

**Social Democracy
& State Foundation**

Estonia

Latvia

Lithuania



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Foreword

Social Democracy and the Founding of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania

Nineteen eighteen was a pivotal year in the history of the Baltic states. Estonia and Latvia achieved statehood and independence for the first time and Lithuania regained them after a long interruption. The proclamation and founding of the three republics occurred at the end of the First World War when the map of Europe was being reshaped and democratisation was surging across the board. The large multi-ethnic states, such as the Habsburg Monarchy, the Russian Tsardom and the Ottoman Empire collapsed and numerous states in northern, central and eastern Europe achieved (nation) statehood for the first time or regained it (after a long time). The social democratic parties were among the main driving forces of this broad-based Europe-wide democratisation of state and society, as well as of state formation. This applies in particular to the Baltic states.

Even though in many cases this newly acquired sovereignty was very short-lived or for Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania lasted only until the early 1940s, when the map of Europe was redrawn in the wake of the Hitler-Stalin Pact and the Second World War the state foundations of 1918 were key events in terms of these countries' historical and contemporary identities. Furthermore, they served as important points of reference in the creation of a new European order of states after the Cold War had ended. In keeping with this, large-scale centenary celebrations were planned to mark the founding of all three Baltic states in 1918.

The present publication is the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung's contribution to this special celebration. With the three country studies we would like to shed light on the contribution of the social democratic parties to the emergence and formation processes of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. We would like to inquire into the role and significance of the social democratic parties in the formation of these states. What social democratic values and ideas found their way into the constitutional systems of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania? How successful were social democrats in elections and, as the case may be, in government? What kinds of exchange took place with the social democratic parties of other countries? And finally, is there anything from that time that still remains today?

In order to provide some orientation in a wider international historical and geographical context brief summaries of other country studies may be found at the end of the publication concerning states also founded at that time. The states examined range from Iceland to Georgia and include, besides the Baltic states, Finland, Ukraine, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, Austria and Belarus. In this way we would like to provide a broad panorama of the multifarious ways, detours and sometimes false paths taken in the process of state formation 100 years ago, as well as the contribution of social democracy.¹ Comparing the three Baltic states reveals quite a few similarities but also many differences. We very much hope that with these three country studies we can restore to historical memory much that had been forgotten, thus making it possible to carry out a more comprehensive assessment of that time, not least as regards its importance for the present.

Tobias Mörschel

Director, FES Baltic States

1. All 14 country studies are being published in book form in 2019: Tobias Mörschel (ed.): *Social Democracy and State Foundation. The emergence of a new European state landscape after the First World War*, Bonn 2019.

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Tõnu Ints studied history at the University of Tartu 1987–1990. Since 2000 Tõnu Ints has been head of the Johannes Mihkelson Centre in Tartu. In 1990 Tõnu Ints was one of the founders of the Social Democratic Party of Estonia (SDE) and is still a member of the party executive. In 2005–2017 he was a member and chair of the Social Democratic group in Tartu city council. Tõnu Ints has also researched and published on the history of the SDE.

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ESTONIA



Session of the Estonian Constituent Assembly in 1919. Estonia. The speaker is the chairman of Estonian Constituent Assembly, August Rei. Photo: Rahvusarhiiv.



The editorial board of Teataja and the family of Mihkel Martna in 1903. Estonia's left-wing thinkers at this time could still all be fitted into one picture. Seated: first on the left Ants Laikmaa and on the right the last editor of the newspaper, Konstantin Päts. At the back, Hans Pöögelmann (with full beard) and Eduard Vilde (with cigarette) are standing next to each other, next to him, Johannes Voldemar Veski and Mihkel Martna are leaning against the sofa. Photo: Rahvusarhiiv.

1 | SOCIAL DEMOCRACY PRIOR TO INDEPENDENCE



1.1 Beginnings of the Social Democratic Movement

Estonia has a complex and colourful history. After the German-Danish expansion in the thirteenth century, Estonia was also ruled by Sweden and Poland. Starting in 1710, Estonia and most of modern-day Latvia were part of the Russian Empire. The latter half of the nineteenth century saw a national and cultural awakening, although Estonia remained predominantly a peasant society.

Social democratic ideas reached Estonia in the late nineteenth century from Russia and Germany. The best known disseminator of these ideas was Mihkel Martna, originally a painter from Tartu. Martna's views proceeded mainly from German social democratic models. Different kinds of organisation were used to spread the ideas, many at first glance having no links with politics; in Tartu, for example, one such association was the Taara bicycling society. In Tallinn, activity revolved around the recently founded newspaper Teataja. Clearly, party-like organisations also emerged, mainly part of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP). In 1903, a schism developed in the leadership of the RSDLP, resulting in two wings, the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks, leading to ideological strife and organisational division.

In Estonia, the rift in the party was not particularly significant. The 1905 split into federalists and centrists was more important. Federalists envisioned the RSDLP as a federation of national parties, with Russia becoming a federal republic in future, with Estonia as one of its constituent states. The centralists considered the correct course to be to remain part of the RSDLP and preservation of the centralised party structure. The best known centralists were Aleksander Kesküla, Mihkel Martna, Hans Pöögelmann, Karl Ast and August Rei. The same year, federalists also formed, besides the RSDLP organisations, the Estonian Social Democratic Workers Unity (ESDWU), which raised the national question and brought up the issue of the special social and economic character of the Baltic states. The leading figures in this camp were the writer Eduard Vilde, Peeter Speek and Gottlieb Ast.

MIHKEL MARTNA (1860–1934)



Photo: Kirjandusmuuseum

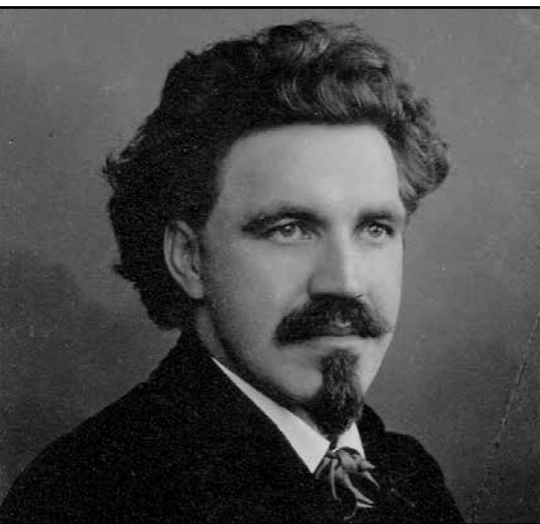
Mihkel Martna, often called the father of Estonian social democracy, was born in Lääne county in 1860. In 1878 he moved to Tallinn and learned to paint under the German master Cayé. While in Tallinn he also perfected his knowledge of the German language, allowing him to read German social democratic literature, a topic of great interest to him. Martna was one of the first Estonians to circulate social democratic ideas. From the end of the 1890s Martna lived in Tartu, where he organised tea and discussion evenings at his town house, mingling at first more with Latvian school and university students, including with Pauls Kalniņš, the future leader of the Latvian social democrats. His so-called 'Red Lounge' also grew in popularity among Estonian students.

In 1903 he joined the editorial board of the newspaper *Teataja* and purchased the printing house that published the paper. Martna was active during the events of 1905 and spent a month in Toompea prison for his role. After martial law was declared on 10 December 1905, Martna fled Estonia and spent the next 12 years in exile living in Germany, France, Switzerland, Finland and Austria. While living in Berlin, he forged closer ties with several well-known European socialists, including Karl Kautsky, who helped him publish around 10 articles in the *Die Neue Zeit* magazine. Martna returned to Estonia after the 1917 February Revolution. He was involved in the founding of the Estonian Social Democratic Workers' Party (ESDWP), became one of its leaders and began publishing the newspaper *Sotsiaaldemokraat*. He was a member of the Provincial Assembly and a delegate of the Tallinn City Council. Local Bolsheviks and communists labelled him a socio-fascist and peddler for the bourgeoisie. But it was Martna who, from 1917 to 1919, guided many supporters of socialist ideas to the social democratic camp, which backed Estonian self-rule and parliamentary democracy.

In 1918 he was active in Copenhagen, and in 1919 he participated in the Second International's meetings, achieving recognition of Estonia's independence there. During the same year, he was Estonia's first representative in Germany, aiding in the release of Estonian prisoners of war and negotiating for the return of assets taken from Estonia. He was a member of the Constituent Assembly and elected to the Riigikogu on all five occasions. He was not just a party politician, but also an ideologue preoccupied with society's problems. He remained a left-wing idealist until his death. The great volume of political literature he either wrote or translated into Estonian is without equal. Mihkel Martna died in Tallinn on 23 May 1934. The press of the day described Martna's passing as the end of a political era in Estonia.

The first to start speaking openly about national-territorial autonomy for Estonia was Peeter Speek, in the newspaper *Uudised* (essentially the voice of the ESDWU): he expressed support for the federalisation of Russia and the granting of autonomous republic status to Estonia. RSDLP members accused the ESDWU of abandoning proletarian internationalism and harbouring extreme nationalist views. At the same time, it should be noted that there were no insurmountable differences between the two camps and members were also known to 'cross the aisle' on various positions. During the 1905 revolution, the ESDWU enjoyed broad support and brought thousands of participants to the social democratic popular movement. Central ideas in the ESDWU's published programme were Estonian autonomy, schooling, expropriation and distribution to farmers of manorial land, and protection of workers' rights.

Ideologically, the events of 1905 were a watershed in the development of Estonian society. They left an imprint on the Estonian self-conception that continues to the present. The greatest strain was put on relations between Baltic Germans and Estonians, and grievances were aired over historical injustices. The revolutionary demands



Peeter Speek (1873–1968) was the leader of the Estonian Social Democratic Workers' Union. After the events of 1905, he went to the USA, working there as an economist and at the Library of Congress. Photo: Rahvusarhiiv.

centred on the question of land. The Baltic Germans had retained their feudal holdings, and over half of the country's agricultural land was controlled by their manors and the church. This led to a peasant revolt and burning of manors in late 1905 in northern Estonia, followed by retributions in which German manorial overlords played a key role. The punitive actions were conducted without due process: Estonian peasants were executed by firing squad and flogged. Estonians developed anti-German attitudes in the first half of the twentieth century.

The year 1905 represented a breakthrough in Estonian literature and art. The literary movement Noor-Eesti (Young Estonia) was closely connected with the social democratic cause. Two of its leading members, Friedebert Tuglas and Gustav Suits, took part in the activities of political parties. The activities of the members of Young Estonia played a key role in establishing a modern, European Estonian culture and national ideology.

1.2 Beginning of the Trade Union Movement

The revolutionary events also opened the way to the trade union movement. Estonia's first trade unions were in essence semi-legal organisations. Their legitimacy stemmed from a proclamation of 17 October 1905 under which the Russian Tsar granted, besides other liberties, freedom of association. The most active period for joining trade unions was 1907. For instance, in October that year there were 2,224 members in six trade unions in Tallinn, including 1,180 metal workers and 463 woodworkers. In subsequent years, however, membership declined substantially. The sudden decrease in members, seen throughout Russia at that time, was the result of a harsh crackdown and a general cooling of fervour: workers were deprived of assistance in bettering their situation and feared incurring their employers' disfavour.



Later to become a reputed writer, Friedebert Tuglas (Mihkelson) (1886–1971) pictured wearing a typical Russian high school student's uniform. In 1905, he was a well-known speaker at many meetings. Photo: Kirjandusmuuseum.

1.3 Social Democrats and Emigration

During the reactionary period that followed the 1905 revolution, the Russian imperial government's fight against separatism and its campaign to ensure the unity of the empire became more determined than ever before. Left-wing parties were dealt a harsh blow by repressions, and in the twilight of Tsarist rule, they operated illegally. The ESDWU's activities in Estonia were essentially shut down. Many Estonian social democrats were forced to emigrate to Western Europe. While in exile, they developed close ties with Social Democrats in Germany and other countries, thanks to which they were able to familiarise themselves with European social democratic ideas and policy-making. For example, in September 1915, Mihkel Martna took part in a European socialists' conference held in Zimmerwald, Switzerland, where most of the 38 delegates, including Martna, denounced support for the war but stopped short of endorsing Lenin's position in favour of turning the war into a civil war against the bourgeoisie. These international contacts were of decisive importance for the future, when the Estonian state and the Social Democratic Party each sought recognition from the West.



Demonstration of Estonian organisations in St Petersburg on 26 March 1917. Russia's Provisional Government was required to establish a single autonomous province of Estonia. This was the beginning of the long journey towards Estonian independence. Photo: Virumaa Muuseumid SA.

2 | THE ROAD TO INDEPENDENCE



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2.1 Founding of Social Democratic Parties in 1917

The February 1917 Revolution in Russia activated broad swathes of society, engaging them in political discussions, and brought the question of political self-determination for Estonians back onto the agenda. Interest in political ideas grew, laying a suitable basis for the formation of numerous parties. It should be noted that all of the parties founded in 1917 in Estonia – both on the left (other than the Bolsheviks) and the right – were in favour of a federal Russia in which Estonia would have autonomy. Estonia's Bolsheviks remained part of the All Russian RSDLP, strengthened their positions in unions and controlled a major part of the organised labour movement in Estonia. In 1917, three parties with a social democratic orientation developed in Estonia: the Estonian Social Democratic Workers' Party, the Labour Party and the Socialist Revolutionary Party.

2.2 The Estonian Social Democratic Workers' Party

On 31 May 1917, the Estonian Mensheviks reinstated the Estonian Social Democratic Association (ESDA) in somewhat altered form. The revival of activity did not go smoothly, however. There were differences of opinion regarding whether the Estonian faction within the RSDLP should be renamed or whether the organisation should strike out on its own. In addition, there were different views on ideological orientation, whether the model should be the positions of the Russian or the German Social Democrats. August Rei, Otto Sternbeck, Villem Maasik, Aleksander Hellat, Mihkel Martna, Nikolai Köstner, Aleksander Oinas, Hans Martna and Karl Ast proved to be the most active politicians in the party. At first, the ESDA elected not to cut ties with the Menshevik wing of the RSDLP but it did part company with the Bolsheviks. At the congress of 8–10 October, a new name was adopted, the Estonian Social Democratic Workers' Party (ESDWP). The party's programmatic basis was the Russian Menshevik programme adopted in 1903, with some modifications and additions. The Congress passed a decision on Estonian autonomy and called for the right of self-determination of peoples. Power sharing between federal states and central government was envisioned as follows: the legislative

AUGUST REI (1886–1963)



Photo: Kirjandusmuuseum

August Rei was born in the rural municipality of Kabala, Viljandi in 1886 into a schoolteacher's family. He began his secondary school education in Tartu, where he enlisted in the social democratic movement. For that reason, he was forced to leave secondary school. He continued his studies in Novgorod and in 1904 he continued on to study law at the St Petersburg Imperial University. Rei's studies were interrupted by the 1905 revolution and he returned to Estonia. He actively participated in revolutionary activities in Tallinn and was arrested and jailed for five months. In 1906 and 1907 he was the editor of the newspaper *Social Democrat* and after the journal fell into the hands of the Bolsheviks, he moved on to publishing a new daily, the *Punane Lipp* (Red Flag). Between 1907 and 1911 he refocused on his studies in St Petersburg, but also found time for politics and social activities. From 1908 to 1910, he participated in the publication of a collection of works titled *Ääsi Tules*, which would have a deep impact on Estonian political thought.

Rei became an artillery officer with the outbreak of the First World War. After the February Revolution of 1917, Rei moved to Tallinn and participated in setting up Estonian national military units. He was the assistant chairman of the Supreme Committee of Estonian Military Personnel. From 1917 onwards, he was on the board of the Estonian Social Democratic Workers' Party (ESDWP), which he headed the board most of the time.

August Rei was named Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Labour and Social Welfare of the Provincial Government in the fall of 1918. His diplomatic career began in parallel. In 1918 the Provincial Government dispatched him to Finland to gather support for Estonia in the War of Independence, which had just begun. Although his mission was a success, he was forced to resign his ministerial position after publishing an article denouncing the Finnish Civil War. Rei also visited Sweden to request support from the Swedish Social Democratic Party. The ESDWP won 41 seats out of 120 in the Estonian Constituent Assembly and Rei was elected chair of the party. He would become into the Social Democratic Party's main leader and ideologist. He was elected to all five Riigikogus, participating mainly in the activities of the general, foreign and financial committees. In 1928, Rei became Estonia's first (and last) social democrat state elder (head of state). Between 1930 and 1934 he was the head of Tallinn City Council and from 1932 to 1933, the foreign minister. Rei initially supported the 1934 coup d'état, believing it would prevent the Vaps veterans' movement from seizing power. But he took the liquidation of his party hard. After the party was shut down, Rei returned to diplomatic work: in 1936 he was named deputy foreign affairs minister and a year later as Estonia's ambassador in Moscow. Rei managed to escape the occupation of Estonia in 1940, fleeing to Sweden where he would continue fighting for Estonia's freedom. In the 1944 Otto Tief government, Rei was named foreign minister, although he remained in exile. After the death of Jüri Uluots in 1945, he became the prime minister in capacity of the president. He would hold the position until his death in 1963.

and executive branches would be vested in the federal states, while the central authority would be responsible for national defence, foreign policy, labour protection and public transport. The ESDWP embarked on securing democracy in Russia and they were prepared to work with the 'progressive' part of the bourgeoisie to this end. The party newspaper *Sotsiaaldemokraat* emphasised in September 1917 that 'socialists must not alienate the bourgeoisie in the name of saving democracy'. Mihkel Martna noted that 'the proletariat must support the bourgeoisie in matters of independence, in particular if it needed to be driven through in government circles, because the bourgeois layers of society are standing on a democratic-revolutionary platform when it comes to the autonomy question'. There was a conviction that the time was not ripe for revolution in Russia, and thus democracy had to be defended against attacks that could potentially come from the monarchists or Bolsheviks. The latter were heavily criticised by the party, branded leftist extremists and counter-revolutionaries who were against federalisation and the establishment of an Estonian state. It could be said that the ESDWP were typical reformist social democrats.

2.3 The Estonian Labour Party

In April 1917, the Estonian Radical Socialist Party was founded. Its members and supporters were democratic radicals who sympathised with a socialist vision of society and 'socialists who interacted with democratic radicals to carry out their basic programme'. At the party's founding congress, support was expressed for people engaged in both intellectual and physical work and value was conferred on labour. Ideologically, the party's views were a fusion of ideas from Russian Trudoviks, Russian National Socialists, German revolutionists and the French radical socialists, adapted to Estonian conditions. As its immediate goal, the party committed itself to fighting for political freedoms and democratic rule, and socialism was set as a distant ultimate ideal. At the congress held from 30 September to 2 October 1917, the party's name was changed to the Estonian Labour Party, which was intended to better convey the nature of the organisation. The best known leaders were Jüri Vilms, Otto Strandman and Ants Piip. The name change did not result in any serious policy changes; only agrarian issues

received more attention, especially the expropriation of all manorial lands (for the benefit of the Estonian state), with only farmland to remain untouched, although the federal state would have a pre-emptive right to purchase farmland. As regards other policies, one goal was to establish an Estonian democratic republic that would be part of the Russian federal republic. The Estonian Parliament was envisioned as having two chambers, with the upper house including representatives of other republics. The official language of administration would have been Estonian, with the caveat that all local peoples would have an opportunity to conduct official business in their respective native languages as well. A majority of the party congress supported the founding of a neutral Estonian state, although others also backed, variously, a Finnish-Estonian union, a Nordic union and a Baltic union. The Labour Party members criticised the Bolsheviks and Kadets (Constitutional Democratic Party encompassing constitutional monarchists and right-wing republicans) for their opposition to a federal Russia. The Bolsheviks were considered to be a regressive 'red' force and their inclination towards a violent coup d'état was considered particularly dangerous. The party publication *Uus Päevaleht* wrote that 'regardless of who will hold the majority in the Estonian Constituent Assembly, it will be the outcome of democratic elections and the will of the people, which gives the Assembly complete power and independence to organise the destiny of the Estonian land and people'.

2.4 The Estonian Socialist Revolutionary Party

In September 1917, Tartu hosted the congress of the Estonian departments of the Russian Socialists-Revolutionaries party (the SRs) and a separate organisation, the Estonian Socialist Revolutionary Party (ESRP), was established there. The leading figures of this party would include Hans Kruus, later a renowned historian and pioneer of the Estonian nationalist view of history, and the writers Jaan Kärner and Gustav Suits. The main slogan of the Socialists-Revolutionaries was 'Land and Freedom!' In essence, this meant supplanting Tsarist rule with a democratic republic and the distribution of manorial lands to the peasantry. The participants in the founding congress expressed unanimity that Russia must become a federal republic and Estonia one of its federal

states. Cultural autonomy was sought for Estonians throughout Russia. This radical programme was introduced by Hans Kruus at the second congress of the ESRP and later in the newspaper *Töö Lipp*: it held the view that land controlled by the Ritter, private manors, churches and major landowners had to be expropriated, commercial circulation separated, the right of selling, purchasing, mortgaging and renting land abolished, and land made available to everyone. The Estonian SRs focused mainly on issues related to the peasantry. No compensation was to be made for expropriated land (except in the case of smallholders); Kruus' rationale for this was that it would be fair recompense for historical injustices, conquest and oppression. He said the large land owners and manor lords had received their fair due in the form of rental payments on leased farms, several times over.

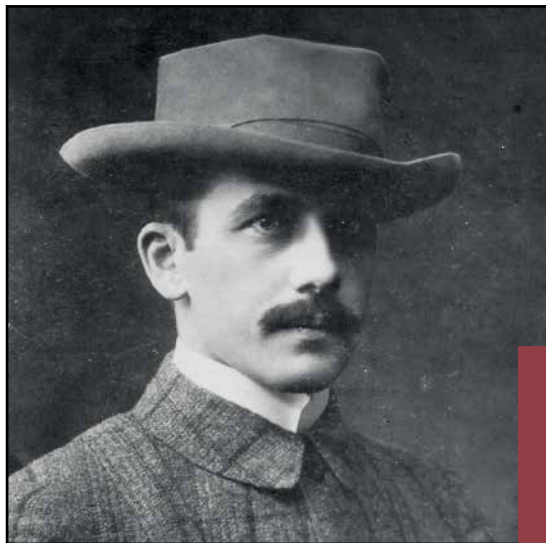
2.5 Balance of Power in the Provincial Assembly

On the road to Estonian autonomy, the first victory was the decision of the Russian Provincial Government regarding the formation of a single autonomous Estonian governorate. The Provincial Assembly (also known as the Land Diet and by other names) – formed through indirect elections held on many levels – became the governorate's self-governing body. Starting from September 1917, the Provincial Assembly had 62 deputies. Five of them were held by the Bolsheviks, and the rest were divided more or less evenly between the bourgeois and socialist blocs. The ESRP had eight seats, the Mensheviks had nine and the Labour Party had 11 seats. The election of most of the Provincial Assembly deputies took place in May 1917, and by the autumn, popular sentiment had changed greatly. The political preferences of the era are best illustrated by the Constituent Assembly election results (elections were held in November and December of the same year). At that time, the Bolsheviks were at peak influence in Estonia, where their level of support (40.4 per cent) was even higher than the average in Russia. The Estonian SRs received 5.8 per cent, the Russian SRs 1.1 per cent, the Mensheviks 3 per cent and the Labour Party 21 per cent of the votes and the remainder was distributed between bourgeois parties.

2.6 From Autonomy to Independence

As in the case of other Eastern European countries and Finland, the geopolitical status quo that had taken shape in the First World War played a determining role in Estonian independence. Russia was domestically exhausted by the war, which precipitated the 1917 February Revolution and the collapse of the government. Although the Russian Provisional Government pledged the allies that it would continue participating in the war, Russia was no longer an equal adversary for Germany. In early September, the Germans captured Riga

and in October the western Estonian islands, which were an important part of the Peter the Great Naval Fortress, which protected the capital St Petersburg (Petrograd). The fate of Estonia and the Baltics, as well as Finland had become an international question. These events had a strong influence on sentiment in Estonia's political circles and future prospects. Still no Estonian party proposed the idea, either before or immediately after the October Revolution in St Petersburg and Tallinn, to break away from Russia and establish independent statehood. True, the question of Estonia's future status had been discussed for the first time at a closed session of the Provincial Assembly in August at the behest of Jaan Tõnisson, but no clear political goals were set. Gustav Suits, a member of the central committee of the ESRP, was the first Estonian politician who started propagating the idea of Estonian independence more widely, and doing so in quite an unusual way. He estimated that the German occupation of Estonia would last two months and saw two possibilities in the future: a German revolution or a Finnish-Estonian Union. In October 1917, speaking before the Helsinki Social Democratic



Gustav Suits (1883–1956), poet, member of Noor Eesti (Young Estonia), later a literary scholar, author of *Töövabariik* (Republic of Work). In 1945 he was in exile in Sweden. Established the Estonian Social Democratic Party in Exile. Photo: Kirjandusmuuseum.

Student Association, he argued that union with Finland was preferable to federation with Russia because the countries divided naturally by the Gulf of Finland should not intervene in each other's legislative or legal procedures and thus it would be better to establish a two-member national association, not a federal state. No Estonian party supported Suits' idea for the time being.

Although the Military Revolutionary Committee and the Executive Committee of the Council of Working People and Military of Estonia became the central power centres after the October Revolution, and they repressed their political adversaries right from the beginning, the opposition still had a number of channels for operating legally. On 28 November 1917, the Provincial Assembly of the Estonian Governorate declared itself the supreme power in Estonia, but the question of statehood remained open; it was to be decided by the Constituent Assembly elected in a plebiscite. The Bolsheviks did not support the decision and declared the Provincial Assembly disbanded. Nevertheless, the Provisional Council's council of elders and the Provincial Assembly continued activities underground.

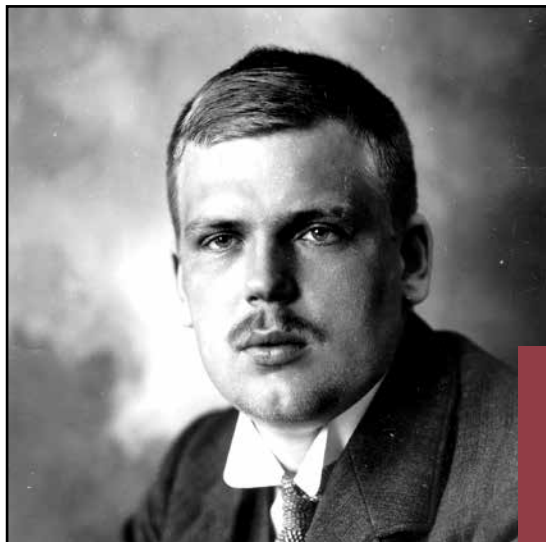
2.7 The SRs' Idea for an Estonian Labour Republic

In December 1917, the stance on Estonian independence changed – on one hand, Bolshevik power in Russia made it questionable whether an Estonian federal state could be created within a Russian federation, and second, the threat of German occupation became more real. Already on 10 December 1917, the Estonian Labour Party at its conference declared Estonian independence to be its goal. The SRs' third congress on 10–11 December continued to back an Estonian state within a federal Russia. In late December, the SRs' position changed, at the urging of Suits and Kruus, and the new goal was an 'Estonian Labour Republic', which was an ideological compromise with the Bolsheviks but which would have still meant, in essence, an independent democratic Estonia. In their memorandum, the SRs turned to the Soviet Russian government and the Estonian Executive Committee of Soviets and sought that Estonia be declared an independent 'Labour Republic'. They also lobbied Stalin, at that time the Soviet gov-

ernment's Commissar of Nationalities, with the proposal in St Petersburg. Both the Estonian and the Petrograd Bolsheviks rejected the proposal, calling it ludicrous. Although power-sharing with the Bolsheviks was planned in the initial Labour Republic phase (until the Constituent Assembly convened on 15 February 1918), had the plan gone into effect, it would have still meant the establishment of a democratic Republic of Estonia, and the end of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

2.8 The Decision on Independence

On 31 December 1917, a meeting took place between the leaders of the Provincial Assembly, the Council of Elders, the Provincial Government and party representatives (the Bolsheviks excluded). Bearing in mind the approaching German forces, the participants unanimously voiced the need to declare Estonia's independence post-haste. The Estonian Social Democratic Workers' Party led by Mihkel Martna dropped their sceptical stance on independence, declaring their own support for the idea a few days later. The Bolsheviks, however, were against any form of independent Estonia and after severing cooperation with the SRs and the Bolsheviks, there was a clear rift between the Bolsheviks and the other parties. Euphoric over the successful October Revolution, the top Bolsheviks in Estonia, led by Viktor Kingissepp, Jaan Anvelt and Hans Pöögelmann, had begun entertaining hopes of a possible world revolution and were in many ways more radical than their Russian comrades. Estonian independence did not fit into their worldview in any shape or form. Although the Bolsheviks had dis-



Jüri Vilms (1889–1918) lawyer, leader of the Estonian Labour Party, one of the most passionate advocates of the idea of Estonian independence. Member of the Salvation Committee, Court Minister and Deputy Prime Minister of the Estonian Provisional Government. He was shot in Finland in obscure circumstances when he was on his way to the Estonian external delegation in Sweden with his attendants. Photo: Kirjandusmuuseum.

banded the Provincial Assembly, they supported going ahead with the elections to the Estonian Constituent Assembly. An obvious role model was the Bolsheviks' positions on the All Russian Constituent Assembly, but they also consented to holding elections in Russia, which they hoped to win. The election results were a grave disappointment to the Bolsheviks, who failed to garner a majority. To express their dissatisfaction over the results, the Russian Constituent Assembly was disbanded by force when it convened on 3 January 1918.

