

## The Communist Party of Denmark and the Comintern 1919-43

During the quarter of a century in which the Comintern existed, Denmark was an agricultural country with a highly developed and modern agricultural sector. Throughout the period, however, manufacturing industry and the industrial working class steadily increased. Politically the country was a constitutional monarchy with a system of parliamentary government. The first Social Democratic (minority) government was formed in 1924-6. From 1929 to 1943 the Social Democratic Party formed a coalition government with the centre party, the Radical Liberals (*Det Radikale Venstre*).

A large proportion of the working class were active in the Danish labour movement, and the movement was characterized by strong trade unions and a centralist Social Democratic Party. Although there was opposition to this strong hegemony throughout the period, it was not until World War I that this opposition gained sufficient strength to establish a Communist Party.

Officially, the Communist Party of Denmark (*Danmarks Kommunistiske Parti*; DKP) was founded on 9 November 1919, but in reality its foundations had already been laid in March 1918.<sup>1</sup> A survey of the various phases of the party's history does not so much reveal changes in Comintern policy in the early stages as the specialness of Danish conditions. The fact is that several heterogeneous elements played a part in the formation of a Communist movement in Denmark. During the first eleven years these elements fought for supremacy in the party, which meant that it was virtually paralysed.

The most important of these elements were, firstly, a relatively strong syndicalist movement, part of the Trade Union Opposition Coalition (*Fagoppositionens Sammenslutning*; FS);<sup>2</sup> secondly, a left-wing Social Democratic group, which drew on the Social Democratic Youth Association (*Socialdemokratisk Ungdoms Forbund*; SUF) for much of its support;<sup>3</sup> and, thirdly, a more diffusely structured group consisting of revolutionaries who had already left the Social Democratic Party by 1918.

In studying the history of the party it is useful to delineate a number of particular periods. The first of these was 1918-23, and this may in turn be further delineated: 1918-19, 1919-21, 1921-2, and 1922-3. In 1918-19 Marie Nielsen (1875-1952) and Thøger Thøgersen (1885-1947) founded the Socialist Labour Party (*Socialistisk Arbejderparti*; SAP). The party was dissolved in the autumn of 1919.<sup>4</sup> On 9 November 1919 the SUF resolved to establish the Left Wing Socialist Party (*Venstresocialistisk Parti*; VSP); in 1920 the party joined the Comintern and changed its name to the *Danmarks Kommunistiske Parti*. In the spring of 1921 the DKP and the FS merged and became the Communist Federation (*Kommunistisk Føderation*). The period 1922-3 saw further significant developments: in January 1922 the Federation was torn apart as a result of internal disagreements, and from then on two DKPs existed, only one of which was recognized by the Comintern. In September 1923 the two parties merged once again.

Between 1923 and 1927 the party was led by those left-wing Social Democrats who used to lead the SUF. From 1927 to 1930 leadership of the party lay with left-wing radicals. In 1930-1 the party experienced a serious crisis, and two years of internal strife followed. The Aksel Larsen faction emerged victorious. The new leadership consisted of people trained at the Lenin School in Moscow.<sup>5</sup> The years 1931-4 may be termed the

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<sup>1</sup> See Jørgen Bloch-Poulsen and Morten Thing, *Danmarks kommunistiske Parti 1918-1941* (Copenhagen, 1979). Very little has been published in English on Danish labour history. The outlines can be found in chapter 3 of John Logue, *Socialism and Abundance. Radical Socialism in the Welfare State. A Study of the Danish Socialist People's Party* (Copenhagen and Minneapolis, 1982). A brief history of the DKP is given in A.F. Upton: *The Communist Parties of Scandinavia and Finland* (London, 1973), pp. 3-33.

<sup>2</sup> Carl Heinrich Petersen *et al.*, *Christian Christensen og den danske syndikalisme*, 2 vols (Århus, 1979).

<sup>3</sup> John Bech Thomsen, "Socialdemokratisk Ungdomsforbund, SUF, 1906-21", *Historievidenskab*, 8 (1976), pp. 7-86.

<sup>4</sup> Jens Christensen, "Danmarks socialistiske Arbejderparti 1918-19", *Årbog for arbejderbevægelsens historie*, 5 (1975), pp. 59-112.

<sup>5</sup> Kurt Jacobsen, *Moskva som medspiller, DKP's gennembrud og Aksel Larsens vej til Folketinget* (Copenhagen, 1987).

ultra-left period and the years 1935-9 may be termed the Popular Front period. The period 1939-41 was overshadowed by the Nazi-Soviet pact. When German forces occupied Denmark on 9 April 1940 the DKP continued to operate as a legal political party, but liaison with Moscow became extremely difficult. Finally, the period 1941-3 saw the emergence of the National Front. On 22 June 1941 more than 300 Communists were arrested, and the party went underground. It immediately began to organize illegal presses, and in 1942 it took up armed struggle against the Germans. After the dissolution of the Comintern in 1943, the DKP called for the formation of a broad national anti-Fascist front, and in September 1943, in response to this, the Danish Freedom Council (*Frihedsrådet*) was established.

