson, *Utviklingslinjer i svensk arbetarrörelse under mellankrigstiden*, in *Nordisk Arbejderbevægelse i Mellemløbetiden. Stat, parti og fagbevægelse. Rapport fra nordisk konference i arbejderbevægelsens historie på Roskilde Højskole 19-21 april 1979*, p. 254.

spokesman, Zeth Höglund - very soon oriented itself towards the German Spartacists and the Russian Bolsheviks. In March 1919 the SSV joined the Communist International.

2nd phase. 1920-1924. This period was marked by a post-war depression. Unemployment grew and peaked in 1921 when approx. 25 p.c. of organised workers had been made redundant. During this period the development toward a Communist party was completed. In March 1921 the SKP was constituted following protracted internal strife. The minority in the extinct Vänsterpartiet was forced to leave the new Communist party.

The period up to 1924 is the period during which Communism in Sweden - under unfavourable external conditions - began evolving its types of activities. The term 'the learning process of the Communist party' springs to mind. The adverse economic trends and the high rate of unemployment forced the SKP to launch the United Front policy in an attempt to reach the workers. The political balancing act between the SAP and the CI, under Höglund's leadership led the SKP to pursue a policy which placed the party very close to the SAP. Under growing political tension within the party, Höglund came into conflict with the CI leadership, and in 1924 he was forced to leave the SKP. Höglund immediately reconstructed an independent Communist party; this however, never really gained any considerable foothold in the ranks of the Swedish working class. Around New Year 1926 the SKP (Höglund) joined the SAP.

3rd phase. 1924-1929. The economic crisis of the early '20s had been overcome about 1924. The period up to 1929 was characterised by a stabilisation of the country's economic position and decreasing unemployment. In the labour market the initiative was in the hands of the employers, and with the support of the SAP and the trade unions, industrial legislation was enacted in 1928, which regulated the relationship between the parties in the collective bargaining process.

Under these rather favourable economic and political conditions, the new SKP leadership with the chairman, Karl Kilbom, as the prime mover, could establish a fairly stable organisation with a relatively strong influence in the trade

union movement. Seen from the domestic policy perspective, the election to the second chamber of the Riksdagen in 1928 becomes the beginning of a turning point for the SKP. Following the election, the SKP strengthened its positions. But other than that, the bourgeois parties moved forward their front line. At that time it also became clear to the SAP that the party should never be able to gain a majority in favour of its policies exclusively by means of support from the working class. The implementation of Social Democratic policies required the SAP to find support outside its traditional electorate. The change of front in the Social Democratic policy would, in turn, require the reduction of Communist influence in the trade union movement. In the new policy, which was given the name of welfare-state policy, it was also required that the Communists should be seen as irrelevant for the main political issues. The SAP drew a very sharp line of demarcation to its left-hand side. At the same time, the CI resolution of the VI World Congress, the class-against-class policy, was emphasised, and the Social Democratic party was brought to the fore as the Communists' primary enemy. The politically complex situation in the field of tension between the SAP and the CI shattered the Communist party. In the autumn of 1929 the majority of the party was forced to leave the SKP.

The split-up of the SKP in the autumn of 1929 must be considered the major break in Swedish Communism. The clashes within the SKP not only strengthened the position of the SAP; the split also weakened the Communist movement. The SKP (Section of the 3rd International) was firmly attached to the CI, and the class-against-class policy became much too difficult to realise in the long term as the base of the party in the working class was shrinking.

4th phase. 1929-1933. The economic crisis hit Swedish trade and industry, and the rapidly increasing unemployment affected the workers very hard. The SAP policy of harmony in the labour market was reinforced, and the new policy of the party, viz., to widen its political basis, in 1932 led to the accession of the party to government power with the support of

the Agrarians' Union. The anti-Communism of the SAP in conjunction with the class-against-class policy of the SKP seems to have reduced the chances of the SKP to act within Swedish politics. From the provincial districts signals were made calling for a change of policy to avoid the party being erased completely from the political map.

5th phase. 1934-1939. The Social Democratic party fortified its position as the dominant power centre of politics in Sweden. The harmonious relationship between capital and labour reached its apex with the conclusion of the so-called Saltsjöbaden Agreement in 1938. Concurrently, under the escalating Nazi and Fascist threat, the SKP began orienting itself towards what was soon to be known as the Popular Front policy. The Socialist Party under the leadership of Karl Kilbom and Nils Flyg split in 1937. Most of the members returned to the SAP together with Kilbom. The group which followed Nils Flyg increasingly oriented themselves towards right-wing radicalism, and in the early 1940 found itself in the political camp of Nazism.

6th phase. 1939-1943. As a section of the Comintern, the SKP was faced with the threat of being declared illegal. Measures were taken by the Government to prevent Communist political activities. The Communists were faced with a ban on the transportation of their publications and with internment in labour camps. The change came in 1944. At that time, the SAP adopted the so-called post-war programme, a party platform which was considered sufficiently radical to find the support of the SKP since the Comintern had ceased to exist.

STATE OF RESEARCH AND SOURCES

Research into Swedish Communism during the Comintern period remains relatively limited, but in terms of time, it covers the entire period.⁴ In some fields, however, research

⁴ For a survey of the state of research see, J. Hermansson, *Kommunism på Svenska? SKP/VPK's idéutveckling efter Komintern* (Uppsala 1984) p. 34 ff. L. Björlin, *Die Forschung über die schwedischen Arbeiterparteien in den 70er und 80er Jahren*, in *Mitteilungsblatt des Instituts zur Erforschung der europäischen Arbeiterbewegung* no.10 (Bochum 1990) p. 51 ff.

has made further progress. Particularly, mention should be made of the studies concerning the left-wing Socialist and Communist parties' reception of ideas during the period 1917 - 1929⁵ and the programme development in the left-wing Socialist and Communism until the early 1970s.⁶ Furthermore, interesting studies have been made concerning the SKP in the trade union movement during the latter part of the 1920s⁷ and a monograph of the independent Communist party in Sweden in the years 1929 - 1937 - after 1934 called the Socialistpartiet [the Socialist party].⁸ The 1970s and '80s within the framework of the research project 'Sweden During World War II' saw two major papers on Swedish Communism in the late 1930s and during the world war.⁹

The relations between Swedish Communism and the Communist International have been examined in certain aspects with the accent on the 1920s. The conflicts between the CI and the SKP, which made themselves felt at an early stage, served to direct interest towards conflicts and divisions in Swedish Communism.

⁵ L. Berntson, Sveriges Kommunistiska Parti och leninismen 1919-1929. in Arkiv för studier i Arbetarrörelsens historia nr. 3. See also M. Hedemo, Idéutvecklingen inom Sveriges Socialdemokratiska Vänsterparti 1917-1929. Unpublished paper, political science. Uppsala 1983.

⁶ K. Lindkvist, Program och parti. Principprogram och partiideologi inom den kommunistiska rörelsen i Sverige 1917-1972. (Lund 1982).

⁷ L. Berntson, Sveriges kommunistiska parti och fackföreningsrörelsen 1926-1929. Unpublished paper, Institute of Political Science at the Uppsala University, 1973; for a survey of the opposition in the trade union movement see, L. Gärdvall, Facklig opposition. Om arbetarrörelsens fackliga och politiska splittring 1917-1929. in Med eller mot strömmen? En antologi om svenska folkrörelser. (Uppsala 1980). The research on SSV and SKP in the trade union movement usually bases itself on trade union issues in the organisations. In these contexts the SSV and the SKP as well as other communist organisations have been treated as actors in the trade union and/or political arena. See for instance J. Lindgren/H. Tingsten/J. Westerståhl, Svenska metallindustriarbetarförbundets historia. Part II and III (Stockholm 1948, 1963), T. Olsson, Pappersmassestrejken 1932. En studie av facklig ledning och opposition. (Kristianstad 1980), B. Persson, Skogens skördemän. Skogs- och flottningsarbetarförbundets kamp för arbete och kollektivavtal 1918-1927. (Lund 1991), A. Thörnquist, Lönarbete eller egen jord? Den svenska landarbetarrörelsen 1908-1936. (Uppsala 1989).

⁸ B. Kennerström, Mellan två Internationaler. Socialistiska Partiet 1929-1937. (Kristianstad 1974).

⁹ Y. Hirdman, Sveriges Kommunistiska Parti 1939-1945. (Stockholm 1974), K. Molin, Hammakriget. Om den svenska krigsmaktens åtgärda mot kommunister under andra världskriget. (Stockholm 1982).

The analysis of conditions within the SKP was done mainly against the backdrop of the ideological and programmatic changes that took place within the CI.¹⁰ However, recent research has examined the conflicts within the SKP on the basis of the domestic policy strategies of the SAP. It has been shown most convincingly that the SAP played a decisive role in the lead-in to the split-up of the SKP in the autumn of 1929.¹¹

Finally, mention must be made of the fact that today no scholarly survey of Swedish Communism in a social context exists.¹² However, at the same time it should be mentioned that a large number of papers was presented in the 1970s and '80s on the theme Communism in Sweden. Among the themes to be treated were the Communist youth organisations, the press policy, the role of the SKP in industrial conflicts, the international involvement in the Spanish Civil War, anti-Communism in the late 1930s and World War II and aspects of Communist cultural activities.¹³

This summary survey goes to show that the study of Swedish Communism is in its infancy. However, international and national events now raise a number of issues in relation to Communism and its role and activities in society and in political life. Also the scholarly preconditions for finding the answers appear to be favourable. This impression is strengthened by the fact that the major international archives are being opened. This new situation has enhanced the possibilities

¹⁰ E.F. Josephson, *SKP och Komintern 1921-1924. Motsättningarna inom Sveriges Kommunistiska Parti och dess relationer till den Kommunistiska Internationalen*. (Uppsala 1976), and H. Arvidson, *Sprängningen av Sveriges Kommunistiska Parti 1924*. in S.E. Olsson, (ed.) *Från SKP till VPK - en antologi redigerad av ...* (Lund 1976), B. Kennerström, *Sprängningen av Sveriges Kommunistiska Parti 1929*. in S.E. Olsson (1976), B. Åkesson, *Sprängningen av Sveriges Kommunistiska Parti 1929*. I-II. unpublished. (Lunds Universitet), also in A. Kan, *Nikolaj Bucharin och den skandinaviska arbetarrörelsen*. (Uppsala 1991).