The elections to the Estonian Constituent Assembly were held in most places on 21–22 January 1918 according to the Julian calendar, yet in places where preparations for the elections were not completed in time they were postponed until 27–28 January. The election results to that point showed that the Bolsheviks would not garner a majority in Estonia, either. The Bolsheviks received 37.1 per cent of votes in the Constituent Assembly elections. Suddenly, the influence of the Labour Party led by Jüri Vilms had grown; 29.8 per cent of voters supported them (an increase of 8.8 per cent). The share of votes cast for bourgeois parties stayed more or less the same. To some extent, the SRs lost support (receiving 4.5 per cent), as did the Mensheviks (they garnered only 1.7 per cent). Thus, over 60 per cent of voters voted for parties who supported Estonian independence. On 28 January, the Executive Committee of Soviets of Estonia declared a state of siege. The main reason for resorting to this measure was probably the fact that the elections to the Estonian Constituent Assembly had not gone as the Bolsheviks had hoped and they faced the prospect of losing legitimate power. The establishment of the state of siege meant a cessation of practically all political activities.

On 10 February according to the Gregorian calendar, at the Brest-Litovsk peace talks, Germany presented the Soviet delegation with an ultimatum: the areas of Russia that had been captured by the Germans thus far would remain under German control. The Soviet delegation did not accept these conditions and exited the talks, announcing that they would not continue fighting. In fact, the old Russian army had lost all fighting capacity by that time and when the German forces started advancing on 18 February, they met no noteworthy resistance. The old Russian army, solitary Red Army units and

the Soviet government started quickly pulling out of Estonia in the face of the oncoming German forces. Estonian political parties and politicians decided to take advantage of the power vacuum and declare independence. To do this, a Salvation Committee with special powers was formed of representatives of the largest parties on 19 February. Full national power was vested in the Salvation Committee, whose members were Konstantin Päts, and Labour Party members Konstantin Konik and Jüri Vilms.

A declaration of independence was drafted, in which Estonia was described as an independent democratic republic for the first time. A Provisional Government was formed from members of the parties, and it took office on 24–25 February 1918 in Tallinn. This was a broad-based coalition government led by Konstantin Päts, and besides his right-of-centre Rural League and the Estonian Democratic Party, it included Labour Party members (Jüri Vilms, Juhan Kukk, Ferdinand Peterson) and a social democrat (Villem Maasik). The newly formed cabinet declared Estonia neutral in the conflict between Russia and Germany. The German occupation forces did not recognise the Republic of Estonia or its government but treated Estonia as an area they had temporarily captured from Russia. At the same time, the Baltic Duchy was founded by the Baltic Germans, which in its final phase would have meant the creation of a vassal state loyal to Germany. Under certain conditions it would have been a serious alternative to the Republic of Estonia, but the step foundered in connection with the outbreak of revolution in Germany.

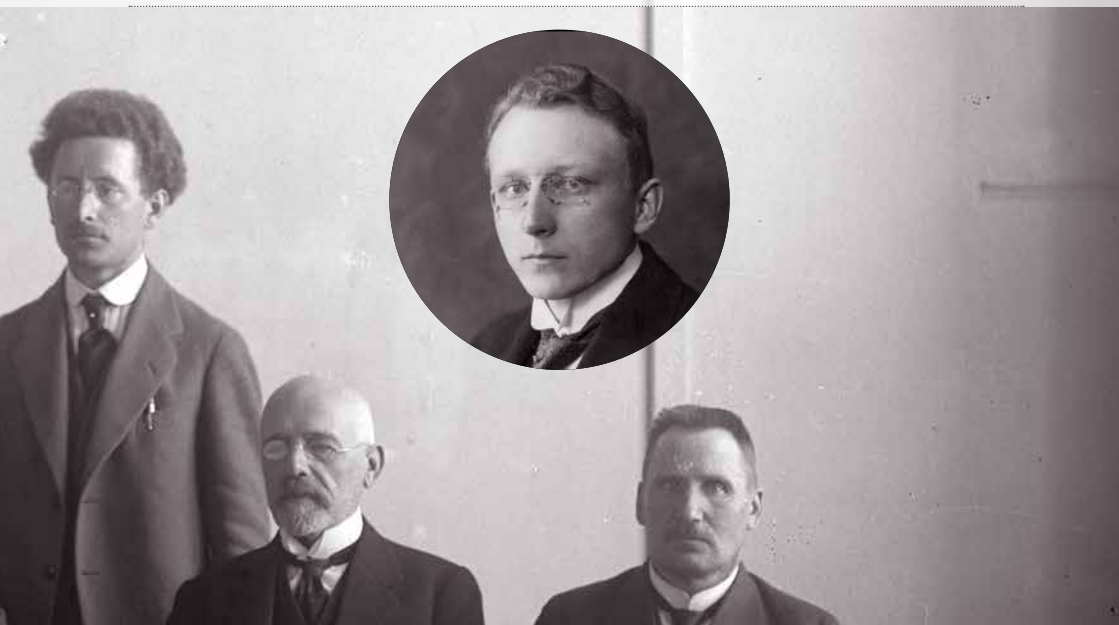


First government of the Republic, appointed on 9 May 1919.

First row from the left: Juhan Kukk (1885–1942), minister of finance (Labour Party), Aleksander Oinas (1887–1942), minister of the interior (Social Democrat), Otto Strandman (1875–1941), prime minister (Labour Party), Jaan Poska (1886–1920), minister of foreign affairs (People's Party), Jüri Jaakson (1870–1942), minister of court (People's Party).

Second row: Theodor Pool (1890–1942), minister of agriculture (Labour Party), Anton Palvadre (1886–1942), minister of labour and welfare (Social Democrat), Juhan Kartau (1883–1964), minister of education (Social Democrat). Nikolai Köstner (1889–1959), minister of trade and industry (Social Democrat) is included in a separate portrait.

Photo: Rahvusarhiiv.



3 | BUILDING THE NEW STATE



3.1 The Estonian Provisional Government Takes Action

At the outset of the occupation, the German military forces were circumspect about further action, taking a wait-and-see approach, but after a while, Estonian politicians and public figures faced a crackdown and imprisonment. It is likely that Labour Party leader and minister in the Provisional Government Jüri Vilms also fell victim to German military forces while in Finland. The Bolsheviks, who had evacuated from Estonia, became concentrated in the Estonian departments of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks). At the seventh congress of the Bolshevik wing of the RSDLP in March 1918, the party's name was changed to the Russian Communist Party (RC(B)P) and the party started to be known as 'the communists'.

The defeat of Germany in the war and revolution ended the occupation in Estonia. On 11 November 1918, the Estonian Provisional Government resumed activity. There was a cabinet reshuffle the next day. The Provisional Government was in power, with minor changes, until the cabinet appointed by the Constituent Assembly on 8 May 1918. The Rural League, the Democratic Party, the ESRP and the Labour Party were all in the government coalition. Democratic Party representative Jaan Poska believed there was a definite need to include the social democrats in the cabinet, to consolidate the Estonian people during a difficult period. Years later, August Rei said that if the ESDWP had taken a passive, neutral stance on this question, the War of Independence would probably not have been fought. The Estonian Social Democrats and the Labour Party were among the first left-wing parties in Europe to form a unity government with right-wing parties. The precondition for participating in the coalition for the ESDWP was legislation establishing an eight-hour working day, which was also passed. The SRs, who were not in the government, nevertheless supported it and clearly opposed the Bolsheviks' plan to reinstate Soviet rule. The domestic political situation was nevertheless very complicated in November 1918. From 8 to 12 November, there was a general strike targeted against the German occupation forces. The strike was a significant means of applying pressure and helped to revive the Provisional Government's activities. At the same time the pro-communist Tallinn Council of Workers' Deputies

also resumed activity. The council declared that the objective of the Estonian working people was to extend a fraternal hand to the Soviet working people, in the fight against a common enemy, and for the Estonian Soviet republic. The Bolsheviks hoped that a similar coup to 1917 would take place, but the situation had changed and most of the Russian workers, soldiers and sailors who had supported them had left Estonia. Among Estonian workers, pro-Estonian independence views had become stronger. The Bolsheviks agitated significantly against the Estonian government and planned an armed uprising. As a result, the government closed the newspaper Kommunist and in mid-December banned the Bolshevik organisations completely. The Bolsheviks continue operating illegally, but their influence dwindled quickly.



Members of the council of the Commune of the Working People of Estonia: seated (from the left) Peeter Pihlap, Hans Pöögelmann (1875–1938), Jaan Anvelt (1884–1937), Otto Rästas (1890–1938), Maks Trakmann (1890–1937) and Karl Mühlmann (Mühlberg) (1890–1922), standing Johannes Käspert (1886–1937) and Artur Vallner (1887–1937). As the dates of death show, most of them were killed during the repression organised by their own party. Photo: Rahvusarhiiv.

3.2 The Unrecognised Government of the Commune of the Working People of Estonia

Upon hearing of the German revolution, the Soviet Russian government annulled the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk on 13 November 1918 and launched a 'holy war' to establish a Soviet Europe. The communists among peoples around the periphery of Russia were pledged all manner of support and 'independent' Soviet governments. In late November, the Red forces invaded Narva, where a Soviet government was proclaimed with their support, called the Commune of the Working People of Estonia. It is hard to assess exactly what was meant by the name. The idea of a 'commune' was fairly broad in Russia at that time; it could mean a cooperative of manor sharecroppers running a manor they had requisitioned or an administrative authority with a very extensive territory. In its rhetoric, the commune styled itself a shadow government opposing the 'bourgeois' Provisional Government operating from Tallinn and the propagandists saw the Soviet war on Estonia as a class struggle and civil war. In its essence, the Commune of Working People represented Soviet Russian civilian rule in the rear of the Red Army and their activity was largely under military command and control. In terms of domestic policy, Estonia's Bolsheviks were even more radical than their Russian confederates. With their reign of terror and their decision that Estonian manors were to be retained and transformed into agricultural communes that farms had to join, the Bolsheviks had alienated many people. The activity of the Commune was thus destined to fail.

3.3 The Political Situation in the Run-up to the Constituent Assembly Elections

Although by the beginning of 1919, the Republic of Estonia's national army had driven the Red Army out of nearly all of Estonia, the war dragged on and the domestic situation was still complicated. Estonia's own national authority and self-rule had only recently been formed and were weak. Many civilian functions were performed by the military and this created serious tensions. A number of disagreements between the coalition parties occurred. The social democrats criticised the Provisional Government

for following a Rural League-oriented domestic policy, excessive intimidation and summary executions due to fears of a military coup. Besides the ESDWP, the SRs and some Labour Party members also criticised the government. The upcoming Constituent Assembly elections also added tensions. Naturally, holding an election during a war was a tall order for a nascent country, but it managed the task well.

The electoral programmes of all three social democratically-oriented parties were similar. In day-to-day politics, criticism was levelled at the curbs on democracy imposed due to the wartime conditions and the activities of the ruling party in the Provisional Government, the Rural League; there were also demands to achieve peace with Russia as quickly as possible. Long-range goals in both the Labour Party and the social democrats' programmes included nationalisation of manorial lands and their distribution to farms. An eight-hour working day and a minimum wage, a labour code and freedom to strike were sought to protect workers' rights. The Labour Party set the following as their general goal: 'A government of and by the people on the broadest footing, so that no individual privileged groups in society could rule over the others.' The ideal was a completely parliamentary republic with no president.

The criticism levelled at the government by the SRs was even harsher. In the case of long-term goals, unlike Labour and the Social Democrats the SRs felt that a better and more equitable social order – socialism – could be achieved not via evolutionary, parliamentary means, but through revolution. The SRs did not distance themselves from the ideal of a nation-state either, however, and they recalled the idea of the Labour Republic proposed the previous year. The right-wing parties were more reserved on the matter of land reform and sought compromises with the Baltic Germans both prior to elections and during the discussions on the Land Act in the Constituent Assembly. Their objections had both an economic rationale – the fact that small farms are less efficient – and ideological and political arguments: that the land of manorial lords was also private property, which should be inviolable. The rightist parties felt that Estonians needed the support of the Baltic Germans and Germany proper. On the matter of statehood, the parties already had a relatively high level of consensus by this time.

The Bolsheviks decided to boycott the elections and continued to engage in agitation among workers and trade unions against an independent Estonian state.

3.4 The Social Democrats Enter the International Arena

At the international level, a symbolic event for the Estonian social democratic movement was the acceptance of the Estonian Social Democratic Workers' Party as a member of the Second International. Estonia's representative was Mihkel Martna, who submitted resolutions in support of Estonia's self-determination and neutrality, but most of the congress did not wish to treat Estonia separately from other emerging independent countries. At a conference held in Amsterdam in late 1919, Martna emphasised the Estonian people's desire to establish an independent country, while living in peace with Russia and resolving economic issues. Now, in a resolution adopted unanimously, Estonia's right to independence was declared, something that was not done at the main conference in Bern. At the conference held in Lucerne in August 1919, Martna noted that Estonia was fighting a defensive war against Russia. At the conference, support was also expressed for the right of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Ukraine and the people of the Caucasus to national independence.

3.5 The Social Democrats in the Constituent Assembly

The elections to the Constituent Assembly were held on 5–7 April 1919, and the social democratic parties in Estonia (Labour, ESDWP and the ESRP) received a total of 78 seats and an absolute majority. A contributing factor to the success of the parties was the demands for radical land reform and the goal of signing a peace treaty with Russia quickly. The elections were a disappointment for the Bolsheviks – the workers had voted social democratic. On 23 April 1919, the newly convened Constituent Assembly elected Social Democrat August Rei as their chairman. On 8 May 1919, the Labour Party's Otto Strandman formed the new cabinet, which included Labour, the social democrats and the People's Party. The SRs were left out of the government. On 19 May, the Constituent Assembly adopted a declaration on the sovereignty of Estonia, which was

ALMA OSTRA-OINAS (1886–1960)



Photo: Rahvusarhiiv.

Alma Rosalie Ostra was born in Tartu county in 1886. In 1901 she began studying at the Tartu Pushkin secondary school, which was the only secondary school for girls in Estonia. From 1903 she was a member of the RSDLP and frequently rubbed shoulders with Russian socialists (mostly students). She set up a national-radical club and edited its journal *Koit*. Alma Ostra was expelled from secondary school for her political views and activities.

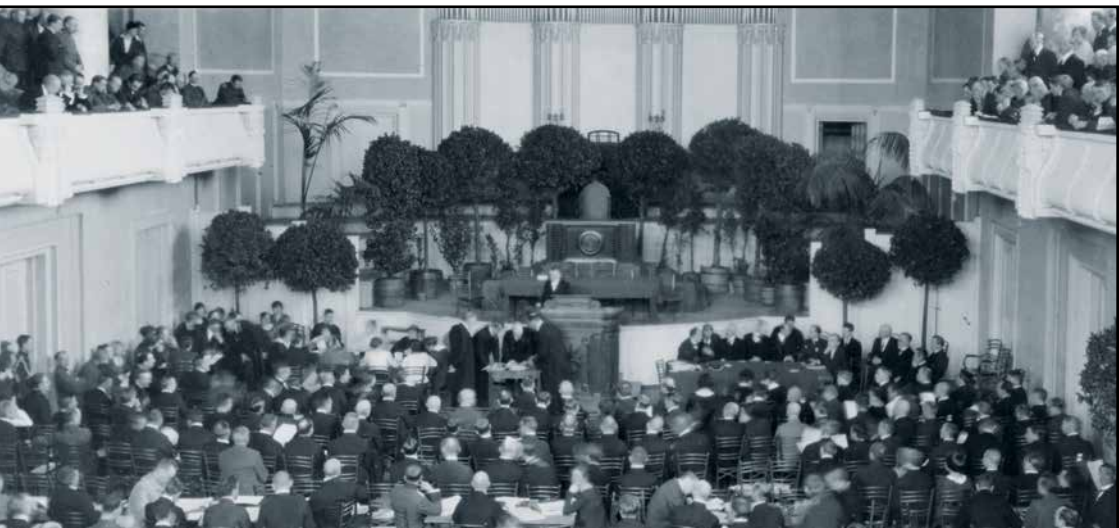
During the 1905 revolution, she took part in events in Tallinn, and was duly arrested and, in December of the same year, deported to Siberia. She escaped from the community to which she was exiled and returned to Tallinn to continue her political activities, but now underground. As she was still a member of the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party, she was sent as a representative to the party's fifth congress in 1907 in London. Menshevik supporters in 1907 were called 'Alma's men', a fact which spoke volumes about her political influence within the party.

In 1908, fed up with her clandestine life, she set her sights on returning to normal life and continuing her studies. Ostra returned to Tallinn after the February Revolution. She became a journalist and a politician; she became editor of the *Sotsiaaldemokraat* newspaper and was selected as a deputy member of the Estonian Provincial Assembly. In 1918 both Alma Ostra-Oinas and her husband supported Estonian independence. In 1919 she was elected to the Estonian Constituent Assembly. She was a member of several of the assembly's committees, working on rural issues and workers' problems. She was also elected to the *Riigikogu* four times.

Alma Ostra-Oinas was one of the first women to hold high office. She was a well-known politician, a persuasive and confident orator who, like other social democrats, was happy to deliver speeches to a crowd. She graduated from the law department at the University of Tartu in 1929. For a decade, between 1924 and 1934, Ostra-Oinas was an advisor to the Tallinn City Council, heading the labour exchange, worker protection department and the welfare department. Her primary activity was combating unemployment, with a particular focus on the protection of wives of unemployed labourers and child protection. She was also an active member of various non-profit organisations, gave speeches on women's rights and spoke up on welfare and child protection topics. Her husband, Aleksander Oinas (social democrat, former minister and auditor general) was imprisoned by the Soviets in 1940 and executed in Solikamsk. German occupation forces imprisoned Alma Ostra-Oinas in 1942. In 1945 she was again imprisoned, this time by the Soviet Union's People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs and she died in exile in Komi in 1960.

aimed mainly at the international community and which reaffirmed Estonia's desire to secede from Russia and continue as an independent democratic republic. The first major decision made by the Constituent Assembly was the Land Reform Act passed on 10 October 1919, which was pushed through by the Social Democrats and Labour Party.

The discussions on the Land Act in the Constituent Assembly began in the summer, when the Landeswehr war was at its height. This fact added ideological weight to the discussion. Anti-German positions were heard in the Constituent Assembly and they also resonated among soldiers at the front near Cesis, Latvia. It should be noted that the land issue also came up on the Estonian–Soviet front, in encounters between Estonian national forces and Red Army soldiers of Estonian origin. Getting land and the 'socialist' government in Tallinn were often among the reasons that Estonians defected from the Red Army to the Estonian national side. At the start of the discussion on the Land Act, Prime Minister Otto Strandman said: 'Future generations will assess the work of the Constituent Assembly based on how well it met the real-life demands of the Estonian people.' Estonian land reform was one of the most radical in Europe at that time and it fully aligned with popular expectations. The greatest accomplishment of the cabinet was stabilising Estonia's international position, which started even before



Session of the Estonian Constituent Assembly in 1919. Estonia. The speaker is the chairman of Estonian Constituent Assembly, August Rei. Photo: Rahvusarhiiv.

independence was declared through the work of foreign delegations, in which the Labour Party and social democrats played an important part. Although Western countries supported Estonia economically and militarily, relations with the First World War allies were not all plain sailing.

The leaders of most Western European countries took a tentative position, waiting to see how the Russian Civil War would be resolved, hoping that a non-Bolshevik government would come to power after the war, one with which the possible secession of border states from Russia could be resolved together. As a result, Estonia's bid for peace with Soviet Russia did not get the immediate blessing of allied countries. The Estonian government nevertheless managed to achieve its goal and signed the Tartu Peace Treaty with Russia on 2 February 1920, under which the Soviet government recognised Estonian independence completely. On 13 February the Constituent Assembly ratified the peace treaty with Soviet Russia. This treaty also paved the way for the recognition of the Republic of Estonia by the West.

On 7 May, the Constituent Assembly passed the Public Elementary Schools Act, which provided for compulsory, free and secular sixth-form education in Estonian as the first tier of the education system. To begin with, four grades of compulsory education were implemented. On 15 June, the Constituent Assembly adopted the Estonian Constitution, which above all was the work of the social democrats and the Labour Party – this would underpin life in Estonia for the next 14 years. The supreme power



Prime Minister Otto Strandman (1875–1941), one of the leaders of the Labour Party, later governor, minister of finance, diplomat. He committed suicide in 1941 shortly before his planned arrest by the NKVD.
Photo: Kirjandusmuuseum.

was vested in the people and they exercised their power in parliamentary elections, referendums and popular initiatives. The 100-seat unicameral Riigikogu was the representative assembly. The prime minister, who bore the title of riigivanem (state elder) served as head of state. The institution of president was not established at this time. August Rei noted that the 'Republic of Estonia must be completely democratic from the roof to the foundation. The entire power must be in the hands of the people. The supreme power in the state must lie with the assemblymen or parliament who are elected by the entire people. Voting must be universal and uniform, direct, secret and proportional.' For its time, the Estonian Constitution was one of the most democratic in the world. Embodying social democratic values, the Constitution was one of the first to provide for women's suffrage. In the general sense as well, men and women were equal under public law. In addition, ethnic minorities were granted cultural autonomy. The Constitution permitted minorities to establish autonomous institutions to safeguard their cultural interests. People enjoyed the right to a school education in Estonian and the right to decide on their ethnic affiliation. In regions in which minorities made up a majority, they were granted the right to use their native language as the official tongue in local government. Citizens of German, Russian and Swedish origin had the right to use their native language in written communications with the central government institutions. At the proposal of the social democrats, separation of church and state was also set forth in the Constitution.

In early 1920, three ESDWP members were in Jaan Tõnisson's coalition government, which was the third government since the Republic of Estonia was founded. On 2 July of the same year, the ESDWP announced that the social democrats were leaving the government. The reason, they said, was that the socialists could govern the country with bourgeois parties only in extraordinary conditions – if the people had to protect the state in a life-or-death matter. Going into opposition, the ESDWP hoped to expand its base and enjoy success in the next parliamentary elections.



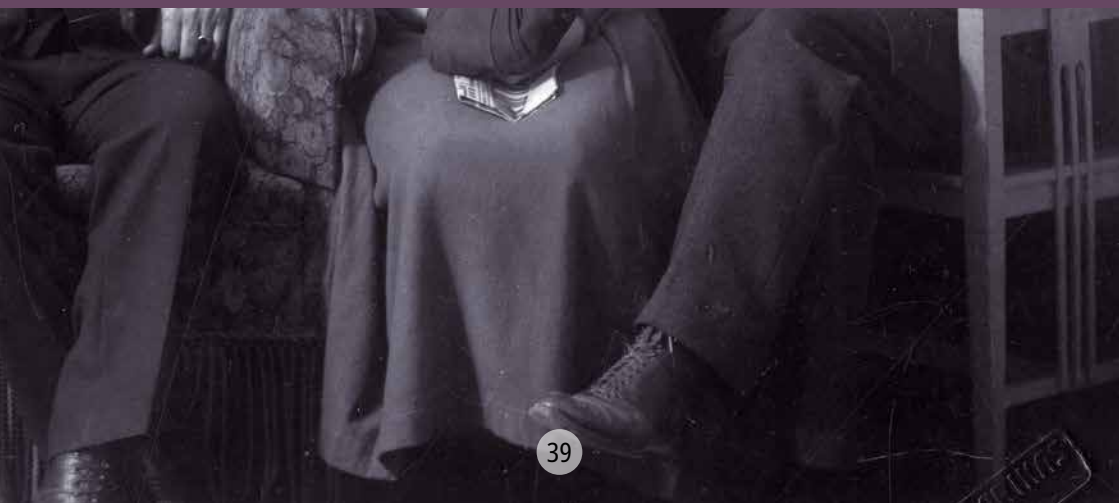
The central committee of the Estonian Social Democratic Workers' Party (ESDTP) at the beginning of the 1920s. Seated: Aleksander Oinas (1887–1942), August Rei (1886–1963), Mihkel Martna (1860–1934), Alma Ostra-Oinas (1886–1960), Karl Ast (1886–1971).

Standing: Anton Palvadre (1886–1942), Aleksander Tulp (1883–1952), Jaan Vain (1886–1942), Karl Virma (1879–1942), Hans Martna (1890–1941).

As seen from the dates of their deaths, most of the members of the central committee died in Soviet prison camps or during deportation. Photo: Rahvusrhiiv.



4 | THE SUBSEQUENT ROLE OF THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS



4.1 The First Years of Independence

In general, the ESDWP and the Labour Party can be considered the social democratic parties in Estonia in the first half of the 1920. The SRs merged with the aggressive left-wingers who had split from the ESDWP to form the Estonian Independent Socialist Workers' Party, whose positions were similar to those of the communists. The first Riigikogu elections were held from 27 to 29 November 1920 and the Labour Party received 22 out of 100 seats, the ESDWP 18 seats. Otto Strandman of the Labour Party was elected speaker of the Riigikogu. In a speech delivered on 4 January 1921, the newly elected speaker said that the Riigikogu faced difficult tasks, the critical years were not yet over and that Estonia's economy was in a difficult situation. In July 1922, a new socialist-oriented party was formed, the Independent Socialist Workers' Party (ISTP). The working class did not warm to the party, however, and its influence remained slight. After some time, the ISTP began moving closer to the ESDWP.

In the second elections to the Riigikogu held on 5–7 May 1923, the Labour Party got 12 seats out of 100, the ESDWP, 15. In 1923, Estonia was hit by an industrial and financial crisis. Many companies went bankrupt and many households experienced difficulties. In May 1924, the Labour Party's Otto Strandman became the finance minister and began restructuring Estonian economic policy with the aim of reducing government spending, stabilising the exchange rate of the Estonian mark, reining in lending by the Bank of Estonia, raising tariffs, reducing imports and increasing exports. On all these items, he succeeded, although he also faced much radical opposition in both political and economic circles. As a part of monetary reform, Otto Strandman proposed introducing the kroon (crown) as the national currency, modelled after Scandinavia.

In 1923, changes took place in the international social democratic movement. A new International uniting socialist organisations was created, known officially as the Socialist Workers' International. Estonia's ESDWP joined up. The organisation was led in the interim by an executive committee in which parties were given seats based on their size. Until 1928, Estonia was represented together with Latvian colleagues; after

that, it was granted an independent seat on the executive committee, which was filled by August Rei and Mihkel Martna.

Table 1: Seats in the Constituent Assembly and Riigikogu following elections in 1919–1932

		1919	1920	1923	1926	1929	1932
Left-wing parties	Extreme left		5	10	6	6	5
	SRs/ independent socialists	7	11	5			
	Social Democrats/Socialist Workers' Party	41	18	15	24	25	22
	Labour Party	30	22	12	13	10	
Centrist parties	People's Party	25	10	8	8	9	
	Settlers			4	14	14	
	National Centre Party						23
Right-wingers	Christian People's Party	5	7	8	5	4	
	Rural League/Farmers' Assemblies	8	21	23	23	24	
	United Farmers' Party						42
	Other		1	8	2	3	
	Ethnic minorities	4	5	7	5	5	8
Seats in the Constituent Assembly and Riigikogu, total		120	100	100	100	100	100

4.2 The Attempted Communist Coup of 1924

The following year, 1924, was of particular importance. There was an unsuccessful communist coup. Defying the communists' expectations, however, it did not meet broader resonance or support among workers and led to a ban on the communists. The Estonian Working People's Party had already been shut down (essentially a front for the communists). The failed communist putsch brought to an end the communist tendency that had dominated in the trade union movement since 1918. The Central Council of Estonian Trade Unions, which united Estonian trade unions, later the Estonian General Confederation of Workers' Unions, had come largely under communist influence and their activity was based on the principles of the Profintern, an organisation that united communist trade unions. For the following few years, the operating principle of free trade unions and a social democratic mindset began to dominate the movement.