### 1. The Archives of the DKP and Other Sources

Until 1990 the DKP archive was inaccessible to scholars. In 1990 a start was made on transferring the archive from the party headquarters to the Archive and Library of the Labour Movement (*Arbejderbevægelsens Bibliotek og Arkiv*; ABA). At present the archive is being catalogued, and the intention is to open it to scholars; the archive is no longer administered by the party, but by the ABA. The archives of the Communist Youth of Denmark (*Danmarks Kommunistiske Ungdom*; DKU) have also been transferred to the ABA. The DKP archive will probably turn out to be comparatively fragmentary for the period prior to 1945. When the party was made illegal in 1941, the police removed the archive from the party headquarters. It has since disappeared. As far as the 1920s are concerned, however, records of meetings between party leaders are preserved.

On a few occasions, Communist historians have been granted access to the Comintern archives in Moscow and have brought back microfilms of documents relating to the Danish section. These microfilms, available at the ABA, seem to indicate that the archives of the Comintern are rich. Not only do they contain extensive material relating to the DKP, but also material relating to other movements. It appears, for example, that the records of the Fagoppositionens Sammenslutning, the Danish syndicalists (1910-21), are in Moscow.

The DKP intends to have the documents in Moscow (either the originals or, more likely, copies of them) returned and to deposit them with the DKP archive at the ABA. The first tranche of around 3,000 pages was recently handed over to the ABA.

In examining the disappearance of a Danish Communist, Arne Munch-Petersen (1904-40), Mansur Mukhamedsjanov, a Soviet historian, has shown that in order to obtain a clear picture of events it is necessary to have access to all the Comintern archives, however, including therefore the papers of the secretariats and the ECCI.<sup>6</sup> Without access to the archives of the NKVD and KGB too, though, it will be impossible to follow individual cases through the Soviet bureaucracy. Particularly for the period after 1935, this is of crucial importance.

By tradition, which is to say prior to the recent crisis in Eastern Europe, the DKP has considered the party history its private domain. The usual party histories have been produced for internal educational purposes and to justify the policies pursued by the party.<sup>7</sup> The party has looked askance at the prospect of permitting outsiders to use the official records, and they have made stringent attempts to exclude scholars potentially critical of the party.

In addition to the internal party histories, a number of other publications have appeared. In 1953, for instance, the party published a selection of speeches and articles by Aksel Larsen, the party chairman.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, when the party introduced a new policy programme in the 1970s a policy document was published, as well as a study of its international relations.<sup>9</sup> During the 1980s the party prepared a series of publications concerning the resistance during the German occupation. These are available from the ABA. Of particular interest is Børge Houmann's research on Martin Andersen Nexø (1869-1954). The famous proletarian author was

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<sup>6</sup> Mansur Mukhamedsjanov, "Og nu til sandheden om Arne Munch-Petersen", *Information*, 31 July 1989.

<sup>7</sup> The most important official party histories are *Materiale om DKPs historie*, 3 vols (Copenhagen, n.d. [1952]), and Ib Nørlund, *Det knager i samfundets furer og bånd, Rids af dansk arbejderbevægelses udvikling* (Copenhagen, 1959; 3rd edition 1972).

<sup>8</sup> Aksel Larsen, *Taler og artikler gennem 20 år* (Copenhagen, 1953).

<sup>9</sup> *Programsamling* (Copenhagen, 1975) and Ib Nørlund, *Internationalisme* (Copenhagen, 1980).

extensively researched in a three-volume biography.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, he has published Andersen Nexø's letters.<sup>11</sup> The role played by Nexø in the early history of the DKP is discussed in a recently published book.<sup>12</sup>

It was a considerable time before DKP veterans began writing their memoirs. The first to do so was Richard Jensen (1894-1974), who for many years had been one of the leaders of the National Union of Stokers and its international organization, the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers (ISH). He was also an important figure in the Comintern and enjoyed the full trust of the Republican government in Spain during the Civil War. He opposed Aksel Larsen throughout the 1930s, and in 1940 he was expelled from the party.<sup>13</sup> Jensen is an important character in Jan Valtin's now classic book *Out of the Dark*. When the book was published in Danish in 1946<sup>14</sup> Jensen responded to it and propounded the theory that Richard Krebs, Valtin's real name, had in fact been a Gestapo agent.<sup>15</sup> An exhaustive study was published in the mid-1980s concerning Richard Jensen's connections with the Comintern, the Red Army and, not least, Ernst Wollweber, the German Communist. It also touches upon the sabotage carried out by the group in other countries.<sup>16</sup>

Following Jensen's memoirs, those of the first party chairman, Ernst Christiansen (1891-1974),<sup>17</sup> were published in 1960. Those of Aksel Larsen (1897-1972) followed in 1970.<sup>18</sup> Many other leading Communists have written their memoirs.<sup>19</sup> Another important group to have published memoirs are former activists in the resistance movement, which included many Communists.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, the memoirs of several Communist intellectuals have also appeared,<sup>21</sup> as too have those of rank-and-file Communists.<sup>22</sup> In addition to published

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<sup>10</sup> Børge Houmann, *Martin Andersen Nexø og hans samtid*, 3 vols (Copenhagen, 1981-88).

