

The Norwegian Labour Movement and the Comintern up to 1943

The political and legal pre-conditions in Norway offered favourable conditions for the development of the labour movement in general and the Communist movement in particular. Once the national question had been settled in 1905 and the country had achieved its independence from Sweden, rapid industrialisation and the breakthrough of the workers' movement both got under way. From the beginning the Norwegian Labour Party (*Det norske Arbeiderparti*; DNA) and the Norwegian Federation of Trade Unions developed a close partnership with mutual representation on the leading committees. The DNA became a broad coalition of the working classes, including in its ranks industrial workers and small farmers, agricultural workers and fishermen, clergymen and freethinkers. The country's geography was a contributory factor to the formation of the party. Its first members of parliament were elected not in the country's industrialised south-east, but by the protest vote of the north. Nor was the party centred on Christiania, the unpopular capital, nor yet on the party committee. In contrast to the other Scandinavian countries the regions maintained considerable independence within the party, too. Frequent changes at committee level ensured that no-one became too powerful.

Rapid industrialisation had radicalised the workers. They were open to "revolutionary thought processes"¹ and had different norms from those of the older working classes, who had developed gradually over the years. In 1918 the newly proletarianised working classes were an important factor in the victory of the "new direction" at the party conference of the DNA. In 1920, when the post-war recession reached Norway, this resulted in loss of members² and mass unemployment.³ This weakening of the organized labour movement could not be overcome until 1933. Mass unemployment remained a permanent problem. The climax was reached in 1932-34 when over 30% of the trade-union members were unemployed. Historians speak of a threefold crisis in Norway during the entire time until the DNA took power in 1935: a political crisis (11 governments in 15 years), an economic one and a social one. However, the crisis in Norwegian society did not work in favour of Norway's Communist Party (*Norges kommunistiske parti*; NKP), whose unemployment policies were unsuccessful,⁴ but above all in favour of the DNA. The crisis plans presented with its ideological re-orientation after 1930 attracted new classes.

State organs never cast doubt on the legitimacy of the labour movement. The early establishment of democracy⁵ was the outward expression of a political culture free of repression. The Norwegian Comintern section existed legally. However, this did not mean that - particularly the NKP - was not periodically subject to supervision. Certain actions also attracted the attention of the police. Only the extreme right wanted it banned ("The Fatherland Society" (*Fedrelandslaget*), Quisling in 1932-1933) but the centre parties did not act on this. The parties were not banned until the summer of 1940, when this was done by the German occupation forces.

1. Sources

Since so many scholars have already dealt with the history of the Norwegian workers' movement and particularly with the DNA and the NKP and their relationship to the Comintern, the impression can arise that there has

¹ Edvard Bull, "Die Entwicklung der Arbeiterbewegung in den drei skandinavischen Ländern 1914-1920", *Archiv für die Geschichte des Sozialismus und der Arbeiterbewegung*, 10 (1922), pp. 329-361, here p. 330.

² Membership of the Norwegian Labour Party fell from 97,500 in 1920 to 59,300 in 1921. In the Federation of Trade Unions membership fell from 142,600 (1920) to 96,000 (1921).

³ There are no official unemployment statistics for this time. The Federation of Trade Unions registered an increase in unemployment among its members from an average of 2.3% in 1920 to 17.6% in the following year.

⁴ Einhart Lorenz, "Arbeidsløse som revolusjonær kraft?", *Tidsskrift for arbeiderbevegelsens historie*, 1983/1, pp. 87-107.

⁵ Parliamentarism was established in 1884, male suffrage in 1898 and female suffrage in 1913.

already been enough research done in these fields.⁶ However, this is not the case. Many authors were able to use only a small part of the material currently available. Also the results were sometimes strongly influenced by the authors' standpoint. It is therefore not surprising that the same author not only characterizes the NKP as "one of the most loyal Comintern sections" but also as an "enfant terrible".⁷ Another author describes it as "an experimental field for the Nazi-Communist united front",⁸ while a third sees it as the protagonist of the real anti-fascist resistance,⁹ a fourth, as a stagnating sect devoid of real importance,¹⁰ and a fifth, as the true bearer of Marxist traditions with a glorious past.¹¹

The archive of the DNA, which was a member of the Comintern from 1919 to 1923, was confiscated during the Second World War by the German occupation forces and has disappeared without trace. Apart from the documentation provided by business reports, newspapers and periodicals, only a few fragments from the archive remain to throw a light on the DNA's relationship with the Comintern.

The archive of the NKP was also confiscated during the war by the German occupation forces and was never found afterwards. Parts of the pre-war archive, concentrating on the years up to 1933, are preserved on microfilm from the Comintern archive in Moscow. Just Lippe, the NKP historian, handed them over to the Archives of the Labour Movement (*Arbeiderbevegelsens Arkiv og Bibliotek*) in Oslo where they are available to researchers. In 1991 *Arbeiderbevegelsens Arkiv* was given more microfilm, which the party had received from

⁶ See Per Karstensen, "Illegalt arbeid i Mo og Nord-Rana 1940-45" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Oslo, 1951); Knut Langfeldt, *Moskva-teser i norsk politikk* (Oslo, 1961); Per Maurseth, *Fra Moskva-teser til Kristiania-forslag* (Oslo, 1972); Jan Bjarne Bøe, "Norges kommunistiske parti 1932-1939: En studie i partiets ideologiske og praktisk-politiske reaksjon på fascismen" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Bergen, 1972); Torstein Haldorsen, "Norges kommunistiske parti 1936-1938: Om NKPs rolle og innflytelse i norsk arbeiderbevegelse i folkefrontens periode" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Bergen, 1972); Torgrim Titlestad, "NKP mellom nasjonale og internasjonale straumdrag 1939-1941" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Bergen, 1972); Trond Gilberg, *The Soviet Communist Party and Scandinavian Communism: The Norwegian Case* (Oslo, 1973); John Atle Krogstad, "Kommunistene i Trøndelag 1936-1945: Kamp mot krig og fascisme" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Trondheim, 1975); Torbjørn Berg, "Arbeiderbevegelsen i Åmot: En undersøkelse av bakgrunnen for den brede oppslutningen om Norges kommunistiske parti i første halvdel av 1920-åra" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Oslo, 1975); Erling Hansen, "NKP og regjeringen 1935-36: En studie av holdninger til statsmakten, regjeringen og den dertil knyttede taktikk" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Oslo, 1976); Ingunn Hostad, "Scheflo, bøndene og revolusjonen: En undersøkelse av Olav Scheflos politiske ideologi med utgangspunkt i hans syn på bøndenes revolusjonære rolle" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Bergen, 1977); Per Bakke, "Hvorledes Danmarks og Norges kommunistiske partier reagerte etter okkupasjonen 9. april 1940" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Oslo, 1977); Einar A. Terjesen, "De russiske kommunister, KPD og norsk arbeiderbevegelse" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Trondheim, 1978); Einhart Lorenz, *Norwegische Arbeiterbewegung und Kommunistische Internationale 1919-1930: Untersuchung zur Politik der norwegischen Sektion der Kommunistischen Internationale* (Oslo, 1978); Erik Krogstad, "Enhetsbestrebelse mellom arbeiderpartiene i Norge 1922-1947" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Oslo, 1980); Erling Outzen, "Kommunistane og militærspørsmålet 1923-1930" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Bergen, 1982); Einhart Lorenz, *Det er ingen sak å få partiet lite: NKP 1923-1931* (Oslo, 1983). - For the time up to 1931 this contribution's presentation and analysis are based on the last-named research. We draw your attention to its extensive footnotes, which make detailed references here unnecessary.