The coup attempt was strongly denounced by the social democrats. As a result, the social democrats and independent socialists were brought closer together. In April 1925, a merger congress was held. The name of the merged party was the Estonian Socialist Workers' Party (ESWP) and it had 4,200 members. The congress gave its blessing to take part in the 'wall-to-wall' government of Jüri Jaakson. August Rei became the party's chairman. The coalition government formed on 16 December 1924 included the social democrats Karl Johannes Virma, who became roads minister, and minister without portfolio Karl Ast.

4.3 The August Rei Government

In the elections to the Riigikogu held from 5 to 17 May 1926, the ESWP won 24 out of 100 seats, and the Estonian Labour Party, 12. The ESWP leadership became more committed to the idea that socialists should not wait for an extraordinary situation to join the governing coalition but rather could do so if the opportunity presented itself. In 1928, during the latest in a succession of government crises, the speaker of the Riigikogu proposed that ESWP chairman August Rei form a new government. The party's Riigikogu faction and the central committee gave their consent and on 4 December

1928, the Riigikogu confirmed the government. The cabinet had eight members, of whom three were socialists: state elder August Rei, minister of finance, trade and industry Aleksander Oinas and minister of labour, social welfare and education Leopold Johanson. The ESWP congress held at the end of the same year saw a few speakers who criticised the fact that the socialists had joined the coalition but most supported the step. The Rei government lasted seven months, and during that time it managed to increase social welfare funding somewhat, but due to opposition from other parties it did not prove possible to carry out fundamental reforms such as a health insurance act and a shop stewards act. The Rei government also initiated a plan for the construction of new railways. The elections to the fourth Riigikogu were held in 1929 and the ESWP no longer was a part of the next government formed in July.



Government led by August Rei in the White Hall of Toompea castle. Left-side of the table (from the left): Jaan Lattik, minister of foreign affairs (Christian People's Party); Aleksander Oinas, minister of finance and minister of commerce and industry (socialist); Leopold Johanson, minister of labour and welfare, minister of education (socialist); Karl Soonberg, minister of agriculture (Asunikud); Johannes Zimmermann, auditor general. Right-side of the table (from the left): Tõnis Kalbus, minister of the interior, minister of court (Labour Party), Mihkel Juhkam, minister of war (Labour Party), Oskar Köster, minister of roads administration (Asunikud). In the middle, at the end of the table, governor August Rei and opposite him state secretary Karl Terras. Photo: Rahvusarhiiv.

4.4 Changes in the Estonian Political Landscape

In the 1920s–1930s, the Estonian social democrats' policies remained unchanged. The main focus lay on reforms to improve workers' social and economic situation, with a socialist society as a goal for the distant future. In terms of tactics, the ESWP became more flexible over the years; forming coalition governments with bourgeois parties was not a problem. The ESWP was the largest parliamentary party in Estonia from 1926 to 1932. The number of members had grown to 6,000 by summer 1931.

The Estonian trade union movement also experienced significant changes in the latter half of the 1920s. As mentioned earlier, a socialist mindset became predominant after the failure of the communist coup. A central organisation called the Estonian Confederation of Workers' Unions was formed in 1927 and it abided by free trade union principles. In 1928, the confederation became a member of the International Federation of Trade Unions. Independent trade unions – unions that sought to change society by democratic means – called themselves apolitical. Nevertheless, they were closely connected with social democrats and the more active members also belonged to political parties.

The elections to the Fifth Riigikogu were held from 21 to 23 May 1932. In the run-up to the elections, changes took place in the party landscape – the Labour Party, which had moved away from social democracy, merged with the People's Party, the Christian People's Party and the Homeowners' Association to form the National Centre Party.

4.5 Crisis of Democracy and the Occupation

The Great Depression that started in 1929 had a strong influence on politics around the world. Populist parties came to power in many European countries and parliamentary democracy was replaced with authoritarian regimes or even extremist dictatorships, as was the case in Germany. Estonia was not unscathed by this crisis, unfortunately. The crisis first manifested itself in the economy and the rapid fall in the value of the Estonian kroon.

Regrettably the parties were incapable of achieving sustainable political agreements in the Riigikogu. The right-wing parties demanded a constitutional amendment to create the institution of president, which they said would balance the less temperate decisions of the Riigikogu. Two referendums were held to change the Constitution, but both failed. Finally, a draft law introduced by the War of Independence veterans groups went through, setting forth the institution of strong state elder (president). The War of Independence participants movement had started out as a veterans' organisation but quickly took on the characteristics of a political party. It was a populist

movement that had clear role models in Italy and Germany. The War of Independence veterans' groups were convinced that the only answer for Estonia was the elimination of the existing parties and an iron fist. The conflict between the veterans' groups and socialists proved particularly acute, culminating in street clashes and rallies. Early 1934 saw the start of an election campaign for new Riigikogu elections and the election of a state elder. It could be clearly be anticipated that the War of Independence veterans' groups would get a significant majority in the elections, as they had just done well in local elections to town councils. The constitutional amendments had already partially come into force and the state elder now had more power. This enabled the state elder Konstantin Päts to declare a state of emergency, imprison the leaders of the veterans' groups, halt the elections and not convene the Riigikogu again. At first, the other parties, including the socialists, accepted this step, and Karl Ast had the main role in achieving an understanding between the state elder and the socialists. Unfortunately, Päts reneged on the agreement to reinstate democracy and in 1935 all political parties were banned.



Karl Ast (Rumor) (1886–1971), politician and writer. Participated in the revolution of 1905, an active participant in the proclamation of Estonia's independence, member of the Estonian Constituent Assembly and Parliament, minister. Lived in exile in Brazil (consul) and the USA after the war. Photo: Kirjandusmuuseum.

Before that, a major conflict took place within the ESWP. The main part of the ESWP was still fairly united in 1930 and 1931, but at the party's seventh congress in December 1932, a number of delegates of a local association expressed strong criticism regarding the policy of cooperation between the ESWP leadership and right-wing parties. From the standpoint of the party's leftist opposition wing, intensive work had to be undertaken to obstruct the veterans' groups and convince the workers to mount joint initiatives for the protection of democracy. The left-wing socialists did not rule out cooperation with the communist-orientated organisations, either. The right wing of the ESWP, however, was opposed to any contacts with communists. The standoff escalated at the party congress held in Tartu in February 1934. The outcome was that the leaders of the leftist wing led by Nigol Andresen were expelled from the party as they had started cooperation with underground communists and they had secret ties to the Soviet embassy. In 1940, after the Soviet occupation, the ministers in Johannes Vares' pup-



Johannes Mikhelson (1907–1992), chairman of Estonian Social Democratic Party in Exile, member of the pre-war party, journalist, trade unionist. In 1990, one of the founders of the modern Social Democratic Party.
Photo: Rahvusarhiiv.

pet government were drawn from their ranks. The Estonian trade union movement also underwent great changes after 1936. In that year, the leadership of the Estonian confederation of trade unions was forcibly replaced with temporary leaders more amenable to the government. The government-friendly Estonian National Labour Union (ERT) also emerged alongside the confederation for this reason. In addition, the authoritarian Päts government began controlling the activity of the trade unions.

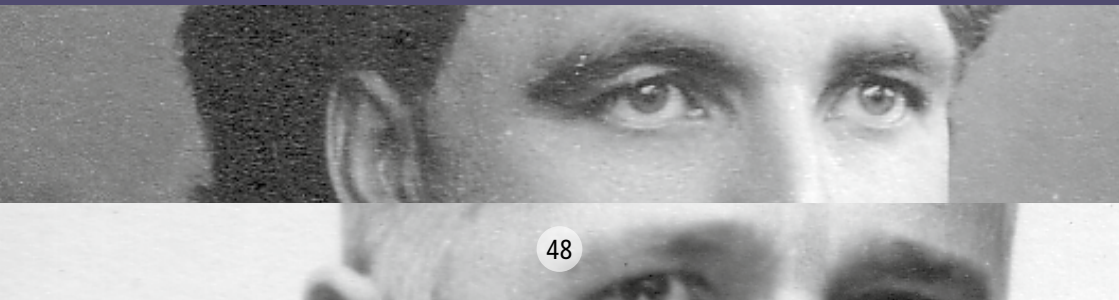
In 1938, Estonia was the only one of the three Baltic countries to take steps toward restoring democracy. Elections to the Chamber of Deputies (the lower

house or Riigivolikogu) were held, consisting of the election of individuals in one-man-date election districts. At the elections, the only legally permitted political association, the Fatherland Union (Popular Front for the Implementation of the Constitution), received a majority. During the Soviet occupation starting in June 1940, social democrats in leading positions also fell victim to repressions, deportations and executions, along with other Estonian politicians and public figures.

During the Nazi occupation (1941–1944), the social democrats left in Estonia participated in the resistance movement, in a so-called search for a third way. They served in Otto Tief's government of September 1944 and its desperate attempt to restore Estonian independence in the interregnum between retreating Nazi forces and invading Soviet troops. The foreign minister in that government, August Rei, fulfilled the duties of head of government in exile after the death of Prime Minister Jüri Uluots. In the conditions of the newly consolidated Soviet occupation in 1944, political dissent was inconceivable and repressions against independence-era politicians continued. In 1945, socialists who had fled to Sweden formed the foreign wing of the Estonian Socialist Party under the leadership of Gustav Suits and Johannes Mihkelson. In the international arena, this organisation was an active advocate for Estonia's interests and played quite an important role in the reinstatement of social democracy in Estonia.



5 | A LOOK BACK AT THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS



The social democratic movement in Estonia has been, from the very beginning, closely bound, besides politics, to the community, literature and art. Writers and scientists who have gravitated towards the social democratic ideology have played an important role in building Estonians' worldviews and their understanding of history. Eduard Vilde and his historical novels are a good example, as are Young Estonia members Suits and Tuglas with their European take on literature. Their works were quickly adopted as classics in Estonia.

Estonia may have been a predominantly agrarian society at the turn of the twentieth century, and politically a small ethnic fragment on the outskirts of the Russian Empire, but a decisive development took place during the first decade of the new century. The year 1905 was one of political awakening as a nation, and young social democrats played an important role. For the first time, women began to play an active role in the wider community, and they did it in social democratic ranks.

Estonian parties with a social democratic leaning were significant guides on the road from a province of the Russian Empire to autonomy, and from an autonomous governorate to an independent state. While the SRs were the first to float the idea of independence in the form of their Labour Republic, the practical steps toward declaring independence in February 1918 were taken by politicians mainly from the Estonian Labour Party, headed by Jüri Vilms.

Social democratic parties played a leading role in the Constituent Assembly after the 1919 elections. The foundation of an Estonian state and free society was laid at the assembly, and that foundation still has significance today. The Constituent Assembly passed land reforms that exerted substantial influence on Estonian society and hastened its development. Baltic German estates were requisitioned and redistributed among Estonian farms, creating a circle of small estate ownership. The move had such a deep impact that Soviet powers did not dare expropriate land from small farms immediately after the occupation of Estonia and approved the land for eternal use. The Soviets only ventured to establish collective farms after the war,

from 1949. The 1919 land reform was certainly a model for the property and land reform bills of 1990–1991.

Education bills passed by the assembly adopted a multi-level approach to education. The same approach is in use in Estonia's education system today. The Estonian state took a distinctly secular path. The church was separated from the state and its position in the public domain quickly diminished. Religious studies became voluntary for students. Marriage registration also had to be done through the state apparatus.

The 1920 Constitution instituted a parliamentary republic and universal suffrage. The Constitution guaranteed equal rights to men and women and society took its first steps to implement them. The short-lived independence period prevented the full implementation of equal rights, falling short mostly in questions of inheritance and family relations. The Constitution begins with a chapter on basic citizens' rights, a chapter which has by and large been transposed to the current Estonian Constitution.

As viewed by conventional Estonian historiography, the role played by social democrats was modest. This is because serious historical works on the independence era were only written from the second half of the 1930s onwards, when Konstantin Päts was in power. The role of Päts and General Johan Laidoner in the founding of the state were highlighted. People tend to remember the last few years of independence more, a period in which political party activity was prohibited. In historical works during the Soviet era social democrats were either ignored or were portrayed as traitors of the working class. Evidence of the social democratic spirit did manage to survive, however, and the Soviet powers failed in their attempt to delete it from history. As the times changed, the restoration of social democracy in Estonia was possible. Social democratic policies and deeds of the past century served as a great example and inspiration for today's Social Democrats during the restoration of Estonian statehood.

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LATVIA



Proclamation of the Republic of Latvia, 18 November 1918. Photo: KLIO (Vilis Rīdzenieks).
Collection of the National History Museum of Latvia.

Satirist Andrejs Skailis, one of the most pro-democratic Latvian writers of the past half-century, has the following recollections of his childhood in the Riga Grīziņkalns, a workers' neighbourhood, in around 1930:

At a May Day celebration at some time in my beautiful youth I sat on my father's shoulder in Grīziņkalns, holding a little flag in each hand: one red, the other red, white and red. I already knew the meaning of these flags: the red one was for the workers, the red, white and red one for Latvians. We were a Latvian workers' family, so both flags were ours. It was very simple! In 1933, my father's friend Lasmanis, a 1905 revolutionary and fighter for Latvia's freedom, died and his coffin was draped with both flags, the red one and the red, white and red one. It looked very beautiful, so I was struck by a thought – if I were to die one day, which of course was not very likely, then my coffin, too, should be draped with both flags. Unfortunately now it cannot be done, such an act would lead to an unpleasant incident – after I was buried, the patriots resting nearby would throw me out of the cemetery, flags and all.¹



Members of the Student Society 'Klints' during the rally at the festival organized by the LSDSP lead organization 'Workers' Sports Union' (later 'Workers' Sport and Guard') in Grīziņkalns. Photo: Unknown. National Archives' Latvian National Cinema Collection.

It is said that every joke is a joke only in part. The relationship between the red, white and red flag of the Latvian state and the red flag of social democracy is not simple – even if the red flag is without the Soviet hammer and sickle in the upper corner. It was the social democrats who brought Latvians into the world of modern politics, yet they told them that it was not as important to be a Latvian as to be a worker. The social democrats were the first to mobilise Latvians politically in the revolution of 1905, but this revolution ended in

bloodshed and the murder of innocent people. Latvian social democrats supported the

1. Skailis, A., *Toreiz blusas lēca augstāk. Pirmskara puikas un palaidnības*, Rīga, Likteņstāsti, 2001, p. 192.

foundation of the Republic of Latvia in 1918, but other Latvian social democrats from Russia immediately wanted to destroy the young country. Social democrats were instrumental in developing and guarding the 1922 Constitution of Latvia, which is still in effect. Nevertheless these same social democrats did not bat an eyelid when a dictator put a stop to the functioning of the Constitution in 1934 and more than one greeted the Soviet occupation of 1940 to their own misfortune.

In other words, the relationship between social democracy and the Latvian state has been complicated. The problem is that without an understanding of the historical role of social democracy the development of Latvian statehood cannot be understood. This chapter is a historical 'essay' in which I have attempted to outline the relationship between Latvian social democracy and the Latvian state instead of attempting a comprehensive study of the subject matter. Much of what I say may be debatable. But it seems undeniable that, generally speaking, the study of Latvian social democracy has not been a priority since the renewal of independence, with the fundamental works by Aivars Stranga and Jānis Šiliņš outstanding exceptions. A good many opinions about the role of the Latvian Social Democratic Workers Party (LSDSP) in the history of Latvian statehood still seem to be based on memoirs. Given the aims of the memoirist at hand, it is not always objective. This can be said not only about the well-known biography of Pēteris Stučka by his fellow Bolshevik Pauls Dauge but, in equal measure, about the memoirs of Mensheviks, such as Fēlikss Cielēns, Brūno Kalniņš, Voldemārs Bastjānis and Klāra Kalniņa published in exile and the recently published memoirs of Klāvs Lorencs. For that reason, the field for research is still wide open, including study of the social democrats' texts themselves, to follow the interrelationship between the socialist and nationalist agendas. In this chapter, I will first (Section 1) describe the origins of Latvian social democracy at the end of the nineteenth century. Then, in Section 2, I will tackle in more detail the various approaches of social democrats to Latvian statehood and autonomy. In Section 3, I will discuss the role of social democrats in the founding of the state. The last (4) section will be dedicated to the activities of the LSDSP in the interwar period, from its decisive role during the Constitutional Assembly to the underground work under Ulmanis' dictatorship. Finally, I will present some overarching conclusions.



Latvian Riflemen's demonstration in Riga, 1 May 1917. Unknown. Collection of the National History Museum of Latvia.

1 | THE NEW AGENDA: SOCIALISM AND LATVIAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT



The LSDSP is the oldest political party in Latvia with roots in the nineteenth century. Up until 1917 when, after the February Revolution, Russia experienced a rapid rise in political activity, the LSDSP was in fact the only Latvian party with a mass membership that workers in a position to play a real political leadership role. The most striking evidence of this was the Revolution of 1905–1907, whose dramatic unfolding to a great extent took place under the leadership of the LSDSP. In founding the state in 1918, the Social Democrats were likewise an influential, albeit not always a positive factor. The relationship between the Social Democrats, the first Latvian mass political party, and the Latvian state has always been close and also complicated. It is impossible to discuss the political development of the Latvian state and the formation of its self-confidence without discussing the impact of social democracy. Nowadays, the red and the red, white and red flags symbolise two mutually exclusive systems of values for most of Latvians. This is understandable, given the experience of Soviet occupation and loss of statehood in 1940. But looking back at the past, one cannot help but notice the multifaceted relationship between the two flags – from opposition and conflict to closeness and overlapping.

Although the LSDSP was founded in 1904, the origins of the social democratic movement go back to the 1890s. At that time, rapid modernisation was taking place in the territory of Latvia, affecting not only the economy but also its culture. Owing to the New Latvians movement, which began in the 1860s and 1870s, a new generation of Latvian intelligentsia had appeared on the scene by the 1890s, which wanted to step out of the patriarchal and provincial framework put in place by the conservative Riga Latvian Society (Rīgas Latviešu biedrība (RLB)). In Latvian history, this movement from the 1890s has acquired the name ‘New Current’ or simply ‘The New Ones’. If, prior to their appearance, Latvian culture mainly busied itself with ethnographic, pseudo-ethnographic or sentimental matters, the New Current was interested in broader horizons of modern culture: realist literature and contemporary natural science, as well as social emancipation and the so-called ‘workers’ question’. The primary publication of the New Current was the newspaper *Dienas Lapa*, around which a good part of oppositional youth gathered. It was as participants in the New Current or the circle of *Dienas Lapa*

that people who were destined to play an important role in the formation of Latvian social democracy met. During the newspaper's most important period, its editors were two Latvian lawyers who had studied at the University of St Petersburg: Pēteris Stučka and Jānis Pliekšāns (Rainis). It was they, and particularly Pliekšāns, who steered the newspaper in a leftist and democratic direction.

At that time, Latvian university and gymnasium students began to rally around *Dienas Lapa*, united by their belief in social progress, the irony of Heinrich Heine and a radically critical attitude toward the 'official Latvianness' propagated by the RLB. The New Current was neither a political party nor even an organised group, but rather a relatively loose network of like-minded people and correspondents based in the Baltics and the metropolises of Russia and western Europe. Along with Pliekšāns and Stučka, the representatives of the most active generation of the New Current were Liepāja-based Janis Jansons-Brauns, Fricis Roziņš (Āzis) and Miķelis Valters; but the wider circle around *Dienas Lapa* also included Eduards Veidenbaums, Aspazija, Pauls and Aleksandrs Dauge, Kārlis Kasparsons, Antons Birkerts and many other people later important to Latvian culture.

The ideological profile of the New Current is sometimes termed 'socialist'. Without a doubt, socialism had an important place in the views of its members. It was socialism broadly understood: an interest in the workers question and its development in the industrialised West; concerns about the fate of Latvian workers both in the countryside and the urban centres; and moral indignation about the callousness and arrogance of the privileged classes. But socialism as Marxist social democracy was important but not dominant. Around 1893, the Latvian New Current first got in touch with German Social Democrats. In that year, Pliekšāns (Rainis) went to Germany where he met with August Bebel, listened to Karl Liebknecht and illegally brought home enough Social Democrat literature to begin to introduce social democracy to a wider Latvian audience. In the contacts between the New Current and German Social Democrats, a role was played also by the Latvian dentistry student Pauls Dauge who published the Erfurt Programme of the German Social Democratic Party in *Dienas Lapa*. It is an interesting

historical curiosity, given that *Dienas Lapa* was a legal publication subject to censorship: apparently, the Tsar's censors at that time did not see anything revolutionary in Marxist propaganda.²

But it would be erroneous to think that all New Current associates were Marxists or even interested in Marxism. In contemporary society New Current gained popularity with two issues not directly related to Marxism: the emancipation of women and a critique of Latvian nationalism. The theme of women's emancipation appeared on the Latvian agenda in 1894, when Hermann Sudermann's play Honour and young Latvian poet Aspazija's play Forfeited Rights were staged. Dealing with the fate of women in a patriarchal, hypocritical society, both works of course caused a scandal in Latvian 'good society'. Second, the New Current openly – albeit not always justly – mocked the achievements of Latvian culture, including pseudo-nationalist romanticism in literature and the General Latvian Singing Festival held in 1895 by the RLB. According to Fricis Roziņš, it was not a real 'people's celebration' but rather a meeting of Latvian intellectuals and commercially minded middle classes that had nothing to do with the genuine Latvian people. In this respect, the New Current was rather an expression of the modernisation and democratisation of Latvian public life that went far outside the framework of a single ideology.

At the same time, it was the New Current milieu that created conditions for the popularisation of Marxism, which gradually led to the establishment of groups that self-confidently identified themselves as social democrats. Thus Fricis Roziņš in his article 'Broad Views' in *Dienas Lapa* in 1896 criticised another Latvian socialist, the internationally renowned statistician Kārlis Balodis, for straying from the Marxist world view. Marxist theory with its rigid, seemingly scientific causalities and universalist logic applied to the whole of human society apparently appealed to the young Latvian New Current participants, many of whom had been raised in a critically sceptical positivist atmosphere and were imbued with a socially critical spirit of protest. At the same time,

2. Dauge, P. ['P. D.'], 1893, 'Sociāldemokrātu stāvoklis Vacijā', *Dienas Lapa* 7: pp. 1–2.

PĒTERIS STUČKA (1865–1932)



Pēteris Stučka. Around 1900–1910. Unknown. Collection of the National History Museum of Latvia.

Lawyer and politician, the most influential of the Latvian Bolsheviks. One of the founders of the New Current, editor of *Dienas Lapa* (1888–1891; 1895–1897). In 1897, he was arrested and exiled to central Russia where he began collaborating with Russian social democrats. After the Revolution of 1905, Stučka joined Lenin and the Bolsheviks; he lived in Vitebsk and St Petersburg and wrote for the socialist press. After the October coup, Stučka became the first People's Commissar of Justice in the Soviet government. In 1918–1919, he led the Bolshevik incursion into Latvia and, until 1920, was the head of the LSSR government in Riga and then in Rēzekne. In the 1920s, he became the most prominent theoretician of 'Soviet legality', emphasising its role as an instrument of struggle and laying the legal groundwork for fighting against the 'crimes of the counterrevolution'. In 1923, he was assigned the post of Chairman of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation. At the same time, he was an active propagandist in Latvian, sharply criticising the independent or

'white' Latvia. In 1919–1920, Stučka became member of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist (Bolshevik) Party. He died in 1932; the urn with his ashes was buried in the Kremlin wall.

"Social democracy does not and cannot have anything principally against local autonomy – it has a democratic foundation and is required because of practical need. Likewise, social democracy does not set as its goal the destruction of the small independent states but only their democratization and international merging. And it is of course obvious that in a small country, separatism and nationalism have a much better and useful nest than in a province of a big country, unless this nationalism rises as a push against the push from above with the intention of Russification, Germanisation, etc. Thus the autonomy of provinces in a democratic country presents no threat to the clarity of principles of international social democracy. Not even the most skilled dialectician will be able to prove the opposite to us."

(P. S.) „Provinču autonomija sociāldemokrātu partiju programmā“. *Nākotne*, 4, 1906.

it should be mentioned that other sources of inspiration, including Darwin, Nietzsche, Ibsen, the Russian Narodniks and anarchists, coexisted with Marxism. To summarise, Latvian social democracy was born in the broad context of the modernisation of Latvian cultural life, in which the entire Latvian culture of the twentieth century is also rooted.

Within the New Current, illegal Marxist groups were formed, propagating political literature and organizing various activities: celebrating May Day, learning together and engaging in cultural activities among workers. Gradually, they began to establish contacts with similar groups in Moscow and St Petersburg. It was because of these latter groups that the New Current was destroyed in 1897: 130 New Current participants were incarcerated, with some spending as much as two years in prison within the framework of pre-trial investigation. The case was dismissed in 1899, but the most prominent members of the New Current, Pliekšāns, Stučka and Jansons-Brauns, were punished with deportation to central Russia, while Roziņš, Valters, Ernests Rolavs and others managed to flee abroad. From that moment until the end of the First World War, the activities of Latvian social democracy were geographically split; some activists were in the Baltics, while others were abroad and helped to bring illegal literature into Latvia, particularly from Great Britain and Switzerland. The social democrats who still lived in the Baltics were primarily busy with matters of practical organisation, recruiting workers and organising strikes, whereas the social democrats abroad could devote more time to theoretical work and debates about conceptual issues regarding social democracy. The first Latvian social democratic publications were also launched abroad. As early as 1898, the émigré Dāvids Bundža in Boston began to publish *Auseklis*; a year later, the newspaper *Latviešu Strādnieks* began publishing in London.

The Latvian social democrats had a variety of influences and role models in the West, above all in Germany. This was natural, not only because most of the New Current had an excellent command of German, but also because German social democracy and the SPD were the centre of attention of leftist democratic parties throughout Europe. Such figures as August Bebel, Karl Kautsky, Karl Liebknecht and others were not only symbols of the mobilisation of German workers under the leadership of the Social Democrats but also a political success: the SPD in Wilhelmine Germany had acquired notable political influence in spite of Bismarck's Sozialistengesetz, and its progress to power seemed inevitable. It was in this context that the SPD's Erfurt Programme was drawn up in 1892, from which the Latvian social democrats drew liberally. Confidence in the imminent victory of the workers by democratic – that is, electoral – means, an inevi-

table collapse of capitalism in the near future, the achievement of a new social order by peaceful and democratic means, all these postulates of the Erfurt programme gained popularity as so-called 'Second International Marxism'. The Latvian social democrats, for whom the greatest intellectual authority was Karl Kautsky, were no exception.

At the same time it would be a mistake to deny the ties of Latvian social democrats with Russian social democrats and the Russian Social Democratic Workers Party (RSDRP), although the latter were also directly influenced by the Germans. Their collaboration was based on an obvious commonality of interests. Even if the German Social Democrats were right and capitalism was doomed, the Russian situation was radically different. Despite its police regime, Germany was a country under the rule of law and a more or less constitutional parliamentary monarchy, whereas Russia at the end of the nineteenth century was an autocracy without even an illusory representation of the people or state-guaranteed human rights and freedoms. Latvian and Russian social democrats alike were confined to the underground; in accordance with Marxist theory, it was at a different stage of development: while bourgeois democratic revolutions had already taken place in Western Europe, Russia was yet to experience one, whereby a parliament and protection of human rights would be established. Thus Russian and Latvian social democrats shared a common enemy: Tsarist autocracy. This is not to imply, however, that Latvian social democracy saw itself only as a part of Russian social democracy. Quite the opposite: according to contemporary observers, Latvian social democracy at the turn of the twentieth century was sceptical of the Russians' low level of organisation and lack of unity. At least until 1906, when the LSDSP and the RSDRP united in the revolutionary aftermath, relations between Russian and Latvian social democrats were symmetrical instead of hierarchical.

The path toward the establishment of the LSDSP in 1904 ran along two parallel tracks; one was located abroad, the other in Latvia. First, not long after the destruction of the New Current, the exiles who had escaped from Russia established the Western European Association of Latvian Social Democrats in London; because of its small size and weak organizational structure it had yet to be called a party. This group, which

published *Latviešu Strādnieks*, was split in 1900 into 'Londoners' (Roziņš, Fricis Vesmanis, Hermanis Punga) and 'the Swiss' (Miķelis Valters, Emīls Skubiķis, Ernests Rolavs); the first were more orthodox Marxists, whereas the others interpreted social democracy more freely, synthesising it with the tradition of Russian Narodniks. The groups were in conflict both in terms of ideology (the national question; acceptability of terrorism; tasks of the socialist press) and with regard to purely practical matters, above all the ownership of the printing press set up by the Association in London. This caused the group led by Roziņš to be expelled from the Association in 1900 and later to launch their publication, *Sociāldemokrāts*; the Swiss group retained the name of the Association but was forced to do without its own regular publication until 1903 when, with support from the United States, it participated in publishing the newspaper *Proletāriets*. The Association existed alongside the party as a competitive yet incomparably weaker organization, mostly made up of intellectuals and only weakly tied to the Latvian working class.