<sup>11</sup> Børge Houmann (ed.), *Breve fra Martin Andersen Nexø*, 3 vols (Copenhagen, 1969-72).

<sup>12</sup> Børge Houmann and Morten Thing, *Venskab og Revolution. Martin Andersen Nexø's og Marie Nielsens venskab og politiske virke 1918-24* (Copenhagen, 1990).

<sup>13</sup> Richard Jensen, *En omtumlet tilværelse* (Copenhagen, 1957) and *Jeg fik 16 år* (Copenhagen, 1965).

<sup>14</sup> Jan Valtin, *Ud af mørket* (Copenhagen, 1946).

<sup>15</sup> Richard Jensen, *Frem i lyset* (Copenhagen, 1946).

<sup>16</sup> Erik Nørgaard, *Drømmen om verdensrevolutionen* [1], *Truslen om krig* [2], *Krigen før krigen* [3], and *Krig og slutspil* [4] (Copenhagen, 1985-86).

<sup>17</sup> *Ernst Christiansen - men det gik anderledes* (Copenhagen, 1960).

<sup>18</sup> *Aksel Larsen ser tilbage* (Copenhagen, 1970).

<sup>19</sup> Ragnhild Andersen, *I livets brænding* (Copenhagen, 1986); Villy Fuglsang, "*Pasaremos*" (Ålborg, 1981); Villy Fuglsang, *Som jeg husker det* (Ålborg, 1985); David Hejgaard, *I det lange løb. En kommunistes erindringer*, 3 vols (Copenhagen, 1979-81); Kai Moltke, *Af en socialistisk veterans erindringer* (Varde, 1977) and *Mordet på Komintern* (Copenhagen, 1976); Martin Nielsen, "40 år i kamp for socialismen", I-IV, *Land og Folk*, 30 October 1959 - 5 November 1959; Ib Nørlund, *Oktober. Født i 1917* (Copenhagen, 1987); Holger Vivike, *Bagbord om* (Copenhagen, 1983).

<sup>20</sup> Ragnhild Andersen and Helge Larsen, *Vi blev reddet denne gang* (Copenhagen, 1945); Carl Christensen, *Som vi var* (Copenhagen, 1989); Poul Christensen, *Af en illegals erindringer* (Copenhagen, 1976); Børge Houmann, *Kommunist under besættelsen* (Copenhagen, 1990); Kai Moltke, *Fire år i fangdragt* (Copenhagen, 1973); Martin Nielsen, *Rapport fra Siutthof* (Copenhagen, 1948); Martin Nielsen, *Fængselsdage og Fangenætter* (Copenhagen, 1949); Oskar Verner, *Min vej gik gennem Sachsenhausen* (Århus, 1983).

<sup>21</sup> Elias Bredsdorf, *Min egen kurs 1912-46* (Copenhagen, 1983); Mogens Fog, *Efterskrift 1904-45* (Copenhagen, 1976); Mogens Fog, *Efterskrift 1945 og resten* (Copenhagen, 1977); Claus Ingemann Jørgensen (ed.), *Otto Gelsted fortæller* (Copenhagen, 1969); Isi Grünbaum, *Da mit hår blev grønt* (Copenha-

memoirs, a number of written and audio-taped memoirs are available in various archives and private collections. Since access to the DKP archives was not possible until recently, these memoirs have been of considerable importance to scholars researching the history of the party. They will remain important too since they constitute the main source of information concerning the culture of Communism.

During the short-lived renaissance enjoyed by the DKP during the 1970s and the early 1980s, various bibliographies relating to the party were prepared. The works of several party leaders, as well as a number of the party's well-known authors, were catalogued.<sup>23</sup> The bibliographies prepared by John Hansen covering the party's own publications<sup>24</sup> are probably more important, however, as are the bibliographies prepared by Erik Voss relating to the cadres and documents published by the party.<sup>25</sup>

## 2. A Brief Outline of the History of the DKP

The formation of Communist parties in Denmark, Norway and Sweden reflects three distinct courses of events, resulting from the strength of the Social Democratic parties, the policy of their leaders and the composition and strength of the opposing groups within the parties. In Denmark the Social Democratic Party was characterized by reformism. The party enjoyed strong support among the working class. Other factions remained relatively weak. Like the other Scandinavian countries, Denmark was neutral in World War I. The discussions in the labour movement concerning the war reached the Social Democratic Party in Denmark from outside. Nevertheless, the stance taken on the Zimmerwald movement was an effective element in the establishment of significant internal opposition. Another important factor was the perception of socialist principles. The policy pursued by the Social Democratic Party in real life seemed inconsistent with the programmatic objectives. Especially the policy of coalition with the Radical Liberals pursued by the party in general elections met with criticism.

