

more, to the history of Mozambique and southern Africa in general. It is one to which all future researchers in the field will be indebted.

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DITTMANN, WILHELM. *Erinnerungen*. Bearb. und eingel. von Jürgen Rojahn. [Quellen und Studien zur Sozialgeschichte, Band 14.] Campus Verlag, Frankfurt [etc.] 1995. xx, 286*, 1562 pp. (in 3 vols). DM 420.00; S.fr. 420.00; S 3276.00.

At last they are available in print, the memoirs of the German Social Democratic politician Wilhelm Dittmann (1874–1954).

Dittmann rose from journeyman joiner to trade union official, party journalist and SPD member of parliament; was a spokesman for those opposing party policy during the First World War and became a founding member of the Independent Social Democrats (USPD); was one of the six “people’s representatives” in the revolutionary government in November–December 1918; helped, after the USPD split in 1920, to pave the way for the unification of the rump USPD and the SPD. At special risk as one of the supposed “November criminals” when Hitler was appointed chancellor in January 1933, he left Germany within a month. He wrote his memoirs, relying on extensive source material he had been able to take with him, in exile in Switzerland between 1939–1942.

The manuscript, numbering several thousand pages, had an unusual fate. No publisher could be found in Switzerland, and in Germany in the early 1950s neither the SPD party executive nor the Commission for the History of Parliamentary Democracy and Political Parties was willing to publish Dittmann’s memoirs. As Ludwig Bergsträßer, a Commission member, put it, it was dangerous to destroy legends, and he would not lend himself to that (p. 280). The manuscript ended up in Amsterdam in 1953, where the International Institute for Social History initiated preparations for publication. When two scholars entrusted with editing the material threw in the towel after years of inactivity, Jürgen Rojahn took over the task in 1980. Now, more than 40 years after completion of the manuscript, this important work has finally been published, in a lavish edition.

Dittmann’s memoirs cover the period from his childhood and youth until the year 1933. Cutting across the division into 25 chapters, the material is arranged in three large complexes, each of which has a distinct format and style. In the first part (around a quarter of the text) Dittmann gives a very vivid description of his youth and his development from union official to senior member of the SPD by the First World War. The second part (around a third of the total), covering the war years, in particular the arguments within the SPD parliamentary group, has the feel of a documentation. And the third part, covering the revolutionary period of 1918/1919, the rise and fall of the USPD and Dittmann’s activities within the reunited SPD, is written in the form of report, and also includes lengthy extracts from speeches and minutes.

Wilhelm Dittmann was born in 1874 and grew up in eastern Holstein. His father was a cartwright, who had to give up his trade and take a job in a wagon factory. The young Dittmann, the second oldest of four siblings, com-

pleted primary school, served a joiner's apprenticeship, took to the road, worked for various people, was unemployed at various times, became active in the trade union and the SPD, and at the age of 25 became the Bremerhaven editor of the party paper. He then steadily climbed the party ranks. He worked as editor in Solingen (1902–1904), party secretary in Frankfurt (1904–1909) and editor-in-chief at the *Bergische Arbeiterstimme* in Solingen (1909–1912). In 1912, at the age of 38, he was elected to parliament for the constituency of Remscheid-Lennep-Mettmann. Such a career was not untypical for the generation of working-class SPD politicians who joined the party after the repeal of the Anti-Socialist Law and held senior party posts by the time the First World War broke out in 1914. But it should also be remembered that, as in Dittmann's case, such a rise required exceptional talent, intellect, energy and stamina.

What makes Dittmann's description of his youth and work in the pre-war SPD so fascinating is the vividness with which he recounts these stages of his life. He describes memorably what life was like in a small-town primary school in the 1870s and in a craft apprenticeship, how electioneering was conducted in an agricultural region like eastern Holstein, how mass demonstrations were organized in a large city like Frankfurt, how the authorities sought to obstruct the work of an SPD journalist around the turn of the century, what manifold task being a party secretary involved, and how he had to stand his ground in internal party debates. These sections of Dittmann's memoirs are eminently readable.

In the pre-war years Dittmann specialized in party organization and organizational reform issues. Within party circles he was already considered an authority in this field. (This was also the source of early tensions with Friedrich Ebert, three years his senior, who was responsible for organization within the party executive and was somewhat suspicious of Dittmann's activities.) In political terms Dittmann, a staunch opponent of the revisionists, was on the party's left wing. He sought to organize the "radicals" so that they could present as united and effective a front against the right as possible at party congresses. Even so, he viewed the SPD parliamentary group's approval of the war credits on 4 August 1914 as unavoidable, since he firmly believed that Germany had been forced into fighting a defensive war. But, like other colleagues, he soon began to have strong suspicions that the government's war aims went well beyond mere "defence". From the turn of the year 1914/1915 he was one of those who opposed the unconditional approval of further war credits backed by a majority of the parliamentary group, and he became a prominent spokesman for the minority. He took extensive notes during the parliamentary group meetings, which he would write up in great detail in order to report back to his constituency.