Parallel to the events in London and Zurich, workers in Latvia were mobilising and self-organising. An increasing number of former agricultural workers were coming to the urban centres Riga, Jelgava and Liepāja hoping to find work in factories; a workers' movement was launched in cities and towns, representing itself with increasing confidence in relations with factory owners and local authorities. Strikes and boycotts gradually became a normal part of industrial relations. Sometimes confrontations turned violent; the most striking incident was the so-called Riga mutiny in May 1899, during which the conflict between the owners of the Flax and Jute Factory and their female workers escalated into chaotic unrest in the entire city, lasting several days. The social democrats managed to take on the leadership role in the workers' movement, which was no easy task, as several socialist organizations were vying for influence among the workers. The most numerous was the Baltic Latvian Social Democratic Workers Organization (BLSDSO), represented abroad with the aforementioned London group with its publication *Sociāldemokrāts* and with Pēteris Stučka as an author from his exile in Russia. In Riga, however, RSDRP members were active, primarily among Russian workers, as was the Latvian Social Democratic Association, supported from Switzerland by

Valters and Rolavs. Among Jewish workers and craftsmen, the Jewish Workers' Association or 'Bund' was active. There was no hostility among these organisations at this time: their borders were often vague and they were in contact through specific individuals. The social democratic organizations had varied international contacts as well. Thus Skubiķis and Rolavs in Switzerland helped Lenin to illegally get the newspaper *Iskra* across the German–Russian border in Courland. A fascinating case that has been little covered in the literature was the so-called Koenigsberg Conspiracy of 1904. In Koenigsberg in East Prussia, German citizens were put on trial for smuggling banned literature to Russia, despite the fact that none of the articles in question was banned in Germany. Latvian social democrats living abroad were involved in the case as witnesses and the German SPD (Karl Liebknecht, August Bebel and so on) used this widely publicised case to discredit both despotism in Russia and the upper echelons in Germany for aiding the Russian secret police in its fight against the social democrats.

In June 1904 the Latvian Social Democratic Workers Party was established, uniting various social democratic organisations. At the moment of founding the organisation had a membership of 2,500, most of whom were based in the largest Baltic industrial centres.³ The nucleus of crystallisation was the BLSDSO, represented at the time by prominent Latvian social democrats Roziņš (Āzis), Jansons-Brauns and Jānis Ozols (Zars). Stučka, Vilis Dermanis and Jānis Lutens (Bobis) also participated in the Congress. The so-called Courland Group, with Pauls and Klāra Kalniņš as the most senior members, also joined the party. In terms of the programme, the First Congress of the LSDSP discussed a document ideologically akin to the SPD's Erfurt Programme but also emphasising the need for political struggle against Russia's autocracy. In 1904, the main illegal newspaper of the LSDSP, *Cīņa*, began publishing. In contrast to the *Sociāldemokrāts* printed abroad it already possessed features of mass propaganda.

In 1905 the newly established LSDSP played a leading role. The outbreak of the revolution was the consequence of many coinciding factors, among them the protract-

3. Miške V. et al. *Latvijas Komunistiskās partijas vēstures apcerējumi. Latvijas KP CK Partijas vēstures institūts – PSKP CK Marksisma-ļeņinisma institūta filiāle*; (Vol. 3), Rīga, Latvijas Valsts izdevniecība, 1961–1981, Vol. 3, p. 74.

ed economic crisis, the failures of the Tsarist army in the Russo-Japanese War, as well as recklessness and criminal disregard resulting in shooting at a peaceful workers' demonstration in St Petersburg on 9 January. In Latvia, which was one of the most industrialised and highly educated regions of the Empire, these events resonated widely. Immediately after 9 January the LSDSP organised a general strike, which kept expanding. On 13 January, the tsarist gendarmes shot at a workers' demonstration on the Daugava Embankment by the Iron Bridge, killing some 70 people, many of whom were members of the LSDSP. As the strikes spread, workers managed to win many economic benefits: a shorter working day, higher pay, inclusion of workers' representatives in enterprise management and so on. Gradually, the protest movement spread to the countryside: farmhands organised strikes and renters refused to pay rent to the local landlord. The government was also petitioned to improve the situation of farmers. The LSDSP was at the helm of these processes, working within the so-called Federal Committee together with local representatives of the Bund and the RSDRP. The membership of the LSDSP also grew rapidly: at the time of the Second LSDSP Congress in June 1905, the party counted some 10,000 members.⁴

A new turning point was 17 October 1905 when the famous Tsar's manifesto, which proclaimed a quasi-constitution, led to the kind of widespread political activity the Baltic public had never before seen. It involved a whole range of participants, from social democrats to monarchists and the aristocracy. But only the social democrats had wide support among the underprivileged classes and a notable mass organisation. One of the gains from the manifesto was the guarantee of freedom of expression and association, which was immediately put to the test as the social democrats published in the legal press and organised mass events. Their membership had grown to 15–18,000.⁵ In these 'days of freedom' in the autumn of 1905, a number of events crucial for Latvian democracy took place, to a great extent under LSDSP guidance and control. On 10–15 November, the Congress of Latvian Elementary School Teachers took place, while on

4. *LKP 25 gadi. Rakstu un materiālu krājums. Kongresu, konferenču un CK svarīgākie lēmumi un rezolūcijas*, Moscow, Prometejs, 1929, p. 39.

5. *LKP vēstures apcerējumi, op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 118

19–20 November it was the turn of the Congress of Municipality Delegates from Livonia and Courland (Vidzeme and Kurzeme). The latter had an important role in the development of Latvian democracy because it was based on newly elected democratic local government organisations, the so-called action committees, which were charged with the task of governing independently of the local administrations controlled by the Tsarist government and aristocratic landowners. It also provided experience of extensive, consolidated action: the Riga general strikes were the largest in the Russian Empire.

It would be a mistake to idealise the course of the revolution of 1905 and the role the LSDSP played in it. Robberies and murders often took place under the banner of social democracy; a large number of cultural treasures were destroyed. At the same time, just as in any other revolution, it provided Latvians with a valuable experience in freedom and self-confidence in organising their own lives. The revolution was suppressed in a lengthy and bloody reaction: as early as November 1905, there were attempts to introduce martial law in Livonia; the LSDSP responded by organising a general strike. In spite of internal opposition, the party resisted launching a united armed uprising, even when, in December 1905, such an uprising was already taking place in Moscow. As a result, there were scattered local armed clashes with Latvian revolutionaries on one side and the local German self-defence or Selbstschutz units and Tsarist forces on the other. The latter managed to suppress the unrest, which was followed by merciless revenge that took the form of so-called punitive expeditions: the burning of houses, arrests, torture, shooting suspects for 'attempting to flee' and so on. The LSDSP lost a number of selfless and energetic members. Many escaped abroad or went underground. Under these conditions, in the summer of 1906, the party made the decision to join ranks with the RSDRP, becoming the Social Democracy of Latvia (LSD, *Социалдемократия Латышского Края*) as an autonomous unit inside it. This meant closer integration with the RSDRP, participating in its congresses and cooperating in agitation and propaganda. As is obvious from the very name, the LSD was a territorial organisation (while the LSDSP was national), and thus it had to collaborate with non-Latvian organisations active in Latvia. For instance, the Jewish Bund was active in Riga, as was the local chapter of the RSDRP, headed for some time by Maksim Litvinov, who later became the Soviet

People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs during the Stalin era. At the same time, up until the First World War, the LSD retained a remarkable degree of autonomy: it had its own press organs and internal polemics with an agenda that was largely different from that of the RSDRP.

Participation in the RSDRP, however, brought into the Latvian milieu the antagonism between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks that had plagued Russian social democracy since 1903. Even though the LSD itself did not split until 1917, the ideological debate was often influenced by Russians. The doctrinal differences between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks are difficult to describe briefly. The Bolsheviks primarily supported a smaller but more consolidated and ideologically united party, while the Mensheviks preferred more pluralism and democracy within the party. Most of the Mensheviks were for cooperation with bourgeois parties, including liberals, various petty bourgeois and peasant socialists (Socialists-Revolutionaries, anarchists and so on) and various ethnic parties, whereas the Bolsheviks considered such cooperation a threat to the interests of the proletariat and susceptible to covert bourgeois sabotage. As far as political struggle was concerned, there was another fundamental difference: while the Mensheviks generally supported a gradual struggle within legal boundaries, for example, in the parliament and legal associations, the Bolsheviks insisted on the need for armed proletarian revolution. After the revolution of 1905 the debate focused on the fate of the illegal party: the Mensheviks called for its liquidation, for under the conditions of 'pseudo-constitutional monarchy' it would be better to make use of the opportunities inherent in legal struggle – for instance, in the Duma established by the Manifesto of 17 October – the legal press and the trade unions rather than constantly risk arrest and remain in conflict with the authorities. The Bolsheviks, on the other hand, called for preserving the illegal party as a fighting organisation for the coming revolution, which, in their view, was inevitable. The legal possibilities were to be used for agitation, but the core of the party was to remain illegal.

These differences were reflected among the Latvian social democrats. The LSD was successful in its legal activities: overall, the party did well in the Duma election.

JĀNIS PLIEKŠĀNS, PENNAME 'RAINIS' (1865–1929)



Rainis as the editor of *Dienas Lapa*. Riga 1893.
Photo: J. Golvers. Collection of the Literature
and Music Museum.

Fatherland Lovers

*Those who love the land of our fathers, have a place,
To shelter from the rain and sleep at night;
They feast on bread, have a peaceful mind,
When darkness reigns, they have no fear.
But alas! Those who are more ardent in their love, –
They become an anvil for the sledgehammer of fate,
They suffer all the pain inflicted on the fatherland –
With no poetic feeling they are hammered to the wall,
Their hands, so tightly bound, are tied to that native wall.*

From the book of poetry *Tālas noskaņas zilā vakarā*, 1903.

Poet, translator, playwright and arguably the outstanding Latvian writer of all time, he was one of the first popularisers of Marxism in Latvia, editor of *Dienas Lapa* (1893–1895), and member of the LSDSP from 1904. In 1897, at the trial of the New Current, he was punished by exile to central Russia. Upon his return to Latvia, Rainis was an active participant in the Revolution of 1905, including as a fighter. In December 1905 he emigrated to Switzerland, where, alongside prolific literary work, also he participated in the communal life of the émigré Latvian social democrats. Even though Rainis wrote political essays as well, his most outstanding contribution to Latvian public life was his literary work – both his social, critical and revolutionary poetry, the play *Fire and Night*, first staged in the atmosphere of 1905, and later, during the war, the epic poem *Daugava*. As a writer, Rainis did not follow a consistent political doctrine, but all of his life he held leftist, at times even radical, political views in combination with concerns for the development of Latvian language and culture.

In 1919 Rainis returned to Latvia together with his wife, the poet Aspazija, and was elected, from the LSDSP ballot, to the Constitutional Assembly. An active contributor to drafting the Constitution, the party several times put his name forward for the post of president. From 1921 to 1925, Rainis was the director of the National Theatre and, in Mārgers Skujenieks' 'leftist' government (1926–1928), he held the post of Minister of Education. Because of his popularity, Rainis represented a very important resource for social democracy; his speeches at the Saeima are among the most brilliant parliamentary speeches in the Latvian language.

It did not participate in the very first election in spring 1906 because it was impossible for it to mobilise voters under the conditions of post-revolutionary terror. LSD member Jānis Ozols was elected to the second convocation of the Duma in early 1907 and submitted interpellations on torture and other activities of punitive expeditions in the Baltics. When the Second Duma was dissolved and voting rights substantially limited, social democrat Andrejs Priedkalns was elected to the third Duma. The illegal party in the meantime suffered several substantial attacks from the authorities, with resulting difficulties for its work. In 1907 and 1908, many Riga social democrats were arrested. In 1908 and 1909, the police arrested all of the participants in the LSD Riga conference; similar actions were undertaken in Liepāja and Ventspils. Several illegal printing presses were confiscated and the publishing of *Cīņa* was moved abroad. Party congresses, similarly to the RSDRP general congresses, were organised abroad as a result of repressions. In 1911 there was an attempt to organise a congress in Helsingfors (present-day Helsinki), but when the police caught on, the congress was held three years later, in 1914 in Brussels. In the meantime, several party members from intelligentsia circles took an active part in the polemics in the legal press, sometimes discussing political issues in a veiled way, including historical materialism and the role of Latvian intelligentsia.

The LSD spent the pre-war years under Menshevik leadership, which had no particular hopes of any resumed revolutionary unrest and called for the exploration of legal activities in associations, educating workers and other low key activities. Some party groups (for example, Riga IV, the so-called Alexander Gate district) were closer to the Bolsheviks, but up to the fourth congress of the LSD in April 1914, the Mensheviks dominated the central committee of the party. They were also the ones that expressed the LSD's condemnation of Lenin's purely Bolshevik Prague Conference of 1912 as illegitimate. The main points of contention between the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks was the attitude towards the so-called 'liquidators' – that is, those who wanted to limit the work of the illegal party and did not insist on organising a revolution – and conditions for reuniting the RSDRP. The LSD's fourth congress in June 1914, in which Lenin took part as a guest, was a turning point: the Bolshevik position took the upper hand,

with the question of the relationship between the LSD and the Bolshevik and Menshevik factions of the RSDRP put to one side for the moment. The majority of Latvian social democrats decided to follow Lenin, while not agreeing to merge with the Bolshevik party. In conclusion, we can say that despite the plurality of opinions and the influence of the fundamentally split Russian party, the LSD managed to retain unity until 1917 when the war and the revolution in Russia gave rise to a completely novel situation.



Rainis speaks at the LSDSP congress. 1925. Photo: KLIO (Vilis Rīdzenieks).

2 | SOCIAL DEMOCRACY AND STATEHOOD



To understand the relationship of Latvian social democrats to statehood generally and to a sovereign Latvian nation-state in particular it is necessary to touch briefly upon the theory of social democracy. Marxism views the political development of humankind from an economic aspect: how people live at a certain point in time is determined by the existing productive forces and their interaction with the relations of production, first of all, ownership relations. Statehood and politics are subject to the economy and in every society political power lies with the ruling class, those who control the means of production (land, factories and so on). Even Western European liberal, constitutional states of the nineteenth century first and foremost acted in the interests of the ruling class, namely the bourgeoisie: although formally it declared people to be free and equal, in reality the interests of the bourgeoisie prevailed. When the transition from a bourgeois regime to a socialist one eventually took place, the system would inevitably change as well. The bourgeois constitutional state based on private property would be replaced by a workers' republic, which, for the first time in history, would act not in the interests of the moneyed few but in those of the working majority: private property would be abolished, goods would be distributed justly and everyone's needs would be tended to, without discrimination. The political views of the social democrats do not make sense without taking into account progress. It was firmly believed that the existing political system would not last forever and sooner or later would be replaced by a more just one, in which democracy would no longer be merely formally political but also social.

The development of social democracy in the nineteenth century coincided with the emergence of various nationalist ideologies. The social democrats, however, viewed the future in international terms. The contradictions between nations caused by nationalist ideology, according to social democrats, was an instrument used by the bourgeoisie to subjugate the working class. It created an illusion about the seeming unity of interests between the bourgeoisie and the working class, but in reality the Polish proletariat, for example, had much more in common with the German proletariat than with the Polish bourgeoisie. Capitalism itself had become cosmopolitan: it flowed across borders, looking for new profits everywhere in the world. For that reason, all the self-conscious

workers of all nations should unite in a common struggle against global capitalism (hence the famous slogan 'Workers of the world, unite!'), instead of harbouring any illusions about national solidarity with their fellow countrymen in the bourgeoisie. As will be made clear below, practice inevitably amended this pure theory. Nationalism for the social democrats was inevitably bourgeois: the 'national unity' propagated by bourgeois ideologues de facto worked for the benefit of the privileged classes.

At the same time, it was important that social democracy was international, instead of anti-national or cosmopolitan; in other words, that it did not deny the right of individual nations to retain their own language and culture. To preserve the latter, however, the isolated nation-state was supposedly not necessary. On the contrary, country borders were needed by the local bourgeoisie to be able to mercilessly exploit the internal market; when people lived in a free proletarian republic there would be no need for such separation and such republics would be able to enjoy being part of a free federal union. This train of thought requires a more detailed explanation. In today's Europe, we have accepted 'small is beautiful' as a norm; in other words, that even small nation-states can be economically efficient and politically successful (sometimes forgetting that the success of these countries is actually guaranteed by their integration with international organisations, such as the EU). But at the end of the nineteenth century, when social democracy developed, the proliferation of small nation-states was considered a peculiarity, perhaps even a reactionary return to feudal fragmentation. Moreover, it was a view not limited to the social democrats. The expansion of capitalism fostered the development of large and increasingly integrated spaces: the British Empire was the most influential in the world, but even Europe itself saw the establishment of the German Empire and a united Italy in the second half of the 19th century. Social democrats, who saw the world in social and economic categories, did not feel that each ethnos should also have its own nation state. For that reason, a number of social democrats in, say, Germany or Great Britain were bona fide imperialists: they may have supported solidarity among the working people, yet the self-enclosure of these working people in their own national cubby holes seemed pointless. After all, the future promised the establishment of the global socialist federation.

At the same time, social democrats at the turn of the twentieth century had to acknowledge nationalism as an important factor in mobilisation, even among working people. Karl Marx had no sympathy for the movements of 'national self-determination', but his most influential follower, Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov-Lenin took this factor most seriously. With this in mind, the Russian social democrats at the very start included people's right to self-determination – including the right to separate from Russia – in their programme. In time, this right to self-determination was subject to many different interpretations, but it is important to view it in context. First of all, any means were deemed acceptable in the fight against Russian autocracy. If the national movement in, say, the forever restless Poland, weakened the Tsar's autocracy, then the social democrats would support it. The question arises of what was to be considered a 'people', however. For Lenin, it was first and foremost the proletariat, not the nationalist bourgeoisie and intelligentsia. Peoples of course were not supposed to use their right to self-determination to establish a bourgeois republic. Rather it was in their interest to establish democratic proletarian republics, which would then have no desire to separate from other democratic proletarian republics, with which they shared a common goal, to develop a socialist society. In other words, the right to self-determination asserted by social democrats was to be understood only in the context of their programme and not as an unlimited right to separate.

The application of social democratic theories to the context of Latvia and the Latvians was of course specific. The New Current had, on one hand, arisen from the Latvian nationalist movement and saw itself as promoting its emancipatory ideals. The official Latvian nationalism, represented by the RLB had, according to the New Current, lost its social critical dimension and interest in the fates of unprivileged Latvians. It had become self-satisfied, conformist and bourgeois. On the other hand, the New Current shared with traditional Latvian nationalism convictions about the future of Latvians within Russia: the leaders of the national movement (Fricis Veinbergs, Aleksandrs Vēbers and so on) saw Latvia as an autonomous province in a liberalised empire, but gradually its participants began to consider transforming the empire into a socialist federation, although naturally dependent on developments in Europe, above all in Germany.

The first open polemics on the future of Latvians began in the London-based newspaper *Latviešu Strādnieks* in 1899, with Fricis Roziņš and Miķelis Valters, both born in Liepāja and both escapees from Russian prisons, weighing in. Miķelis Valters saw the budding Latvian social democratic movement as a continuation of the former Latvian national movement, wherein the proletariat had inherited the mission of liberating the Latvian people: 'if previously its enemy was the German Lutheran minister, estate manager or Burgher, now it is the Latvian Burgher'. Roziņš, on the other hand, was a strict internationalist, asserting that 'a social democratic workers' movement is national in form, not in content'.⁶ Latvians were to fight their own national bourgeoisie but, as socialism was achieved, national differences would become meaningless.

This text from 1900 already shows the differences between the later 'party-ists' (partijnieki) and 'associationists' (savienībnieki); the former were strict internationalists, whereas the latter, particularly their main ideologue Valters, had a very broad understanding of social democracy and attempted to synthesise it with various other currents. In his article 'Down with Autocracy! Down with Russia!' of 1903, published in the relatively little-known 'associationist' journal *Proletāriets* Valters for the first time proposes the break up of Russia as the most efficient way of fighting against autocracy:

'You need your self-respect and not only for yourself; you must fight for your personal freedom and it is for the benefit of all peoples living in Russia', we say to everyone. We have to say this to all the peoples of Russia: 'establish your self-respect, recognise your personality, your essence, break out of Russia, foster divisionary trends in Russia, for it is for the benefit of all peoples and citizens of Russia; expand the corral of your freedom, try to be a master of your fate, learn self-organisation, self-government, self-judgment, be a lawmaker yourself'.⁷

6. Valters, M. ['M.W.'], 1900, 'Iz latviešu sadzīves', *Latviešu Strādnieks*, No. 5, pp. 151–162; Roziņš, F. ['A.'], 1900, 'Tauta un tēzeme', *Latviešu Strādnieks*, No. 5 (April).

7. Valters, M., 1903, 'Patvaldību nost! Krieviju nost!', *Proletāriets, Politikas un Zinātnes laikraksts*, No. 11, pp. 65–67.

According to Valters, classic social democracy did not have a positive programme for national self-determination. It was to be found in the concept of republican self-organisation. After its founding, the LSDSP also tackled the national question. When, in June 1905, the first LSDSP programme was adopted, it demanded, when 'a democratic republic of Russia is established, self-determination rights for all peoples that live within the borders of the current Russian state'.⁸ At the same time, this demand was not expanded on, given that the political demands of the congress focused on a radical democratisation of Russia, civic freedoms and the abolition of classes, as well as an eight-hour working day and insurance for workers, among other things. In general, the LSDSP recognised peoples' rights to self-determination while not seeing them as a means of separating Latvia from Russia. The 'proletarian nationalism' of the 'associationists' was suspected of having a petty bourgeois bent.

That is not to say that the LSDSP was not aware of its national peculiarity. After all, it was founded as a Latvian party and was not going to deny this. This becomes apparent when one reviews the discussions of 1904–1905 on the relationship between the LSDSP and the RSDRP: should it take the form of a union or a federation? Even the subsequent Latvian Bolsheviks – for example, Pēteris Stučka – supported a federative arrangement, similar to the one the Jewish Bund maintained with the RSDRP.⁹ In other words, the LSDSP was taking shape as an internationalist party of ethnic Latvians.

Social demands were undeniably at the centre of the revolution of 1905. Several documents testify to demands for national cultural rights, however, for instance, to resume education in Latvian in elementary schools. The LSDSP social democrats also demanded broad autonomy for Latvia within Russia. The congress of municipality delegates – numbering about 1,000 people – that was convened on 19–20 November, met with the widest response.¹⁰ At the congress local government reforms were discussed, given that it was only logical if in the future they led to the establishment of an auton-

8. LKP 25 gadi. p. 41.

9. Stučka, P., 1904, 'Vienība vai federācija', *Sociāldemokrāts*, No. 24, pp. 1–24.

10. Sk. Longworth, J., 1959, *Latvian Congress of the Rural Delegates*, Northeast European Archives.

omous Latvia, including Latgalia or 'Vitebsk Latvia', whose delegates also took part in the congress. On the other hand, this autonomy project, although widely discussed, was never formulated or adopted; the expectations for the future were too optimistic.

During the revolution the Association, whose members were mostly from the intelligentsia, was also active, albeit on a smaller scale. Alongside Valters, Rolavs and Skubiķis, its membership (or at least strong supporters) in 1905 also included Jānis Akurāters, Jānis Poruks, Apsesdēls, Kārlis Dišlers, Kārlis Skalbe, Eduards Treimanis (Zvārgulis) and other well-known Latvian intellectuals. In terms of autonomy, the demands put forth by the LSS in December 1905 were more radical. On one hand, the Association called for the immediate convening of a Russian Constitutional Assembly to turn the empire into 'a free people's democratic republic with direct legislation'. On the other hand, *de facto* sovereignty was demanded for Latvia:

5. The entire land inhabited by Latvians – Courland, Southern Livonia and Inflantia [Latgalia] – should be united in a single self-governed region, Latvia, with full self-determination in the internal life of this region.

6. Self-determination rights should be conferred on the entire citizenship of Latvia, irrespective of gender, religion and ethnicity.

7. Latvia's self-determination rights should be expressed: a) in the autonomy of its legislation, that is, the work of its separate parliament and decision-making through all inhabitants of Latvia; b) in the autonomy of its executive actions or autonomy of governing and justice, that is, in electing authorities and oversight of institutions.¹¹

Be that as it may, the revolution and the ensuing reaction fostered the current of centralism in Latvian social democracy. In 1906, the LSDSP joined the RSDRP and was

11. Latviešu sociāldemokrātu savienības pirmais vispārējais Kongress, noturēts Rīgā, 29. un 30. decembrī 1905. g. (brochure) Riga, 1905, p. 5.

territorially renamed 'Latvian Social Democracy'. The LSS also formally joined the Russian Socialists-Revolutionaries (or SRs), but the most prominent members had already abandoned the Association. The intellectuals returned to their peacetime professions and reflections while the radical terrorists continued their underground activities as part of the Russian social revolutionary fighters' organisations.¹²

Leftist Latvian politics resumed the national theme only on the brink of the Great War, when two Latvian intellectuals published their reflections in book form: the LSD Menshevik Mārgers Skujenieks issued *The National Question in Latvia* (1914) and the 'associationist' Mīkēlis Valters *The Democracy of Latvian Culture, Its Forces and Tasks* (1913). These works did not so much offer positive programmes as express dissatisfaction with the dominant a-national, internationalist current among the social democrats. Both were attempts to rehabilitate the national question in the eyes of Latvian democratic circles, freeing it both from the conformism of the Riga Latvian Society and from the national nihilism of the Bolsheviks. Skujenieks followed the then popular Austromarxist (Otto Bauer and Karl Renner) tradition: the proletariat should take on the development of the national language and culture because only through them could it hope to improve its situation. Culture should become the property of the unprivileged working class, preventing a monopoly of the upper classes and bourgeoisie over cultural development:

If even now large numbers of workers are robbed of the chance to take advantage of cultural gains, an unmistakable trend is still obvious: the democratisation of culture and thus also the nation. While in the Middle Ages, culture was an advantage of the clergy and, later, also of the aristocracy and later still the bourgeoisie joined these groups, now ever larger masses make use of culture. Modern capitalism is making great strides in bringing people to democratisation. When we regard a people as a process, then we can talk about it as a community united by a common culture. Workers are the main democratisers of the nation; the evolutionary-national politics of the working

12. See, for example, Pumpuriņš, T., 2005, 'Terora lielmeistars – Alberts Traubergs no Cēsīm', *Informācija, revolūcija, reakcija 1905.–2005. Starptautiskās konferences materiāli*. Rīga, Latvijas Nacionālā bibliotēka, 2005, pp. 134–40.

MARGERS SKUJENIEKS (1886–1941)



Mārgers Skujenieks. The 1920s. Photo: Mārtiņš Lapiņš. Collection of the National History Museum of Latvia.

Politician, statistician and essayist, he was one of the most prominent social democrats and supporters of Latvian independence. Skujenieks joined the social democrats even before the Revolution of 1905. As a skilful statistician, he argued for Latvia's autonomy, emphasising the mutual interaction rather than antagonism between the national and class principles. His main source of inspiration was Austromarxism and the works of Otto Bauer. During the First World War, Skujenieks was active in securing provisions for Latvian refugees and, along with other social democratic Mensheviks, in developing plans for Latvia's autonomy. As a member of the Democratic Bloc, he had a decisive role in aligning various interests as the Republic of Latvia was proclaimed in November 1918. As of 18 November, Skujenieks was the deputy of the Chairman of the National Council, Jānis Čakste.

Later, Skujenieks's career reflected the different fates of social democrats in Latvian politics. In 1921 Skujenieks and 18 other MPs broke off from the LSDSP faction to form their own 'Social Democratic Minority Party'. Later, under the name of Progressive Association, it gradually lost its influence. Skujenieks headed two governments, including the so-called 'left' government with the participation of the LSDSP, gradually drifting to the right and acquiring a slightly chauvinistic stance.

In 1934 Skujenieks, as a 'socialist' popular among the people, was included in Ulmanis' authoritarian cabinet as deputy prime minister, but he abandoned that post in 1938 because of internal discord within the government. In 1940, after Latvia was occupied by the Soviets, he was arrested, taken to Moscow and shot on 12 July 1941 in the Lubyanka prison.