The most important focus of opposition was to be found in the syndicalist current within the trade union movement however. It attached major importance to "direct action". To some extent it was influenced by American syndicalism, and to some extent also by Norwegian syndicalism, which by then had become relatively strong. The radical conscientious objection movement had its roots in syndicalism too.

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gen, 1988); Villars Lunn, *Tvesind* (Copenhagen, 1986); Carl Madsen, *Fortids møre mur* (Copenhagen, 1973); Peter P. Rhode, *Midt i en ismetid* (Copenhagen, 1970).

<sup>22</sup> Sven Bager, *Fra en brødløs tid* (Copenhagen, 1984); Rasmus Bonde-Larsen, *Røde Ras* (Copenhagen, 1983); C. Brønnum, *Men kloden bliver mere rød* (Hjørring, 1967); Karl Christensen, *Min spanske krig* (Copenhagen, 1986); Andreas Fritzner, "1917-19 - brydningsår i dansk arbejderbevægelse", *Tiden*, 6-7 (1959); Bjørn Meidell, *Niels og Alvilda* (Copenhagen, 1982); Henry Mogensen, *Ét er sikkert - alt forandres* (Århus, 1987); J. Sperling, *En hilsen fra Johs Sperling* (Copenhagen, 1971); Ejnar H. Tønnesen, *Brydningsår* (Copenhagen, 1930); Bruno and Regina Wechselmann, *Slår bro fra kyst til kyst* (Copenhagen, 1989).

<sup>23</sup> A bibliography on the DKP can be found in Jørgen Bloch-Poulsen and Morten Thing, "DKPs historie og den videnskabelige historieforskning", *Socialistisk politik*, 4 (1977), pp. 32-48.

<sup>24</sup> John and Sanne Hansen, *Bibliografi over Arbejderforlaget 1921-1941, Mondes Forlag 1928-1940 og Forlaget Tiden 1945-1978* (Middelfart, 1979); John Hansen, *En bibliografi over DKU og Danmarks Kommunistiske Parti 1919-1973* (Middelfart, 1975); John and Sanne Hansen, *40 års kommunistisk tidsskrift* (Middelfart, 1976).

<sup>25</sup> Erik Voss, *Registrator over partidokumenter, meddelelser fra Komintern & Udenlandske, signerede artikler i den kommunistiske presse 1919-1929* (Kolding, 1982); Erik Voss, *Registrant af skønlitterære bidrag til den kommunistiske presse 1919-1929* (Kolding, 1982); and Erik Voss, *DKPs kadrer 1919-1929* (Kolding, n.d.). Information on party leaders can be found in Morten Thing, "Ledelsen i Danmarks Kommunistiske Parti 1918-1941", *Arbejderhistorie*, 19 (October 1982), pp. 23-44. Supplementary details can be found in Kurt Jacobsen, "Yderligere oplysninger om sammensætningen af DKP's ledelse", *Arbejderhistorie*, 20 (April 1983).

In March 1918 an accumulation of conflicts caused a split in the party, and Marie Nielsen<sup>26</sup> left the Social Democratic Party and founded the *Socialistisk Arbejderparti*. Via the Socialist Commission in Stockholm, the new party was supported by the Bolsheviks, and Lenin had chosen it to participate in the establishment of the Comintern. As early as the spring of 1919, however, the party began to disintegrate. By then opposition elements in the Youth Association had decided to break with the Social Democratic Party, and on 9 November 1919 they formed the *Venstresocialistisk Parti*, basing the party on a Swedish model. The VSP participated in the Second Comintern congress and changed its name to the *Danmarks Kommunistiske Parti*.