⁷ Gilberg, *The Soviet Communist Party and Scandinavian Communism*.

⁸ Franz Borkenau, *Der europäische Kommunismus* (Berlin, 1952), p. 240.

⁹ John Atle Krogstad, "Kommunistene i Trøndelag 1936-1945"; similarly the self-presentation of the party in *Norges Kommunistiske Parti* (ed.), *Hvitbok om 1940* (Oslo, 1973).

¹⁰ Jahn Otto Jahansen in Åke Sparring, *Kommunismen i Norden og krisen i den kommunistiske verdensbevegelse* (Oslo, 1965).

¹¹ Rune Slagstad, "Om NKPs rolle i norsk arbeiderbevegelse", *Kontrast*, no. 57 (1975).

the Comintern archive. Currently it is only possible to guess how complete these archive sections are. The films contain stenographic minutes of party conferences, Central Committee and Politburo sessions, secretariat sessions, circulars, some sets of correspondence, memoranda etc. There is no doubt that a selection was made, but nothing points to its being a one-sided selection. There are considerable gaps, but this is not necessarily exclusively the result of pre-selection in Moscow. It can also indicate faulty routine in the NKP - and its poverty. So far this material has been used for two studies only.¹² In other words it is fair to say that nearly all NKP research is based on limited material.

Single documents, such as the minutes of the NKP finance committee for the years up to 1928, are in the archive of the *Mot Dag* (Towards Dawn) group of intellectuals (in *Arbeiderbevegelsens Arkiv og Bibliotek*).

The NKP itself had made only a modest contribution to throwing a light on its own history.¹³ A relatively complete set of minutes exists only for the first party congress (1923), those for the second and third party congresses (1925 and 1929) are incomplete, while no minutes at all were published for the fifth and sixth party congresses (1932 and 1936), just resolutions and axiomatic reports. All that is available from the extended sessions of the Central Committee and the party conferences are printed resolutions. There is nothing on the discussions.

The only autobiography written by a leading communist¹⁴ contains practically no material about his time as party chairman (1934-1946). More can be found in the unpublished memoirs of ECCI member Arvid G. Hansen,¹⁵ but in the final analysis they, too, are unsatisfactory, because they throw so little light on the internal life of the party or on Hansen's work in Moscow.

Of the leading actors of the Comintern time (Olav Scheflo, Jacob Friis, Erling Falk, Arvid G. Hansen, Peder Furubotn, Christian Hilt, Henry W. Kristiansen, Elias Volan, Just Lippe) biographies exist only for Furubotn.¹⁶ These do not, however, fulfil scholarly criteria. An attempt was made to write a biography "from the basis" about communists in the east Norwegian forestry workers' area of Hedmark.¹⁷ This affords retrospective glimpses of the thinking of some "simple" Communist Party members.

The only NKP bibliography is a survey of contributions by Norwegians and about Norway in the Comintern's official publications.¹⁸

2. *Periodisation of the History of the Communist Movement in Norway*

Any attempt at a periodisation of the history of the Communist movement in Norway must start from the fact that the DNA, founded 1887, joined the Comintern, and that a Communist Party was not founded until 4 November 1923. The split within the DNA cost the Comintern its "brightest" member party.¹⁹ From then on the NKP, founded as one of the last genuinely Communist parties in Europe, provided one of its politically,

¹² Lorenz, *Det er ingen sak å få partiet lite*; Terje Halvorsen, "Enhet med sosialfascistene?: NKPs forslag om samarbeid med DNA våren 1933", *Tidsskrift for arbeiderbevegelsens historie*, 1985/2, pp. 139-156.

¹³ Just Lippe, *Norges Kommunistiske Partis Historie* (Oslo, 1963).

¹⁴ Adam Egede-Nissen, *Et liv i strid* (Oslo, 1945).

¹⁵ "Arvid Hansen i en rekke intervjuer med Knut Langfeldt. Begynt 14. juli 1965" (*Arbeiderbevegelsens Arkiv og Bibliotek*, Oslo, unpublished).

¹⁶ Torgrim Titlestad, *Peder Furubotn 1890-1938* (Oslo, 1975), *Stalin midt imot: Peder Furubotn 1938-41* (Oslo, 1977), and *I kamp, i krig: Peder Furubotn 1942-1945* (Oslo, 1977); see also Torgrim Titlestad and Anne Helliesen, *Hvem var Peder Furubotn?* (Stavanger, 1989).

¹⁷ Stein Tønnesson, *Røde skoger. Skogsarbeidere forteller om klassekampen på landsbygda* (Oslo, 1976).

¹⁸ Einhart Lorenz, "Norske forhold i Komintern-publikasjoner", *Tidsskrift for arbeiderbevegelsens historie*, 1981/1, pp. 199-208, and 1985/1, pp. 165-181.

¹⁹ Julius Braunthal, *Geschichte der Internationale*, Vol. 2 (Hannover, 1963), p. 333.

organizationally and ideologically weakest sections.

In 1916 the DNA had embraced the principles of the Zimmerwald movement. Its youth organization had taken the side of the Zimmerwald Left as early as 1915. Then in 1919 it took part in the Berne Conference (though only as a critical observer) but was also represented at the Comintern's Founding Congress. Emil Stang took part as an active observer, but abstained from voting, as the question of a Third International had not been discussed in advance in the party. Leading representatives of the "new direction", which won at the 1918 party congress and introduced the radicalisation of the party, had worked together during the World War with Russian revolutionaries (among others with Kollontai and Bukharin),²⁰ had organized the transport of men and material etc. At the Second Comintern Congress the high status enjoyed by the DNA in Comintern circles found expression in the fact that, after Soviet Russia, Norway provided the second biggest delegation with the right to vote. At the Third Congress the DNA was placed in the second of a total of five groups and allowed 30 votes. There was, however, some controversy about the status²¹ of the party so much praised by Bukharin and Zinoviev. In the 21 conditions of admission attention was drawn to its "important reformist and social pacifist wing".

There were reservations on both sides. The DNA's decision to join in 1919 was pushed through not only in the face of the opposition of the party's right wing (absent during the "unanimous" party congress resolution) and of the powerful trade-union chairman Ole O. Lian; the Comintern supporters also reserved their right to "complete freedom of movement within the supporting principles of the new International". Initially the reservations had no consequences - one reason being, as the 1919 business report says, that it was not possible to maintain the contact with the Comintern - but in the implicit demand for inner self-determination lay the seeds of the conflicts which led to the brink of withdrawal in 1922 and finally to definite resignation in 1923.