Let us take a look at the workers. Do they, in protecting their economic interests, give up their national goals? Not at all. In improving their economic position, workers acquire the potential to turn into cultural people and fuller members of the cultural community of their nation. (...) There is no contradiction between the interests of the working class and those aspirations that he should foster as a member of an unprivileged nation. It is the class struggle that can bring the entire nation to culture and promote the growth of its cultural power. For that reason, the attempts by workers to make it easier for the entire nation to access national treasures are an important part of national politics and are more significant than the opportunistic Realpolitik of the petty bourgeois.

M.S., *Nacionālais jautājums Latvijā*, St Petersburg, A. Gulbis, 1913, p. 132.

class, says O. Bauer, is no impediment to the development of the nation's character but rather an attempt to transform the people into a nation.¹³

Skujenieks activated the national question in the context of the reforms of the self-government of Baltic *gubernias*, in which once again an attempt was made to replace the regional assemblies with zemstvos. He argued for the autonomy of Latvia (including Latgalia), emphasising its Western European character and suggested that it develop democratically elected local government and expand Latvian language rights. National autonomy did not mean the disappearance of classes among Latvians; it meant opportunities for the lower classes – that is, workers – to develop and catch up with others. Skujenieks called this approach 'an evolutionary national politics'.

Miķelis Valters also talked about national autonomy as a precondition for cultural development, albeit without specifying what political institutions would be necessary to achieve this goal:

In other words, our various cultural institutions will be able to develop successfully only if they are based on the bloc of all Latvian cultural strata, beginning with the far left wing and ending with those liberals that have not clouded their minds to the extent that they fail to see that the internal structure of our people itself is a democratic bloc. [...] But a cultural movement that in our circumstances would want to be satisfied with everyday petty cultural questions would find itself on the wrong path. [...] Our cultural issues are much broader because they want to lay down the most indispensable forms as a foundation for cultural work as a whole.¹⁴

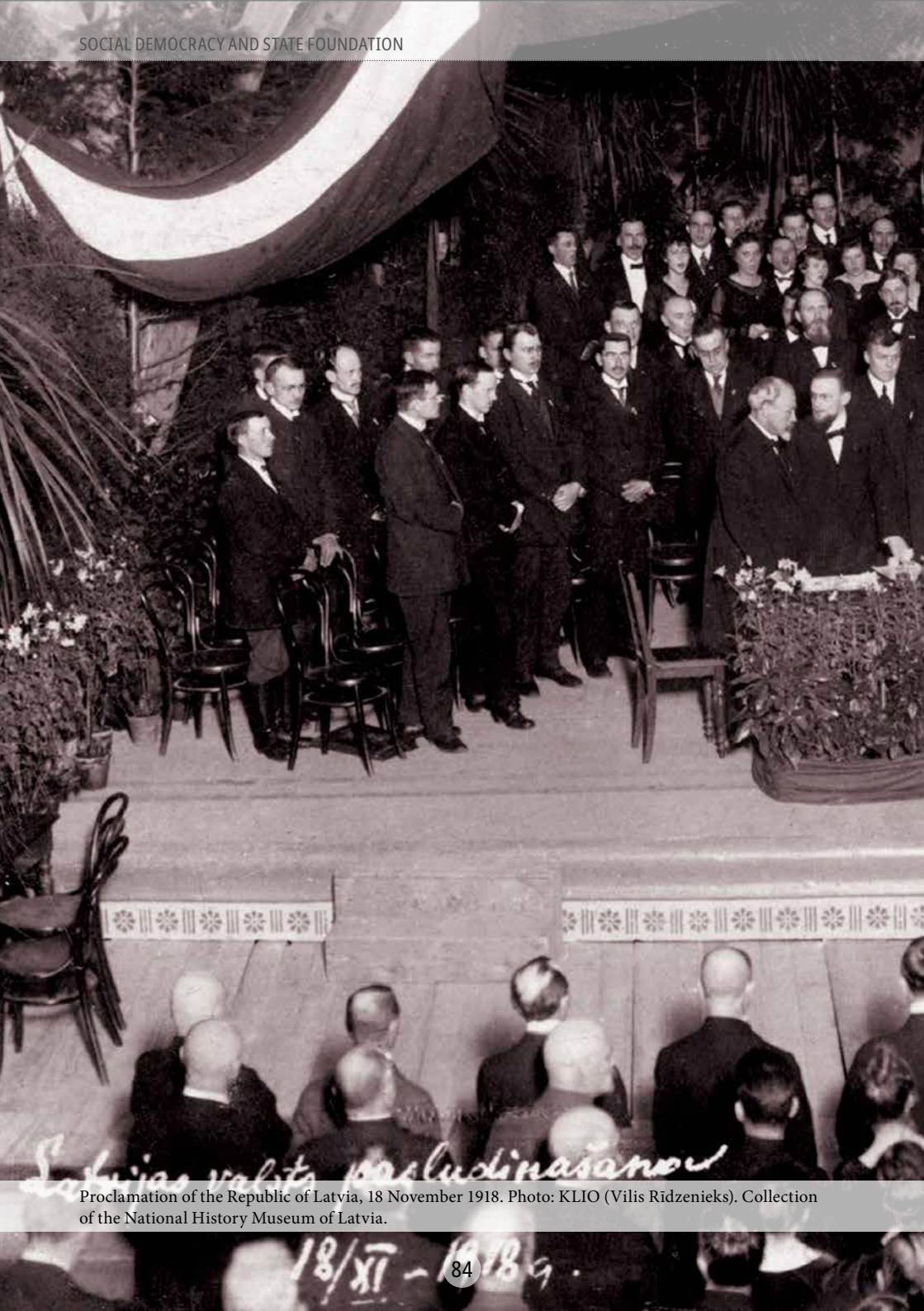
In any case, before the First World War, increasing interest in the problems of national autonomy was observed in Latvian leftist democratic circles and a desire to seek

13. Skujenieks, M., 1914, *Nacionālais jautājums Latvijā*, St Petersburg, A. Gulbis, 1914, p. 15.

14. Valters, M., 1913, *Latviešu kultūras demokrātija, viņas spēki un uzdevumi*, Rīga, Valters un Rapa, pp. 22–25.

compromises between social emancipation and Latvian cultural autonomy. National culture, self-confidence and a feeling of togetherness were increasingly understood as a resource instead of an obstacle for achieving social goals, while at the same time disassociating from the 'official' nationalism of the Riga Latvian Society.

The LSDSP had not achieved consensus regarding the issue of national autonomy. After the revolution of 1905, the internationalist trend was strong owing to the influence of Lenin and the Bolsheviks. At the same time, a substantial number of members believed that Latvian culture and autonomy were important. At that time, the public visibility of the Association had diminished and in the Party no one proposed any ideas about secession and the establishment of an independent Latvia. It should be borne in mind, however, that at the time such views were not common in the Latvian political sphere, whether among RLB-associated conservative monarchists with Fricis Veinbergs and Frīdrihs Grosvalds at the helm, or Latvian liberals rallying around Arveds Bergs and Dzimtenes Vēstnesis. From 1905, projects concerning Latvian autonomy became widely discussed under the influence of debates in the Russian Duma. Most active in this debate, however, were social democrats of various kinds – from the socialist revolutionary 'associationists' to Mensheviks and Bolsheviks. It is a remarkable fact that many of the social democratic discussions took a negative tone, as attempts to combat 'separatism' and 'nationalism'.



Latvijas valsts pasludināšana
Proclamation of the Republic of Latvia, 18 November 1918. Photo: KLIO (Vilis Rīdzenieks). Collection of the National History Museum of Latvia.

18/XI - 1918 g.



3 | SOCIAL DEMOCRACY AND 18 NOVEMBER



The war that began in August 1914 saw the LSD with Bolshevik leadership. A few months before the beginning of the war, to a great extent following the internal conflicts of the Russian party, Lenin sympathisers Jānis Lencmanis, Roberts Eihe, Jānis Šilfs-Jaunzems and others had taken over the leadership of the central committee. As the war began, they of course supported Lenin's position on 'turning the imperialist war into a civil war'. That meant using the war to foster an armed rebellion. At the same time, Mensheviks such as Voldemārs Rikveilis, Pauls and Klāra Kalniņš, Fricis Menders and others still had great authority among the membership. The Mensheviks were not united in their attitude towards the war. Most of them followed the so-called Zimmerwald internationalist path; they did not support the war (including the forming of Latvian Riflemen battalions) and called for disarmament; a minority supported the Russian troops against the German aggressor (the so-called 'oborontsy'). The war decimated the already diminished ranks of the LSD: the workers of many industrial enterprises were evacuated together with their factories to central Russia. Even before the February Revolution of 1917, a number of Mensheviks among the social democrats launched a discussion of different projects concerning Latvia's autonomy. The main worry not only of the left, but also the so-called bourgeois politicians was developments that might place Latvia under Germany; this scenario was not hard to imagine, given that Courland was already under German occupation.

When the Tsar had abdicated and chaos overtook the former power in Latvia, spontaneous attempts at self-organisation began in the part of Latvia unoccupied by the Germans. Workers' deputy councils were established in Riga and smaller towns, the United Executive Committee of Latvian Riflemen's Regiments (Iskolatstrel) and others; in many of them Mensheviks – for example, Pauls Kalniņš and Marģeris Skujenieks – were dominant. The Latvian Bolsheviks, on the other hand, were concentrated in Moscow where, after electing a new party central committee independent of the Mensheviks, they set out on the path to a final rupture. With the Bolsheviks gradually penetrating Latvia as well, the party held its congress in Riga in June 1917. The Bolshevik position predominated: instead of a gradual progression to a 'bourgeois' democracy through the election to the Russian Constitutional Assembly, the approach should be

'all power to the soviets' and an immediate socialist revolution. This was followed by lengthy spontaneous processes with elections at various levels: the LSD claimed victory in the election to the Riga City Council (electing the Menshevik Dr Pauls Kalniņš as chairman) and in the election to the Livonia regional council, in which it won the absolute majority (for the most part, Bolshevik). The Menshevik party gradually gained independence from the Bolshevik Central Committee. During this complicated period, the LSD was the dominant political choice of the majority of Latvians, and the lion's share of this support benefited the Latvian Bolsheviks. This was borne out by the elections to the Russian Constitutional Assembly that took place at the end of 1917, already after the Bolshevik coup: in Latvia, 72 per cent voted for the Bolsheviks, substantially more, on average, than in Russia. The Mensheviks remained marginalised.

At the same time, it was the Mensheviks among whom the idea of Latvian autonomy took hold. The main reason was the terror tactics adopted by the Bolsheviks, which had nothing in common with the understanding of democracy present in the tradition of democratic socialism. Menshevik Fēlikss Cielēns was active during this period; he saw autonomy (not yet independence) first and foremost as an opportunity to escape the German sphere of influence, which was a real threat, particularly after Riga fell to the Germans at the beginning of 1918. In order to gain support for such autonomy, Latvian Mensheviks got in contact with the German USPD (Independent Social Democratic Party) Reichstag deputies – for instance, Georg Ledebour and Hugo Haase – and at the same time sought, by splitting from Russia, which was now in the throes of civil war, to evade the clutches of Germany. Thus, in the summer of 1918, the LSD finally split: in May, the Bolsheviks expelled the Mensheviks from 'their' LSD, which resulted in the latter establishing their own party in June under the historical name the LSDSP.

These Latvian Mensheviks played an important role on 18 November 1918. As an eyewitness to these events, Brūno Kalniņš later remembered: ‘the struggle for democracy and Latvia’s independence set the social democrats **against** the Bolsheviks and gave rise to two parties, which later fought each other tooth and nail’.¹⁵ It would be erroneous to perceive the freshly re-established LSDSP as a nationalist organization, however. Its basic values were rather left-democratic: the establishment of a free, democratic and socially just system in Latvia’s progression towards world socialism, sometime far in the future. In 1918 Latvia’s independence seemed the best format for realising this programme, certainly better than German imperialism or the bloody terror of the Bolsheviks. For this reason, the LSDSP became fully involved in the founding of the Republic of Latvia. The Democratic Bloc (*Demokrātiskais bloks*) established in Riga in 1917 served as a platform for this initiative, uniting, alongside social democratic Mensheviks and the recently established Latvian Farmers’ Union, other, smaller Latvian democratic parties: the social revolutionaries, radical democrats, national democrats and so on. The Democratic Bloc was founded in Riga shortly after the German invasion, and the Mensheviks, such as Dr Pauls Kalniņš, Mārgers Skujenieks and Fricis Menders, took leadership positions in it. This organisation consolidated Latvian democratic forces, which understood with increasing clarity that the only possibility for a free and democratic future was an autonomous, internationally recognised Latvia.

In its quest for international recognition of Latvian interests, the Democratic Bloc sometimes found itself in conflict with another organization founded in late 1917, representing the Latvian right-wing. This was the Latvian Interim National Council (LPNP), which was active in the unoccupied part of Livonia and Petrograd, and later in the German-occupied Valka. As opposed to the Democratic Bloc, the LPNP was not formed from parties but Latvian civic organisations. Nevertheless it represented a substantial number of Latvians scattered throughout Russia and considered itself the only representative of the Latvian people. The LSDSP did not participate in the LPNP, but maintained informal contact to it. The LPNP had in its ranks some outstanding bourgeois

15. Kalniņš, B., *Latvijas sociāldemokrātijas 50 gadi*, Riga, 1993.

politicians (such as Arveds Berģs and Voldemārs Zamuēls), as well as some public intellectuals (for example, Jānis Akurāters and Kārlis Skalbe). A compromise between the LPNP and the Democratic Bloc was needed. The participation of socialists was a stumbling block for many right-wing politicians, however, making them look askance at founding the state on this basis: the LPNP majority did not want to collaborate with the socialists; even the group led by Andrievs Niedra of the Farmers Union, which was part of the Democratic Bloc, was categorically against such cooperation. The crucial role in establishing the Latvian state with the support of social democrats, who enjoyed popularity among the masses, was however played by two leaders of the Farmers Union, the former socialist and 'associationist' Miķelis Valters and the head of the Provisional Government-in-making Kārlis Ulmanis.

The National Council, which was tasked with proclaiming Latvia's independence on 18 November 1918, was a pre-parliament formed by the parties, in which the LSDSP played an important role: in its various compositions, the party accounted for about one-third of the National Council membership and Mārgers Skujenieks became vice chairman of the National Council. Of course, in participating in the founding of a 'bourgeois' or liberal democratic state, the LSDSP did not cease to consider itself socialist. This is obvious from the opinion of the LSDSP fraction expressed by Dr Pauls Kalniņš at the state proclamation meeting of 18 November:

The storms of world revolution have also given rise to the idea of a free and independent Latvia. Today, on 18 November 1918, the representatives of united Latvian democracy proclaim the founding of an independent Latvia. We, too, as representatives of the Latvian Social Democratic Workers Party, consider it necessary to foster the free Latvia developing into an independent state. The free and independent Latvia, however, is not our goal but only a means toward achieving our goals. Just as before, our foundation is the Socialist International. Its goal, and therefore our own goal, is a socialist republic in a union of free nations.¹⁶

This last phrase read out by Dr Kalniņš is often understood as proof of the ‘disloyalty’ of social democrats, in the sense of their readiness to abandon the idea of Latvian independence in the name of socialist internationalism. At the same time, we should keep in mind that the goals of the social democrats were basically of a social and economic, not a cultural nature. The LSDSP was convinced that social justice and growth could be achieved in a democratic and independent Latvia. The transition to ‘a socialist republic in a union of free nations’ was a very distant goal, when democratic and liberal Latvia would have the economic preconditions in place, instead of the results of an imminent coup as envisaged by the Bolsheviks. In this respect the LSDSP had bitter conflicts with the Latvian Bolsheviks, who had already begun to call themselves the Latvian Communist Party and were willing to establish a socialist order immediately.

In the struggle for statehood, most problematic was the withdrawal of the LSDSP from the National Council in January 1919, during the invasion from Russia by Pēteris Stučka’s Bolsheviks. This historical episode is fraught with contention: formally, the party withdrew from the National Council in protest against the Ulmanis government’s agreement with the German Freikorps, which now was supposed to fight for a democratic Latvia. Instead, the LSDSP called for a general mobilisation. It is more likely, however, that the party did not want to openly support fighting against their former

16. Meeting of the National Council, 18 November 1918, transcript.

colleagues, the Latvian Bolsheviks, because it would have had a negative effect on its reputation in the eyes of the workers and peasants who were still bolshevised to a great extent. There are no grounds for accusing the LSDSP of disloyalty to the Latvian state: the party never considered any kind of collaboration with Stučka, and its opposition to Bolshevik dictatorship was principled.

The LSDSP returned to the National Council after the so-called 'Manteuffel putsch' on 16 April 1919, when the German army and the so-called Iron Division arrested Ulmanis' provisional government and established the pro-German Niedra/Vankin cabinet. LSDSP members at this time were in the first ranks of the defenders of democratic Latvia, participating in the War of Independence. The Party also actively rallied its membership to fight against Pavel Bermond-Avalov's West Russian Volunteer Army, which tried to eliminate Ulmanis' government in Autumn 1919. Several of the LSDSP leaders were awarded the Order of Lāčplēsis.



Pirmās Saeimas zot

Sēž no kreisā

Rainis,

P. Kalniņš,

Cielens,

Dēķens,

Lorencs,

stāv no kreisā

Rainis together with the members of the Social Democratic Party at the first Saeima (the Latvian parliament), 1922. Photo: Mārtiņš Lapīns. Collection of Literature and Music Museum.

Gulbis, Maizels, Morics, Ozoliņš, M. Kalniņš, Br. Kalniņš, Dukurs, Veck



4 | THE LSDSP AND THE INDEPENDENT STATE



socialdemokrātu frakcija.

s uz labo:

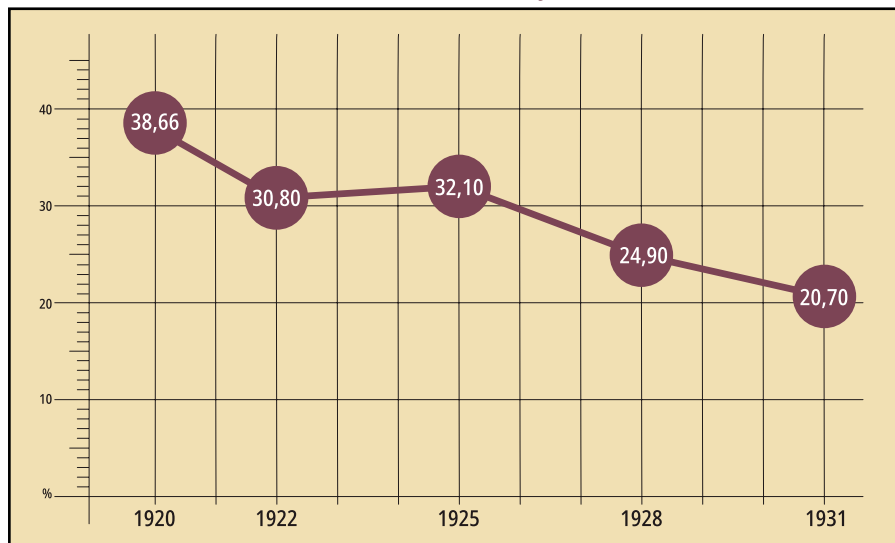
Bastjānis, Ulpe, Bungš, Rozentāls, Kalejs.

s uz labo:

kalns, Lejins, Rudzis, Zeibolts, Menders, Petrevics, E.Gulbis, Radziņš.

During the entire period of democracy in Latvia – from the Constitutional Assembly elected in 1920 to the dissolution of the fourth Saeima in May 1934 – the LSDSP had the largest faction in the parliament. It was a mass organisation: according to Brūno Kalniņš's data, in 1932 the LSDSP had 12,525 members, a considerable number, second only to Ulmanis' agrarian Latvian Farmers Union (LZS), whose membership is estimated to have been around 32,000–39,000.¹⁷ The LSDSP electorate was varied: in the Constitutional Assembly the party won 38.7 per cent of the votes, and much of its electorate were supporters of radical agrarian reform, the landless peasantry; the majority, however, were workers in the urban centres and it was their interests that the programme of the party reflected. For various reasons, support for the party diminished during the period of democratic elections: in the first Saeima, elected in 1922, the party gained 31 seats, but in the fourth, elected in 1931, that number fell to 21. We will return to the reasons for this below. For now, it's important to remember that the LSDSP remained the largest parliamentary faction with a substantial and stable electorate.

LSDSP in elections to the Constitutional Assembly and the Saeima (% votes)



Source: Central Election Committee, www.cvk.lv

17. Freivalds, O., *Latviešu politiskās partijas 60 gados*. Stockholm, Imanta, 1961, p. 108.

The LSDSP had a significant impact on the constitutional structure of the newly established Republic of Latvia. Although the party did not have an absolute majority in the Constitutional Assembly, it strongly influenced the final version of the Constitution. First of all, social democrats fulfilled the main task of adopting an expressly democratic and parliamentary constitution. For its time, the Constitution really was outstandingly democratic. It provided not only for general, equal and direct elections by secret ballot and for both genders, but also for vesting power in a proportionally elected multi-party parliament. The issue of a directly elected president turned on a principle: the LZS, the Baltic Germans and others supported such an arrangement, whereas the LSDSP initially did not want a separate head of state, suggesting that the speaker of the Saeima should have the relevant ceremonial duties. The result was a compromise: a president elected by the parliament with relatively circumscribed powers. Regarding direct democracy and referenda, the LSDSP was split: most saw the danger of populism, whereas some supporters of a Swiss type of democracy, including Pliekšāns-Rainis and Kārlis Dzelzītis, wanted the option of people's legislation. The latter was included in the Constitution, although the prescribed conditions were set rather high. The so-called Second Part of the Constitution, which was to include a charter of basic rights, also gave rise to much discussion. The charter was not adopted, primarily because of the opposition of the social democrats: the majority of the Constitutional Assembly considered most of the social rights that this would have entailed excessive.

What were the main reasons for the LSDSP's inter-war popularity? First of all, the party membership included several very well known and loved politicians. Up until his death in 1929, the famous poet Rainis was a candidate on the LSDSP list; his wife, the poet Aspazija, was also elected to the Constitutional Assembly from the LSDSP. A number of other popular politicians, most of whom had been active before the war, also belonged to the party: Pauls Kalniņš, speaker of the Saeima from 1925; his son Brūno Kalniņš, who headed the active Workers' Sports Union, the later Workers' Sports and Guard (SSS), which also helped in maintaining public order; Mārgers Skujenieks, a statistician with great intellectual authority (he left the party rather early on, however); and Fēlikss Cielēns, an expert on international affairs and a brilliant speaker. A popular,

albeit controversial figure was the long-serving LSDSP faction leader Fricis Menders, who had a sharp mind and an equally sharp tongue. The party was fairly successful in exploiting its experiences in 1905, to which wide circles of Latvian society responded: several of the party's leaders, including Rainis, in fact had been very active in 1905. It is only fitting that in one of his speeches Menders even discussed the LSDSP's role in founding an independent Latvia as a kind of continuation of the Revolution of 1905.¹⁸

Alongside such personalities, the LSDSP also had a number of popular policies. The party held on to the Marxist rhetoric about the coming socialism and struggle to serve the interests of the proletariat, but its initial success was agrarian reform which, starting in 1920, was carried out on a large scale and was termed 'Bolshevist' by its opponents, primarily aristocratic Baltic German landowners. Given the large number of landless people, immediate agrarian reform was absolutely necessary to ensure political stability in Latvia: the latifundia of the landed gentry could not be preserved. At the same time there were disagreements on how the agrarian reform should be implemented: the main point of contention was whether aristocratic landowners should be left with some of their land and whether they should be compensated for what was taken away. In contrast to the right-wing conservative LZS, the LSDSP argued against leaving some land with its existing owners and paying compensation and this position proved to be victorious. The amount of land to be left with its former owners was set at only 50 hectares and the compensation issue was put aside for later.

Agrarian reform is a good illustration of a distinctive feature of interwar social democracy: 'social' justice was very closely tied with 'historical' justice, and the latter was carried out primarily against the Baltic German landed gentry. At its most radical moments, the LSDSP acquired features of ethnic chauvinism as the struggle against the legendary 'Black Knights' took on an anti-German character, instead of concentrating on the privileges of the gentry. These ethno-political retributions were expressed in

18. Menders, F. (1925) Divas revolūcijas. Revolūcijas piemiņas runa, turēta 26. janvārī 1925. gadā Valmierā, 1905. gada janvāra notikumu 20 gadu piemiņas dienā, Rīga, Sociāldemokrāts.

FRICIS MENDERS (1885–1971)



Frīdrihs Menders. Around 1907–1911. Photo: Pietschmann in Vienna. The Handwriting Foundation of K. Āre. The Latvian National Library.

Lawyer and politician, chairman of the LSDSP, head of the party faction in the Constitutional Assembly and the first four convocations of the Saeima. He began his political activities in the Riga chapter of the RSDRP, subsequently joining the LSDSP. Persecuted for his activities in the Revolution of 1905, Menders lived in Switzerland from 1907 to 1917. Upon returning to Latvia, he took an active part in establishing the ‘Menshevik’ LSDSP and founding the Republic of Latvia. He became the main ideologue of the party, a brilliant writer and polemicist. After the coup of 15 May 1934, Menders was briefly imprisoned in a detention camp in Liepāja; he participated in the activities of the illegal Latvian Social Democratic Workers and Peasants Party. During the Second World War, he was one of the members of the Latvian Central Council who called for the restoration of Latvia’s independence. After the war, Menders was repeatedly repressed by the Soviet regime. In 1948, he was deported for seven years to Mordovia. In 1969, the KGB arrested him for ‘anti-Soviet’ writings and attempts to send them abroad. Owing to the pressure of international social democrats, he was freed but died soon afterwards.

‘Marxism – this hitherto unsurpassed ideology of struggle – has been a spiritual weapon not only for the movement of the proletariat. It may sound paradoxical, but that’s how it is. In all the movements of nations that have become “free”, i.e. politically free from their condition of being oppressed or, as is said, “without history”, Marxism has played a greater or lesser role, for the strata most capable of fighting within these nations, have been found among the proletariat or elements close to it, which are designated by the rather imprecise phrase “the working class”. (...)

Despite being bourgeois, the Latvian state is a great cultural achievement for the Latvian people. To protect it and develop it is also the task of socialism. Above the state, as a higher value, is the people and its great toiling masses. Let the state serve their welfare!’

F. M., ‘Sociālisms un nacionālisms’, *Domas*, 1, 1, 1924, pp. 42–45

active support for 'trying' the pro-German Andrievs Niedra¹⁹ and the LSDSP-instigated referendum against conferring land acquisition privileges on the Baltic German Landeswehr for their contribution to fighting the Bolsheviks in 1919. In this respect, the LSDSP drew some of its legitimacy from the historical legacy of the anti-German sentiments that the First World War reinforced. The LSDSP was more radical in this regard than the 'official' right-wing nationalist parties, Arved Bergs's Latvian National Association and others. At the same time, it would be wrong to call the LSDSP a nationalist party. It was the party who most often took a stance to protect the rights of national minorities; moreover, the Jewish Bund, led by Dr Noah Meisel in the Saeima, was an integral part of the party.

In terms of strategy, the LSDSP was most split over the issue of working in coalitions. Often there were disagreements between the orthodox 'left' of the party and some prominent members who were on friendlier terms with the right-wing parties. The leader of the leftists was the aforementioned Dr Frīdis Menders, who held to his strong conviction that social democrats should not enter governing coalitions with bourgeois parties unless they have a 'determining influence'. Menders also thought that a coalition with the right would make sense only if the main player among the bourgeois parties, the LZS, were part of it. Usually there was no such opportunity: of the 19 interwar Latvian governments (including three provisional governments), the LSDSP participated only in two. The first was the short-lived Jānis Pauļuks government (27 January 1923–27 June 1923), the second, the 'leftist' and longer lasting government led by Mārgers Skujenieks (19 December 1926–23 January 1928). Otherwise the LSDSP was in opposition.