¹¹ B. Schüllerkvist, *Från kosackval till kohandel. SAP's väg till makten*. (Kristianstad 1992). Also, C. Carlsson/E. Dahlin/E.T. Nilsson, *SKP och 30-talet*. in S.E. Olsson (1976).

¹² A survey with the emphasis on the post-war period Å. Sparring, *Från Höglund till Hermansson* (Stockholm 1967), P-O. Zennström, *Klasskampen 1917-1939. En kommunistisk krönika*, (Lund 1977).

¹³ See papers in the periodicals *Arbetshistoria*, *Arkiv för studier i Arbetarrörelsens historia* and *Zenit*.

of in-depth research into Swedish Communism. The source material in Swedish and foreign archives is comprehensive and, as far as can be assessed, well preserved. In the following presentation of sources to the study of Swedish Communism I have concentrated the account on printed and unprinted sources in Swedish archives and in *Rosijskogo Tsentra Chraneija i Stsjutjeniaja Dokumentov Novejszej Istorii* in Moscow.

In the Swedish labour movement, there is a tradition for documenting all activities. The Communist line within the movement continued within this tradition. Furthermore, the establishment of archives was also promoted by the Communist principles of organisation and decision making process with its highly developed reporting system. The main part of the Communist party archive is kept at the Labour Movement Archive and Library in Stockholm.¹⁴ However, certain parts of the SKP archives are still kept at the office of the Left Wing party in Stockholm,¹⁵ primarily the series of protocols. A large-scale archive covering SKP (Section of the 3rd International) is kept in Moscow at the *Rossijskogo Tsentra...*, the former Comintern Archive. Documents which relate to Communist activities locally and regionally, can, if they have survived at all, normally be found in the regional archives located at various places in the country.¹⁶

Swedish Communism during the Comintern years reflects an inconsistent organisational image. Four parties are relevant: Sveriges Socialdemokratiska Vänsterparti (SSV) 1917-1921, Sveriges Kommunistiska Parti (Section of the 3rd International) 1921-1943, Sveriges Kommunistiska parti (Höglund) 1924-25 and Sveriges Kommunistiska Parti (Kilbom) 1929-1937. SSV was not a Communist party, and it is more than doubtful whether SKP (Höglund) can be characterised as Communist. At an early stage, Zeth Höglund who played a very prominent role in the Communist

¹⁴ Arbetarrörelsens Arkiv och Bibliotek. Upplandsgatan 5. Box 1124, 11181 Sthlm., Sweden.

¹⁵ Vänsterpartiet. Kungsgatan 84, 112 27 Sthlm., Sweden.

¹⁶ Information on the so-called popular movement archives can be obtained from Arbetarrörelsens Arkiv och Bibliotek in Stockholm.

movement in Sweden from the time before World War I and until the mid-1920s, opposed the CI organisational principles and policies and, therefore, he was perceived as a non-Communist as early as 1921. In my opinion it is important to see SKP (Höglund) as a left-wing Socialist party.

The archives reflect the organisational development of the organisations. The SKP archive for the period 1921-1943 is a fairly complete archive well reflecting the activities of the party. The holdings in Moscow supplement the party archive in Stockholm. The SKP (Kilbom) has also left behind it a well maintained archive. By contrast, the archives of SKP (Höglund) have considerable lacuna. However, to some extent these shortcomings in the archive of the organisation can be bridged by means of documents from the personal archives of the two party leaders Zeth Höglund and Fredrik Ström. The party archive of the Socialdemokratiska Vänsterpartiet is nearly complete until March 1921 when the party split. A small and incomplete archive exists for the party formation which, for some years, tried to pursue a left-wing Socialist policy somewhere between the SAP and Sveriges Kommunistiska Parti.

YOUTH ORGANISATIONS, FRONT AND ANCILLARY ORGANISATIONS

The youth organisations of the Swedish labour movement played a prominent political role within their respective parties. The associations succeeded in organising large numbers as members; from time to time the Communist youth association had more members than did the mother party, and the associations spurred organisational and agitation efforts. For long periods, the associations pursued policies that were independent of the party, even at the international level and, without exception, they have taken up oppositional positions to the left of the mother party. The Sveriges Socialdemokratiske Ungdomsförbund (SDUF 1903-1921) [Sweden's Social Democratic Youth Association] played a prominent role in the confrontations in the labour movement and the party split-ups at the end of World War I and in the transition into a Communist organisation. At its 1921 congress, the SDUF was transformed into

Sveriges Kommunistiska Ungdomsförbund (SKU) [Sweden's Communist Youth Association]. The documents left behind by the two youth organisations are located in the Arbetarrörelsens Arkiv och Bibliotek in Stockholm. The holdings are relatively comprehensive and there are good prerequisites for studying the activities of the associations, national as well as international. The Swedish archival holdings are well supplemented by a substantial source material in the holdings of the Communist Youth International at Rossijskogo Tsentra ... in Moscow.¹⁷ Documents concerning De Ungas Förbund [Association of the Young] within SKP (Höglund) 1924-1925 and concerning the youth association of the Socialist Party seem largely to have been lost.

Scholarly research into the Communist front organisations in Sweden is very limited.¹⁸ The organisations began to emerge a few years into the 1920s. Following the split in the party in 1929, they became an increasingly prominent part of Communist activities.¹⁹ It is possible that the emergence of these organisations at the turn of the decade should be seen in light of the fact that from 1928 the SAP and the LO launched a comprehensive anti-Communist campaign to oust Communists from the trade union movement. It is possible that the front organisations constituted an attempt on the part of the SKP to counter the SAP/LO campaign over a broad front and to find

¹⁷ Access to the material requires permission from the Vänsterpartiet/Ung vänster in Stockholm.

¹⁸ R. Pålbrant, *Arbetarrörelsen och idrotten 1919-1939*. (Uppsala 1977)

¹⁹ The following front and ancillary organisations are involved: Kommunistiska Kvinnointernationalen [Communist Women's International]; Röda Hjälpen [Red Aid]; Internationala Arbetarhjälpen [International Workers' Aid]; Röda fackoppositionen/Profintern [Red Trade Union Opposition]; Frontföreningsinternationalen/Röda Frontförbundet [the Front Association International/the Red Front Association]; Röda Bondeinternationalen [the Red Agrarians' International]; Kommunistiska kooperationen [the Communist Cooperation]; Röda Sportinternationalen [the Red Sport International]; Röda Frontkämparinternationalen [the Red Front Fighter International]; Internationella sällskapet för kulturella förbindelser [the International Society for Cultural Relations]; Bildningsarbetarnas International [the International of Educational Workers]; Revolutionära kampinternationalen för sjömän och hamnarbetare [the Revolutionary Fighting International for Seamen and Dockers]; Antikolonialförbundet [the Anti-Colonial League]; and Sovjetunionens vänner [Friends of the Soviet Union].

alternative ways of reaching the working class once it had become difficult to act within the trade union movement.

As far as is known the archives covering the front organisations are incomplete. Some of the extant parts have been collected in the Arbetarrörelsens Arkiv och Bibliotek.²⁰

The left-wing Socialist and Communist organisations in Sweden never attempted to establish alternative trade union organisations to those of the Social Democratically dominated unions.

The left-wing Fackoppositionen [the Trade Union Opposition] and the Röda Fackoppositionen [the Red Trade Union Opposition] which stood under Communist influence worked within the LO. More than anything they were propaganda organisations and organisationally they belonged under their respective political parties.

To the extent that the archival documents of these bodies have been kept, they can be found in the left-wing Socialist and Communist archives.

An important supplement to the archives of the left-wing Socialist and Communist trade union bodies are located in the archival holdings of the LO and the individual national unions. The archives are extensive and well-ordered, but can only be used for research purposes upon explicit permission.

A large number of the people who were active in a leading capacity within the Swedish Communist movement during the Comintern years, have transferred their personal archives to research institutions.²¹ In the present article it is not possible to go into the content and usefulness of every individual archive since they vary a lot in both respects.

²⁰ K. Olsson's archive at the Arbetarrörelsens Arkiv och Bibliotek, Stockholm contain documents concerning Röda Hjälpén during the 1930s. Documents concerning Kommunistiska kvinnoförbundet can be found in certain parts of Anna Stina Pripp's personal archive, at Arbetarrörelsens Arkiv och Bibliotek, Stockholm. Mention must be made of the fact that in connection with my work at Rossijskogo Tsentra ... I am examining the archival holdings pertaining to the front and ancillary organisations,

²¹ A good survey of the personal archives of the Arbetarrörelsens Arkiv och Bibliotek can be found in Arbetarhistoria. Meddelande från Arbetarrörelsens Arkiv och Bibliotek, Nr. 39-40 (3-4/1986).

Among the comprehensive archives containing long correspondences of relevance to Swedish Communism in the inter-war years mention can be made of those left behind by Knut Bäckström, Nils Flyg, Otto Grimlund, Zeth Höglund, Karl Kilbom, Ture Nerman, Knut Olsson, Edvin E. Persson, Anna Stina Pripp, Fredrik Ström and Gunnar Öhman. All these archives are located at the Arbetarrörelsens Arkiv och Bibliotek in Stockholm.

Archives of importance to research into Swedish Communism during the Comintern years can also be found outside the Arbetarrörelsens Arkiv och Bibliotek. A small archive left behind by the Communist Albin Ström, who was active in Gothenburg and who was expelled in the mid 1930s, is located in the LO archive. Frederik Ströms very extensive archive is available for research in the University Library in Gothenburg. In the City Archive of Stockholm there is the very large personal archive left behind by Carl Lindhagen, one of the most prominent figures in the Socialdemokratiska Vänsterpartiet up to 1918.