Dittmann's notes on the parliamentary group meetings between August 1914 and March 1916, that is until the minority formed a separate parliamentary group, the Social Democratic Working Group [Sozialdemokratische Arbeitsgemeinschaft], constitute the lion's share of the section covering the war years. They constitute source material of the first order, since Dittmann's notes are much more extensive, precise and detailed than the official minutes of SPD parliamentary group meetings (published in edited form in 1966) or the notes left by other group members, almost all of which have also been published by now. Dittmann's notes reveal the bitter, highly personal debates within the SPD

parliamentary group on the party's war policy, focusing on the war credits issue. The way in which the majority treated the minority comes out particularly clearly. It would be too much to claim that the SPD's wartime history will have to be rewritten on the basis of the revelations in Dittmann's notes, but there is no doubt that the assessments of the majority's stance made in previous studies will have to be reconsidered. What is particularly frightening is the harshness of majority members (e.g. David, Heine, Legien, see pp. 352 and 414), who betrayed a nationalist, even chauvinist, attitude that had certainly not been the norm within the SPD until then.

Dittmann did not take similarly detailed notes about the meetings of the Social Democratic Working Group and its successor, the USPD, founded in April 1917. For one thing, he was called up for military service for some time. And he was completely cut off from political life between early February and late October 1918. During the January strikes he was arrested while addressing strikers in the Treptower Park and convicted of attempted treason by a special court martial and sentenced to two months' imprisonment and five years' confinement in a fortress. He spent the two months in Berlin-Tegel, and was then transferred to a military institution in Groß-Strehlitz in Upper Silesia. So in the months leading up to Germany's great domestic crisis Dittmann was out of touch and insufficiently aware of domestic political developments. He was not able to resume his political activities until his release on 15 October 1918. Dittmann recounts in detail the events in Berlin and within the USPD parliamentary group on 9 and 10 November 1918. On the 9th he played an active role in the negotiations with the majority SPD leaders, and on the morning of the 10th, after Ledebour and Liebknecht had rejected a coalition government with the SPD, the USPD group appointed him one of its three members in the revolutionary Council of People's Representatives.

This brings us to the third section of Dittmann's memoirs. In the Council of People's Representatives Dittmann acted as a representative of the USPD's right wing. His account of the revolutionary months very clearly illustrates this position. He was actively involved in planning the transformation of society, a path along which the USPD wanted to push the hesitant majority SPD; he favoured elections to a national assembly, but only after the post-revolutionary structures had been "consolidated"; he called for sweeping changes in the military sphere, above all the removal of the imperial army leadership. The latter issue created the greatest tensions within the coalition government. Dittmann defends the political line pursued by the USPD people's representatives and sharply and persuasively criticizes the SPD representatives' stance. At the congress of Workers' and Soldiers' Councils in December 1918 he presented the report of the people's representatives, in which he argued for the USPD right wing's "middle" revolutionary line. But the USPD people's representatives failed not only because of SPD leadership's determination to suppress the revolutionary process, but also because of the intransigence of their own party's left wing. Dittmann slates the USPD's decision at the December congress not to send delegates to the Central Council as a grave political error and an "incredible stupidity" (p. 600, see also pp. 614, 628). In light of this he argues – surely rightly – that the three USPD people's representatives had no option but to resign from the revolutionary government in late December. This escalated the conflict between the majority SPD and the independents into a bitter "civil war" within the organized labour movement.

Let me list briefly the other major events Dittmann covers: the debates between the USPD's left and right wing and the struggles for the party leadership; the sharp increase in USPD membership, which created a major headache for Dittmann as the party's "organizer"; the phenomenal success at the 1920 election (when the party doubled its share of the vote and became the second largest parliamentary group with 81 seats, with Dittmann subsequently elected parliament's senior vice-president); and the deep split over whether the USPD should join the Moscow-sponsored Third International. Highlights of Dittmann's memoirs are the detailed accounts of the six-week trip to Moscow to negotiate the party's possible membership of the Third International and the party congress in Halle in October 1920 which sealed the USPD's split. Dittmann returned from the Soviet Union as a sworn enemy of the Bolsheviks, and wrote a much-discussed newspaper article about his disillusionment. The Halle congress was marked by verbal warfare on a scale probably unique in the annals of German party-political history. From this time Dittmann's position was clear, and he maintained it consistently over the following years: staunch opposition to the Moscow-loyal German communists combined with an equally staunch opposition to everything he categorized as "Prussian militarism".