This strategy of the social democrats provoked a rather heated debate in both the contemporary press and in memoirs and historiography. Most – for example, Brūno Kalniņš and Fēlikss Cielēns – criticised this tactic as wrong: after all, it is even possible that if the LSDSP had been part of the government, the coup d'état of 15 May might

19. See, for example, Kroders, A., *Prūšu un baronu sazvērestība pret Latvijas valsti 16. aprīlī 1919 Liepājā*, Rīga, 1919.

have been averted. Such assertions should be subjected to critical scrutiny, however. For the most part they originate with Menders' political opponents, who, as opposed to their faction leader, could later look for the guilty parties from safety beyond the borders of Sovietised Latvia. Menders was of course a doctrinaire politician, but his position was not without some logic. In his view, the very economic foundation of capitalism had to be first restored in Latvia after the devastating war and the evacuation of industry. That could not be done under the leadership of social democracy for it did not serve capital but defended the interests of workers. Referring to the traditional authority figure for the LSDSP, the German social democratic theoretician Karl Kautsky, Menders wrote about the differences between the tasks facing West European and East European social democrats:

The life forces created by capitalism broke the semi-feudal system, destroyed absolutism and laid the groundwork for democracy, yet they also encountered an economy in ruins, which meant that there was no place to think about a transition to socialism as analysed in Kautsky's later works [...] instead they had to figure out how to 'start anew' – to restore 'damned' capitalism, so that it would be possible at least to live and create a new material basis for economic development and the possibility of existence to the life force of socialism, the proletariat.²⁰

In other words, the 'bourgeois' revolution – the transition to liberal democracy – had taken place under circumstances in which the capitalist economy had to be built up anew. Even under such circumstances, the social democrats could become part of the government, but only for short periods and depending on the situation; in other words, it 'wanted to remain truthful to itself, that is, to the workers and did not want to turn into a group of petty bourgeois under a socialist coat of paint'.²¹ The social democrats, who wanted a place in the government at any cost, were to be considered opportunists

20. Menders, F., 'Koalīcijas politika un sociāldemokrātija', Rīga, *Sociāldemokrāts*, 1923, p. 19.

21. Ibid.

who had no place in Menders' strict construction of historical development.

Given that this position was that of the main theoretician and Saeima faction leader, we can draw some conclusions about the ideas shared by Latvian social democrats at least partly from Menders' words. The goal of the social democrats was democratic socialism and it was taken very seriously. It was not supposed to be achieved by armed uprising and dictatorship of the proletariat but by allowing the economic potential of capitalism to develop until a democratic transition to collective ownership of the means of production became possible. To achieve such a position, Latvia had a long road ahead of it, given that the country's economic potential had suffered substantial damage in the war. But this process should not take place under the leadership of social democrats; rather the bourgeois parties should undertake the task of rebuilding capitalism. In other words, social democratic politics required a certain level of economic development, which could only be reached in Latvia in the future. Otherwise, the social democrats could either build capitalism themselves (and thereby cease to be social democrats) or turn to 'barracks socialism' and a total restriction of human liberties, as in Soviet Russia. Menders may be guilty of too doctrinaire an approach and getting carried

away with Marxist scholasticism, but there is little reason to reproach him for being politically inconsistent. Like many other LSDSP members, he took the ideology of the party seriously. It is another issue that such consistency had practical political consequences. As early as 1921, the group of LSDSP deputies led by Mārgers Skujenieks at the Constitutional Assembly threw its support behind the right-wing Meierovics government but then, by the time of the election of the first Saeima, broke off from the mainstream and founded their



Leaders of the Latvian Social Democratic Party. Around 1928. Photo: Vilis Rīdzenieks. Collection of the Museum of the History of Riga and Navigation.

own, rather weak social democrat Menshevik (Mazinieku) party. Skujenieks, the popular leader of this party, continued his political career: from heading the 1926–1928 ‘leftist’ government to becoming deputy prime minister in the authoritarian cabinet of Ulmanis. Another competitor of the LSDSP on the left were the Communists who, after the ban on their party was lifted, were represented as the ‘faction of workers and peasants’ in the third and fourth Saeimas. This organisation was financed and controlled by the USSR, which accused the LSDSP of being insufficiently radical and even ‘social fascist’.

Among the greatest achievements of the LSDSP in the parliamentary period, at the forefront were efforts to protect workers’ rights with regard to insurance and safe working conditions, among other things. An important party policy was organising sickness insurance funds. The LSDSP suspected the right-wing coalitions of constantly attempting to curtail constitutionally secured democratic rights and of corruption. It was an important part of the party’s activities to identify various conflicts of interest and wasteful use of public funds by rightist governments. At the same time, the LSDSP fostered an increase in the state’s role in the economy: regulation by the state, nationalisation and state allotted benefits were considered a solution to many problems facing workers and peasants.

The LSDSP also did much to secure independent Latvia’s international position. At the founding of the state, its representatives, including Fēlikss Cielēns, Fricis Menders and Ansis Buševics, participated in brokering peace with both Soviet Russia and Germany. The leading expert in foreign affairs was Cielēns, who was also deputy foreign minister under Zigfrīds Anna Meierovics in Pauļuks’ cabinet and foreign minister in Skujenieks’ government.

In general, the party’s foreign policy orientation was toward a broad regional integration that would benefit a rebirth of industry and the situation of the workers. The relationship with Soviet Russia and later the USSR played a special role: the LSDSP supported a broad economic integration of Eastern Europe that would also involve Russia as Latvia’s ‘natural’ economic partner. Of course, such ideas might seem naïve, particularly because Russia would try to achieve political dominance in such an alliance.

We should keep in mind, however, that the USSR of the 1920s, at least in the eyes of LSDSP theoreticians, was not the totalitarian superpower that it later became. In Russia this was the period of the so-called New Economic Policy (NEP), when it seemed that even the Bolshevik government was ready to make political concessions in pursuit of economic revival and welfare. At this time, owing to the LSDSP, Cielēns and Skujenieks' 'leftist government', Latvia signed a sizeable trade agreement with the USSR, whose main objective was to stimulate Latvia's industry and renew the economic relations broken by war. The agreement, however, was only a partial success.

In general, throughout the interwar period, the LSDSP feared right-wing radicalism, various expressions of national conservative authoritarianism, rhetorically labelled 'fascism', both inside and outside the country. The attitude toward communism was much more nuanced. The LSDSP did fight against the local communists or 'leftist trade unionists', but ideologically they were much closer to the party than to the various right-wing nationalist forces and particularly the LZS. Regarding the USSR, the party long held on to the hope that the neighbouring superpower would gradually become more democratic and be interested in peaceful collaboration, ignoring the fact that developments in the Soviet empire were going in the opposite direction. Soviet authorities and Latvian social democrats shared similar goals, but their approaches to achieving them were diametrically opposed. To quote Menders once again:

If they [the Bolsheviks], with fire and sword, were to install Soviet power after the Russian pattern in Latvia, social democracy will use propaganda and, within the limits of red dictatorship, will fight for the minds of the workers so that they would achieve an understanding – perhaps through many sacrifices – that the struggle of the proletariat for a life worthy of human beings must not, in the name of socialism, walk over the dead body of democracy, but instead proceed via a flourishing democratic system, which will give the proletariat the material foundation, strength and ability not only to take and conquer power but also to hold on to it and transform society as a whole on the basis of socialism.²²

22. Menders, F., 'Partijas konference', *Sociāldemokrāts*, No. 15, 28 December 1918.

Most surprising here is the illusion that ‘within the limits of red dictatorship’ democratic socialists would have a chance to compete for ‘the minds of workers’ as if the Bolsheviks would ever have tolerated any alternatives to their dogma.

But the LSDSP in fact took the competition for hearts and minds very seriously. The party worked with the public very intensively: it had much experience with propaganda from the time of the Tsar and Russian Civil War. Moreover, the need for propaganda far exceeded the tasks of the election cycle: activities to raise the awareness of the proletariat stemmed from party ideology, according to which social democrats could not and should not turn against the government of the country: on 18 November, an independent, democratic country had been established with general voting rights and broad civil liberties. Under these conditions, the party had to work on workers’ minds to guide them to a new and more just system, while not giving in to populism on either the right, fascist side, or on the left, communist side.

The party had its daily press: the best known was the newspaper *Sociāldemokrāts*, later also *Dienas Lapa* and *Liepājas Avīze*, as well as weeklies published by the regional chapters in many urban centres of Latvia. The Women’s Central Executive Council, led by Klāra Kalniņa, published the magazine *Darba Sieviete* (‘The working woman’). The theoretical publication of the party was *Domas* (‘Thoughts’), in which Menders, Cielēns and others published their theoretical articles. At the same time, the party’s publishing efforts were not limited to periodicals: its publishing arm *Nākotnes kultūra* (‘Culture of the Future’) also issued brochures and books on a variety of issues topical for Latvia and elsewhere.

Alongside the territorial chapters or groups of the party, whose number reached 287 in 1932, it also had a number of subordinate units. Among those was the Social Democratic Youth Association, which in 1926 was transformed into Working Youth with a membership of 2,182 and the magazine *Darba Jaunatne* (‘Working Youth’). The party also had some satellite organisations, which did not consist solely of party members but maintained a regular relationship with the party, including trade unions, absti-

KLĀRA KALNIŅA (1874–1964)



Klāra Kalniņa. Beginning of the 1920s. Photo: Vilis Rīdzenieks. Collection of the Museum of the History of Riga and Navigation.

Politician, essayist and dentist, Kalniņa was among the founders of the Latvian movement for women's rights. Already as a gymnasium student, she met members of the New Current, Jansons-Brauns, Rainis and others. In 1895 she married the later prominent Menshevik Pauls Kalniņš (1872–1945) and their union produced a son, Brūno, later to become a politician (1899–1990). Kalniņa participated in the events of the Revolution of 1905; she was a member of the Central Committee of the LSDSP and editor of the illegal party newspaper, *Ciņa*. An active defender of women's rights from the social democratic perspective, she wrote about the situation of women in different countries and translated the well-known work by August Bebel *Die Frau und der Sozialismus* (1912). In 1917, Kalniņa was elected to the Riga City Council and in 1920 to the Constitutional Assembly of Latvia. She was an editor of various party publications, worked at the City Council and was active in the trade union movement. In the brochure *What Should Women Vote For* (1925), she called on women to actively defend their rights.

At the end of the Second World War, Klāra and Pauls went by boat to Sweden but ended up in Germany where Pauls, the prominent social democrat and former speaker of the Saeima in democratic Latvia, died. Klāra and Brūno finally ended up in Sweden, where they participated in the work of the Socialist International, defending Latvia's right to independence. Klāra Kalniņa was the most prominent representative of the Latvian socialist feminist movement.

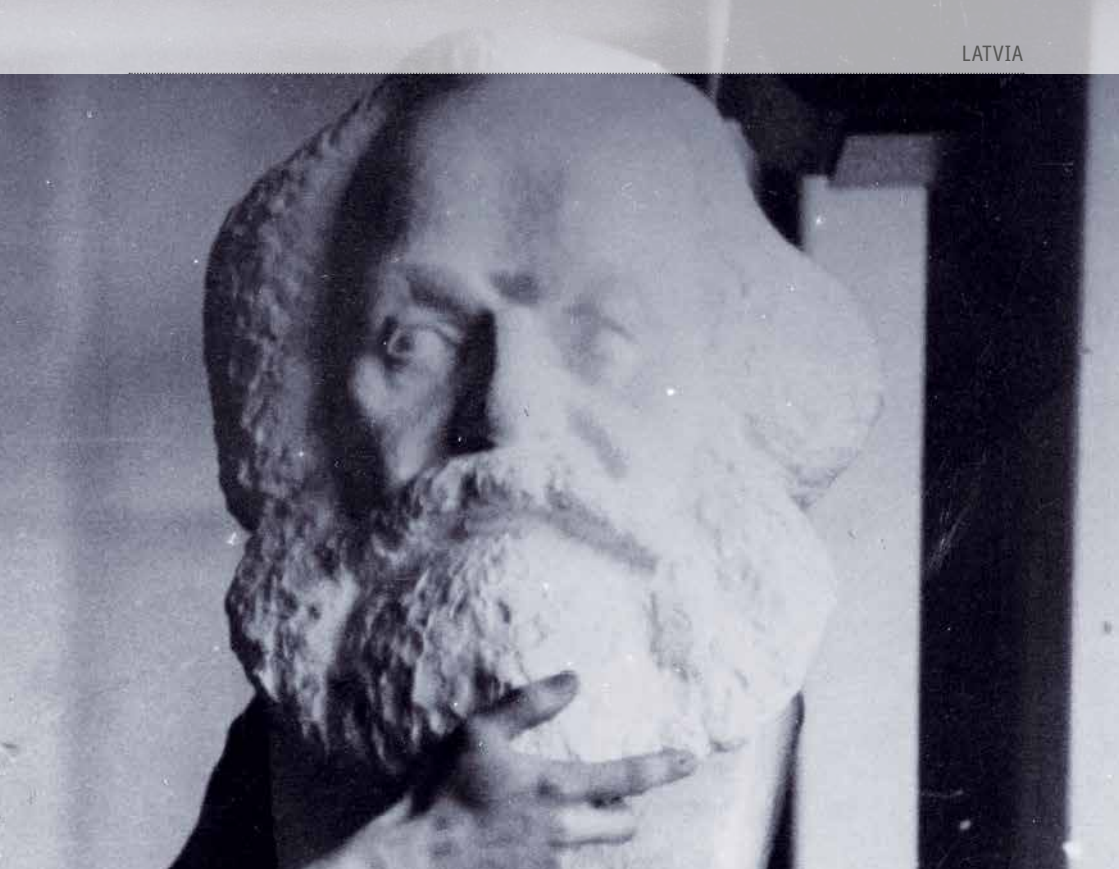
Class contradictions will exist while classes exist. Class hatred will always be as great as its flames stoked by reactionaries. Whoever sows the wind shall reap the whirlwind. Women are not classless but belong to classes and, being part of economic production, they, just like men, find themselves on either one or the other side of the class struggle. For that reason, conscious working class women have nothing in common either with the national union or bourgeois women. (...) Working class women, both in the country and in cities, do not believe in the promises of bourgeois women. Their fight is not your fight. This is obvious from their so-called 'programme'. There is nothing about the demands of a working woman that play the most important role in her life. There is nothing said about insurance against old age or unemployment. Bourgeois ladies do not have to fear poverty and hunger in their old age, therefore all they care about is a fair division of property between husband and wife.

K.K., 'Uzmanat, darba sievietes', *Lauku Darbs*, 210, 1925.

nence societies and student organisations. The party was also substantially involved in the education system: it had its own teachers' section and its members took part in the work of the so-called Riga People's University, offering a wide range of public lectures on different social issues. The party specialised in various mass events: celebrating May Day, pre-election rallies at both local and national level, and sporting and commemorative events. In other words, just like many other interwar European social democratic parties, the LSDSP found it necessary to attract the support of the masses with a significant presence in various areas of public life, including culture, education, sporting activities and consumer cooperatives.



A guard taking down the bust of Marx from a podium on the morning of 16 May 1934, at the LSDSP Town House. Author unknown. Collection of the Latvian War Museum.



5 | THE DEMISE AND LEGACY OF THE LSDSP



In the early 1930s, the economic situation in Latvia deteriorated under the impact of the world economic crisis. The democratic regime suffered attacks from both the communists and the fascists. In 1934, then Prime Minister Kārlis Ulmanis dissolved the Saeima and established an authoritarian dictatorship, ostensibly to prevent a coup d'état planned by Latvian fascists. The LSDSP, with its paramilitary organisation the SSS, put up no resistance. The party was not even prepared for such a possibility because an armed struggle against the 'bourgeois' government was not compatible with its ideological doctrine. According to historian Aivars Stranga, 'Under such conditions of capitalist "doom" [...] Menders and Latvian social democracy generally lived to see 15 May 1934: in their bourgeois flats and without as much as entertaining the thought of any other form of political struggle, except civic parliamentarianism'.²³

The social democrats were Ulmanis' political opponents; therefore it is hardly surprising that the LSDSP was most damaged by the coup. The most prominent members of the party were arrested and imprisoned in the well-known political prisoners' camp in Liepāja, usually spending several months there. Brūno Kalniņš estimated that about 2,000 party activists, both in Riga and elsewhere, were arrested. Ulmanis purged LSDSP members from all state institutions – ministries, schools and the army – all societies related to the party were dissolved and its press and publishing houses were liquidated. There was an odious 'trial' of Dr Pauls Kalniņš, Brūno Kalniņš, Jūlijs Celms and Pēteris Ulpe in 1935–1936 ostensibly for the illegal possession of firearms and the LSDSP itself was banned.

At the same time, the coup of 15 May marked the beginning of the downfall of the LSDSP, from which it would never recover. After the coup, the party returned to the underground where, until the occupation of 1940, it functioned as the Latvian Social Democratic Workers and Peasants Party (LSSZP), with a membership of 200–300 and issuing illegal publications. At this time, fighting Ulmanis' dictatorship from the underground, the party developed closer ties with the communists and became more

23. Stranga, op. cit. p. 19

pro-Soviet. Only the Stalinist USSR was considered as a serious force able to oppose the growing influence of Hitler's Germany, at least until the signing of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact on 23 August 1939. The occupation by the Soviet Union in June 1940 gave rise to revanchist elation among some of party members: there was hope that the democratic Constitution would be restored. These illusions were soon disappointed: Kirhenšteins' government refused to register the renewed LSDSP. The reputation of the social democrats was seriously tarnished in 1940 by the fact that a number of prominent LSDSP members became bureaucrats in the openly pro-Soviet Kirhenšteins' government: Brūno Kalniņš became the political head of the Latvian army, Voldemārs Bastjānis headed a department at the Ministry of Finance and Klāvs Lorencs became the director of a bank. But it would be a mistake to claim that members of the LSDSP led the Sovietisation of Latvia or even had a considerable impact on it, even though Brūno Kalniņš' high position in the army caused many people to harbour illusions about the democratic character of the new regime. It should also be kept in mind that Latvian politicians from a variety of parties and movements seemed ready to collaborate with the Soviet power: Kirhenšteins himself was a member of the Progressive Union and minister of justice Juris Pabērzs a member of the Latgallian Progressive People's Union. Many social democrats did not support Latvia being incorporated into the USSR but, in their own opinion at least, tried to 'save what could be saved'. The most striking symbol of the democratic stance of the LSDSP was the behaviour of Dr Pauls Kalniņš. As chairman of the last democratic Saeima of the Republic of Latvia he did not accept any offers to collaborate. In that capacity, together with many left- and right-wing Latvian politicians in 1944 he signed the memorandum of the Latvian Central Council (LCP) on the restoration of the Latvian state. The LSDSP itself, long since driven underground by the Nazis, also issued a resolution demanding the restoration of democratic Latvia. With their participation in the LCP, the Latvian social democrats went full circle in cooperating with other Latvian democratic parties in the name of Latvian statehood: from the Democratic Bloc and National Council at the end of the First World War to cooperation with their former opponents in the LCP within the framework of the LCP.

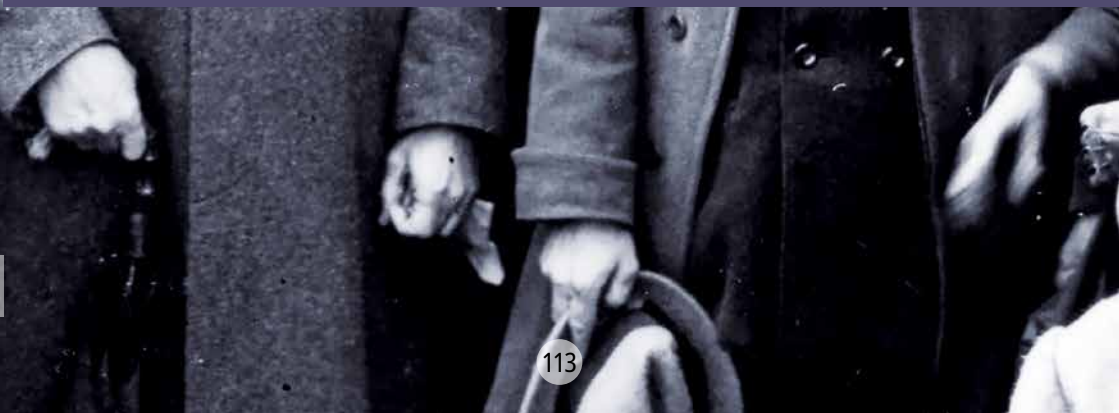
The successive occupations by the two totalitarian superpowers decimated the ranks of the LSDSP: a number of prominent members were subjected to communist repression; for the Nazis, social democrats were among the main objects of their hatred. After the war, some LSDSP members, for example, Voldemārs Bastjānis and Klāra and Brūno Kalniņš managed to make it to the West; many of them, including Fēlikss Cielēns, gathered in Sweden. Here, the Swedish Latvian Social Democratic Club was active, representing the LSDSP abroad. Others, however, including Fricis Menders and Klāvs Lorencs, were deported and had to experience heavy repression under the Soviets. One of the tasks of the LSDSP membership abroad was to turn the attention of international social democratic organisations to the fates of Latvian social democrats in the 'workers' paradise', the USSR. It was owing to such influence that repressions were softened against Fricis Menders, who was allowed to die in peace in 1971 – albeit exiled to a home for the disabled in Varakļāni as punishment for writing his (as yet unpublished) memoir *Thoughts, Works, Life*. The LSDSP resumed activities in Latvia during the so-called Third Awakening, in 1989: Brūno Kalniņš, then 90, lived to see it.



Rainis and Aspazija at the rally in Esplanade Park on 1 May 1922. Photo: Vilis Ridzenieks. Collection of the Museum of the History of Riga and Navigation.



6 | CONCLUSION



What can we conclude about the relationship between Latvian social democracy and the Latvian state established in 1918? First, social democracy was the first Latvian mass political movement which, starting in the 1890s, galvanised the political life of Latvians, inviting them to think, debate and make their own decisions. Until the rise of social democracy, Latvian political life was conducted under the control and tutelage of societies and pseudo-aristocratic 'leaders of the people' who were loyal to the autocratic regime and in search of a mythological past. Social democracy brought modernity to Latvian political life: a demand for political participation, civil rights and freedoms and social justice. Of course, all these were adjusted to the conditions in the Baltics: the postcolonial relations with the Baltic Germans, the specific attitude toward the Russian Empire and the conformism of the Latvian middle class. Much in the activities of the social democrats was exaggerated, extreme and meaningless; much was borrowed, without thinking, from the Western European socialist tradition, attempting to press the reality of Latvia into 'objective' schemes and clichés. But it should be remembered that Latvian social democrats had precious little in terms of national cultural traditions from which to draw, in addition to a practically non-existent tradition of Latvian national political thought. Most of the prominent turn-of-the-century social democrats (and not just them, but the Latvian intelligentsia as such) were first-generation intellectuals; their openness to various political ideas and distaste for Baltic provincialism were almost limitless.

The Latvian social democrats were internationalists: the most important items in their programme were to improve the lot of the working people and build a socially just society. By and large they were not anti-nationalist, however. They recognised the cultural needs of different peoples and understood that Latvians should organise their lives themselves. Of all the Latvian autonomy projects that were created by 1917, the lion's share of credit should go to the social democrats. In those too, the cultural needs of Latvians and the right to self-government played a prominent role. Of course, before 1917, the social democrats did not talk about Latvia as a sovereign nation-state. Even if such an idea had seemed politically feasible, their economically-oriented thinking would have made such a scenario absurd to the social democrats: they saw Latvia's



Disruption of the rally in Esplanade Park on 1 May 1921. Photo: Vilis Rīdzenieks. Collection of the Museum of the History of Riga and Navigation.

economic future only within a federalised, republican Russia. Such an approach was also characteristic of the Young Latvians and the entire early Latvian nationalist tradition, with the difference that the latter saw the future reformed Russia as a monarchy instead of a republic.

The role of the LSDSP in establishing the Latvian state and its political life was unequivocally positive. Even those who opposed the LSDSP, including Kārlis Ulmanis, had to admit that the LSDSP joining the National Council platform brought the kind of mass support for the new state that no other Latvian political force could have hoped to attract. The support of the social democratic Mensheviks for the Republic of Latvia was decisive in persuading a large part of the proletariat and peasants to turn away from Bolshevism, particularly after the fiasco of the Stučka invasion. The activities of the social democrats in the Constitutional Assembly made the new regime decidedly

democratic; it fully conformed to contemporary democratic idealism. It might be asked whether the chosen form of constitution was conducive to allow the new state to remain democratic even in economically and politically difficult times. But how can one reproach loyalty to democratic ideals if these ideals are betrayed by the realities of the time?

At the tactical level, the LSDSP took a series of problematic decisions. They include staying out of coalitions, getting carried away with extending the state's economic role and illusions about the likelihood of the USSR becoming more democratic. But such reproaches are relevant only if we evaluate the alternatives as they presented themselves to the participants in the process. One of the arguments in favour of not establishing coalitions was the need to control the radically left-leaning electorate (which was not insignificant) for fear that it might go over to the communists, a radically anti-democratic force, which really was an enemy of Latvian statehood. Were these worries justified? We are unlikely to find out unless we are ready to fully enter the area of 'virtual history'. The desire for more decisive involvement by the state in the economy was ideologically predetermined for the Latvian social democrats. It seemed to them that the influence of the party on the democratic political process should first and foremost be used to improve the situation of the working people and that it could only be done with the help of the state apparatus, by controlling, redistributing, regulating and subsidising. The fact that such an approach usually leads to mismanagement of funds, bureaucratisation and corruption did not seem more important than the common mission of social democracy. As far as the relationship with the 'world's first country of workers and peasants', Soviet Russia or the USSR, the Latvian social democrats allowed illusions to replace their sense of reality. After all, their former party colleagues were in high positions in the Soviet state (although later they disappeared into Stalin's meat grinder one by one). The social democrats saw the main threat from a right-wing dictatorship; a totalitarian dictatorship by the left seemed morally more acceptable to them, if only a little. This tendency became ever stronger when Ulmanis' authoritarian government, with its political police, drove the social democrats underground, threw them in prison and kicked them out of work at state institutions. For that reason, occupation by the

USSR seemed to many to bring positive change, however tragically mistaken such illusions might seem. Regarding the later collaboration by social democrats we have to admit that, apart from some scandalous instances, such as Brūno Kalniņš' few months in command of the army, it was nothing extraordinary compared to that of others. After all, when we think about the most infamous Latvian collaborators, the list is headed by people who had nothing in common with social democrats, such as Vilis Lācis and Vilhelms Munters. Collaboration was unfortunately party-colour blind; the opportunities to make a career under the new regime were taken by all kinds of people, and most of them came from the 'bourgeois' circles loyal to Ulmanis' regime and not from the social democrats who were driven underground. The same can be said about Soviet period dissidents and critics of the Soviet regime: there were social democrats among them as well.

Latvian social democracy is one of the basic elements of Latvian political history and it is impossible to understand the creation and development of the Latvian state without considering its role. Yet the social democrats did not have eyes in the backs of their heads. They could not predict the turn of events and sometimes relied too much on theoretical dogma. They had their own, sometimes very strong illusions. In the political landscape of their time, however, they represented a leftist democratic movement that enjoyed much public support. If we try to toss out social democracy from Latvian history, we are also turning our backs on democratic participation, civil rights, social justice and peaceful cooperation between countries within an integrated Europe – against ideals which, in a very Latvian way, warts and all, were defended by this historical party.

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LITHUANIA



Prominent LSDP figures: seated (from the left) L. Purėnienė, S. Kairys and V. Požela; standing (from the left) A. Purėnas and K. Bielinis. Kaunas, 1921.



The Presidium of the Conference of Lithuanians held on 18–22 September 1917 in Vilnius. In the centre between Jonas Basanavičius (on the left) and Antanas Smetona (on the right), the chairperson of the Conference. LSDP leader Steponas Kairys is seated on the presidium chairperson's chair. Other Social Democrats: first from the left Pelikšas Bugailiškis, tenth from the left (seated) J. Paknys, third from the right M. Biržiška. Photo: Aleksandra Jurašaitytė. LNM.

1 | HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF LITHUANIAN SOCIAL DEMOCRACY AND IDEOLOGICAL- PROGRAMMATIC ASSUMPTIONS AND POLITICAL ASPIRATIONS



The possibility of restoring (and creating a modern) Lithuanian state in 1918–1919 was determined by a number of external factors. They include the First World War, which led to the collapse of the old political system in Europe; the revolutions in Russia and Germany during the war and the collapse of their empires; the German defeat in the war; the coming of the Bolsheviks to power and the civil war in Russia; and the popularity of the right of nations to self-determination. Lithuania would not have become an independent state, however, if the Lithuanians themselves, including both individuals and groups with different worldviews and different political beliefs (and thus political parties), had not taken the opportunities that presented themselves and actively

participated in building their country. One of the political parties that played a role was the Social Democratic Party of Lithuania, the LSDP. In this chapter we briefly present the role of this party in the formation of the Lithuanian state¹.

* * * * *



Alfonsas Moravskis (1868–1941), one of the LSDP founders and leaders at the end of the nineteenth century; the first historian of social democracy in the country and an economist.