Finally, I should like to mention that left-wing Socialists and Communists in Sweden have continually been under scrutiny by the state and its authorities. This supervision has left behind it extensive files. The source material is largely stored in the Riksarkivet [the National Archive] in Stockholm as well as in the regional archives that are governed by the Riksarkivet.²² In the Stockholm City Archive,²³ a good deal of the metropolitan police archives are kept, whereas the archives of the Swedish Security Police archives are still mainly in the hands of that authority itself. In order to gain access to the Swedish Security Police archives and those of its predecessors on the surveillance of Communist organisations, specific permission is required. During the inter-war years, the Swedish military authorities worked in parallel with the

²² Riksarkivet. Fyrverkarbacken 13-17, Box 12 541, S - 102 29 Stockholm. Information on the regional archives, the landsarkiven, can be obtained from the Riksarkivet.

²³ Stockholms stadsarkiv. Kungsklippan 6. Box 22 063, S - 104 22 Stockholm.

police in keeping an eye on the left-wing groups in the Swedish labour movement. In the military, the efforts were coordinated by the Domestic Policy Section of the General Staff. An extensive source material is found at the Krigsarkivet [the War Archive] in Stockholm.²⁴

The printed source material on Swedish Communism is very extensive. The source material can be subdivided into three categories: printed documents contained in the archives of organisations and personal archives; contemporary political and trade union printed matter; papers and periodicals. The party archives usually contain printed protocols of congress business (motions, etc.). Furthermore, in the party archives we normally find printed activity reports and circulars and handbills. To this category also belong the printed annual activity surveys produced by the Communist parliamentary group.

The contemporary political and trade union printed matter is extensive. Brochures on general political themes, agitation material, the very broad printing activities of trade union and front organisations constitute an important source of information reflecting various aspects of the Communist movement in Sweden.

Papers and periodicals have been considered very important for the Communist agitation. Among the theoretical periodical mention is made of the Zimmerwald which was published between 1919 and 1921²⁵ and the Kommunistisk Tidskrift [the Communist Periodical] whose publication began in 1930.

Like the rest of the labour press the Communist papers had to work under very difficult financial conditions.²⁶ The

²⁴ See also the archive of the Police Office in the War Archive. Banérgatan 64, S - 115 88 Stockholm and the 6th department of the Stockholm police. Part of the Archives of the Security Police, Rikspolisstyrelsen [the National Police Authority].

²⁵ For the periodical the Zimmerwald see A. Pleijel, Zimmerwald - en socialistisk tidskrift. in S.E. Olsson (1976) p. 38ff.

²⁶ No very extensive research into the communist press has been made. However, see L. Dalquist, Röd tidning i Vätterbygden. Norra/Nya Småland 1917-1926. in Meddelande från Arbetarrörelsens Arkiv och Bibliotek nr. 9, p.30ff. L-Å. Engblom, Arbetarpressen i Göteborg. En studie av arbetarpressens förutsättningar, arbetarrörelsens presspolitik och tidningskonkurrens

Folkets Dagblad Politiken [the People's Daily, the Policy], the principal organ of the party in the 1920s, had been founded in 1916 under the name of the Politiken [the Policy]. After the party split in 1929, the paper became an organ of the Socialist Party until 1937; at this time the paper was taken over by that group within the party which had begun orienting itself towards Nazism. To replace Folkets Dagblad, the SKP started the paper the Ny Dag [the New Day] in 1930 which became the chief organ of the SKP. From 1924 to 1925, the SKP (Höglund) ran the paper the Den Nya Politiken [the New Policy]. All of the three Communist organisations have at different times operated a regional press.

During the Comintern years, the weekly, the Stormklockan [the Tocsin], founded in 1908 as an organ of the Social Democratic Youth Association was the organ of the Sveriges Kommunistiska Ungdomförbund [Sweden's Communist Youth Association]. The youth association of the Socialist Party published the Avantgardet [the Vanguard]. Among the press of the ancillary organisations, mention should be made of the main organ of the Communist Women's League, the Röda Röster [the Red Voices].

Among the longer series of printed sources of importance to research into Swedish Communism, the public press should also be mentioned. Apart from a number of public white papers concerning Communism, I would particularly draw attention to the Riksdagstrycket, the parliamentary minutes, committee documents, etc. The minutes are a central source of information reflecting the activities of the Communist organisations in the parliamentary arena. Similarly, a lot of printed source material exists which reflects the policies of the Communist organisations at regional and local level.

MEMOIRS, BIOGRAPHIES, BIOGRAPHICAL HANDBOOKS

The first generation of Swedish Communists retired from active duty during the latter part of the 1940s. Many of the active politicians followed up on and wound up their political activities by publishing their memoirs. At the same time, the

sen i Göteborg 1890-1965. (Gothenburg 1980) passim.

more prominent leaders of the labour movement have been made the object of biographical studies.²⁷ Several of the authors of the memoirs have been active in the Communist movement for longer or shorter periods. Memoirs written by the political actors of the time, therefore, frequently go beyond strictly Communist events. However, with a few exceptions, the authors of the memoirs generally do not contribute any profound analysis of the Communist movement of which they were a part.

The series of memoirs was begun by *Frederik Ström* who published his memoirs in 1942-45. A third volume was planned but never completed. Ström was the secretary of SKP from 1921 to 1924, but ever since the 1910s he had had a prominent position in the left-wing opposition of the labour movement. Ström was one of the key people in the split-up of the SAP in 1917 and in the transitional period from 1917 to 1921 in the the Swedish Social Democratic Left-Wing Party.²⁸

At the same time as *Fredrik Ström* ceased publishing his memoirs, *Zeth Höglund* published his.²⁹ During the period 1951-1957, Höglund published three volumes³⁰ of his memoirs, the fourth volume was written by his daughter *Gunhild Höglund*.³¹

²⁷ For a compilation of the memoir literature and biographical material concerning people in the labour movement, see *Arbetshistoria. Meddelande från Arbetarrörelsens Arkiv och Bibliotek nr. 39-40 (3-4/1986)* Svenska Folkrörelser I (Stockholm 1936) contains bibliographical data for a large number of biographical persons active within the labour movement. In *Svenskt Biografiskt Lexikon* we find biographies for a majority of the better known communists e.g. C.N. Carlsson, Nils Flyg, Zeth Höglund, Karl Kilbom, Svend Linderot, etc.

²⁸ F. Ström, *Min ungdoms strider. Memoarer.* (Stockholm 1940), idem, *I stormig tid* (Stockholm 1942).

²⁹ Z. Höglund began publishing his memoirs in the periodical *Folket i Bild* during the latter part of the 1940s.

³⁰ Z. Höglund, *Minnen i fackelsken I-III* (Stockholm 1951-57). Biographical material on Z. Höglund, see F. Ström, *Om Zeth Höglund.* in *Festskrift tillägnad Zeth Höglund.* (Stockholm 1944), A. Gustafsson, Z. Höglund in *Svenskt Biografiskt Lexikon*, L. Björlin, Z. ser tillbaka. Zeth Höglund som biograf och memoarförfattare. in *Arbetshistoria nr. 39-40* (1986).

³¹ G. Höglund, *Moskva tur och retur. En dramatisk period i Zeth Höglunds liv.* (Stockholm 1960).

Zeth Höglund was one of the most prominent people on the left wing of the SAP, the Social Democratic Left-Wing Party, and SKP until 1924. He also had a central position in the Scandinavian Communist movement, and for a time he was even on the Executive Committee of the Communist International. Primarily, Höglund was a journalist; up till and including 1918 he was editor in chief of the Stormklockan, and during the years 1919 - 1924 he was editor in chief of SSV/SKP's principal organ, the Folkets Dagblad Politiken.

After the abortive attempt to build up a Communist party outside the Comintern simultaneous with attempting to make headway with the Den Nya Politiken, Höglund abandoned Communism when, in 1926, he returned to the SAP.

Like Zeth Höglund's *Karl Kilbom's* memoirs were published in the early half of the 1950s.³² Every single one of the old Communists, who over time found themselves in differing political camps, had good reason to give their version of what had once happened within the Swedish Communist movement. Like Höglund, Kilbom has a very prominent position in the history of Swedish Communism. Like Höglund, Kilbom from an early stage found himself among the left-wing opposition within the Swedish labour movement. He involved himself in the Social Democratic Left-Wing Party, and together with the editor Otto Grimlund, Kilbom was in Moscow at the time of the foundation of the CI.

Karl Kilbom took up a position in favour of the CI during the party crisis of 1924 and he became one of the moving spirits in the reconstruction efforts taking place in the SKP up to 1929.

When he was forced to leave the CI in 1929 he became one of the leaders in the Communist party which was independent of the CI and which in 1934 took the name of the Socialist Party. However, like Höglund, Kilbom had to face the fact that the political space between the Socialist International and the Comintern was shrinking, and in 1937 he returned to the SAP.

³² K. Kilbom, *Ur mitt livs äventyr* (Stockholm 1953), *I hemligt uppdrag* (Stockholm 1954), *Cirkeln slutet* (Stockholm 1955). Biographical contributions on K. Kilbom, see A. Gustafsson, K. Kilbom. Article in *Svenskt Biografiskt Lexikon*.

Ture Nerman, A.J. Smålan and August Spångberg were also first generation Communists. Like the men mentioned above, Ture Nerman had a central position in the SKP during the 1920s.³³ Smålan and Spångberg were not among the prominent. A.J. Smålan rather describes himself as an agitator.³⁴ August Spångberg was a member of the Riksdagen and primarily active at the regional level in the western part of Sweden.³⁵

Kata Dalström and Einar Ljungberg belonged to the circle close to Zeth Höglund. They are both remembered as great and successful agitators in the labour movement. They both belonged to the Communist movement of the 1920s.³⁶ However, contemporary sources seem to indicate that they can hardly be considered as belonging to the highest echelon within Swedish Communism.