The skilful policies of the DNA chairman Kyrre Grepp managed to split the anti-Comintern right wing, which had organized itself as a political group in June 1919. However, nothing could prevent the constitution at the beginning of 1921 of Norway's Social Democratic Labour Party (*Norges sosialdemokratiske Arbeiderparti*; NSA),²² though it stayed in a minority compared to the DNA (9.2% compared to 21.3% for the DNA in the 1921 elections).

The first phase of the history of the Communist movement in Norway (that of the DNA's Comintern membership), its pre-history and sub-periods have been thoroughly researched in the work of Fure,²³ Langfeldt,²⁴ Maurseth²⁵ and Lorenz.²⁶ It is characterized by the changing conditions in the relationship to the Comintern. The first decisive break came with the 21 conditions of admission.²⁷ In Norway, unlike Germany and Italy, these did not cause an immediate split. However, many Comintern supporters reacted strongly. The

²⁰ See Fritz Petrick, "Zum Anschluß der Norwegischen Arbeiterpartei an die III. Internationale", *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung*, 17 (1975), pp. 682-696; Alekandr Kan, "Fra Olaussen til Colbjørnsen: Den norske arbeiderbevegelse og Nikolaj Bukharin", *Arbeiderhistorie 1989* (Oslo, 1989), pp. 121-132; and especially id., *Nikolaj Bucharin och den skandinaviska arbetarrörelsen* (Uppsala, 1991), pp. 26ss.

²¹ See Terjesen, "De russiske kommunister, KPD og norsk arbeiderbevegelse".

²² See Kaare Fostervoll, *Norges sosialdemokratiske Arbeiderparti 1921-1927* (Oslo, 1969).

²³ Odd-Bjørn Fure, "Mellom reformisme og bolsjevisme. Norsk arbeiderbevegelse 1918-1920" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Bergen, 1984).

²⁴ Langfeldt, *Moskva-teser i norsk politikk*.

²⁵ Maurseth, *Fra Moskva-teser til Kristiana-forslag*.

²⁶ Lorenz, *Norwegische Arbeiterbewegung und Kommunistische Internationale 1919-1930*.

²⁷ Langfeldt, *Moskva-teser i norsk politikk*; Fritz Petrick, "Die 21 Aufnahmebedingungen der Kommunistischen Internationale und die Norwegische Arbeiterpartei", *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, 24 (1976), pp. 292-301.

question of withdrawal was discussed.²⁸ The contrary positions which had always existed between the centralism of the Comintern and the federalistic majority ("Tranmæl wing") in the radical "new direction" became apparent.²⁹ The latter was distinguished by its strong sympathy for the Russian Revolution and a deep-seated distrust of reformism and social partnership. This was the reason it had broken with social democracy. However, in its basic attitude it did not tend towards Communism theoretically, nor was it prepared to follow the increasing centralisation. Zinoviev's concessions led to the Comintern's keeping the DNA as a "guinea pig" (Šmeral) until, with the "Christiania suggestion", the DNA leadership found an ideological platform³⁰ which led to the ending of the "historical misunderstanding" in November 1923.³¹ The succeeding split has become another object of intensive research.³²

With the founding of the NKP came a second phase, which lasted till 1925 and can be designated the actual formative phase of the Communist movement in Norway.³³ During this phase the party lost many members who had originally belonged to the DNA's left-wing opposition. These resignations led to a consolidation of the NKP's leadership's left wing, though the process was not concluded during this phase. In 1925 a period of collection began. Serious internal conflicts arose, when the party's right wing suggested a Norwegian "Labour Party" as an umbrella organization. Initially the Comintern rejected this, but subsequently took up the idea itself. The *Mot Dag* intellectuals had been the driving force behind the DNA's 1923 break with the Comintern but had themselves been excluded from the DNA in 1925. The Comintern forced their union with the NKP, thus strengthening the party's right wing around Scheflo. By constructing a "unity party of the working class" as a counterpart to the DNA-NSA fusion it was possible to prevent the disintegration of the NKP but not to counterbalance the DNA.

The Comintern's "third period" was also the NKP's "third period" (and the fourth in Norwegian Communism). It was marked by its defining its position compared to that of the DNA, by intensive attempts at Bolshevization, the final withdrawal of the "Right", a fall in membership, isolation within the trade-unions, appalling organizational conditions, interference by the Comintern and self-chosen "semi-illegality". During this period, in May 1933, came the surprising initiative to form a united front from above. The Comintern intervened to condemn this deviation. The result was purges.³⁴

The popular front period, which began in July 1935, helped the NKP out of its political isolation. It culminated in 1936-37 in negotiations for unity with the DNA. As late as 1939 Communist trade-union members supported the collective membership of their unions in the "fraternal" DNA party. However, in spite of this policy the party did not regain its old position in the trade unions, even though its active engagement for

²⁸ Cf. Martin Tranmæls suggestion at the marginal negotiations with Zinoviev at the USPD party congress in Halle. Microfilm "Fra DNAs arkiv Moskva 1920-åra" in the *Arbeiderbevegelsens Arkiv og Bibliotek*, Oslo; also in *Dokumente und Bibliographie zum Verhältnis Norwegische Arbeiterbewegung - Kommunistische Internationale* (Kiel, 1979), mimeo, pp. 8-15; also Langfeldt, *Moskva-teser i norsk politikk*, pp. 49ss.

²⁹ See Fure, "Mellom reformisme og bosljevisme".

³⁰ See Maurseth's analysis, *Fra Moskva-teser til Kristiana-forslag*, pp. 149-183.

³¹ Arvid G. Hansen at the Fifth Comintern Congress, *Protokoll. Fünfter Kongress der Kommunistischen Internationale*, 2 vols. (Hamburg, 1924), 1, p. 360; cf. also Franz Borkenau, *World Communism* (New York, 1939), p. 261.

³² Cf. besides Lorenz, *Det er ingen sak å få partiet lite*; Berg, "Arbeiderbevegelsen i Åmot"; Erik Andresen, "Radikalisering og splittelse på lokalplanet: Slemmestad-arbeiderne 1913-1924" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Oslo, 1977); Øyvind Aasmul, "Bruddet i Bergens arbeiderparti i 1923" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Bergen, 1977); Jan Træen, "Splittelsen innen arbeiderbevegelsen i Buskerud: Diskusjon, kamp og partisplittelse i 20-åra" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Oslo, 1982).

³³ For the periodisation of the history of the NKP, see Einhart Lorenz, "NKP", *PaxLeksikon*, Vol. 4 (Oslo, 1980), pp. 453-460; for the formative phase, see Bjørnhaug, op. cit.