In addition to the DKP, however, the syndicalist FS still existed. The left wing of the SAP had joined the FS, while the right wing had joined the new Communist party. In 1920 both the DKP and the FS published their own daily newspapers, which survived largely due to support from their respective members. Thanks to Andersen Nexø's relations with the Russians, it was possible in the spring of 1921 to get approval for the establishment of a federation of the two organizations and a merger of their two newspapers. The new construction was short lived however. A coup in January 1922 led to a split, and for the next eighteen months Denmark had two Communist parties, of which only one was recognized by the Comintern. This coup split the party along lines not altogether clear. The main division was between a left-wing reformist and a syndicalist-revolutionary wing. Members' attitudes towards the methods employed in the coup and its main protagonists divided the membership too, however, and to some extent blurred political differences. And although the parties did successfully merge in 1923, factional conflicts continued for the next twenty years.<sup>27</sup>

In 1929 the Comintern intervened in an "Open Letter" which removed the leadership. For the next eighteen months the party was administered from Moscow through an ExR. At the same time, the party chairman, Thøger Thøgersen, was exiled to Moscow, where he remained until 1936. Direct control of the party by Moscow came to an end when a new leadership was appointed; it consisted of three relatively young people who had all been trained at the Lenin School in Moscow: Aksel Larsen (1897-1972), Martin Nielsen (1900-62) and Arne Munch-Petersen. The older generation of leaders had effectively been replaced. A leadership had now been established that was characterized by a high degree of stability; it succeeded in holding on to power right up to the crisis of 1956-8.

In many ways conditions in Denmark during the 1920s favoured the development of Communism. The unemployment rate was relatively high, and especially during the years 1926 to 1929 social distress was widespread. There was also a certain degree of opposition within the trade union movement to Social Democratic leadership. The large General Workers' Union was not affiliated to the Confederation of Trade Unions during that period for instance. Since the DKP was paralysed by factional strife, however, it could take advantage of this general dissatisfaction only to a very limited extent.

The situation changed somewhat after 1929, when the Social Democratic Party joined the government. When, after a few years, Denmark was hit by recession, the number of unemployed reached a record high. Since Denmark was a raw material importer with a manufacturing industry mainly supplying the domestic market, the country initially benefited from declining prices. Not until 1931-2 were the full effects of recession felt. During these years the DKP managed to channel a great deal of this discontent, particularly by establishing a movement among the unemployed. Work was severely hampered, however, by the harsh anti-Social-Democratic rhetoric and the rigid organizational methods used during the ultra-left period.

It is an important feature of this period that the ideological polarization that developed over the years caused a number of students and young intellectuals to turn to Communism, which was then considered to be synonymous with "modernity". Modern architecture, modern painting, jazz, psychoanalysis, sexual reform, etc., were increasingly associated with the DKP. This is not to say that they were supported by the party; but it did not oppose them. As well as being a marginal working-class culture during the 1930s, Communism constituted an important factor in the *kulturkampf* of the time. These activities also came to form the basis on which future anti-Fascist opposition was conducted.

DKP candidates were returned to parliament for the first time in 1932; they secured 1.1% of the vote, and two seats in parliament. At the same general election the Social Democrats obtained 42.7% of the votes. At the 1939 general election the DKP won three seats and secured 2.4% of the votes. The corresponding percentage

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<sup>26</sup> Morten Thing, "Marie Nielsen. En politisk biografi", *Årbog for arbejderbevægelsens historie*, 5 (1975), pp. 5-58.

<sup>27</sup> For a detailed description of these conflicts, see Kurt Jacobsen, *Mellem København og Moskva* (Copenhagen, 1989).

for the Social Democrats was 42.9%. In other words, the 1930s was a period of continuous progress for the party. Part of this success could be attributed to the shift to a popular-front policy, which facilitated an accommodation of Communist policies to the particular conditions that prevailed in Denmark, with its small industrial enterprises, small-scale capital, and a large and strong lower-middle class. Of course, the role played by the Soviet Union had an impact. Despite the trials, etc., the Soviet Union was an image rather than a reality; an image of a land where workers had taken over. At the same time, the Soviet Union appeared as the leader of the anti-Fascist struggle at the time of the Spanish Civil War.

The non-aggression pact between the Soviet Union and Germany came as a shock to the DKP and turned progress into decline however. Similarly, the invasion of Finland by the Soviet Union in November 1939 made a strong impression on all the Nordic countries and cost the DKP dearly.

The DKP's days of glory began with the German attack on the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941. The party and its press had remained legal even after the occupation of Denmark on 9 April 1940. On the 22 June 1941 the party was declared illegal and more than 300 Danish Communists were interned. A bill was later enacted by the Danish parliament which made membership of the Communist party a criminal offence.

Unlike in Norway, the Social Democratic Party in Denmark co-operated with the Germans. A national coalition government was formed and until 29 August 1943 this government gave in to German demands in order to keep the administrative and the legal system in the hands of the Danish authorities. Not a single voice was raised in parliament against the banning of the Communists. The reasoning behind the Social Democratic policy of collaboration was probably the expectation that Germany would win the war, and a wish to keep Denmark out of it. Initially this policy probably had the support of the workers. Gradually, as the war went on, after Pearl Harbour and Stalingrad, this support was eroded however. During the same period, the DKP built up a powerful and efficient resistance movement, which together with other, non-Socialist, groups within the resistance movement became the informal government of the country from September 1943.<sup>28</sup> The Social Democrats did not change their policy, and they remained outside the resistance movement throughout the occupation. The DKP's efforts during the war made the party a serious rival in the issue of which party was to represent the working class during the early post-war years. Indeed, a few abortive attempts were even made to merge the DKP and the Social Democratic Party.<sup>29</sup>