In the introductory survey, I have placed the "break-through" of Swedish Communism in the time following the split of the Communist party in 1929 by reference to the new policy which the SAP was implementing at the time directed against Swedish Communism. After the reconstruction of the SKP, persons emerged who were to remain as the leaders of the party till the mid-1960s. To some extent it is fair to speak of a generational change in the Communist movement.

³³ T. Nerman, *Allt var ungt. Minne och redovisning* (Stockholm 1948), *Allt var rött. Minne och redovisning* (Stockholm 1950), *Trots Allt!. Minne och redovisning* (Stockholm 1954), B. Nerman, Ture Nerman - överlöpare. in *Arbetshistoria. Meddelande från Arbetarrörelsens Arkiv och Bibliotek* nr, 39-40 (3-4/1986). Idem, Ture Nerman, Article in *Svenskt Biografiskt Lexikon*.

³⁴ A. Johansson (A.J. Smålan) *Vandringar och strider*. (Stockholm 1946), *Storm och Dyningar* (Stockholm 1950), *Från Bebel till Hitler*. (Stockholm 1965).

³⁵ A. Spångberg, *I tidens ström* (Karlstad 1966).

³⁶ F. Ström, *Kata Dalströms liv, öden och äventyr i kampen mot herremakten. En krönika* (Stockholm 1930), R. Berggren a.a.(1987), E. Johansson, *Agitatorns olika skepnaden*. Manuscript on E. Ljungberg as an agitator. Research project *Arbetarrörelsen och Språket*, Institutionen för Litteraturvetenskap, avdelingen för Retorik, Uppsala University.

Among those who then emerged, *Hilding Hagberg*³⁷ and *Knut Senander*³⁸ have set down their memories. *Sven Linderot*, the chairman of the party from 1930 and for more than twenty years, was also a journalist. He made his political career via the Social Democratic Youth Association, the Social Democratic Left-Wing Party and the SKP (Section of the 3rd International). Some of his writings and speeches were published in 1972.³⁹

THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF SWEDEN 1919 - 1943 - A SURVEY.

The SKP was founded in March 1921. At that time, the party had been affiliated to the Communist International for two years. Under the name of Sveriges Socialdemokratiska Vänsterparti (SSV), the party had joined the CI at the time of its first congress in March 1919, however, with the reservation that the party congress to be held in the summer of 1919 would ultimately decide upon the affiliation to the CI. The SSV was not a Communist party, but the congress confirmed the affiliation of the party to the CI following the decision of the Social Democratic Youth Association to join the CI via the Youth International.⁴⁰ Then the party had gradually adapted its activities to the requirements made by the CI on the sections, after the autumn of 1920 in conformity with the 21 conditions for affiliation to the CI.

The affiliation to the CI marks the ideological and political choice of direction made by the SSV. Non-Communist groupings within the party left the organisation as early as

³⁷ H. Hagberg, *Röd bok om svart tid*. (Uddevalla 1966).

³⁸ K. Senander, *Röd gryning - et halvsekel i arbetarklassens tjänst*. (Stockholm 1973).

³⁹ S. Linderot, *Svensk Arbetarrörelse i brytningstid. Tal och skrifter i urval*. (Stockholm 1949) P-O. Zennström (ed.) *Linderot-masslinjen. Tal och skrifter av Svend Linderot i urval och med inledning av Per-Olov Zennström*. (Stockholm 1972) Biographical material on S. Linderot see Y. Hirdman, *Sven Linderot*, in *Svenskt Biografiskt Lexikon*.

⁴⁰ Sveriges Socialdemokratiska Vänsterparti. AU-protokoll 27/1 1919. (Stockholm 1919). Arbetarrörelsens Arkiv och Bibliotek, Stockholm. Protokoll fört vid Sveriges Socialdemokratiska Vänsterpartis Tredje kongress i Stockholm 12-16 juni 1919 (Stockholm 1919) p. 19 ff, 98. Protokoll fört vid Socialdemokratiska Ungdomsförbundets sjunde kongress i Stockholm 7-9 juni. (Stockholm 1919) p. 19ff.

1919, and when the 21 conditions had been adopted at the congress in 1920 the conflict within the Swedish party deepened. The conflict did not relate to the affiliation of the party to the CI per se, but rather the issue of being affiliated to the International and still maintain political independence and freedom of action. A minority to which even belonged a majority of the parliamentary group refused to recognise the 21 conditions. In the autumn of 1920 the political crisis was a fact, and in March 1921 the party split. The minority left the party, and the remaining majority constituted itself as Sveriges Kommunistiska Parti [Sweden's Communist Party]. Section of the 3rd International.

The conflict within the left-wing party and the formation of a Communist party in Sweden had been followed avidly by the leadership of the International in Moscow. At the meeting held by the Executive Committee in February 1921, immediately prior to the constitution of the SKP, reports on the situation in the left-wing party were made and statutes and programmes of principles and platforms were scrutinised by the CI leadership⁴¹ before they were adopted by the newly formed Communist party.

From the very beginning the relationship between the SKP and the Comintern was strained. Throughout the Comintern years the Communist movement in Sweden found itself at the intersection between, on the one hand, the demands made by the CI on its sections and, on the other, the options open to the party of gaining a political platform, primarily in the trade unions and anchored in the working class in competition with the Swedish Social Democrats. Its room for manoeuvre was restricted. No matter which line it chose, the party ran the risk of removing its own *raison d'être*. Research has demonstrated that a policy based on the general line of the Comintern placed the SKP in political isolation and removed it from the central

41 Draft Statutes in Rossijskogo Tsentra Chranenija i Stajutjenija Dokumentov Novejszej Istorii, Moscow Fond 495, opis 182, delo 10, Sitzung des Exekutivkomitees am 5. Februar 1921. Fond 495 opis 1 delo nr 23.

issues in Swedish politics.⁴² On the other hand, a policy formulated as a close alternative to that of the Swedish Social Democrats ran the risk of placing the SKP so close to the SAP that the justification for maintaining the party was undermined.

In step with the CI building up its organisation and type of activities over the 1920s with a view to laying the foundations of a supra-national, uniform Communist policy, the demands made on its sections to submit to the CI leadership and to adapt their policies to the guidelines drawn up by the CI Executive Committee were intensified. The increasingly more restricted room for national political manoeuvre resulted in conflicts. The demands made by the CI that within a relatively short time the Communist organisation must be established, democratic centralism introduced, and submission to the CI leadership implemented simultaneously with anchoring the Swedish party and Communist policies in a political environment in which the SAP and the trade unions dominated by the SAP were running things, and without paying any attention to the political and trade union traditions of the Swedish working class, gradually reinforced the conflicts between the right wing of the Swedish section and the CI leadership. For Communism in Sweden, the 1920s were a transitional phase, a period during which ideas were received⁴³, learning processes went on and Bolshevikisation took place.⁴⁴ By contrast, the SKP history of the 1930, as far as we have evidence of its activity, shows a far more homogenous, but at the same time small and weak

⁴² B. Schüllerkvist, (1992) p. 89ff.

⁴³ L. Berntson, Sveriges Kommunistiska Parti och leninismen 1919-1929. Arkiv nr. 3.

⁴⁴ Teser över de kommunistiska partiernas bolsjevisering. Antagna vid Kominterns utvidgade exekutivmöte i april 1925. (Stockholm 1925), E.F. Josephson (1976) p. 98ff and passim, J. Hermansson (!) () p. 11ff.

political party⁴⁵ strongly under the influence of the leadership of the Communist International.⁴⁶

ORGANISATION

In the early 1920s, Sweden found herself in a deep cyclical trough. Unemployment was increasing rapidly and industrial strife was rife.⁴⁷ The employers had taken the initiative, and they demanded wage reductions and other reductions of workers' rights in the labour market. Similarly the political situation in the country was unstable. The breakthrough of parliamentarism and democracy in Sweden was followed by a series of minority governments in the 1920s. In 1921, the Hjalmar Branting, the Social Democratic leader, headed a Social Democratic minority government which sought support for its policy among the non-Socialist Liberals. The Swedish Social Democratic Party, which had its chief political basis in the working class, had radicalised its political programme in 1919/1920. But the SAP was still a "soft" party looking for new ways to be active and a new political profile following the introduction of democracy in the country. In the process, which eventually led to the so-called welfare-state policy, the newly formed SKP was not acceptable as a partner for cooperation. Communist proposals to establish a United Front against the bourgeois parties were met with silence. But it must be stressed that the SAP maintained a wait-and-see policy vis-à-vis the Communist party.⁴⁸

As a consequence of the new orientation which had occurred within the left-wing party after 1919, a demand was raised that in continuation of the 21 conditions for affilia-

⁴⁵ B. Schüllerkvist (1992) p. 89-150.

⁴⁶ This assessment is mainly based on the preliminary results of research into the Swedish sectional archives of the CI archives. Rossijsko-go Tsentra ... Moscow.

⁴⁷ F. Mikkelsen, *Arbejdskonflikter i Skandinavien 1848-1980* (Odense 1992) p. 87ff.

⁴⁸ B. Schüllerkvist (1992) p. 89ff.

tion to the CI, the foundations of a Communist organisation under the auspices of the party be laid, and that this new organisation should become a section of the CI.⁴⁹

With its decisions, the III World Congress in Moscow in 1921 had laid the foundations of a new organisational structure for the Communist parties. The factory cell would constitute the basic unit located at the places of work. By means of a network of factory cells, the Communists thought that it would be much easier to have their agitation reach workers in their every-day lives. In organisations that were already active, e.g. within the trade union movement, Communist factions or groups were to be established. The objective was to conquer the organisations in which these factions or groups were active from within. Then the party leadership would have the ultimate responsibility for the organisational activities in conformity with the principles of democratic centralism.