³⁴ Cf. on this initiative Halvorsen, "Enhet med sosialfascistene?".

republican Spain attracted some sympathy. Even though it could influence the left wing of the DNA in certain questions,³⁵ it remained on the sidelines. A re-structuring of the membership and the electorate (as far as it could be registered) also pushed the NKP geographically out to the periphery.

The fifth phase, marked by the almost total isolation of the NKP, started at the time of the German-Soviet non-aggression pact. The isolation was deepened by the Finnish-Soviet Winter War and confirmed by the party's ambiguous behaviour in occupied Norway. Leading party members maintained their dubious attitude to the German occupation forces even after the NKP was banned on 16 August 1940, the first Norwegian party to be so treated. The more militant resistance policy (on which there was disagreement within the party³⁶) subsequent to the German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941 led to the renewed sympathy for the NKP during the course of the war.³⁷ It even experienced a short renaissance after liberation (11.9% at the 1945 election). Illegality and German reprisals led to a decentralization of the organizational structure, to greater independence of the members from the party leadership and of the party leadership from the Soviet Union/Comintern.³⁸ There is disagreement among researchers as to whether Furubotn, who took over the party leadership at New Year 1941/42, really stood for independent and oppositional policies against Stalin - as Titlestad emphasizes.³⁹

3. The Relationship with the Trade Unions

For Martin Tranmæl, the leader of the DNA wing critical of the Comintern, party and trade unions were partners with equal rights, respecting each other's independence and sovereignty. The establishment of a hierarchy was unthinkable. The DNA emphasized this attitude with great precision once again in 1923 in the "Christiania Suggestion".

The NKP's dilemma was that, on the one hand it saw the trade unions as its most important field of operations, but on the other hand its trade-union policy was more and more determined by cadres who knew nothing about trade unions. This led to conflicts between the party and the trade-union officials among its members, who wanted to maintain the unions' autonomy. When there was conflict their loyalty was to their union rather than to the party.⁴⁰

The founding of the NKP was contemporaneous with the iron- and metal-workers' strike,⁴¹ which the Comintern saw as a test case for the party's revolutionary and communist basic attitude. The strike, during which the Communist-dominated strike committee fought the trade-union committee, caused the first big party conflict,

³⁵ Haldorsen, "Norges kommunistiske parti 1936-1938", pp. 39ss.

³⁶ Cf. among others Tore Pryser, *Klassen og nasjonen (1935-1946)* (Oslo, 1988) [= *Arbeiderbevegelsens historie i Norge*, 4], pp. 366ss.

³⁷ For the NKP's reactions to Fascism and on its war policy, see particularly Terje Halvorsen's unpublished studies "Parti og motstandsorganisasjon I. En undersøkelse av NKPs illegale virksomhet og organisasjoner på sentralplanet og i Oslo-området fram til sommeren 1943" (Mimeo) and "Mellom Stalin og Hitler. Kommunistene og motstandsarbeid under den tysk-sovjetiske pakt 23. august 1939 - 22. juni 1991" (Mimeo). Halvorsen is currently working on a longer study on the NKP during the World War. See also Frode Færøy, "Den kommunistiske motstandsbevegelsen i Bergensdistriktet, 1940-45" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Oslo 1991); Pryser, *Klassen og nasjonen (1935-1946)*; Titlestad, "NKP mellom nasjonale og internasjonale straumdrag 1939-1941", *Stalin midt imot und I kamp, i krig*; also Bøe, "Norges kommunistiske parti 1932-1939"; Haldorsen, "Norges kommunistiske parti 1936-1938"; John Atle Krogstad, "Kommunistene i Trøndelag 1936-1945"; and Bakke, "Hvorledes Danmarks og Norges kommunistiske partier reagerte etter okkupasjonen 9. april 1940".

³⁸ See Halvorsen, "Mellom Stalin og Hitler".

³⁹ Titlestad, *Stalin midt imot*.

⁴⁰ Lorenz, *Det er ingen sak å få partiet lite*.

⁴¹ Cf. Bjørnhaug, op. cit.

as Halvard Olsen, the chairman of the union of iron- and metal-workers, was also the vice-chairman of the NKP. The conflict ended in Olsen's defeat. Together with other leading trade unionists (besides him two other members of the Norwegian Trade-Union Federation's Executive Committee) he resigned from the NKP, thus weakening the party at a decisive point. However, this result of the conflict also led to a consolidation of the party, since the NKP was no longer identified with the previous trade-union policy of the DNA's Comintern wing, which had even accepted compulsory settlements.

Originally the Communists occupied an important position within the trade unions and they got off to a good start. In a series of conflicts, for instance in the successful building workers' strike of 1928,⁴² their engagement won them much sympathy. However, once the conflict was over they could not prevent the return to power of the trade-union establishment and its acceptance and recognition by the strikers. Initially the Communists were well represented at trade-union congresses. At the 1925 congress 31% of the delegates were Communists, 41% members of the DNA, 15% Social Democrats and 12% Independents. In 1927 some 20% of the delegates were Communists, but by 1931 this had fallen to 6%.⁴³ In 1925, together with the Social Democrats and the Independents, they achieved the suspension of the traditional, institutionalized co-operation between the DNA and the Federation of Trade Unions (up to 1927). They were particularly successful where international links were concerned, in that, together with the radical wing of the DNA, they managed to prevent the return of the Norwegian Federation to the International Federation of Trade Unions until 1934. The Norwegian Federation's negotiations with the All-Russia Trade-Union League about a co-operation agreement (1927-28) and the consequent conclusion of friendship and partnership agreements between Norwegian and Soviet Skilled Unions can be largely traced to the NKP's influence and ability to mobilize support.⁴⁴

The second period of conflict occurred in connection with the Comintern's "third period" and its trade-union policy. The Strasbourg Theses conflicted with all the traditions and practices of the Norwegian trade-union movement. The idea of working with and accepting the influence of workers who were not organized was so distasteful to many Communist trade unionists that - without waiting for threats of trade-union exclusion - they turned their backs on the party.⁴⁵ Elias Volan, a veteran of the "trade-union opposition of 1911", resigned in 1929, robbing the NKP of its last important trade unionist. The last bastions in the trade-unions were lost in single unions but also regionally (in the Forest- and Agricultural Workers' Union, the Bookbinders' Union and in the union cartels in Bergen and East-Telemark). The attempt to get rid of "trade-union bigwigs" in 1930-31 (which the party simultaneously thwarted by trying to keep certain party figureheads) also reduced Communist influence. As of 1931, apart from local exceptions, the NKP was marginalized in the trade-union movement. The Red Trade-Union Opposition was clearly unsuccessful. It seems exaggerated to conclude from the insignificant increase in numbers at the 1938 trade-union congress that it had become a "political power-house".⁴⁶ The NKP's participation in the strike movements of the second half of the nineteen-thirties was peripheral.

4. Members and Electors

Since its founding the Norwegian Labour Party had been built up on the principle of collective membership. This type of membership was also mentioned in the 21 conditions of admission, which demanded a transition to individual membership. The DNA, which considered its intimate relationship with the trade-unions - and its financial bases - affected by this demand, negotiated a compromise with Zinoviev in 1920, thus avoiding the

⁴² See Signe Marsdal Wulff, "Tvers gjennom lov til arbeidsfred: Bygningsarbeiderstreiken 1928" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Oslo, 1980).