### 3. Programme, Membership Figures and Front Organizations

At the second party congress in 1920 a programme was adopted that briefly clarified the position of the party *vis-à-vis* the working class and the Social Democrats, in addition to outlining its attitude to the issues of the day.<sup>30</sup> Only a few amendments had been made to this by the time the party was admitted to the Comintern. A more extensive programme existed after the split in the party.<sup>31</sup> From the mid-1920s onwards the party's political programme was identical to that of the Comintern itself. Thus in 1928 the *Programme of the Communist International* was published in Danish. The Central Committee (CC) adopted manifestos and appeals at regular intervals, but no general, overall programme. Such a programme only evolved during the war,<sup>32</sup> following the dissolution of the Comintern.

The party never had a particularly large membership. In 1922 it had 1,200 members, and less than 1,000 between 1923 and 1927. In the course of the 1930s membership rose; in 1936 it was about 2,500, and it may have peaked at 5,000 in 1938.

Little reliable information exists concerning the social composition of the party. The ECCI report to the

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<sup>28</sup> On the DKP's policy during the occupation see Ole Borgå, "DKP's enheds- og folkefrontspolitik 1940-45", *Historievidenskab*, 12 (1977), pp. 67-127.

<sup>29</sup> Mogens Nielsen, *Socialdemokratiet og enheden i arbejderbevægelsen 1943-45* (Copenhagen, 1978).

<sup>30</sup> *Danmarks venstresocialistiske Parti. Program, Love og regulativ for Arbejdet* (Copenhagen, 1920).

<sup>31</sup> *Program og Love for Danmarks kommunistiske Parti* [1923].

<sup>32</sup> *Vi kæmper for et sandt Demokrati* (Copenhagen, 1943); *Folkets Vilje Landets Lov...* (Copenhagen, 1944); *Kommunisternes Program* (Copenhagen, 1947); and *Det danske folks vej* (Copenhagen, 1951).

Sixth World Congress estimated that the proportion of workers among the DKP's members was 69%, and that of employees 13.2%. The latter figure probably includes clerks, so there can be no doubt that it was a working-class party. The proportion of intellectuals is estimated at 1.2%. This category was probably somewhat larger during the 1930s, but even so it is reasonable to conclude that in social terms the party was a working-class party throughout the period. There was, however, a different problem of composition, namely the conflict between industrially developed Copenhagen and the less developed provinces. The factional conflicts of the 1920s actually split the party into a Copenhagen faction and a provincial faction. This was the usual pattern in Danish trade unions too.

Originally, no special importance was attached to political work within trade unions. But from the mid-1920s it became an important field of activity, and the DKP built up a solid network of trade union support, nearly all at the local level. The DKP succeeded in winning the chairmanship or the majority of the places on the committee of many local trade unions. Only in the case of the National Union of Stokers was the chairmanship of a national union won by a DKP candidate though. The policy pursued by the DKP followed the guidelines laid down by the Comintern. This meant that in Denmark, too, a Revolutionary Trade Union Opposition (*Den revolutionære fagopposition*; RFO) was established. It was set up in May 1932 and was fairly active for a few years. By and large, the strategy of organizing strikes failed in Denmark, however, and the RFO never managed to organize the oppositional forces within the trade union movement.<sup>33</sup>

In the course of time, the DKP established and dissolved a number of such *ad hoc* or front organizations. A few of them merit description however. One was the association Friends of the Soviet Union (*Sovjetunionens Venner*, SUV),<sup>34</sup> which flourished in the 1930s. Through its periodical the SUV disseminated Soviet propaganda and arranged trips to the Soviet Union. The association probably had about 3-4,000 members at its peak. During the Popular Front period the DKP never managed to make anything other than fragile attempts at unity with the Social Democrats.<sup>35</sup> It was possible, however, to establish a broad organization of intellectuals, the Liberal Cultural Struggle (*Frisindet Kulturkamp*), which was very active between 1934 and 1939. Among its leaders were prominent Social Democratic intellectuals, although they participated without permission and in the face of protests from the Social Democratic Party's leadership. The organization published an influential paper, *Kulturkampen* (The Cultural Struggle), which had a circulation of about 2,000.

#### 4. The DKP and the Comintern

The relationship between the DKP and the Comintern always reflected the small size of the party and the unimportance of the country. In the early days the personal relationships between Andersen Nexø and Karl Radek, Mihail Kobetskij and Otto Wille Kuusinen played a major role. It was undoubtedly of considerable significance that Aksel Larsen, who became chairman in 1932, had for a time during his stay in the Soviet Union from 1924 to 1929 associated himself with the Zinoviev opposition. Leaders from the 1930s state that he was not well-liked by the Comintern leadership. At the same time, Richard Jensen had practically been appointed by the Comintern, and he claimed to have good relations with many highly-placed figures in the Comintern, a.o. with Dimitrov.