However, the Communist organisation in Sweden was largely structured on the Social Democratic model. In the early phases, the local party ward was the primary political unit, even if the sources do seem to indicate that factory cells were emerging.⁵⁰ However, there are many indications that the party encountered major difficulties in its organisational efforts. The setting up of cells was highly controversial, not infrequently the cell as a concept and as an organisational form was associated with criminal activities, and in the party leadership there was deep disagreement in the early 1920s as to what form and what names should be used for the Communist organisational units. The fact that as a transitional measure the SKP chose to create an organisation on the Social Democratic pattern must, most probably, be seen as an attempt to find an organisational form that was appropriate to the actual conditions of the party. Among the leaders of the party there was also a deep scepticism against over-centralising the organisa-

⁴⁹ B. Kennerström, (1974) p. 9ff.

⁵⁰ E.g. A. Wretling, *Driftcellen - vår organisation på arbetsplatsen. Kort handledning för klubbarnas organisatoriska arbete.* (Stockholm 1923).

tion.⁵¹ Furthermore, it must be assumed that there remained a lingering, left-wing Socialist positive attitude to a decentralised organisational form using the local party ward as the basic unit. The explicit objective of Sweden's Communist party affiliated to the International was to make Communism into a mass movement⁵² broadly anchored in the working class. In Sweden this would require the SKP to gain considerable influence in the trade union movement. But this, in turn, would require the rolling back of the SAP dominance in the trade union movement, that collective affiliation of trade unionists to the party was discontinued.

The importance of the trade union movement to the Communist movement was reaffirmed at the second congress of the International in the summer of 1920 and at the congress of the Profintern in Moscow in July 1921. In the guidelines for trade unions adopted by the second CI congress it was observed that in a time of growing class antagonism, the trade union movement must direct all its force at supporting the revolutionary struggle, nationally as well as internationally. To attain this objective a considerable centralisation of the trade union struggle was required, not just domestically, but also by affiliation to the CI.⁵³ Under item 9 of the 21 conditions for affiliation to the CI, it was stated that it was the duty of each party in the CI to carry out Communist activity in the trade union movement and in the other organisations of the labour movement by establishing Communist cells as local

⁵¹ As early as in 1921, the demand for subordination under the party leadership created conflicts between the party leadership and the youth organisation, the women's league and the trade union organisation, the Fackliga Propagandaförbundet [the Trade Union Propaganda Association]. Varying opinions concerning the organisational issues were one factor among several causing the split-up of the SKP in 1924 and 1929. See also E.F. Josephson, (1976) *passim*.

⁵² Till nytt arbete, till nya strider! Manifest till arbetets män och kvinnor i alla land. in *Världsläget och Kommunistiska Internationalens uppgifter. Teser och resolutioner antagna på Kommunistiska Internationalens tredje världskongress, Moskva, 12 juni-12 juli 1921.* (Stockholm 1921) p. 241ff.

⁵³ Protokoll des II Weltkongresses der Kommunistischen Internationale. (Hamburg 1920) p.536.

vehicles for the activities. According to the statutes, the cells would be completely subordinated the Communist party.⁵⁴

It was impossible to shape a single uniform trade union policy under the leadership of the CI. The conditions in the different countries were considered much too divergent. The Communist trade union policy depended on the specific conditions existing in each individual country. Communists were supposed to work within cells and factions to attain their goals within the organisation. But they were no strangers to the idea of splitting an organisation if advantages could be gained from doing so. Karl Radek summarised the Communist trade union tactics in the following way, "The most important thing is to unify two factors: to be with the masses and to move with the masses, but not to be left behind the masses. That is the Communist line to take in the trade unions. ..."⁵⁵

The trade union movement in Sweden is the primary mass organisation of the Swedish working class, and since the end of the 19th century it has been dominated by the Swedish Social Democratic party. The degree of unionisation has been high and the collective affiliation to the SAP has given this party a dominant position.

It is against this background that the left-wing Socialist and Communist parties in Sweden have always endeavoured to reach workers by working inside the organisations, in cells or factions. Additionally, because of the close relationship between the trade unions and the SAP, the SKP attempted to involve the unemployed workers in the trade unions in their activities in order to strengthen the position of the oppositional forces in the trade union movement and in order to roll back Reformist influences.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Ibid. p.391f.

⁵⁵ Ibid. p.499.

⁵⁶ See for instance E. Andersson, *Vad vill Fackliga Propagandaförbundet? Några ord om förbundets uppgifter och allmänna riktlinjer.* (Stockholm 1921), *passim*, *Idem Fackföreningsrörelsen och kommunismen.* (Stockholm 1922), *passim*, *Idem Fackföreningsrörelsens politisering och kollektivanslutningen.* (Stockholm 1927), *passim*, K. Kilbom *Revolutionär fackföreningsrörelse.* (Stockholm 1920), *passim*, H. Hagberg, *RFO visar arbetarna den revolutionära utvägen ur krisen! Kilbompartiet ett bihang till reformismen.*

In the wake of the German and Russian revolutions and when the economic trends started to weaken in Sweden, the Fackliga Proagandaförbundet was founded in September 1919.⁵⁷ The organisation presented itself as a trade union "centre of struggle"⁵⁸, as a information and propaganda organisation open to all. However, every member was asked to remain in his trade union so as to be able to support the activities of the organisation from there.⁵⁹

The Fackliga Propagandaförbundet, (FPF)⁶⁰ has not yet been researched, but everything seems to indicate that it was not a trade union organisation in the traditional sense of the word. Rather it must be seen as an organ for linking for left-wing Socialist factions in the Swedish trade union movement together. There was no formation of cells along Communist lines under the auspices of the organisation. On the other hand, left-wing Socialist clubs were set up in the places of work, a works organisation which apparently differed from the Communist cell in name only.⁶¹ There are many indications that the FPF

(Stockholm 1932) p. 19.

⁵⁷ Twice before 1919 did the opposition in the Swedish trade union movement take the initiative in establishing trade union organisations alongside of or within the Landsorganisationsen (LO). 1910 saw the establishment of Sveriges Arbetares Centralorganisation (SAC) [the Central Organisation of the Workers of Sweden]. See L.K. Persson, *Syndikalismen i Sverige 1903-1922* (Kungälv 1975) p. 87ff. In 1916 the left-wing opposition within the SAP established the Fackoppositionen [the Trade Union Opposition] on a Norwegian pattern. This organisation was not active for very long. See K. Kilbom, *Revolutionär fackföreningsrörelse* (Stockholm 1921) p. 17ff., L. Gärdvall (1980), p. 21ff. On the Norwegian trade union opposition see J. Bjørgum, *Fagopposisjonen av 1911*. in *Tidskrift for arbeiderbevegelsens historie*, 1, 1976, p. 63-132. On the Swedish trade union opposition before 1917 see L. Björnin, *Vänstersocialistiska riksdagsgruppen*. in *Meddelande från Arbetarrörelsens Arkiv och Bibliotek* nr. 24-25, p. 6ff and the literature listed there.

⁵⁸ E. Andersson, (1921) p. 1f.

⁵⁹ K. Kilbom, (1920) *passim*, Bericht über den Verband für gewerkschaftliche Propaganda in Schweden. in *Die Kommunistische Internationale* nr. 16, p. 341ff. Also L. Gärdvall, (1980) p. 9ff.

⁶⁰ Brief mention by L. Gärdvall, (1980), p. 21ff.

⁶¹ E. Andersson, (1921) p. 1f. During the building up phase, the terminology remained unclear in the SKP as regards the basic trade union unit. See Ekki t. alle Organisationsen der kommunistischen Partei Schwedens Nov. 1921. Fond 495, op.1, Delo 46a, A. Vretling t. EKKI 17/4 1923, Fond 495, op. 18, Delo 10. Ross. Tsentra, Moscow.

adopted the Communist concept of trade unions' role in the class struggle as a transgressor of the system.⁶² However, the organisation was not willing to bow to the leadership of the Communist party and let itself become part of the Communist organisational structure; it insisted on maintaining its independence. The motives are unclear, but it seems reasonable to assume that tactical as well as ideological motives guided the organisation. The organisation wanted to reach Syndicalist workers, too, something that might become difficult if it declared its allegiance to the SKP. And in view of the unclear points pervading Swedish left-wing socialism in the period 1919 - 1921, we may assume that the FPF had good reason for awaiting the establishment of the SKP and its position on the conditions for affiliation to the Communist International.

The FPF never became the trade union force which the SSV and later the SKP had expected it to be. The organisation did not have the necessary power resources to mobilise the workers. In January 1921, the FPF had 3,700 members in 28 trade unions and 20 clubs. A year later the membership had risen to 5,450 in 41 trade unions and 30 clubs. At the same time, the LO dominated by the Social Democrats had 395,651 and 343,982 members, respectively.⁶³ The LO had lost well over 50,000 members during that year whereas the FPF had grown by 1,750 members. Despite the impressive growth in percentage terms, the FPF had not been able to exploit the crisis-like situation in the Swedish labour market during that year. Compared to the LO, the FPF appears as a marginal organisation. As an organisation active in the trade union field, the FPF is even overshadowed by the SAC which had 30,800 members in 1922.⁶⁴

⁶² Protokoll fört vid Sveriges Socialdemokratiska Vänsterpartis tredje kongress i Stockholm 12-26 juni 1919, p. 163ff. Protokoll fört vid Sveriges Soc.-dem. Vänsterpartiets fjärde kongress och Sveriges Kommunistiska Partis första kongress i Viktoriasalen i Stockholm 25-29 mars 1921, p. 65ff. Also K. Kilbom (1920) *passim*.

⁶³ J. Westerståhl, *Svensk fackföreningsrörelse. Organisationsproblem Verksamhetsformer Förhållandet till staten* (Stockholm 1945) p. 31.

⁶⁴ L.K. Persson, *Syndikalismen i Sverige 1903 - 1922*. (Kungälv 1975) p. 112.

By the turn of the month November/December 1921, the Executive Committee forwarded to the SKP a detailed proposal concerning the way in which trade union activities were to be carried out in the party. The Executive Committee demanded that the decisions of the 3rd World Congress concerning trade union activities be adhered to. The SKP was required to build a network of cells within the trade unions in order to start the efforts toward turning trade unions into "true instruments for the class struggle". Special Works Councils should be established and special work teams were to be set up in the places of work. The efforts were to be pursued both within the Reformist and the Syndicalist trade union organisations.