⁴³ Per Maurseth, *Gjennom kriser til makt (1920-35)* (Oslo 1987) [= *Arbeiderbevegelsens historie i Norge*, 3], p. 400.

⁴⁴ Cf. Einhart Lorenz, "Brückenbau und Partnerschaftsverträge: Norwegisch-sowjetische Gewerkschaftsrelationen in der Zwischenkriegsperiode", in John Hiden and Aleksander Loit (eds.), *Contact or Isolation?: Soviet-Western Relations in the Interwar Period* (Stockholm, 1991), pp. 271-291.

⁴⁵ Lorenz, *Det er ingen sak å få partiet lite*, pp. 108ss.

⁴⁶ Haldorsen, "Norges kommunistiske parti 1936-1938", passim.

DNA's provisional resignation from the Comintern.⁴⁷ The DNA's formal interpretation of the 21 conditions, which the Comintern accepted, stated that the current situation was not favourable to changes in the form of the party's organization. The only concession to the Comintern's demands was an assurance that a right of reservation would be introduced. Nor did the DNA fully accept the principle of democratic centralism, in that it expressly stated its belief in the necessity of comprehensive democracy within the party and of limiting bureaucracy. It emphasized that all important questions must be put before members at general assemblies. The Comintern tolerated such special points of view from no other party but the DNA.

When the DNA split in 1923 it was still organized on the basis of collective membership and territorial unity. Not until the spring of 1925 did the NKP begin serious discussion of the organizational question. It then declared the basic principles of democratic centralism to be binding, began to organize cells and to reduce the federalist elements. Reorganization in work cells was largely a failure. There was a continual reduction in the number of members organized in work cells, both in percentage and absolutely (1927: 21% of the members, but only 12% in 1930), and those few cells "mostly only existed on paper or as formal administrative organs".⁴⁸ The territorial local organizations were more attractive to the members and they worked better, too.

An analysis of NKP membership is difficult. The party itself had only very incomplete records of its members and neither internal nor published figures reflect all the basic material. Even the first, still quoted, membership list as per 31 December 1923⁴⁹ is full of mistakes, so that the number of members during the founding phase must be calculated as lower⁵⁰ than 13,960. The lists for the following years show considerable fluctuations. The 20,000 members claimed in the 1924 Comintern annual were a figment of the imagination. A more realistic assessment can be gathered from the subscriptions calculated by the NKP finance committee, which put membership at 7,000 (1925) and 5,000 (1926). The party's own figures put membership in 1929 at 6,045 and in the following year at 2,985.⁵¹ Membership settled down at this level in the thirties. Membership fluctuation was significant and showed the difficulty the party had to integrate members and sympathisers permanently. In 1928 only 14.2% had been members since the foundation in November 1923. In other words after 4½ years only 1,000 original members at most were still in the party. Besides disagreement with Comintern policy and the deep-seated desire for unity in the Norwegian labour movement, the main reasons for the defections were inadequate organization (in carrying out the cell system, providing information, delegating work, collecting subscriptions); a lack of integrational force (there was no time of probation before joining the NKP); extremely high demands on members to be active (which led to a too heavy workload, resulting in collective defections from cells and local groups) and finally, resignation. Inner-party stock-taking is studded with complaints about the heavy fluctuation.

The 30 to 40 year-olds with 38.4% were the most strongly represented group, followed by the 40 to 50 year-olds with 20.9% (1927). The biggest occupational groups were (also in 1927) labourers (59.9%) followed by housewives (17.4%) and small farmers, forestry and agricultural workers and fishermen with 12.4%. Shifts in the membership and electorate in the thirties led to a decline in the number of industrial labourers and a higher number of fishermen or fishermen-small farmers. In its high number of women members (some 20%) the NKP differed not only from the DNA but also from the German Communist Party (*Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands*; KPD). Leaving aside the "guest appearance" of the *Mot Dag* group, which was not integrated into the party, the NKP was never attractive to intellectuals.

The NKP's share of the vote at parliamentary elections sank from 6.1% (1924) to 4.0% (1927) and 1.7% (1930), which was followed by a slight rise in 1933 to 1.8%. At the last pre-war parliamentary election (1936)

⁴⁷ Langfeldt, *Moskva-teser i norsk politikk*, p. 55; Lorenz, *Norwegische Arbeiterbewegung und Kommunistische Internationale 1919-1930*, pp. 117-119.

⁴⁸ For the time up to 1931, see Lorenz, *Det er ingen sak å få partiet lite*, pp. 126, 130, 132-133, 137-150; for the succeeding years Ph[ilip] Dengel, "Om Kadrerne og Metoderne i Ledelsen af de kommunistiske Partier i de skandinaviske Lande", *Kommunistisk Tidsskrift*, 2 (1934), pp. 148-156.

⁴⁹ Lippe, *Norges Kommunistiske Partis Historie*, p. 166.

⁵⁰ Lorenz, *Det er ingen sak å få partiet lite*, pp. 180-184.

⁵¹ *Die Kommunistische Internationale vor dem VII. Weltkongress. Materialien* (Moskau-Leningrad, 1935), p. 321.

the NKP put up candidates only in the Bergen constituency. In the second half of the nineteen-thirties its potential share of the vote is put at 1.5 to 2%.⁵² In 1923, when the split occurred, 13 of the 29 DNA members of parliament followed the NKP. In 1924 they had 6 (out of a total of 150) members in Parliament (*Storting*), in 1927 only 3 and after 1930 none. However, these figures give only an incomplete picture of the NKP's actual strength at the elections of the twenties, nor do they reflect the regroupings which occurred.

Geographically seen, there were significant membership shifts within the NKP, particularly in the thirties. In 1923 Hedmark, Trondheim, Bergen and Hordaland were centres of support. This continued to be the case, despite loss of members and votes, but - percentually - there was a shift northwards. Particularly in the Finnmark communist "niches" came into being in certain communities, from which the party could recruit new members and electors when its fortunes were low. Its position was extremely weak in Oslo and the other industrial regions.⁵³

In contrast to its extreme weakness in Oslo (1924: 2.0% compared with 35.5% for the DNA and 8.1% for the NSA) was its almost counterbalancing strength in Bergen and Trondheim, the second and third largest cities of the country: in 1924 in Bergen the NKP got 30.3% compared with 2.0% for the NSA,⁵⁴ and it was also stronger than the DNA in Trondheim. In 1927, after the re-unification of the DNA and the NSA and after an electoral landslide in favour of the united DNA, the relative strength altered in favour of the DNA, but the NKP still retained 22.6% in Bergen and 15.0% in Trondheim. In spite of a general decline, as early as 1927 the NKP was able to register slight gains in a few strongholds (Skien, Odda, Åmot) and regions (Nordland, Troms). In 1924 44% of those who voted for the NKP came from 11 typical industrial towns and communities. Three years later 43.7% of this electorate was concentrated in only 6 industrial towns and communities. 1930 saw the beginning of the electoral shift from Telemark, Hedmark and Hordaland to Trøndelag and Finnmark. This trend continued in 1933 and at the local elections of 1937. In 1933 22.3% of the entire NKP electorate came from Trøndelag (compared with 12.6% in 1924) and 14.4% from the three northern districts (compared with 6.8 % in 1924). During the same period the NKP lost three-quarters of its electorate in the "red" district of Hedmark.