Early on, Swedish and Norwegian leaders represented the DKP in Moscow. Later, when a Scandinavian secretariat was established, the Finns in particular dealt with Danish matters. Thus Kullervo Manner was entrusted with finding a solution to the intricate Danish problem in 1922, and subsequently Kuusinen took over. In 1924 John Pepper (alias József Pogány) was briefly ExR for the DKP. At the congress in 1926 it was the German Wilhelm Pieck who represented Danish interests, and in the following year Richard Gyptner visited the DKP. In 1928 Richard Sorge, a secret agent, was stationed in Denmark in order to assist the party in

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<sup>33</sup> Jørgen Bloch-Poulsen and Morten Thing, "DKPs faglige politik 1930-35: Den revolutionære fagopposition", *Historievidenskab*, 9 (1976), pp. 7-93.

<sup>34</sup> On the DKP's relations with the Soviet Union see Morten Thing, "The Russian Revolution and the Danish Labour Movement", *Socialismo Storia*, 3 (1990).

<sup>35</sup> A survey of efforts made by the DKP to ensure unity during the 1930s can be found in Hans Erik Avlund Frandsen *et al.*, *Planøkonomi & Folkefront. Omkring Socialdemokratiet og DKP i mellemkrigstiden* (Copenhagen, 1979).

implementing a cell structure. During the inter-party struggles of 1930 Heinrich Wienecke was stationed in Denmark. During the 1930s it became usual for DKP leaders to go to Moscow to seek approval for their policies.

We have no detailed information concerning the flow of funds from the Comintern. For a period during the 1920s they went via the KPD, which paid an amount corresponding to the salary of one official. In the 1930s Richard Jensen, among others, was involved in the transfer of funds. It is also possible that Comintern emissaries, who visited Denmark fairly frequently up to 1932, might have brought money with them. Whatever the methods and intermediaries used, it does seem as if the party was subsidized throughout the period. We know nothing about the size of the amounts however.

The bolshevization of the DKP began by the late 1920s with the restructuring of the party into a cell-type organization. Because of the small size of the party, geographical cells were employed. Only in the largest enterprises were factory cells set up. As a result of this strategy, factions sympathetic to communism had been organized on a wide scale by the 1930s. In trade unions, student organizations, as well as in front organizations, these factions were an important factor in ensuring the considerable influence of the Communists.

Originally, the party was organized in a way similar to the Social Democratic Party, with local constituency-based parties. Similarly, the party apparatus followed the Social Democratic pattern. But as bolshevism gained ground, features associated with Russian democratic centralism were also adopted. Thus at party congresses it became normal practice to elect the Central Committee *en bloc*, which meant that in reality it was appointed by the existing Central Committee. Between meetings of the Central Committee the secretariat (which was briefly termed the *politburo*) acted as the party leadership. The secretariat had a number of central functions, including the administration of the trade union secretariat, the newspaper, and the publishing house. The country was divided into a number of districts. Below the districts were the party cells.

## 5. The Press

When the party was founded in 1919 a weekly newspaper *Arbejdet* (Labour) was also established. At the time of the parliamentary crisis around Easter 1920 it became a daily paper, and its name was subsequently changed to *Arbejderbladet* (the Worker's Paper) after the formation of the Federation in 1921. After the 1922 coup it continued as a weekly, and the other Communist party also established its own weekly under the name of *Klassekampen* (the Class Struggle) (1922-3). During the mid-1920s *Arbejderbladet* had a circulation of 6,000, falling to around 4,000. After 1930, however, its circulation began to climb once again. In 1934 it became a daily newspaper again, and by 1935 it had a circulation of about 7,000, reaching 12,000 by 1940. In 1935 a weekly paper was also established in Jutland, though it failed to have any major impact. In 1936 a weekly paper associated with the *Arbejderbladet* appeared and continued to do so until 1941 (it was initially called *Arbejderbladets Ugeblad* (the Worker's Paper Weekly) but in 1940 it was renamed *Ugens Ekko* (Weekly Echo)); it achieved a circulation of between 16,000 and 17,000. Between 1933 and 1937 the party published a theoretical journal, *Kommunistisk Tidsskrift* (Communist Journal), which was renamed *Tiden* (Time) in 1936.

Shortly after being banned, the DKP began publishing an underground paper, originally called *Politiske Maanedsbreve* (Political Monthly Letters) but soon renamed *Land og Folk* (Land and People). It became one of the most widely circulated underground papers in the country. In addition to this, the DKP published a large number of local papers.