However, everything seems to indicate that the demand that cells be established within trade unions was difficult to fulfil. The reports to the Executive Committee contain divergent information. But with these new directives from Moscow, the FPF no longer had a role to play. The SKP trade union efforts were assigned to the party leadership, and in 1923 the FPF was dissolved.

Communism in Sweden enjoyed no progress in the early half of the 1920s. The tactics of the United Front and efforts within the trade unions had failed, the party had suffered a defeat in the election to the second chamber in 1921 - only 1/7 of the workers' votes had been cast for the SKP. The number of members had shrunk, the party split in 1921 had all but halved the membership compared to what it had been in 1918. In 1922, the party barely had 11,500 members.⁶⁵ And the party leaders had not found it possible or desirable to implement the directives from Moscow. The SKP was very weak compared to the SAP, the LO, the SAC, and the cooperative organisations. The difficulties were aggravated by the deep controversies within the party leadership which were rooted in differences of opinion over the way in which the Swedish Communist organisation were to be structured, and how Communist policies were to be pursued in Sweden. The conflict intensified, and in a dramatic sequel

⁶⁵ In 1918, the SSV had 21,238 members, in 1921 - after the split - approx. 12,000, and in 1922 11,461.

of events in which the Executive Committee of the CI, the Executive Committee of the Youth International and the SKU played key roles, the SKP split up in August 1924. The people around Z. Höglund, the party chairman, were forced to leave the SKP.

By the mid-1920s the country's economic position had become more stable. Business trends were slowly improving, and unemployment declined although the number of people out of work remained high.

Following the split there were two parties in Sweden which claimed to be rooted in Communism. The SKP (Höglund) constituted itself in September 1924, barely a month after the split on the basis of a vague programme. The *Den Nya Politiken* became the main organ of the party, and it was published already from the end of August.

However, the party was without any resources, without any strength to offer a Communist policy other than that offered by the Comintern. The party had less than 2,000 members and its organisational basis was very limited; the party had its main support in the southern part of the country. It succeeded in winning one seat in the Riksdagen.

From the very outset, the SKP (Höglund) found itself in a shrinking political space between the SAP and the SKP (Section of the 3rd International). In the longer term, the party was faced with the risk of disappearing altogether. For the party leaders, only the SAP constituted an alternative - the door to the Comintern had been closed. In August 1925 the issue of the party's future was taken up. In 1926, the party was dissolved. The party leaders and most of the members rejoined the SAP.⁶⁶

After the split, the SKP (Section of the 3rd International) underwent a swift reorganisation under the leadership of Karl Kilbom and Nils Flyg.⁶⁷ The membership of the party grew considerably during the next few years. At the time of the turn of the year 1924/1925, the party had approx. 7,000 members. In

⁶⁶ B. Schüllerkvist (1992) p. 70ff.

⁶⁷ Kamp och framgång. Sveriges kommunistiska parti 24 nov. 1924 - 1 juni 1927.

May 1926, the number was a little under 11,000, and two years later it was 15,600.⁶⁸ Shortly before the dramatic showdown in the party in the autumn of 1929, it had 17,300 members.⁶⁹ In the Riksdagen the party had five seats in the second chamber in 1924 and eight seats in 1928.

The successes in the political arena was followed by a corresponding development within the trade unions. The formation of cells was making strides - in September 1928 the party had 328 factory cells, 105 town cells and 219 block cells. At the same time there were factions in 13 trade unions, in particular in the big trade unions of the metal workers, the paper pulp workers, the sawmill workers and the transport workers.

It is possible that the success in the trade union field has to do with the initiative taken by the metal industry workers' union in the manufacturing and seaport city of Gothenburg in the western part of Sweden when they decided to form the so-called United Committee in 1926. The Committee saw its task in uniting the oppositional forces within the Swedish trade union movement in order to radicalise trade union policy in the LO collective. The Committee had the support of the Executive Committee in Moscow, and on the occasion of its constitution, the Committee claimed a membership of 80,000 organised workers, i.e. almost 17 p.c. of all the workers organised under the LO.⁷⁰

By means of the United Committee the Communists gained a relatively considerable influence on the trade unions in the mining and paper industries as well as in the food, metal and sawmill industries. The research available in the field has established that during the period up to 1929, the Communists increased their influence primarily in the trade unions whose

⁶⁸ SKP Representantskapets protokoll 15-17 maj 1926. Arbetsutskottets protokoll 9/5 1928, bilaga.

⁶⁹ B. Kennerström (1974) p. 29.

⁷⁰ H. Blomquist, Enhedskommittén och Sverges Kommunistiska Partis sprängning 1929, Unpublished paper, Stockholm University 1972.

members worked within the export sector.⁷¹ The situation was favourable. In 1929 when the SKP began to be exposed to a constantly growing ideological pressure from the SAP, the objective was still to organise the proletariat against the capital by means of the United Committee and to work in such a way that the Swedish trade union movement would grow closer to the Profintern.⁷²

The result of the 1928 elections to the Riksdagen became a turning point for the working class parties. The SKP increased its parliamentary representation in the second chamber of the Riksdagen by three seats to eight, but as a whole the labour movement was the loser of the elections.

In this situation the Social Democratic party leadership could only conclude that the SAP would never attain the political parliamentary power, by relying on the working class exclusively. The SAP began broadening its social basis by turning the party into a people's party by seeking support for its policies also among those who traditionally voted for the non-Socialist parties, but who had closely related interests, among them the farmers.

A dynamic force in this political innovation was the broadly laid out anti-Communist campaign which was launched by the SAP at the same time. The objective was to expel the Communists from the trade unions. These were to be social-democratised, and in the Riksdagen Communists were to be ignored.⁷³ At the same time, at the 6th World Congress, the CI resolved to radicalise Communist policy. The slogan class-against-class was launched, and the Social Democratic party, particularly its left wing, was designated the chief enemy of the Communists. In order to pursue its anti-Communist policy, the SAP strengthened its influence with the LO and the national unions. The LO was forced to openly declare itself anti-Communist. The enhanced Social Democratic influence in the trade

71 L. Berntson, (1973) p. 12, 32ff. P-O. Zennström (1977) p. 111ff.

72 SKP. Centralkommitténs protokoll 1929.

73 B. Schüllerkvist (1992) p. 89ff.

unions placed the SKP in a new political situation. The policy vis-à-vis the Social Democrats became one of several factors in the rapidly increasing conflicts in the SKP.

At the same time, the CI forced through a shift to the left in Communist policy which further intensified the conflicts in the SKP. In the autumn of 1929 the party split once again. This time the majority of the party under the leadership of Karl Kilbom and Nils Flyg was expelled from the Communist International. The minority under Hugo Sillén's and Sven Linderot's leadership remained in the CI under the name of SKP (Section of the 3rd International).⁷⁴

The Communist movement in Sweden embarked upon the 1930s as a house divided. The wing around Karl Kilbom kept the name of Communist until 1934 when the name was changed into the Socialistiska Partiet (SP) [the Socialist Party]. The SP has been the object of intense research and will not be gone into further in the present context.⁷⁵ The initial attempts made by the party to reestablish the links to the CI failed. As far as is known no further connection existed between the SP and the International. Just like the SKP (Höglund) the Socialist Party was faced with a shrinking room for manoeuvre. The SAP was strengthening its position in the working class. In 1932, the party formed the government and could at the same time, as has already been mentioned, strengthen its position in the LO. On the other hand, the SKP constituted the Communist political alternative. 1937 saw the split up of the SP, too, and the majority of its members joined either the SAP or the SKP. A small minority under Nils Flyg continued the activity in the old party. However, SP moved away from Communism and the anti-

⁷⁴ P-O. Zennström (1977) p. 140ff.

⁷⁵ B. Kennerström (1974), Idem. Socialistiska partiet och spanska inbördeskriget. in Arkiv nr. 6.

Fascist struggle, and shortly after ended up in the pro-Nazi political camp.⁷⁶

A scholarly study of the SKP (Section of the 3rd International) in the 1930s has yet to be undertaken. The party's own chroniclers have related the party history⁷⁷ without any critical scrutiny of the party's organisation, policies and relationship with the neighbouring organisations in Sweden or with the CI. The trade union efforts of the party have been touched upon in connection with research pertaining to the Swedish trade union movement and to the SP.⁷⁸ To this must be added some minor studies on the SKP's role in industrial conflicts during the early half of the 1930s.⁷⁹ In those minor studies the general policy of the SKP during the 1930s is touched upon⁸⁰ together with the participation of Swedish Communists in the Spanish Civil War.⁸¹

The SKP was seriously affected by the international economic recession which began the 1930s. In its position between the class-against-class policy ordered by the Comintern and the ever harsher anti-Communism of the SAP, the SKP risked being made irrelevant to the real political issues of the day.

However, following a temporary setback, it was possible for the party to increase its membership. In March 1931, the party had 9,000 members, in January 1934 a little more than

⁷⁶ T. Nilsson, *Från internationell socialism till nationell folk-gemenskap. Socialistiska Partiet 1938-45.* in *Svensk Historisk Tidskrift* 1985:1 p. 26ff.

⁷⁷ P-O. Zennström, (1977) p. 143ff. *Mellan världskrigen 1917-1942. Bidrag till Sveriges Kommunistiska Partis historia*, (Stockholm 1942).

⁷⁸ B. Kennerström, *Kommunistisk facklig politik 1929-1932.* in *Arkiv* nr. 1. *Idem*, (1974) p. 160ff.

⁷⁹ B. Svensson/E. Svensson, *Sjömansstrejken 1933; Baggrund, förlopp och konsekvenser.* in *Arkiv* nr. 2, F. Kupferberg, *Byggnadsarbetarstrejken 1933-1934.* in *Arkiv* nr. 2, H. Apitsch, *Socialdemokrater och kommunister i byggnadsarbetarstrejken.* in *Arkiv* nr. 2.