As mentioned, Dittmann, one of the rump USPD's leaders after Halle and a co-chair from January-September 1922, took the initiative that paved the way for a unification between the rump USPD and the SPD. As one of the six full-time party secretaries in the united SPD, he no longer operated in the political limelight, but he made some memorable parliamentary speeches (as in the Fechenbach case) and was an influential member of the committee of inquiry into the causes of Germany's collapse in 1918. In his submission on the "navy judicial murders" in 1917 and the "admirals' rebellion" in 1918, based on a thorough study of the sources, he criticized the actions of the senior naval officers sharply and persuasively and proved incontestably that the heads of the high-seas fleet were planning a naval offensive in contravention of government policy in October 1918.

In his capacity as a member of the SPD executive Dittmann was asked to mediate in the internal wrangles in Saxony in 1923 and 1925. In doing so he sought to counter the local party's "super-radicalism" (p. 871). The thrust of his intervention deserves special attention, for most studies thus far have concluded that the unification of the USPD and SPD resulted in a sharp lurch to the left. The situation was quite different in Saxony. The "super-radicals" were largely from the majority SPD, while Richard Lipinski (leader of the Saxon USPD until 1922), for instance, tried to steer a more moderate course. Something similar happened at national level. In addition to Dittmann, other former USPD leaders such as Breitscheid and Hilferding, to name but two, advocated a rational SPD policy. So the view that the unification of the SPD and USPD severely restricted the SPD's room for manoeuvre should be revised in the light of Dittmann's revelations.

I hope the above shows that these brilliantly written memoirs by Wilhelm Dittmann are rich in content and source material.

Among the various comments that can be made regarding the presentation of the work, I will mention only two. At nearly 300 pages the introduction seems overlong. Apart from providing undoubtedly important information on the origins of the memoirs and reflections on their value as source material, it

also contains a misplaced historical perspective of the November revolution and more than 200 pages of commentary on Dittmann's writings. The notes, which fill nearly the whole third volume, are arguably too detailed in many instances. Specifically, the notes to Dittmann's reports of the debates in the SPD parliamentary group from 1914–1916 are almost as long as the original text, not least because they include lengthy extracts from minutes and notes already published elsewhere. But there is no doubt that the editor, Jürgen Rojahn, has approached his task with great care and expertise. In particular, the exemplary index, the list of Dittmann's publications and the list of periodicals set high editing standards.

However, the thoroughness of the edition and the unusual breadth of the introduction and background material also present a drawback. Covering three volumes and totalling around 1,800 pages, Dittmann's memoirs are on sale at the prohibitive price of DM 420, which is likely to keep this important work beyond the reach of many. But it deserves a large readership, since Dittmann's is a major voice, which should be heard, not least because it represents the first first-hand exposition of the standpoint of the USPD's right wing. Many senior majority SPD members were able to justify the party's policies during the war and the revolutionary period in memoirs published during the Weimar period (e.g. Noske, Scheidemann, H. Müller) or soon after 1945 (e.g. Severing, Löbe, Keil, O. Braun, and David's wartime diaries were published in 1966). But the voices of the former USPD leaders remained unheard. In some cases this was unavoidable: Haase was murdered in the autumn of 1919, Breitscheid and Hilferding perished during the Nazi period, and Kautsky, Ledebour and Däumig did not write any memoirs. This is one reason why Dittmann's memoirs are so significant. And in light of this it is to be hoped that the publication of this comprehensive edition will be followed as soon as possible by a smaller edition at a more affordable price. This could comprise Dittmann's memoirs, which are still readable without extensive annotation, and a minimal commentary.

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DAS, SURANJAN. *Communal Riots in Bengal 1905–1947.* [Oxford University South Asian Studies Series.] Oxford University Press, Delhi [etc.] 1993. xvi, 311 pp. Maps. £7.95.

When Suranjan Das's book first appeared in 1991, it was widely reviewed and acclaimed as a piece of erudite and in-depth research. Its reappearance in paperback certainly indicates the value of this meticulous study on communal riots in Bengal between the two partitions of the province in 1905 and 1947. In the history of communalism, which in the context of the Indian subcontinent means the Hindu-Muslim divide, Bengal occupies an important position. Not only did this province have a large concentration of Muslims, it also witnessed the first articulation of a political consciousness among these people. It is no wonder that in 1906 the Indian Muslim League was born in Dacca in the eastern part of the province, where an enthusiastic Muslim leadership had already distanced itself from the Hindu-dominated National Congress and was fighting for a share of political power – a process which ended in the partition of the