The party also received a large number of votes in the local elections in certain regions of west, east and north Norway. In the important industrial community of Odda (Hordaland), the forestry workers' area of Åmot (Hedmark)⁵⁵ and the industrial and fishing community of Alta (Finnmark)⁵⁶ its share of the vote at local elections in the thirties sometimes continued to exceed 30%.⁵⁷ Variations between its share of the vote in parliamentary and local elections show that at the local level Communists enjoyed considerable trust. Some of these NKP communities developed their own specific camp culture.

Various research⁵⁸ has shown that there is no direct link between social position and occupation and a preference for voting NKP or DNA. Neither social discontent (at least in the winter of 1923/24) nor a feeling of political isolation and impotence led automatically to a longing for an "apocalyptic revolutionary change". It is not possible to use the label Rydenfelt⁵⁹ thought up for Sweden: "Desert and Isolation Communism". Spar-

⁵² Per Selle, *Norges kommunistiske parti* (Bergen, etc., 1983), p. 91.

⁵³ In 1930, in the country's five most important industrial areas, the party had only 867 members. In 1932 in Oslo and the surrounding Akershus government area, only 428 compared with the DNA's 41,801.

⁵⁴ See Aasmul, "Bruddet i Bergens arbeiderparti i 1923".

⁵⁵ Berg, "Arbeiderbevegelsen i Åmot".

⁵⁶ Henry Minde, *Stein og brød* (Alta, 1983).

⁵⁷ For Finnmark, see Trond Amundsen, "Fiskerikommunismen i nord: Vilkårene for kommunistenes oppslutning på kysten av Øst-Finnmark i perioden 1930-1940" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Tromsø, 1991).

⁵⁸ See, e.g., Knut Heidar, "Økonomisk struktur og korporativ dominans: Arbeiderpolitikken i Rjukan og Odda ca. 1906-24", *Tidsskrift for arbeiderbevegelsens historie*, 1976/1, pp. 177-212.

⁵⁹ Sven Rydenfelt, *Kommunismen i Sverige* (Lund, 1954).

ring⁶⁰ and Smidt⁶¹ took it over for Norway, tainted as it is with the odium of backwoodsman-ism, but the variations in time as well as the considerable differences in the party preferences in communities with similar socio-economic, cultural and geographic pre-conditions, mean that it cannot be transferred. Greater significance attaches to local and/or regional leaders of opinion, probably also to family and neighbourhood links. In areas of sparse and homogenous population no-one wanted to risk breaking with familiar friends and colleagues. It can be definitely shown that in cases where a local leader of opinion defected to the DNA, the NKP suffered almost total collapse. It is correct to designate the party more a protest movement than an ideologically oriented movement.

5. The Internal Structure of the Apparatus

Up to 1925 the election of the most important committees (Central Committee and National Council) conformed with common democratic procedures. The first considerable interference with the sovereignty of the party congresses - apart from the fact that these congresses were often postponed and the intervals between them grew longer - was the replacement of Christian Hilt as party secretary by Ottar Lie (1927). In 1930, after Furubotn's resignation and subsequent move to the USSR, the party was to all intents and purposes without a leader. This allowed Arvid G. Hansen almost complete domination until, with the New Year, the Comintern installed Henry W. Kristiansen as chairman. Kristiansen's removal from office in 1934 and the appointment of the veteran Adam Egede-Nissen as chairman were also the result of Comintern interference, but by then the chairman had only a symbolic function, the real power being in the hands of Emil Løvlien, while Kristiansen as editor of the central organ still exercised a leading function. Party members were informed by their press of such changes by the Comintern after they had happened. No reason was ever given. At the same time, local and regional leaders - as far as can be gathered from the available sources - were selected by the responsible organs with an eye to personnel and material resources. The party leadership constantly criticized regional leaders and committees and referred to them as "barriers", which shows that elements of federalism managed to survive in the Communist labour movement.

So far only the nineteen-twenties have been researched⁶² where the internal structure of the NKP apparatus and the party's entire organizational practice is concerned. Because of missing sources and sparse information in the (numerically much reduced) party press it is possible to make only very tentative remarks about the thirties. It is not really appropriate to speak of an NKP apparatus, considering its limitations and its political, organizational and financial weakness. Apart from a few full-time secretaries in Oslo, whose number was reduced during the first four years, there were some journalists, publishing and printing employees, who can be counted as belonging to the apparatus in Oslo, as can a few people in the service of the Soviets. The Oslo party also produced an apparatus of "jacks of all trades", whose presence - as Hilt remarked in 1929 - enlivened the sessions of the extended Central Committee (party conferences).⁶³

The small group of theoretically trained NKP politicians in Oslo - known internally as the party's "dead weight" - was even able largely to prevent "purges". However critical the Comintern was of certain people, they were irreplaceable (the most extreme example is Arvid G. Hansen). Nor could the Comintern find a solution. When one considers how unimportant the NKP was and how (relatively) many Norwegian Communists were trained at the Comintern schools in Moscow, it seems clear to us that the Comintern was trying to find suitable leaders. The selection of Kristiansen as party chairman at New Year 1930/31, even though he had shortly before been accused of ideological errors, was just as much of a stop-gap appointment as that of the 66-year-old Egede-Nissen in 1934.

⁶⁰ Åke Sparring, *Kommunismen i Norden og krisen i den kommunistiske verdensbevegelse* (Oslo, 1965), p. 8.

⁶¹ Maximilian Smidt, "Skandinavien - von ganz links nach links", in *Kommunistische Parteien im Westen: England, Frankreich, Italien, Skandinavien* (Frankfurt/M., 1968), p. 165.

⁶² Lorenz, *Det er ingen sak å få partiet lite*.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 148. See also Dengel, "Om Kadrerne og Metoderne i Ledelsen af de kommunistiske Partier i de skandinaviske Lande".

It really is not possible to speak of a party apparatus in the regional parties. Only three of the eleven regional parties had full-time secretaries in 1925 or in 1930. The district committees worked on a voluntary basis, limited by the money and time available, frequently peripatetic, and thus sporadic, because of unemployment. As early as 1925 there were complaints that only two or three of them regularly submitted their minutes to the party's secretariat. As of 1929/30 passivity increased, so that regional committees frequently failed to pass on instructions and information from the party's Central Committee to the basis. The Central Committee thought of them as "barriers" rather than an extended arm. If we take into consideration the relatively independent position enjoyed by the party's press outside Oslo - its expressed its own opinion and neither invariably supported nor always publicized the leadership's policies - and if we further take into consideration that regional representatives distanced themselves more or less definitely from the leadership, it can come as no surprise that party members were imperfectly aware of official party resolutions. It is noteworthy that the party was particularly successful in those regions in which little attention was paid to the leadership's policies. We therefore think it better to be careful about employing the term "Bolshevization", at least during the twenties, for the NKP.