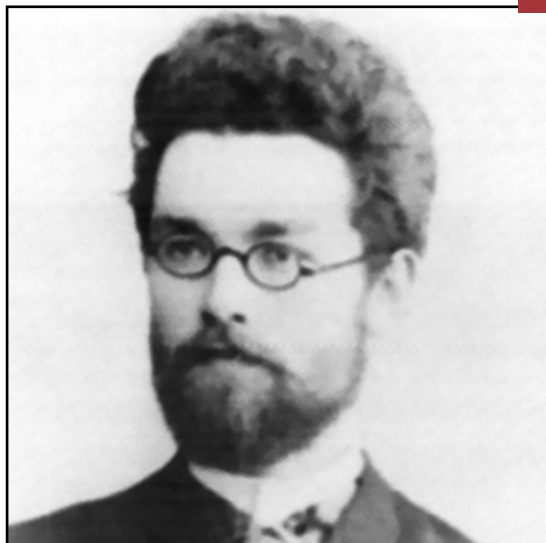
Although the establishment of the LSDP was announced in 1896, the Lithuanian social democratic movement had emerged a few years earlier. Its origins date back to 1893, when Vilnius residents Alfonsas Moravskis and Andrius Domaševičius became leaders of the first Lithuanian social democratic groups. In 1895, a conference led to the establishment of the organisation called 'Lithuanian Social Democracy'. On 1 May

1. In a monograph, the author of this text has analysed in detail the relationship between the social democrats and the process of creating the Lithuanian statehood. See Mitrulevičius G., *Lietuvos socialdemokratijos ideologinė-politinė raida 1914–1919 metais. Istoriografija, tarptautinis ir istorinis kontekstai, santykis su Lietuvos valstybingumo kūrimu*. Vilnius, 2017.

1896, at the 13th Social Democrat Meeting held in Vilnius, which was later recorded in history as the LSDP I Congress, it finally became a political party.

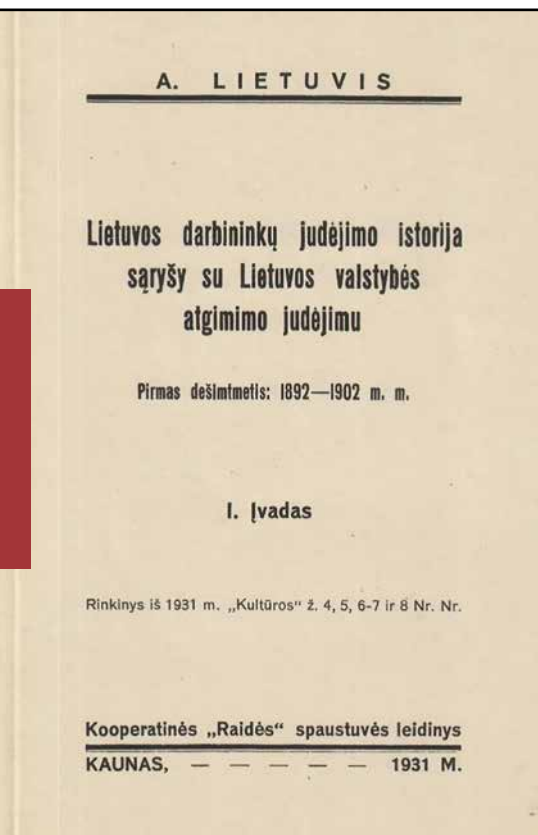
The emergence of the LSDP was influenced by similar factors to those that led to the formation of social democratic parties in other countries and by more local circumstances. It is well known that the emergence of social democracy in the second half of the nineteenth century was connected to the convergence of socialism and the workers' movement. As far as Lithuania is concerned, although socialism had already manifested itself, it was related mainly to the Russian '*Narodniks*', which developed into '*Narodnaya Volya*' ('people's will') socialism. From the beginning of the 1880, a number of partially 'pro-Narodnaya Volya' and partially pro-Marxist socialist figures and interest groups were associated with the Polish revolutionary 'Proletariat' party.

No independent socialist organisation had been formed that was native to Lithuania, however, and none of the aforementioned manifestations of socialism in Lithuania took root until the last decade of the nineteenth century. Socialism really developed only in the wake of the social democratic movement. But the emergence of the latter, too, required certain socio-economic prerequisites that were rapidly forming in Lithuania at the end of the nineteenth century.



Andrius Domaševičius (1865–1935) LSDP founder and leader at the end of the nineteenth–beginning of the twentieth century and in the period 1917–1919. Medical doctor, noted public and cultural figure.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, when serfdom was abolished, capitalist social-economic relationships began to develop more rapidly in tsarist Russia, and thus in Lithuania as well, which had been merged with Russia at the end of the eight-



The book by Alfonsas Moravskis, pseudonym 'Lietuvis' was dedicated to the birth of the LSDP.

eenth century. At the same time, the conditions for a workers' movement began to develop. This created favourable ground for the spreading of socialist ideas from Western European countries (often through Russia and Poland), where these ideas had already become very popular. At that time, an intelligentsia began to form in Lithuania, whose representatives often became distributors of socialist ideas among the workers.

The development of the aforementioned processes in Lithuania and throughout Russia was considerably delayed compared with Western European countries. As a result, Lithuania remained an agrarian country. According to the Russian nationwide census of 1897, 73.3 per cent of the population of Lithuania belonged to the peasantry,

while urban dwellers accounted for just 20 per cent. The slow development of industry, along with the slow growth of the working class and, in general, the urban population, meant that Lithuanian social democracy began to manifest itself only in the 1890s. At the end of the nineteenth century and in the first decades of the twentieth century, it still did not attain the same influence as in more industrialised countries.

The slow process of industrialisation and urbanisation was also influenced by the policy of national oppression pursued by the Russian Empire, which became even more onerous following the prohibition of the press (until 1904) in Latin script in Lithuania after the 1863 uprising. Nonetheless, the national revival and national movement that

were partially a reaction to the oppression also served as one of the prerequisites for the emergence of Lithuanian social democracy.

It should also be noted with regard to the circumstances fostering the emergence and development of social democracy that the autocratic Russian political system did not allow political parties to operate legally. Although parties had been allowed to operate on a semi-legal basis since the end of 1905, the actions of the socialist parties were still severely restrained and persecuted.

Another important characteristic was the national composition of the population of Lithuania, especially in cities and in Vilnius in particular. When the LSDP was formed, the composition of the country's population was 58.3 per cent Lithuanians, 13.3 per cent Jews, 10.3 per cent Poles and 14.6 per cent Eastern Slavs (Russians, Belarusians and Ukrainians). As much as 93.3 per cent of all Lithuanians were still peasants, however. According to the Russian nationwide census of 1897, Lithuanians made up only 3.9 per cent of all urban dwellers. Additionally, 42.1 per cent of Lithuanian urban dwellers considered Yiddish to be their mother tongue, 24 per cent Polish and 21.5 per cent one of the Eastern Slavic languages, while only 7.8 per cent considered the Lithuanian language as their mother tongue.

Taking this into account, it is understandable why the first social democratic group



Page 1 of the LSDP magazine *Lietuvos darbininkas* issue No. 2, 1898.

in Lithuania is considered to be the group, international in its nature, founded in 1887 and headed by the famous Polish (later German) social democracy activist and Jewish socialist Leo Jogiches (Jan Tyszka). It is also understandable why the social democratic movement in Vilnius fragmented, at least to a large extent on a national basis, in the 1890s.

When Leo Jogiches emigrated in May 1890, the new social democratic organisation that continued the work of his group, unlike its predecessor, is referred to in the literature as a Jewish social democratic group in Vilnius. Indeed, Jews were the first among the Lithuanian people of different nationalities to establish social democratic organ-

isations on a national basis. In 1897, in Vilnius, they founded a general trade union composed of Russian and Polish Jews called the Bund.

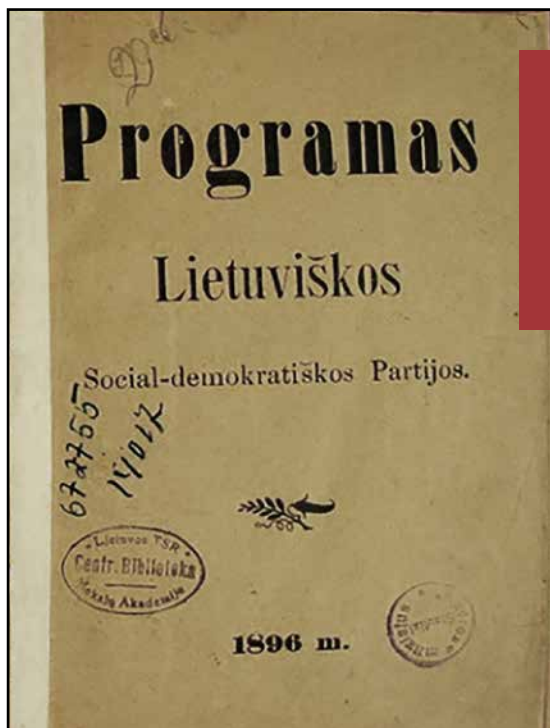


Jonas Šliūpas (1861–1944), a famous figure of the Lithuanian National Revival and one of the first socialists.

Since the beginning of the 1890s, besides the Jewish social democrats, small labour groups had operated in Vilnius that were also influenced by the Polish socialists, and from 1893, a unit of the Polish Socialist Party (PSP) that had been founded in 1892 in Paris began to emerge in Lithuania as well. The activities of the Jewish and Polish socialists served as an incentive for the emergence of the Lithuanian social democratic movement, and for the formation of the LSDP in 1895 and 1896.

In the second half of the 1890s, more socialist organisations were launched in

Vilnius, including the Lithuanian Trade Union (LDS) founded in 1896 by Stanislas Trusevičius, who left (or was forced to leave) the future LSDP. Members of the LDS together with members of Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland (SDKP), founded in 1893, and some of the ex-members of the LSDP founded Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania (SDKPiL) in 1900–1901, another party that operated in Lithuania under the same name until 1906. In that year, the SDKPiL merged with the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP) formed in 1898, and its members continued to function in Lithuania as members of the RSDLP. It should be noted that the RSDLP was one of the social democratic parties that operated in the territory of ethnic Lithuania (partially from the end of the nineteenth century and entirely from the beginning of the twentieth century) through the Bund, which became part of the RSDLP in 1898 (until 1903) and then again from 1906. The Belarusian Socialist Assembly (Belarusian Socialist Hramada) and the Russian Socialist Revolutionary Party, as well as several Socialist-Zionist Jewish parties, were still operating in Vilnius at the beginning of the twentieth century.



Front page of the LSDP programme for 1896.

Among all the parties mentioned here, however, only the LSDP represented Lithuanian social democracy. As a matter of fact, there was one more organisation that fit this definition, the Social Democratic Labour Party of Lithuania (LSDDP), but it existed only very briefly. It was founded in 1905, but merged with the LSDP in the same year. The LSDP was also the only Lithuanian party to represent the Lithuanian socialist move-

ment in general, before the members of the Lithuanian Democratic Party (LDP) became socialists-populists. Besides the aforementioned LSDDP, the LSDP was also the only socialist party in Lithuania (before the Democrats became socialists-populists) that was also a part of the national social and political movement. The Lithuanian social democrats who founded the LSDP were also the first Lithuanian proto - political group to emerge between the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth that developed into a political party. It was also the Lithuanian party that presented the first Lithuanian statehood restoration programme.

The programme adopted by the LSDP in 1896 is considered the first party manifesto. In its theoretical part, it describes the development of the Lithuanian economy after the abolition of serfdom based on a Marxist analysis of social development. The programme states that the formation of a socialist regime requires political freedom and that cooperation between different countries is necessary because the socialist order cannot be created in a single country. Friedrich Engels declared in a preface to the 1892 Polish edition of the Communist Manifesto that 'a sincere international collaboration of the European nations is possible only if each of these nations is fully autonomous in its own house'. Accordingly, the task of the LSDP is stipulated as 'to hasten and organise the class struggle of the Lithuanian proletariat, both its economic and political constituents, [and] to indicate the final goals of this struggle and the gradual stages ...'. The party programme goes on to say:

In order to organise as soon as possible, and to prepare for the emergence of a socialist order necessary to ensure the greatest possible welfare and the widest possible political freedom in these times of doing one's duty, the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party, relying on the abovementioned grounds [the theoretical programme comprising the first three sections, *author's note*], formulates the following minimum programme: a self-governing democratic republic, consisting of Lithuania, Poland and other countries, based on a free federation².

2. *Programas lietuviškos socialdemokratiškos partijos.* (Tilžė, 1896 : 8–9).

Annex 4 of the programme indicates that by 'other countries' the authors of the LSDP programme meant Latvia, Belarus and Ukraine. According to historians, such a composition of a 'free federation' shows that the LSDP programme of 1896 is still referring to 'the old noble notion of the Lithuanian state' and that the 'Lithuanian statehood formula' stipulated in the LSDP programmes is evidently based on the 'unified' tradition of the former statehood of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania³.

A. Moravskis, however, when commenting on the wording of the LSDP Programme of 1896 mentioned the Swiss example, which was popular among party members. According to Moravskis, 'the Lithuanian social democrats depicted the future independent Republic of Lithuania, liberated from Russian oppression, as a federal democratic republic consisting of Lithuania, Poland and other territories with full autonomy'.⁴ Therefore, the wording of the first LSDP programme on the political future of Lithuania was determined by more than an allusion to the tradition of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

As far as the wording of the LSDP's main political position is concerned, it should also be noted that the opinions of the participants in the Congress of 1896 were scarcely unanimous. The minority included Felix Dzerzhinsky, who was then a member of this party but soon became a member of the SDKPiL, and later a Bolshevik activist. He spoke against Lithuania's goal of separating from Russia. In addition, in 1896 (before the congress), there had been disagreements between the leaders of the LSDP and S. Trusevičius and his followers, who also opposed the 'separatism' of the former.

The historian Vytautas Merkys wrote that the LSDP programme of 1896 on the political future of Lithuania shows 'a clearly defined task of the political liberation of Lithuania from the tsar's power', as well as 'the demand of the Lithuanian nation for the right

3. Merkys, V., *Knygnešių laikai. 1864–1904*, Vilnius (1994: 321); *Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštijos tradicija ir tautiniai naratyvai*, Vilnius (2009: 130).

4. Lietuvis, A. [Moravskis A.], *Lietuvos darbininkų judėjimo istorija sąryšy su Lietuvos valstybės atgimimo judėjimu. Pirmas dešimtmetis: 1892–1902 m.* [vadas, Kaunas (1931: 30).

to sovereignty'. According to another historian, Česlovas Laurinavičius, it also generally represents 'the first programme on the restoration of the Lithuanian statehood'.⁵ Until that time, the entire Lithuanian national movement had considered the matter of a liberated Lithuania only occasionally and abstractly, if at all. It should be noted that one of the first people to write about the future 'of a free Lithuania' and about the fact that 'Lithuania wants to be politically independent' was one of the first Lithuanian socialists in the 1880s, Jonas Šliūpas.

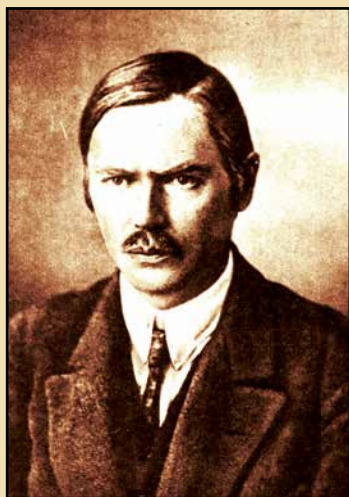
It should be further noted that, when specifying the political credo in their commemorative speeches on 1 May 1894, A. Moravskis and A. Domaševičius called socialism a 'future goal' and pointed to the demand for Lithuanian statehood as an immediate political aspiration. In another speech they also stated that the populations of some European states were smaller than that of Lithuania and that there were three million Lithuanians who could form a separate state. Because, according to A. Moravskis, the 'local revolutionary forces were not sufficient to seek a completely independent and separate state of Lithuania' the founders of the LSDP favoured a 'free federation', as mentioned in the 1896 programme.⁶ From a modern understanding, this could have meant either something between a federation and a confederation, or maybe even a confederation rather than a federation.

Moreover, with respect to the 1896 LSDP programme, it should be mentioned that following the goal of forming an 'independent democratic republic', the programme further describes the 'foundations of the Constitution' for this future republic. In these foundations we can see a programme of radical democratic demands including: the sovereignty of the nation; a universal, democratic, proportional electoral system; equality of all citizens; freedom of speech, the press, assembly and organisation; universal, compulsory and free education; separation of church and state; free courts,

5. See Merkys, V., *Lietuvių nacionalinio išsivadavimo judėjimas [ligi 1904 m.]*, Vilnius (1987: 246); *Lietuvių atgimimo istorijos studijos*, t. 4, Vilnius (1993: 439).

6. Lietuvis, A. [Moravskis A.], *Lietuvos darbininkų judėjimo istorija sąryšy su Lietuvos valstybės atgimimo judėjimu*. p. 30.

STEPONAS KAIRYS (1879 –1964)



Steponas Kairys 1917, LCVA.

Steponas Kairys was a long-standing leader of the Social Democratic Party of Lithuania (LSDP), as well as being an ideologist, one of the most prominent activists in the Lithuanian National Liberation Movement in the early twentieth century, a leading Lithuanian politician in the first half of the twentieth century and a post-Second World War political activist in emigration.

Kairys was born to a peasant family in Ukmergė District. He attended the Šiauliai Gymnasium and studied at the St Petersburg Institute of Technology. As a 22-year-old student, he became one of the leaders of the LSDP and, more or less, remained in the party for the rest of his life. He was one of the main writers of the party's programmes, proclamations, brochures and various other LSDP political texts, and was its leading ideologist. He was also the editor of the LSDP newspapers and magazines.

From December 1905, Kairys was one of the deputy chairmen of the Lithuanian Summit, and one of the leading authors of the summit resolutions. During 18–22 September 1917, he was nominated as chairman of the Lithuanian Conference and was one of the authors of the political resolutions. He was then elected as deputy chairman of the Lithuanian Council. Together with three other leftists, Kairys played an important role in the adoption of the historical resolution of the Lithuanian Council of 16 February 1918, otherwise known as the Act of Independence of Lithuania.

Kairys left his position on the Lithuanian Council after it exceeded the powers vested in it and proclaimed Lithuania a monarchy, as well as electing its king. At the end of 1918, Kairys became one of the creators of the municipalities and was the chairman of the Council Board of Utena County. From 12 April to 4 October 1919, he served as minister of supplies and food of the fourth provisional government of Lithuania; from 1920 to 1926, he was a member of the Constituent Assembly of Lithuania and the first three Seimas; and in 1926, he became the first deputy chairman of the third Seimas. Following the revolution of 17 December 1926, Kairys' political activities became more restricted.

Aside from his political life, Kairys was a talented engineer. From 1923 to 1938, he worked as head of the Water Supply and Sewage Department of Kaunas City Municipality, where he supervised the water supply and sewage restoration work. From 1923, Kairys taught engineering science at the Lithuanian (Vytautas Magnus) University. From 1939 he was a professor; in 1940, he became an honorary doctor; and from 1941–1943, he served as Dean of the Faculty of Construction.

During the Second World War, Kairys participated in the anti-nationalist and anti-Soviet Lithuanian resistance movement. During 1943–1945, he was the first Chairman of the Supreme Committee for the Liberation of Lithuania (VLIK). After the Second World War, he lived in Germany and the United States under the alias 'Juozas Kaminskas', where he actively participated in emigrant political activities aimed at the liberation of Lithuania, and was a strong critic of Bolshevism and the USSR. Kairys wrote two volumes of memoirs. He died in New York and was reburied in Lithuania in 1996.

with the principle of the choice of judges; abolition of the death penalty; replacement of the army with the *militsiya*; and utilising the international peace courts to resolve international conflicts. Also mentioned was the 'equalisation of the remuneration of officials and deputies with payment for physical labour'. The programme also formulates social requirements such as free health care, 'free medicines and funerals', progressive taxation of profits and property, the abolition of all direct taxes and moreover 'gradual limitation of the right to leave wealth to one's heirs'.

Thereafter, demands for the 'protection of the rights of economic workers' were laid down. These included: a shortened working day, 'continuous rest for at least 36 hours per week for each worker', minimum wages and wage equalisation for men and women, the improvement of work health and safety, social protection, labour protection, labour inspections, labour exchanges, laws on a labour secretariat, recognition of the freedom to strike and labour movement rights, as well as the demand for the regulation and supervision of state economic processes. It ends with a goal typical of the social democrats of those times: 'gradual nationalisation of the land, means of production and communication to be managed by the community' (that is, the public, author's note), in other words, the gradual socialisation of the means of production⁷.

The 1896 LSDP programme therefore provided not only for the separation from Russia and Lithuanian statehood, but also for a certain vision of the social and political nature of such a state, along with a clear and even radical programme for the consolidation of a democratic system. At first glance, the programme looks like an analysis of the development of a Marxist society and of the fight for social and national liberation.

According to the long-standing leader of the LSDP, Steponas Kairys, the theoretical justification of the 1896 LSDP programme was 'purely Marxist, as was the case with the German or Austrian social democrats', which 'clearly showed the complete orientation of the authors of the programme towards the West', where 'the explanation for

7. Programas lietuviškos socialdemokratiškos partijos. p. 9 – 12.

the changes in the Lithuanian economy and good examples of related activities were sought'. The content of the basic programme was 'based on the growing experience of the socialist movement in the West'.⁸

Indeed, the 1896 LSDP programme drew on the Social Democratic Party of Germany's (SPD) Erfurt Programme of 1891, as well as the resolutions of the Second International Congress and the Polish Socialist Party's SDKP and PSP programmes. Thus, the text of the 1896 LSDP programme, as well as its sources testify to the idea expressed by historians that the LSDP was an 'international party in nature'. It should be noted that the establishment of the LSDP in 1896 was also related to the wish of the Lithuanian social democrats to be independently represented at the Second International Congress in London. It turned out, however, that the US Lithuanian Socialist J. Šliūpas, who was supposed to represent the LSDP, was absent from the Congress.



Vladas Sirutavičius (1877–1967), one of the LSDP leaders at the beginning of the twentieth century; one of the Lithuanian Social Democrats during the First World War and in 1919. Later a member of the Constituent Assembly (Seimas), engineer and industrialist.

To conclude the discussion on the LSDP's 1896 programme, it should also be noted that apart from the wording of its main political demands and the related programme annexes, the remainder of the programme (the theoretical part and the part stipulating the specific political and economic demands) remained almost unchanged from the late

8. Kairys, S. *Lietuva budo*, New York (1957: 275).

nineteenth century until the beginning of the twentieth century, and throughout the First World War, as well as partially during the initial period of the Republic of Lithuania.

Nevertheless, the wording of the main political demands was later amended. The new version of the party programme adopted at the 1897 LSDP Congress was finalised following heated debates. It described Lithuania's political future as follows: 'Voluntary federation of the regions with the self-government of the people passing laws and governing in the state, the krai, the province and the volost.'⁹ Although some interpretations have it that at the congress of 1897 the Lithuanian social democrats sur-

rendered their goal of separating from Russia, in fact, the wording of the 1897 programme was somewhat obscure. For example, as Moravskis shows, the term 'free federation' was supposed to be made up of nations that had separated from Russia.

This interpretation is also supported by the following demand raised in the social democrats' proclamations in 1898: 'the demand for Lithuanian autonomy, based on the relations of a free federation with those of neighbouring nations, which will recognise Lithuania's autonomy'. This demand was repeated at the 4th LSDP Congress held in May 1899.

It is important that the word 'autonomy', which at that time was understood differently than in 1906–1907, should not be



Augustinas Janulaitis (1878–1950), one of the LSDP leaders at the beginning of the twentieth century and on the eve and beginning of the First World War. A famous lawyer and historian.

9. Skyc program Litewskiej social-demokratycznej organizacji // LMAB RS. F. 64–58. L. 5.

misinterpreted. Apparently, it was understood as explained in the resolutions of the 6th LSDP Congress of 1905:

in the event of a misunderstanding of the word “autonomy”, the congress explains that the political autonomy of Lithuania, as currently demanded, was understood as it is currently explained in our programme: the democratic Republic of Lithuania, willingly comprising the neighbouring nations and coordinated on the basis of a federation.¹⁰

Such explanations led to the conclusion that, if Lithuania were to join the federation on a voluntary basis, then it would first of all have to gain independence and only then, as was provided in the wording of 1898, would it have been able to choose its partners to establish a federation-based relationship.

The resolution of the 5th LSDP Congress of 1902 states that the LSDP shall recognise the right of every nation to decide its fate and shall ‘strive to create a democratic Lithuanian republic federated with neighbouring nations that are at the same level in terms of a social and political stature’.¹¹ Such a provision eliminated Russia from the future federation, as a rather underdeveloped region.

At the LSDP Conference of 1903, a number of ideals were again spoken of favourably: ‘full political freedom of the workers’, ‘universal people’s freedom’ and ‘national Lithuanian freedom... which would provide for ... a democratic republic of Lithuania ... united with the equal republics of neighbouring nations’. It should be noted that the latter phrase was not mentioned in the resolutions of the 1903 Conference in relation to ‘a free democratic republic’.¹² In 1903 and 1904, however, the LSDP repeatedly spoke in favour of an ‘independent Lithuania’, a ‘Lithuanian democratic republic’ and ‘an inde-

10. Kairys, S., *Lietuva budo*. pp. 342–43, 409.

11. Vilčinskis, J., *Lietuvos socialdemokratija kovoje dėl krašto nepriklausomybės. Istorinė apžvalga* (London 1985: 42).

12. Ibid., pp. 43, 46–47.

pendent Lithuania, a Lithuanian republic'.¹³ Notably, at that time, no other Lithuanian social nor political force had spoken out so radically for the political future of the Lithuanian national-social movement.

Thus, toward the end of a decade of LSDP activities, the emphasis on forming a 'federation' in the party's programme began to weaken, while the aspiration for an independent democratic Lithuania grew stronger. According to a later affirmation by Vincas Kapsukas, the editorial office of the LSDP newspaper *Workers' Voice* 'considered the demand for a federation to be a demand for independence' because 'without independence, there cannot be, without coercion, any "free will" in the merger of one land with another'.¹⁴

Vincas Kapsukas and Zigmas Angarietis, former social democrats who then became communists, in common with communist historiography in general, criticised the LSDP's actions at the turn of the twentieth century due to its aspiration for Lithuania to secede from Russia and for Lithuanian statehood. They interpreted this 'separatism' on the part of the LSDP as a 'manifestation of reformism', 'opportunism', 'social patriotism' and 'bourgeois nationalism ... among the members of the LSDP', as well as a demonstration of the 'relationship of the LSDP with the petit bourgeoisie' or even the 'bourgeois nature of the LSDP'.¹⁵ This was only the communist view, however. From the point of view of the social democrats themselves, or at least a considerable part of them, the aspiration for the independence of individual nations, or the pursuit of their statehood, did not stand in opposition to the aspirations of the proletariat.

According to various historians, in the wake of the 'national revolution' that took place in Lithuania in 1905, the LSDP was the 'most active' and 'most influential' political force, as well as the most 'influential organisation in Lithuania'.¹⁶ On the other hand, in the year of the revolution it was shown that the aspiration for a separate and independ-

13. Mitrulevičius, G., *Lietuvos socialdemokratijos ideologinė-politinė raida 1914–1919 metai*, p. 238.

14. Ibid., pp. 238–39.

15. Ibid., pp. 88–138, 392–415.

16. Ibid., pp. 246–252.

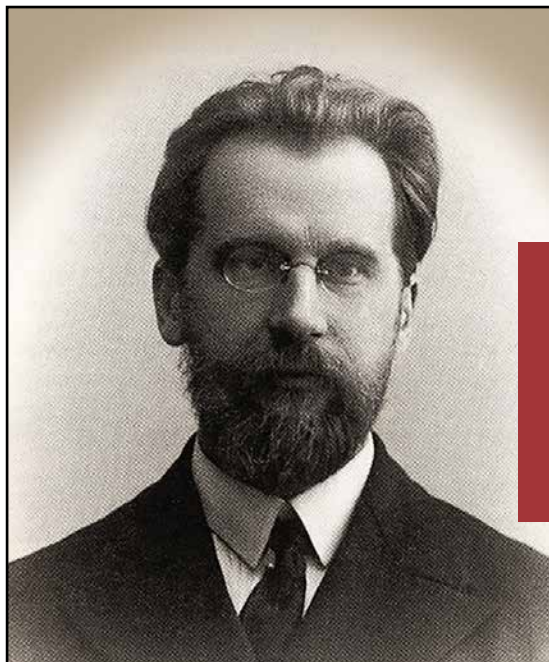
ent Republic of Lithuania, at least in the wording of the goals of the programme, was not yet stable.