⁸⁰ C. Carlsson, E. Dahlin, E.T. Nilsson in S.E. Olsson (1976) p. 151ff.

⁸¹ C-G. Jönsson, *SKP och den svenska spanienrörelsen.* in *Arkiv* nr.4.

15,000 and two years later approx. 17,000 members. It can be observed that the membership began increasing at the time when the party abandoned the class-against-class policy and oriented itself towards what was later to become the Popular Front policy. The absence of research is, as already mentioned, pronounced. But many things seem to indicate that the party was forced towards the political periphery. A number of questions begs an answer. How did the party try to defend its positions? What measures were adopted to counteract the harsh Social Democratic policy?⁸² How were parliamentary and extra-parliamentary politics combined? How was the illegal work carried out? And what was the actual influence of the Comintern on the policy of the Swedish Communist party?

In the trade union field, the SKP introduced the Röda Fackliga Oppositionen (RFO) [the Red Trade Union Opposition] in 1930.⁸³ The new organisational type was not tantamount to the introduction by the SKP of any trade union tactics that were new in principle. The forms taken by the efforts, which now as before were aimed at gathering the oppositional forces in the trade unions, consisted in carrying out Communist agitation and introducing Communist organisational structures in already existing trade unions and had the objective of reaching the workers via their trade unions. The RFO-groups were active in the places of work in order to carry out trade union and agitation work there. Similar to what had been the case once before, the SKP found it difficult to persevere in its trade union efforts vis-à-vis the LO. In the broadly laid out anti-

⁸² T. Kanger/J. Gunnarsson, *Kommunistjägarna. Socialdemokraternas politiska spioneri mot svenska folket.* (Stockholm 1990), P. Francke, *Då kommunisterna gjordes fredlösa. Den politiska interneringens tid.* in *Meddelande från Arbetarrörelsens Arkiv och Bibliotek* nr. 24-25 p. 52ff.

In the context it should be emphasised that the SKP met with an increasingly more severe attitude on the part of the government authorities, i.e. the SAP who was in government office. In addition to the fact that legislation was directly hostile to the communists they were also the object of increasingly more intensive observation on the part of the police and the military during the inter-war years. See J. Ottoson/L. Magnusson, *Hemliga makter. Svensk militär underrättelsestjänst från unionskrisen till det kalla kriget.* (Kristianstad 1991).

⁸³ H. Hagberg, *RFO visar arbetarna den revolutionära utvägen ur krisen. Kilbompartiet et bihang till reformismen.* (Stockholm 1932).

Communist propaganda launched by the SAP, the LO was - as already pointed out - involved more and more as the social democratisation of the LO progressed.

During the spring of 1933, the LO issued a special circular letter calling upon the individual unions to expel members who had joined the RFO. The RFO activities were abandoned. But we note that at the same time as the RFO ceased to exist, the front organisations began making themselves more felt. The front organisations were cover organisations for Communist activities. When the SKP encountered difficulties in working in the trade unions, we may assume that the front organisations gained in importance as points of contact with the workers.

According to themselves, the front organisations emerged in order to take part in the struggle against Fascism and to develop the United Front in the working class. They were the Swedish sections of the Internationala Arbetarhjälpen, Internationella Röda Hjälpen, Röda Frontförbundet with the additional organisation of the Röd Marin [the Red Marine], de Antifascistiska Ungdomsgardena [the Anti-Fascist Youth Guards] and the Arbetarnas Idrottsförbund [the Workers' Sports Association]. As part of their agitation efforts, the Swedish sections issued their own publications and via their international organisations they were, in the final analysis, subordinated the Comintern.⁸⁴

The source material which has become known⁸⁵ in recent time because of the opening of the Comintern archives strengthens the general opinion that despite problems in the organisation and with the establishment of cells, the SKP endeavoured to actively counter the SAP anti-Communist agitation. The SKP launched the United Front policy from below. And the source material indicates that in their political efforts, several front organisations supported the policy of the United Front.

⁸⁴ R. Pålbrant, SKP och den tidiga arbetaridrotten 1917-1923: Uppbyggnad och ideologi. in Arkiv nr. 5. Idem (1977) passim.

⁸⁵ The documents have not as yet been made available for research.

However, the source material also indicates that from an early stage, the SKP leadership received signals from the regional and local organisations to the effect that the isolation in which the party had been placed as a result of SAP's anti-Communism and the general policy of the CI of class-against-class had to be broken, if the party were to grow. This observation is important because it allows us to deduce that proposals for innovation in the Communist policy had become topical some years before the policy of the United Front was launched by the Comintern. Much seems to indicate that the SAP front turned against the Communists after 1929 was a major reason why, as early as 1933/34, the SKP began orienting itself towards the right, towards the Social Democratic party in its tactical demeanour; it did so for the same reason as in the early 1920s, viz. to find a common political line for the working class in the day-to-day policy within the framework of the Popular Front in the struggle against unemployment and Fascism. It is possible that in this light the dissolution of the Röda Fackoppositionen should not be seen exclusively as an reflection of the SAP/LO trade union and political strength, but also as a tactical concession on the part of the SKP to create an opening to the right - a first step towards the Popular Front.

However, it seems very unlikely that the changes were an expression of a general transformation of the SKP policy. The source material indicates that several of the front organisations were fully active even during the latter half of the 1930s. This is true of the Röda Frontförbundet and the Arbetarnas Idrottsförbund. Subsequent research in the field demonstrates that the changes should probably be seen as politico-tactical measures in the fight against the Social Democratic party.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ W. Schmidt, Mellan Lenin och Stalin. SKPs folkfrontspolitik. Unpublished paper. History. Stockholm University 1989.

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SURVEY.

In the Communist rhetoric of the inter-war years, the parliamentary work was considered less important than the struggle in the places of work. The rostrums of the parliaments were primarily platforms for "the mobilisation of the masses outside of the Riksdagen in favour of their own class interests...".⁸⁷ The debates taking place in the Riksdagen were seen as an important part of Communist agitation. In the Riksdagen it was possible for the party to get its message publicised by means of the mass media of the time which followed events in the Riksdagen closely.

However, in the Communist opinion, parliamentary work could not lead to the emancipation of the working class, the dissolution of capitalist society and the establishment of a Socialist society. As an alternative to parliamentarism and democracy in the western sense of these terms, the Swedish Communist, in conformity with the viewpoint of the Communist International, offered the Dictatorship of the Proletariat as the bearer of the political power in the transitory phase between capitalism and socialism. And as has already been indicated the political anchorage was sought outside the riksdagen in the places of work, in the trade union movement and in the front organisations.

In practice the Swedish Communist parties, with a few exceptions, have actively participated in the parliamentary work and in elections in order to win seats and put its candidates into the two chambers of the Riksdagen, in the provincial councils and on the councils of bourgeois municipalities. The strategies of left-wing Socialists and Communists were aimed at uniting parliamentary and extra-parliamentary efforts. Legislation to improve the social conditions of workers and small farmers or battles in the Riksdagen to try to prevent the adoption of bills which might mean limiting the freedom of

⁸⁷ H. Hagberg, *Arbetspolitik i riksdagen. Kommunistiska motioner samt inlägg i årets remissdebatt.* (Stockholm 1936).

action for the workers were accepted as stop-gap measures prior to the large-scale and radical disruption of the system.⁸⁸

An overall scholarly survey of the Riksdag-policy of the Swedish left-wing Socialists and the Communists remains outstanding. There are some commendable studies of individual issues; however the scholarly results are as yet too limited to form the basis of a general assessment.⁸⁹

At the time in question, the Swedish Riksdag consisted of two chambers. The number of members, eligibility and period of the mandate differed between the chambers. And the elections to the chambers followed different principles.

The first chamber consisted of 150 members, indirectly elected via regional decision-making bodies - the provincial councils. The period of the mandate was 9 years and the membership was renewed by rotation. The second chamber with 230 seats was elected directly on the basis of constituencies. The period of the mandate was up to 4 years. Swedish parliamentarism was a so-called lower-house parliamentarism - it was the distribution of seats in the second chamber which determined the composition of the government.

Since the break-through of parliamentarism in 1917 and the introduction of universal suffrage in Sweden in 1921, the SAP has had a prominent position in the Riksdagen. Following the general elections to the second chamber of the riksdagen in 1917 the party formed the government together with the Liberala Samlingspartiet [the Liberal United Party]. In 1920 the party established its first minority government which was followed by another two in the course of the 1920s. Following the election in 1932, the party formed its first majority government with the support of the Bondeförbundet. Apart from a short period in 1936, the SAP was in charge of the country's government for 44

⁸⁸ G. Kempe, *Facklig kamp mot tvångslagar och rationalisering*. (Stockholm 1936) p. 1.

⁸⁹ H. Stålberg, *Sveriges Socialdemokratiska Vänsterparti*. in *Statsvetenskaplig Tidskrift* 1936, J. Bolin/S. Larm, *Sveriges Socialdemokratiska Vänsterpartis riksdagsrepresentation 1917-1921*. Unpublished paper. Högskolan, Örebro, J. Bolin, *Teori och praktik*. *Sveriges Kommunistiska Parti och den leninistiska parlamentarismen 1926-1928*. Unpublished paper. Högskolan, Örebro.

years, during the world war in an all-parties government and during the 1950s in a coalition government with the Bondeförbundet.

The parties to the left of the SAP have never been able to conquer any considerable representation in the Riksdagen. Out of the 150 members of the upper chamber the Socialdemokratiska Vänsterpartiet had one seat in the period 1917-1919, in the period 1919-1920 it had 3 seats, and from 1920 to March 1921 4 seats. Following the split of the party, the party's group in the upper chamber was halved.

Out of the 230 seats in the lower chamber, the Vänsterpartiet had 11 seats in 1917, 7 seats in 1920, and 6 seats in 1921. The election to the second chamber of the riksdagen in 1921 gave the newly formed SKP 7 seats there, 5 in rural constituencies and 2 in urban constituencies. After the election in 1921 and up till 1943, one or more Communist parties took part in the elections to the Riksdagen at the five times when elections were held to the second chamber in the years 1924, 1928, 1932, 1936 and 1940.