Myths and legends surround the subject of the party's finances. Internal NKP material from the twenties reveals a party living in dire poverty, unable to pay salaries, sometimes not even able to finance the printing of its leaflets, forced to limit or even discontinue publishing its newspapers for financial reasons⁶⁴ and dependent on its members' willingness to make sacrifices. Quisling, who later became leader of the Norwegian fascists, during his time as Minister of Defence in 1932 declared that he possessed documents proving that the Comintern financed the DNA and the NKP, but he could never produce the proof. Both the police and the secret service denied Quisling's claim. There can, however, hardly be any doubt that both officially and illegally money from the Soviet Union reached the party. This took the form of loans from the Soviet trade unions to the Norwegian Federation of Trades Unions to pay off NKP debts, or sums of money brought to Norway by Comintern emissaries to finance particular actions, e.g. the attempt in 1927 to establish the working-class umbrella party.⁶⁵ No-one has so far researched in detail the financial transactions of the *Mot Dag* group, which administered the party's finances in 1927-28.

6. The Relationship to Central Bodies of the Comintern

In 1923 the relationship to the Comintern's central bodies was one of the most important subjects in the disagreement between the DNA and the Comintern. The DNA defended itself vigorously against the Comintern's attempt to deny it the right to choose its own ECCI representatives. In the summer of 1923 the DNA prevailed on the Comintern leadership to accept Erling Falk, the chairman of the *Mot Dag* group, as coequal second Norwegian ECCI representative in addition to Scheflo, who belonged to the minority.

Rivalry about Comintern contacts continued after the founding of the NKP. Scheflo, now on the right wing of the NKP, continued to represent the party at the ECCI (member of the ECCI presidium till 1927). However, his work as a representative was countermined by Hansen's frequent trips to Moscow and his personal contacts. Hansen, who became an ECCI candidate in 1924, used his personal contact to Zinoviev not only to pursue his own factional goals, but also on behalf of Ruth Fischer. Besides all this, as early as 1924, in the Scandinavian Federation of Communist Parties Hansen had created a base from which he could act as the Comintern's authorized representative, with no supervision from the party leadership.⁶⁶ After 1929/30, when the leading nineteen-twenties Communists, in the persons of Furubotn, Hilt, Foss, Hansen and Lippe, were all in Moscow, there were, not only within the Comintern and RGI establishment but also to Norway, personal links which, by-passing the party leadership, were fully utilized within the party. No research has yet been done on their intensity and effectiveness. These personal links are probably one of the reasons why differing signals and instructions came to Norway from the Comintern, its Scandinavian Countries' Secretariat and the RILU. The Norwegians at the Comintern schools were also involved in these disagreements.

⁶⁴ Lorenz, *Det er ingen sak å få partiet lite*, passim.

⁶⁵ Johan Vogt in conversation with the author, 23 June 1982.

⁶⁶ Erland F. Josephson, *SKP och Komintern 1921-1924* (Uppsala-Stockholm, 1976), pp. 323ss.; Lorenz, *Det er ingen sak å få partiet lite*, pp. 56, 234-235; "Arvid Hansen i en rekke intervjuer met Knut Langfeldt".

7. The Press

Before the split in November 1923 Comintern supporters were over-represented in the DNA press. In the struggle for the press, which was fought on a local level, the party could not bring its superior weight to bear, but it took over the daily papers in Bergen and Trondheim and at the New Year was in possession of 16 newspapers. 1925 saw a re-organization and an attempt to Bolshevize the NKP press.⁶⁷ Instead of the daily and weekly papers published so far, which party secretary Hilt dismissed as a social democratic relic, priority was to be given to works papers. However, this directive was carried out hesitantly, unsystematically and imperfectly. The arrival of *Mot Dag* led to a renewed interest in traditional organs of the press. New papers were founded, so that by the end of 1927 the NKP was publishing 13 papers. A year later this number had fallen to 7, though this cannot be entirely traced to a conscious press policy. The party's appalling financial state was equally responsible. New papers founded on local initiative had little success.

This permanent decline in the fortunes of the NKP press reflected the party's general development. As early as autumn 1929 the central organ *Norges Kommunistblad* (Norway's Communist Paper) got into financial difficulties, so that its function was taken over by *Arbeideren* (The Worker), the organ in the previous NKP strongholds in east Norway (Hedmark region). This paper remained the central organ until August 1940, when the German occupation forces banned the party, though there were times when, for financial reasons, it could not appear as a daily paper. In 1940 there were still five NKP newspapers (Oslo, Bergen, the NKP stronghold Odda in west Norway and in the north Norwegian regions Nordland and Finnmark).

Other publications besides the daily press were, from 1923 to 1929, the theoretical organ *Proletaren* (The Proletarian), originally a periodical for the Communist youth movement; from 1932 to 1933, *Kommunisten* (The Communist), sub-titled "Organ for Marxist-Leninist Theory and Practice" and from 1933 to 1940 *Politikken* (Politics), sub-titled "Organ for Peasants and Workers". *Gnisten* (The Spark) was published from 1925 to 1928 as a relatively successful periodical for proletarian women. The youth movement continued publishing its periodical *Klassekampen* (The Class Struggle), which was rich in tradition, until 1940. Another youth movement publication was *Pioneren* (The Pioneer, 1926-1929), the organ of the Norwegian Pioneer Organization.

Apart from the central organ and the cities' daily papers, the NKP's local organs followed a relatively independent line. This gave rise to a number of conflicts with the party leadership. Frequently, in the "third period", material emanating from the party's central office was not printed, so that the party's press failed to function as a "collective organizer" or as a propagandist for the party.

8. Opposition Groups

When considering opposition groups it is necessary to differentiate between the DNA and the NKP periods and also between opposition groups opposed to both the Comintern and the party leadership and those opposed only to the Comintern. There had been opposition to Comintern membership since 1919, during the DNA time. This opposition was split, so that one wing founded the NSA, while the other (with Ole O. Lian as its most important apologist) stayed loyally in the DNA but never relinquished its doubts about the Comintern. In 1923 these sceptics supported the group critical of the Comintern around Martin Tranmæl (whose scepticism had increased since the 21 conditions of admission), the historian Edvard Bull, and the *Mot Dag* group around Erling Falk, which criticized centralism and the Comintern's political practice from the left.