## 6. Problems and Perspectives

Throughout its existence the DKP has had to co-exist with the Social Democratic Party. In this respect it probably does not differ from any other Communist party. But in Denmark (and in Scandinavia generally) throughout the period of the Comintern the Social Democratic Party was the unchallenged leader of the working class (with the exception of the period 1943-5). This leadership was reflected in voting figures, but also in the workers' active support of the party and the trade unions. At the same time, the Social Democrats were members of the coalition government from 1929-43. It was important to the DKP to understand this special relationship between the Social Democratic Party and the working class. Although all discussions were always based on the tactics advocated by the Comintern, the problem of how to perceive the Social Democrats and thus how to perceive themselves also shaped discussions of tactics. These discussions fluctuated between total rejection and total disillusionment. Total rejection could take the form of a concept of betrayal, according to which Social Democratic policies were seen as a betrayal of working-class interests, a betrayal, however, that the working class was incapable of seeing for what it was. It was the task of the Communists to "introduce correct policies

from without". This total rejection could also take the form of accusations of simple cheating, according to which the "right-wing Social Democratic clique of leaders" was consciously pulling the wool over workers' eyes. This pattern of thought was widespread during the ultra-left period, when the policy being attacked by the DKP was termed Social-Fascist. It was then considered the responsibility of the DKP to expose the policy for what it was and to tear the masses away from this fraudulent leadership. Total DKP disillusionment as a policy was short-lived, however; it lasted for only a brief period in the mid-1920s when some of the leaders seriously considered disbanding the party.

Only during the Popular Front period 1935-9 were there signs of a different approach to the Social Democratic Party. Possibly in the light of defeat in Germany, attempts at unity led to an appreciation of the fact that the dominant position of the Social Democrats was due to genuine satisfaction on the part of workers. Thus unity would have to be built on the concept of feasible common interests between Communists and Social Democrats in the short term and diverging interests in the long term.

The perception of the Social Democratic Party, of unity and of Fascism also formed the basis for the establishment of opposition groups outside the party. Thus from 1934 a Brandlerian opposition group existed, and from the following year a Trotskyite and a syndicalist group; they remained weak and virtually without influence however.<sup>36</sup> Only after the Moscow trials and in reaction to developments during the Spanish Civil War did opposition of any importance spread among students and intellectuals. Several of these groups continued as underground organizations and participated in the resistance.

The trials, the Spanish Civil War and the non-aggression pact also had significant, though varying, effects within the DKP. Strangely, the trials were accepted without much dissension - and led to only one case of expulsion. Only the opposition made an issue of the role played by Communists in the Civil War; in the party itself it was viewed as a heroic period. Around 500 Danes took part in the Civil War; 60% of them were Communists or Communist sympathizers.<sup>37</sup>

By contrast, the non-aggression pact came as a shock to the party, and led to many resignations. The preceding period of anti-Fascist activity made the pact particularly hard to accept. But undoubtedly the many resignations also reflected an escalation of dissatisfaction: members had meekly accepted the trials and the slaughtering of the opposition in Spain, but the non-aggression pact was simply the last straw. When the Russians invaded Finland on 30 November 1939, a witch-hunt was begun against the DKP, and Andersen Nexø's books were publicly burned.

Perhaps the most important success of the DKP during the Comintern period was the creation of a specifically Communist culture. It developed as a minority culture, with the special distinctive and protective features that characterize, for instance, religious sects. It lent to the DKP enormous psychological strength and considerable social perseverance. Party life became such an important part of the life of the individual that it tended to become the cohesive factor in that life, the very focus of one's identity.

A particular feature of Danish Communist culture was the importance of the alliance with the intellectuals. This alliance is vividly illustrated by the fact that four of the most important Danish authors of this century, Andersen Nexø, Otto Gelsted, Hans Kirk and Hans Scherfig, were Communists. But prominent architects, entertainers, doctors, painters, etc. were also Communists. This alliance led to a sort of fusion between working-class culture and intellectual culture, so that Communist culture differed from Social Democrat culture by, for instance, the high priority it gave to reading literature, to theatre, to art, etc. Similarly, a distinctive Communist culture of festivity evolved, marked by the many progressive artists who participated in the festivities or who decorated the venues.

Later, it was the involvement of the DKP with the resistance movement that much influenced the DKP in the post-war and post-Comintern years. But the basis on which the party had been able to take part in the resistance was laid in the 1920s and 1930s. The development of Communist culture and the priority given to combating Fascism were its two principal components.

Translated by Lena Flugler

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<sup>36</sup> A survey is included in Steen Bille Larsen, *Mod Strømmen. Den kommunistiske "højre"- og "venstre"-opposition i 30-ernes Danmark* (Copenhagen, 1986).

<sup>37</sup> Carsten Jørgensen, *Fra Bjelkes Allé til Barcelona. Danske frivillige i Spanien 1936-39* (Copenhagen, 1986), p. 105.