The representation of the Communists in the second chamber of the Riksdagen during the period 1924 - 1940 follows the below pattern:

	SKP (Höglund)		SKP		SP	
	rural/urban		rural/urban		rural/urban	
1924	1	-	4	-	-	-
1928	-	-	5	3	-	-
1932	-	-	1	1	4	2
1936	-	-	2	3	4	2
1940	-	-		3	-	-

The table reflects the development of Swedish Communism during the Comintern years. SKP (Höglund) did not survive for a full mandate period; as has been pointed out the party returned to the SAP in 1926.

The SKP (Section of the 3rd International) shows a continuity in its representation in the Riksdagen, but the split of 1929 reduced the number of SKP seats to two. We can

also observe that a shift took place in the latter half of the 1930s in the support given to the party at elections to the Riksdagen. During the 1920 the party found its strongest parliamentary support in the rural constituencies. At the 1936 elections the centre of gravity shifted towards the urban constituencies.

At the split-up of the party in 1929, the majority of the SKP parliamentary group left the party and joined the newly formed independent Communist party, from 1934 known as the Socialist Party. In the small parliamentary group of the SP, rural representation dominated. The party was represented in Riksdagen for two mandate periods only. In 1937, the SP joined the SAP and the parliamentary group was formally dissolved.

During the years between the wars, the SAP was the dominating working class party in the parliamentary arena. A comparison between the actual vote cast for the SAP and that cast on the Communist parties at the 6 elections for the second chamber of the Riksdagen which took place during the period 1921 - 1940 clearly demonstrates the domination of the SAP in the parliamentarian field.

Numbers of votes cast on the working class parties 1921 - 1940.

	SKP (1921/1929)	SKP (Höglund)	SAP
1921	80,355	-	
1924	63,601	26,301	725,407
1928	151,567	-	873,931
	SKP	SP	
1932	74,245	132,564	1,040,689
1936	96,519	127,832	1,338,120
1940	100,424	-	1,546,804

Source: Bidrag till Sveriges Officiella Statistik. Allmänna val [Contribution to Sweden's Official Statistics. General Elections].

The distribution of mandates between the parties in the second chamber leads to the following distribution of the 230 seats:

	SKP	SAP
1921	7 seats	93 seats
1924	5/1 seats (SKP/SKP(Höglund))	104 seats
1928	8 seats	90 seats
1932	2/6 seats (SKP/SP)	104 seats
1936	5/6 seats (SKP/SP)	112 seats
1940	3 seats	134 seats

In addition to observing that the parties to the left of the SAP had their strength in the rural areas, we can also observe that the regional variations in sympathy for the parties varied considerably.

In the northern parts of Sweden, the parties to the left of the SAP found considerably over-proportional support at general elections in relation to their national average.⁹⁰ Out of the total electorate, 4.6 p.c. voted for the Communists at the elections to the Riksdagen in 1921. In the northern parts of Sweden, in the provinces of Gävleborg, Kopparberg, Norrbotten and in the province of Värmland in the western part of Sweden, the Communist obtained 10, 11, 21.1 and 12.4 p.c. of the votes cast, respectively. These four provinces are all woodland areas whose industry is based on forest production. In the provinces of Kopparbergen and Norrbotten, mining was of major importance for the economy and employment.

The general election 1928 left the situation largely unchanged. In the province of Norrbotten, the SKP obtained 21.6 p.c. of the votes and in the province of Värmland 10.8 p.c. In the province of Gävleborg the party got as many as 14.0 p.c. of the votes cast. The situation is more or less the same at the general election in 1932, but at the time of the next general election four years later, in 1936, a change had taken place. The SKP remained very strong in the province of Norrbotten, but the election results show that the party had also made remarkable inroads into the electorate in the western part of the

⁹⁰ B. Matti, *Kommunismen i Norrbotten. En kritisk granskning av Sven Rydenfeldt avhandling "Kommunismen i Sverige"*. Unpublished Statsvetenskapliga institutionen, Uppsala University 1962, p. 11ff.

country. In the city of Gothenburg the party obtained 9 p.c. of the votes. In this connection it should be noted that in 1936 the Socialist Party obtained a large vote in the provinces of Gävleborg, Kopparberg and Värmland - those parts of the country where, prior to the split-up of the party in 1929, the Communists had had a relatively strong political support at general elections. In the other parts of the country both the SKP and the SP showed poor results. And the parties were, we need to stress, constantly outdistanced by the SAP.

We do not have general knowledge of the Communist work in the Riksdagen. A summary survey of the Register till Riksdagens Protokoll med Bihang 1921-1940 [Register of the Riksdagen Minutes and Annexes 1921-1940] shows that the representatives of the parties adapted themselves to Swedish parliamentary tradition; obviously there were no noticeable differences between the behaviour of Communist members in the Riksdagen and that of members representing other parties.

In the great debates touching on problems in the Swedish labour market, the Communists were, as far as can be ascertained, very active - the debates on the unemployment issues and social legislation seem to have attracted particular interest. Nothing really indicates that the Communists used the rostrum of the Riksdagen in a way that differed from that of any other party. Even if several of the speeches held by Communist members of the Riksdagen were published as agitation brochures⁹¹ the *realpolitik* seems to have been at the centre of things for the Communist members, too.

A reasonable point of departure for research into Swedish Communism is the fact that the parties have always been relatively small and politically weak. Their power resources have been insufficient for realising Communist policies. Compared to the SAP they had few members, a weak organisation - partly as a result of several exhausting conflicts. Apparently, the Comin-

⁹¹ E.G. H. Hagberg, *Arbetarpolitik i riksdagen* (Stockholm 1936), *Idem Realpolitik. Kommunisternas arbete i Riksdagen* (Stockholm 1938), *Idem, Vad vi gjort och vad vi ämna göra.* (Stockholm 1938).

tern and in particular its Executive Committee, which followed developments in the Swedish Communist parties avidly from 1924, did not constitute the source of strength which could give to the SKP (Section of the 3rd international) power and influence over workers and small farmers in Sweden. Throughout the period, contacts between the leadership of the SKP and the Executive Committee were close, the SKP was incessantly bombarded with directives, resolutions, recommendations and unconditional demands by the leaders in Moscow.

Nor was it apparently possible to reach the "masses" - the Swedish workers and small farmers - by means of agitation. Had the start of the 1920s seen the end of the revolutionary rhetoric and the beginning of the Social Democratic welfare-state rhetoric? Did the difference between the Communist rhetoric and Communist down-to-earth policies, between what the Communists considered politically desirable and what they found politically feasible become too pronounced? Did this lead to a loss of political credibility on the part of the Communists? To which extent were the Communists able to root their policy in the working class and the class of small farmers? Their weak position in the Riksdagen and their limited influence in the trade union movement - if we except the latter half of the 1920s - do not really provide an exhaustive answer. The United and Popular Fronts of the 1920s and 1930s could not be realised at the central level. How were these policies pursued locally? And what part did the Communist parties play in the strike campaigns of the inter-war years, in the mass rallies against unemployment in 1922 and in the expressions of the general opinion following the events in the Ådalen in 1931? Was it possible for the Communists to mobilise workers in such situations and how did they use the front organisations? To what extent did the Communist parties which were faithful to the Comintern get financial support from the CI during the inter-war years? The sources that have so far been examined are silent on this point, except for expenses for trips to Moscow.

The political youth associations have played an important role in the labour movement in Sweden. In this context I have only paid attention to the two organisations Sveriges Socialdemokratiska Ungdomsförbund, SDUF, (1903-1921) and Sveriges Kommunistiska Ungdomsförbund, SKU (1921-). In opposition to their respective parties, the youth organisations have played an very independent role in the labour movement, through agitation, organisational work and in the international arena.

An unbroken line can be observed running from the SDUF to the SKP of 1921. The leaders of the SDUF of 1909 reappear as the leaders of the SSV of 1917, and a more radical group within the SSV leadership oriented itself towards the Russian Bolsheviks and via the Zimmerwald-movement towards the Communist International in 1919. However, it was the same generation of Socialist politicians who broke away from the Comintern in 1921, 1924 and 1929 to revert to the SAP.

The youth associations were part of the parties' organisations, but they also pursued an independent policy, not infrequently against their own mother parties. The conflicts within the SAP and the SKP between 1917 and 1929 partly had their causes in the independent policies of the youth associations. But to exactly the same degree it seems as if conflicts were intensified because the youth organisations were influenced and to a certain extent run by political forces at the international level, forces which the mother parties could not control. Even at first sight, the Zimmerwald-movement and the Comintern appear to be such political power centres.

So the actual policy was not solely shaped by the parties' own political strengths. The Communist parties in Sweden also pursued their political struggle against the SAP and the LO. It is reasonable to assume that to a high degree the two main organisations in the Swedish labour movement determined the political conditions for the Communists. The Fackliga Propagandaförbundet discontinued its activities in 1923 (we do not know why), the establishment of cells and factions in the trade union movement moved at a sluggish pace during all of the Comintern years - in the early 1930s, the LO made a direct

counter-attack on the Communists in the trade unions. SAP drew a sharp line of demarcation to the left of itself - something which also affected the situation within the Communist parties - and the left-wing Socialist and independent Communist parties were squeezed between the SAP and the CI, and gradually they reverted to the SAP.

When the SAP and the LO launched their agitation efforts against Communism and for the welfare state, workers and small farmers brought the SAP to power. At this time - the early 1930s - the government apparatus was also more systematically used against the Communists. Whether Communism did in fact constitute a threat to Swedish society or whether, for political reasons, the SAP conjured up the image of a menacing type of Communism in its rhetoric, is unclear. Menace or not, during the war years the SKP lived under the threat of being made illegal. In 1944 it was again possible for Communists to enter the political arena. But by then the Comintern had been dissolved for a year.

Translation: Lena Flugel