The heterogeneous composition of the NKP in the twenties resulted in numerous wings and directions. A simplified depiction of the situation in Oslo at this time would show a left wing around Arvid G. Hansen and the youth movement and a right wing around Olav Scheflo (and trade-unionists, who, however, got out early), Sverre Støstad (first party chairman), Emil Stang, and later also Jeanette Olsen (who originally belonged to the left). The party secretary, Peder Furubotn, can be regarded as occupying the centre position. At the beginning of 1928 the right, including the *Mot Dag* group, resigned, but the trade-union right outside Oslo did not leave until the new trade-union policy was formulated. In the thirties the party was more homogeneous and the wings had few disagreements. The party's provincial groups had little understanding of the ideological discussions taking place in the capital's leadership circles.

Spectacular resignations by single persons or groups were the exception. People were more likely quietly to change to the DNA, which, as a sort of Norwegian popular front, had room for opposition Communists, too.

⁶⁷ For the NKP press, see Lorenz, *Det er ingen sak å få partiet lite*, pp. 164ss.

There were occasional local attempts to form organizations. The most important of these happened in January 1930, resulting in the Independent Communist Party (SUKP) in Skien, the only industrial town where the NKP was still the largest party in 1927.⁶⁸ The SUKP supported a position close to that of the German *KPD-Opposition*, but merged with the DNA in the very year of its foundation. A small Trotskyist group around Jeanette Olsen produced - with the help of the German emigrant Walter Held (i.e. Heinz Epe) - a periodical called *Oktober* (1937-1939), but did not form an organization or group within the party.

A special position was occupied by the *Mot Dag* group, which in 1928, in agreement with Otto Kuusinen and over the heads of the party leadership, left the NKP and was even given the monopoly of carrying out Marxist education.⁶⁹ The group, which was organized in accordance with cadre principles and which did not return to the DNA till 1936, was the only opposition group to attempt - unsuccessfully - to organize a separate party.⁷⁰

9. The Relationship with the Labour Party

Norwegian historians agree that the November 1923 split in the DNA and the foundation of the NKP did not draw clear lines between these two parties. In 1923, from the left, the DNA criticized the Comintern's attempts at interference and emphasized the different conditions in East and West Europe. It also demanded a reform of the Comintern, but continued to consider itself a Communist party and initially wanted to return to the Communist International. There was a stark contrast between Tranmæl and Bull's perception that a return to the Comintern was impossible and the widespread sympathy with the Russian Revolution and the Soviet Union, which made a complete break impossible. When a return to the Comintern was blocked, the DNA occupied a special position internationally (membership in Steinberg's Information Bureau, later, until 1934, in the predecessors of the London Bureau).⁷¹ Ideologically, too - although theory and practice had parted company as early as 1918 - it was difficult to place the DNA in the traditional category of social democracy versus communism, since it supported the soviet system and mass actions, was sceptical about the possibilities of parliamentarism, etc. This special status of the dominant Labour Party created problems for the NKP and the Comintern, since the DNA was never properly analyzed. Since the DNA failed either to return to social democracy, as prognosticated by the NKP, or to fall apart, the NKP's analyses made it seem untrustworthy. The same applies to its attempts to discredit the DNA as a "social fascist" party.

The claim of the Labour Party to be the sole representative of the working classes and its refusal to countenance the Communist attempts to set up front organizations (such as Friends of the Soviet Union, Red Aid, National Committee against War and Fascism, and Hunger March 1932) caused all such attempts to wither away before they could get started, or to be reduced to marginal efforts. Only in areas where the basis was not in the hands of the DNA and/or the Federation of Trade Unions was the NKP successful, since there was then no-one to discredit it as divisive. Its most successful undertaking of this type was its *active*, i.e. illegal help for Spain. The NKP mobilized people outside the circle of its own members and sympathizers and made the project attractive to left-wing DNA members and young people. However, its limited resources meant that concentrating effort in one area led to neglecting party work in others. One special example of front organization was the

⁶⁸ See Bjørn Bering, "Radikalisering og splittelse: 'Den nye retning' i arbeiderbevegelsen i Skien 1911-1929" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Oslo, 1985).

⁶⁹ Lorenz, *Det er ingen sak å få partiet lite*, pp. 90-93.

⁷⁰ Einhart Lorenz, *Willy Brandt in Norwegen: Die Jahre des Exils 1933 bis 1940* (Kiel, 1989), pp. 102, 301.

⁷¹ See Lorenz, *Willy Brandt in Norwegen*, pp. 69ss.; Egil Etresvaag, "Mellom London og Moskva: Det norske Arbeiderparti og de internasjonale forbindelsene 1923-1927" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Bergen, 1972); Einhart Lorenz, "Die internationale Stellung der Norwegischen Arbeiterpartei 1919 bis 1938" (Mimeo).

founding of Housewives' Societies (*husmorlag*),⁷² about which opinion in the Comintern was divided,⁷³ but which probably brought the party new members.⁷⁴

The attractiveness of the DNA was a permanent challenge and threat to the existence of the NKP. The split which happened in the winter of 1923/24 had shown that in such a small recruiting area as Norway ideological controversies were less important than maintaining mutually founded organizations, newspapers, club houses, etc. Locally it was frequently the case that whichever party was stronger was the more attractive, and that worked in favour of the DNA. The Norwegian labour movement's preference for unity continually resulted in renewed discussions about uniting.⁷⁵ These began only a few weeks after the founding of the NKP. In them, from the beginning, the DNA demanded an organizational merger as *one* party. The irreconcilable positions taken up here - not to tolerate or recognize any other working-class party besides itself as a partner - dominated the DNA-NKP relationship throughout the pre-war era. At no time during those years did the NKP represent a credible alternative to the DNA.

Translated by Delia Grözinger

⁷² See Harriet Clayhills, *Kjerringer mot strømmen* (Oslo, 1978) and also Lorenz, *Det er ingen sak å få partiet lite*, pp. 151ss.

⁷³ Cf. *Inprekorr*, nr. 74 (1926), p. 1177, nr. 28 (1927), p. 589; Lorenz, *Det er ingen sak å få partiet lite*.

⁷⁴ In 1927 20% of the NKP members were women; in the DNA the figure was 16.7% and in the German Communist Party only 13%.

⁷⁵ The unity and fusion negotiations are another favourite area for researchers into Communism in Norway. See Per Martin Ølberg, "Samplingsbestrebelse i norsk arbeiderbevegelse fra november 1923 til januar 1927" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Oslo, 1957); Jan Bjarne Bøe, "Norges kommunistiske parti 1932-1939"; Haldorsen, "Norges kommunistiske parti 1936-1938"; Erling Hansen, "NKP og regjeringen: En studie av holdninger til statsmakten, regjeringen og den dertil knyttede taktikk" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Oslo, 1976); Erik Krogstad, "Enhetsbestrebelse mellom arbeiderpartiene i Norge 1922-1947"; Halvorsen, "Enhet med sosialfascistene?"; Einhart Lorenz, "Einheits- und Vereinigungsversuche in Norwegen", in Dietrich Staritz and Hermann Weber (eds.), *Einheitsfront, Einheitspartei* (Köln, 1989), pp. 391-423.