The defeat in the revolution was a hard blow to both the LSDP as an organisation and its activities and influence in society; it also shaped the party programme. At the 7th Congress of the LSDP held in 1907, the participants spoke in favour of declaring that the LSDP's political programme should aim at 'forming a democratic republic and the political autonomy of Lithuania'.¹⁷ This meant that the LSDP favoured the autonomy of Lithuania as part of Russia.

According to S. Kairys, such a change in the LSDP's political programme in 1905 was determined by the collapse of the Russian revolution of that year, which

undermined not only the struggle for freedom, but also the party programme, perhaps not so much due to the new situation, but rather due to the lack of confidence in the forces of democracy and not seeing the only way forward as unifying the efforts of the entire proletariat of the Russian empire.¹⁸

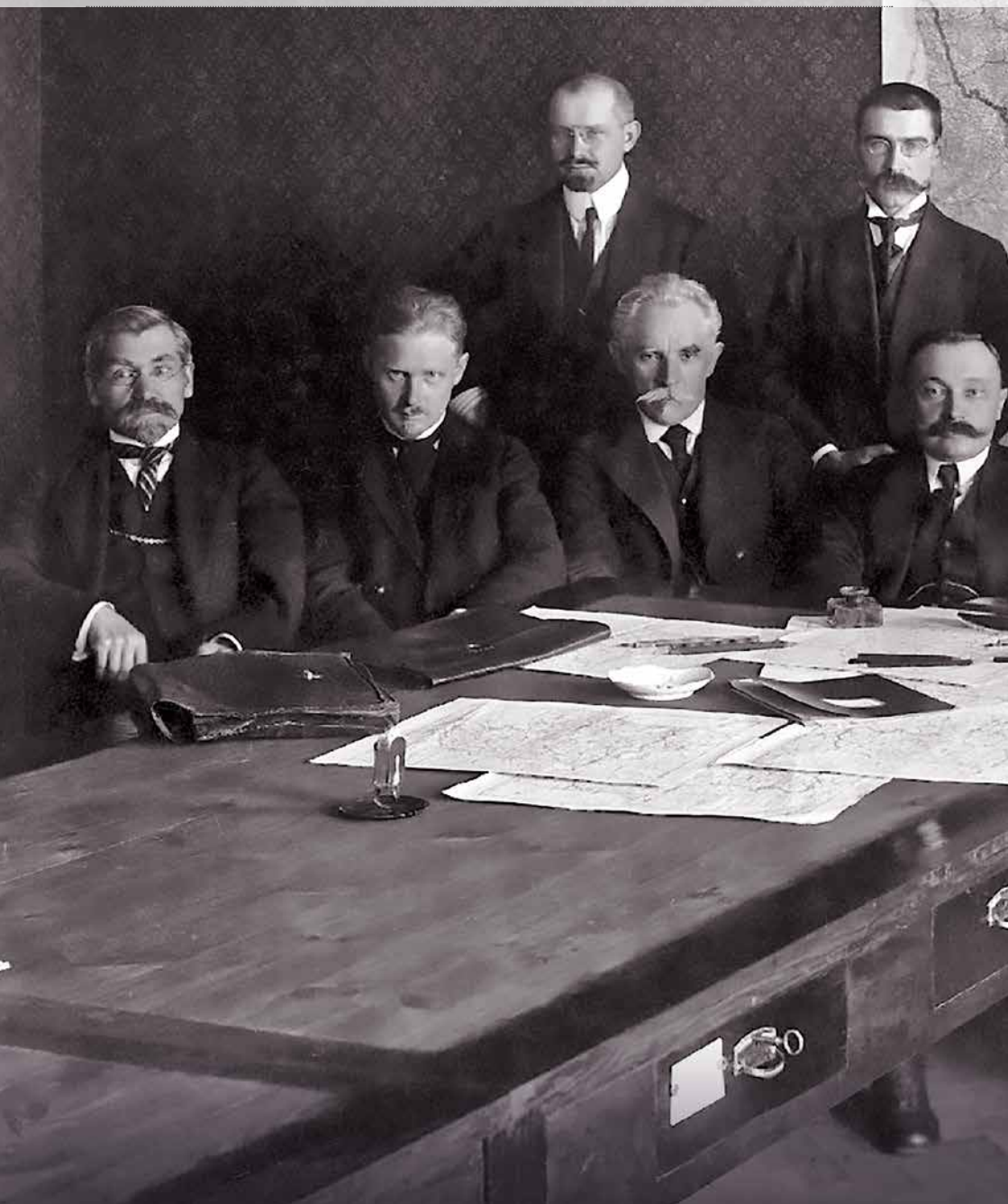
The LSDP continued to be guided by this provision concerning Lithuania's political future until the First World War.



Mykolas Biržiška (1882–1962), a signatory of the Act on the Independence of Lithuania of 16 February; a famous scientific and cultural figure, one of the LSDP leaders before the First World War and in 1914–1917.

17. Kairys, S., *Tau, Lietuva* (Boston, 1964: 226–29, 388).

18. Ibid. p. 410.



The 4th Provisional Council of Ministers (12-04-1919–07-10-1919) Social Democrats: second from the left, seated, J. Paknys, second from the right, S. Kairys. Kaunas, 1919 LNM.



2 | ROLE OF THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS IN THE (RE)CONSTRUCTION OF THE LITHUANIAN STATE (1914–1919)



The beginning of the First World War and the German occupation of Lithuania meant that the remaining Lithuanian social democrats, whose options as regards organisation and political activities conditions had been narrow even before the war, would have to amend their programme as regards the future of Lithuania. These amendments were made as soon as discussions about the Lithuania's political fate became relevant.

LSDP members predicted that the war would lead to changes in the political map of Europe. They rejected the programme of 1907 and very clearly and apparently somewhat earlier and more radically than the other Lithuanian political forces at that time, decided 'to name an Independent Democratic Lithuania as the highest aspiration of the Party'. The matter of relations with other countries remained open, although it was

Be dienos klausimų iškilo betgi greitai laiku politiko Lietuvos likimo klausimas, ir besant rusams Lietuvoje buvo pradėta jį svarstyti ir mėginta risti. Kuomet tas klausimas buvo ilgesnį laiką debatotas sąsurtų organizacijų tarpe, buvo pasistengta, prieš pat rusams pasitraukiant, susaukti Partijos konferenciją, kad joje nustatytas, tarp kitko ir politikių Partijos forumai atsiaminsiuos sąlykos. Del visuotinos suirutes ir pasunkėjusio susinešimo konferencija įvyko tik išdailės ir tik išdailės darė atsakymą į svarbiausią dienos klausimą.

Tuomet begi buvo konferencijos patvirtinta, kad nors negalima iš anksto pumatyti, kaip karo pabaišoje susidarys valstybių santykiai, politikių lozungai turi formuluoti Partijos siekima prie kuo plačiausios politikos laisvės, nežiūrint to, ar Lietuvai lemia pasilikti prie Rusijos, ar su ja persiskirti.

Praleidus tris mėnesius tas klausimas ilinavojo iškilo skiltinė, o šiandien jį atsistojo visų kitų prieklaikyje — tiek mūsų Partijos darbe, tiek Lietuvos visuomenės gyvenime. Tas klausimas mudato Partijos veikimą net kitais atvejais. Reikia pasakyti, kad šiuo metu Partijai sunku buvo tiek susitvarkyti, kad dabar ji būtų galejus duoti formali teisėt atsakymą politikus lozungus tartant. Sulygos neleidė sudaryti bent kiek platesnių konferencijų, ir todėl Centro Komitetas padarė, ką galėdamas: sukvietė atstovus vietinių organizacijų, kiek jų buvo galima dar surinkti, ir papildė susirinkimą žymeniais Partijos darbe draugais. Ta konferencija, duodama interpretaciją politikam Partijos programui, rensei jau ulei formules, kaip ją yra nustatę Krikuovus suveikimas, bet programo dvasios. Partijos programas, siekis Lietuvai laisvo demokratiško sureidimo, nustatė Partijos atsiradimo pradži demokratiškos respublikos forma, federacijos ryšius susijungusios su kaimynų salimis. Žlugus 1905 metų Rusijos revoliucija pakito kojas ne tik kovai už laisvę, bet ir politikam Partijos programui: gal ne tiek dėl naujo pamatavimo, kiek dėl nepastitikejimo demokratos įėjomis, nematant kitų tokio kelio laimeti, kaip suvienijus viso Rusijos proletarijato pastangas. Partijos programo demokratiškos suferduotos respublikos vietą užėmė politika Lietuvai autonomija su plačiausiomis teisėmis savarankiai tvarkyti krašto gyvenimą.

Dabartinis karas iš pamato išgriovė senuosius Lietuvos santykius ir sutvėrė visai naują padėjimą. Dabar mažai kas tiki, kad rusai įveiktų vokiečius ir ginklu juos išvartų iš Lietuvos; negu Rusijos talkininkai; negu pati ekonomikai suvergosi Vokietija karo pabaišoje turėtų, apveiktą, išizdėti užimtų plotų ir atiduoti, tarp ko-kita, ir Lietuvą.

Tačiau niekur nesimato Lietuvoje kokio gyvenimo nuo sumegsi nutraukties su Rusija ryšiai. Pritirtas ir caro vyriausybės prisipaadinimas, ir verginimas Lietuvos gyvenimo visuose jo srityse šiandien valdžiai stoja Lietuvos darbininkų ir valstiečių akyse ir verčia juos, nežiūrint sunkaus vokiečių teimininkavimo, kasart vis greičiau pasilikti nugarą nuo Rusijos.

Vadinamos rusų orientacijos žmonų turime Lietuvoje akiziūmi; bet jie nesudaro mūsų gyvenime jokios platesnės ar siauresnės visuomenės grupos. Tai reti žmonės tiek liaudies tiek ypai inteligentijos tarpe.

Visi tie prirodyimai ir motyvai, kuriais Partija kitados pamatavo reikalą Lietuvai laisvo, demokratiško ir savarankio politiko sureidimo, šiandien ne tik nesutejo savo turinio ir svarbos, bet dar įgijo ypatingo gyvumo ir prasmės — viena, dėl gresiančio pavojaus mūsų laisvei iš Vokietijos pusės, antra, dėlto, kad karo bėgis, ypai jeigu jis dar ilgiau patvėrtų, duoda vilties susilaukti tokio susiklosčiusio susilpimo ir tokios kosjakturos visoj Europoj, kurie Lietuvos demokratijai leistų gal ir pilnai realizuoti politikus mūsų siekinius.

Kaip ten nebūtų, dabartinis istorinis momentas yra gal vienintelis ilgam laikui, kuomet galima tikėtis ir reikia siekti kuogiliausio pirmalio politikame ir visuomeniskame mūsų krašto surėdyme. Reikia siekti, nes sumazėjęs pavojus iš Rusijos pusės padidino pavojų iš Vokietijos pusės: niekieno neabejojama, kad laisvesi Vokietija be atodairos mėgintų prijungti Lietuvą ir išnaudoti ją saviems reikalams.

Be kultūrinio pavergimo, reikėtų tuomet laukti Lietuvos kolonizacijos, pasiryžimo paveikti konkurencijoj Lietuvos valstiečius, tuo keliu expropiuoti juos, varijoti vietinę pramonę Vokietijos naudai, varyti, žodžiu, ekonominio užkariavimo politiką, kuri risis su kultūrine kova, ir sudarys tokias sąlygas politikam, visuomenės ir ekonomiskam Lietuvos gyvenimui, kurios vers Lietuvos darbininkus ir ukinius įsitraukti sunkiausios kovon, kurioje greitų demokratijos įėjon, o padėjimas menkai tegrėty. Tuo tarpu, pasiekus savarankį politiką turima, tuo pačiu būtų išgaustos tinkamos sąlygos normaliai plėtoies ekonomiam, visuomenės ir kultūriniam mūsų krašto gyvenimui, prie kurio Lietuva, kaip mums rodo, yra jau pribrėndusi ir net priartėgusi.

Sunku trumpai pamatuoti politikių Partijos lozungai, kuriuos ji šiandien eiklėnt isklė, bet maždaug dėl to motyvu tapo nutarta viršinai Partijos siekima pastatyti **NEPRIKLAUSOMA DEMOKRATISKA LIETUVA**.

Santykių klausimas su kitomis šalimis, kaip Latvija ir Lenkija, tebestovi atviras, nors siekiamas to, kad susipratus su jų demokratija bendrai kovai laisvei įgyti ir įgytąją laisvę atleisti sau garantuoti.

Nepriklausomos Lietuvos lozungas vispirma tapo priimtas I. S. D. Partijos, o po jos greitai laiki prie to obalsio prisidėjo visos kitos Lietuvos visuomenės grupos. Kitokios susitvarkiusios orientacijos Lietuvoje nėra. Tik demokratų grupa kokią laiką laikė neišaiškį suformuluoto lozungo — saviranki Lietuvai, risanti begi savo likimą su vidutines Europos likimu, — bet ir ta grupa šiandien pasisakė šalininkie nepriklausomos Lietuvos, nepriklausomos ne nuo Rusijos, bet nuo Vokietijos, linkusios ton pusėn, kuri panorės tuos mūsų siekinius pripažinti ir juos paremti.

Kadangi neturime legalės spaudos, o jeigu ir būtų, tai būtų sušpausta atšiaurus vokiečių cenzūros. Partija pradėjo veikti nelegaliai.

Fragments of the article by S. Kairys, a pseudonymous work by Vienas Vilnietis, Lietuva gyvenamuoju momentu (Lithuania nowadays) published in the Chicago Lithuanian newspaper Naujienos (News) in 1916 19th, 21st, and 22nd August issues from Tau, Lietuva by Kairys (For you, Lithuania), Boston, 1964, pp. 410–411.

'aimed at becoming acquainted with their democracy in order to jointly fight to acquire freedom and to guarantee that freedom once acquired'.¹⁹

Having established such a goal and in order to popularise it, but without being able to act publicly, the LSDP illegally disseminated its proclamations and occasionally illegal publications, in which it not only explicitly advocated an independent democratic Lithuania, but also emphasised the need for a democratic order in the future state, as well as indicating how it should be done. Given the current situation, the LSDP amended its position on cooperation with other political currents in Lithuania, although earlier, as well as at the beginning of the war, it had pursued cooperation only with other socialist parties. Therefore, the social democrats joined the joint social structures of various political currents in Lithuania, aimed at organising support for the victims of war, discussing political issues and representing Lithuanian affairs. In this way, they participated in the joint actions of representatives of various currents in order to improve the state of Lithuania. For example, in July 1916, Steponas Kairys, Antanas Smetona and Jurgis Šaulys attended the conference of the League of Nations Oppressed by Russia, at which, for the first time, an official demand was made on behalf of the Lithuanian representatives for the 'completed undefined independence of Lithuania'.²⁰

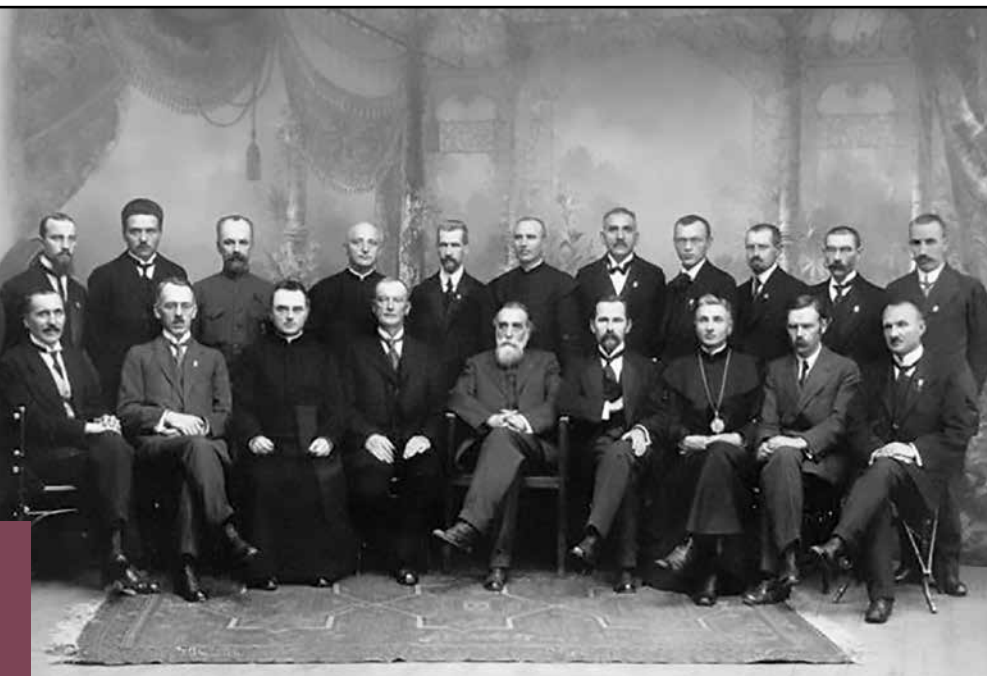
Of course, the fact that the social democrats took part in these joint actions along with other political currents did not mean that their mutual disagreements had disappeared. Indeed, the social democrats coordinated with right-wing activities aimed at promoting Lithuania's 'main political goals' abroad in order to obtain support from European and global democratic forces.²¹

The LSDP's relations with right-wing parties were once again aggravated in spring 1917; however, they did not completely break with them at that time, and in summer

19. Ibid., pp. 248–49, 411.

20. *Lietuva vokiečių okupacijoje Pirmojo pasaulinio karo metais 1915–1918. Lietuvos nepriklausomos valstybės genezė*, Sud. E. Gimžauskas (Vilnius, 2006: 100–102).

21. Mitrulevičius, G., *Lietuvos socialdemokratijos ideologinė-politinė raida 1914–1919 metais*, pp. 291–302.



Council of Lithuania, Vilnius, 25 August 1917. Social Democrats: second from the right in the first row, S. Kairys, fifth from the left in the second row, M. Biržiška. Photo: Aleksandra Jurašaitytė. LNM.

1917 the social democrats supported the idea of creating a Council of Lithuania. Although they were in favour of a democratic election, they did not agree with the principle of co-option when choosing participants for the conference, which was proposed by the presidium for the summoning of the Lithuanian Organising Committee Conference. However, given the fact that the Germans would not allow elections to be organised, they suggested a 'semi-co-option – semi-election' alternative, and encouraged not only Lithuanians to be 'invited', but also other nationalities who 'sympathise with Lithuania'.²²

The social democrats took part in the election of the participants in the Lithuanian Conference and actively participated in it (18–22 September 1917). When discuss-

22. About the relationship between the social democrats and the election of the Council of Lithuania, their work and provisions, see *ibid.* 307–87.

ing the general political resolution of the conference on the future of Lithuania, they were firmly opposed to the establishment of any relations with Germany, and clearly expressed their strong support for the independence of Lithuania – although, due to German pressure, it was necessary to note in the resolution that Lithuania would enter into some kind of relationship with Germany. The LSDP representatives highlighted the significance of the Constituent Assembly of Lithuania (the ‘Seimas’) to be elected democratically, which would have determined both the internal political order of Lithuania and its relations with its neighbours. They also concurred that the resolution on the future of Lithuania must also deal with national minorities, who should be granted cultural autonomy.

The social democrats supported the election of the Council of Lithuania. However, when the various representatives failed to agree on proportional representation, only two members of the LSDP and two left-wing representatives, S. Kairys and M. Biržiška, were initially elected. After some tensions between the left- and the right-wing parties, certain compromises were made by the latter. Thus, instead of two priests who had

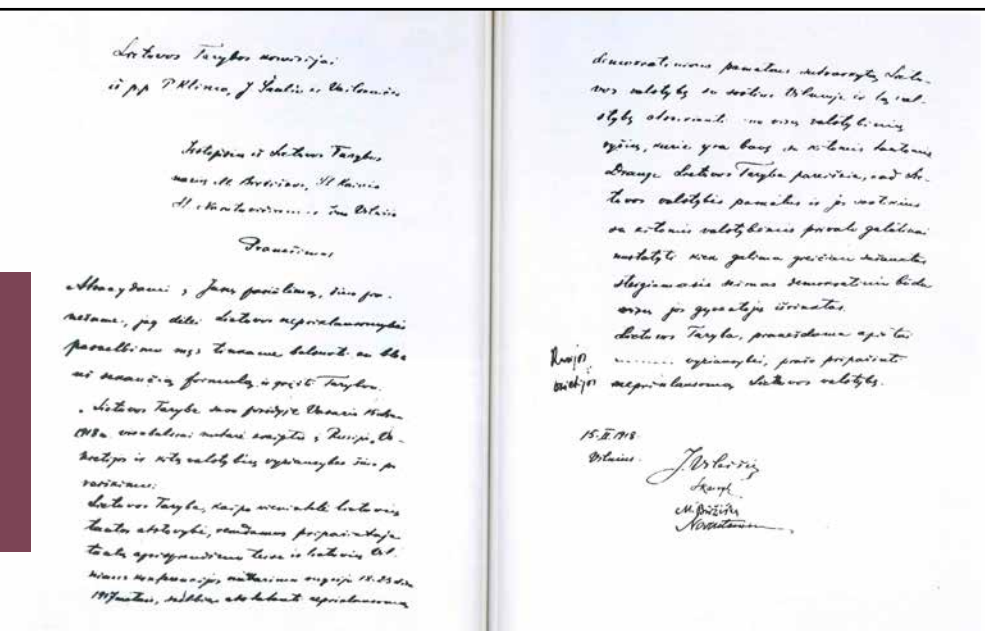


Jonas Vileišis (1872–1942), a signatory of the Act on the Independence of Lithuania of 16 February, one of the Left Quartet of the Lithuanian Council, one of the LSDP leaders at the end of 1918–1919.



Stanislovas Narutavičius (1862–1932), a signatory of the Act on the Independence of Lithuania of 16 February, one of the Left Quartet of the Lithuanian Council.

withdrawn from the Council of Lithuania, two left-wing politicians were elected: the democrat (socialist-populist) Jonas Vileišis and Stanislovas Narutavičius, who was close to towards the social democrats. In 24 September 1917, at the first meeting of the Council of Lithuania, S. Kairys was elected its first deputy chairman.



Text of the decision on the declaration of independence presented by the Left Quartet of the Lithuanian Council on 15 February 1918; after the commitment of the majority of the Lithuanian Council to adopt it, the Lefts agreed to resume their duties on the Council.

The left-wing quartet on the Council of Lithuania was the strongest opponent of German annexation plans in Lithuania. The left-wingers spoke clearly against the Council resolution of 11 December 1917 and declared not only the goal of secession from Russia and the restoration of an independent Lithuania, but also of a 'firm, eternal alliance' with Germany, as was established under the four conventions. On 26 January 1918, S. Kairys, M. Biržiška, J. Vileišis and S. Narutavičius, after disagreeing with the policy of connivance with Germany that was accepted by the majority of the

Council of Lithuania, withdrew from the Council under the leadership of A. Smetona, and agreed to return only when a majority of the Council accepted, in principle, their draft Declaration of the Independence of Lithuania. Thus, the role and contribution of the social democrats (and of the left-wing in general) in the final formulation and adoption of the Act of 16 February 1918 (as it was published) was quite significant.

Kas Vasario 16-sios autorius?

"Drauge" išspausdinus J. Prunskio pasikalbėjimą su kan. Sauliu, kuriame buvo paliestas ir Lietuvos nepriklausomybės paskelbimo klausimas, kilo kai kurių abejonių, todėl tuo reikalu buvo kreiptasi į prof. S. Kairį ir paprašyta atsakyti:

Ar jis skaitė tą pasikalbėjimą? Ar teisingai yra prel. Saulys ten pasakęs, kad nepriklausomybės aktas bus suredagavęs Petras Klimas, o jau visokias pataisas nešė kiti Tarybos nariai? Ir pagaliau kokie buvo Uracho rinkimų motyvai?

Prof. Steponas Kairys atsilpė šitokį atsakymą:

—Skačiau, Gerb. Redaktoriau, nors su "Drauge" susitinku retokai. Iš to skaitymo darau išvadą, kad ypač mūsų amžiuje labai nedrąsu pasitikėti savo atmintimi. Todėl gerai padarė ir prel. K. Saulys pasakydamas, kad aktą bus redagavęs P. Klimas. Buvo vis tik ne taip, ir aš būsiu laimingesnis už prelata, kad, atsakydamas į Tams-

du. Kartu buvo prašoma, kad Vokietijos vyriausybė pripažintų nepriklausomą Lietuvą, tuojau ją paskelbus. Tam įsipareigojimai amžinai surišti Lietuvą su Vokietija buvo griežtai priešingi bent keturi Tarybos nariai: S. Narutavičius, J. Vileišis, M. Biržiška ir S. Kairys. Nežiūrint visų išoliųjų teigimų, man ir šiandien dar galvoje, kad ty keturių narių nebuvo parašo ir po minėtu dokumentu.

Reakcija prieš vokiečiams gruodžio 11 dieną įteiktą dokumentą prasidėjo jau traukinio vagonė, Tarybos nariams grįžtant iš Kauno Vilniun ir aštrėto labai sparčiai ne tik minėtų 4 narių tarpe. Toliau aš Tamstai tiekiau duomenis vien iš prof. Z. Ivinskio straipsnio.

1918 metų sausio 8 dienos T. Tarybos posėdyje gruodžio 11 dienos nutarimui panaikinti S. Kairys pasiūlė Tarybai formulę,

nuo nepriklausomybės akto teksto. Balsuojant, už S. Kairio pasiūlytą tekstą buvo 12 balsų, du susilaikė ir trys buvo prieš, jų tarpe A. Smetona. Be kitų, S. Kairio rezoliuciją palaikė kun. J. Staugaitis, kun. Petrušis, P. Klimas, Bizauskas, A. Stulginskis.

Tad, kai Taryba ir vėl susirinko 1918.1.26, A. Smetona ir J. Saulys pasiūlė Tarybai naują formulę, kurioje tebebuvo pasididėjimas stoti už 4 konvencijas, bet gale buvo dar toks priedas: "Lietuvos Taryba, pranešdama apie tai Vokietijos vyriausybei, šiuo prašo pripažinti nepriklausomą Lietuvos valstybę, kartu pareikšdama, kad galutinai nustatyti Lietuvos valstybės pamatus ir jos santykius su kaimyninėmis valstybėmis privalo steigiamasis Lietuvos seimas.

Už tą "dekoruotą konvencijų" rezoliuciją, nežinantis logiškų joje prieštaravimų, balsavo 12, susilaikė 3 ir 5 buvo prieš. Prieš balsavo: S. Kairys, M. Biržiška, J. Vileišis, S. Narutavičius ir A. Stulginskis. Po to S. Narutavičius, J. Vileišis, M. Biržiška ir S. Kairys iš Tarybos pasitraukė, ir tik 1918.2.15, kai Tarybos dauguma priėmė nepriklausomybės paskelbimo tekstą S. Kairio redakcijoje (be konvencijų), išėjusieji grįžo Tarybon, ir sekandą dieną aktas buvo paskelbtas. P. Klimui padarius tekstą vieną kitą redakciją pataisė.

Tad iš prof. Z. Ivinskio tiekiamų duomenų Tamsta, Gerb. Redaktoriau, matai, kad S. Kairys gali pretenduoti būti nepriklausomybės akto teksto autorium. Negali to "nuopelno" savintis pats vienas, nes Tarybai patiekias akto tekstas buvo visos "opozicijos" patvirtintas. Pagaliau, ne tiek jau buvo sunku surašyti akto teksto projektas, kiek paveikti Tarybos daugumą, kad ryžtųsi skelbti "svaigį" nepriklausomybę ir dėl to teko S. Kairiui gal daugiau ginčytis, kaip kam kitam.

Apie karaliaus Mindaugo II-jo rinkimų motyvus norėčiau su Tamsta, Gerb. Redaktoriau, pakalbėti kitą kartą.

Pakalbinkime draugus ir kaimynus užsiskirti "Keleivį". Kauno metraštis 54.

Prie protokolo Nr. 61
[19]18.II.15 rytą
Lietuvos Tarybos Komisijai
iš p. p. P. Klimo, J. Šaulio
ir Vailokaičio

Išstojusių iš Lietuvos Tarybos
narių M. Biržiškos, St. Kairio,
St. Narutavičiaus ir J. Vileišio

PRANEŠIMAS

Atsakydami į Jūsų pasiūlymą, šiuo pranešame, jog dėl Lietuvos nepriklausomybės paskelbimo mes [su]tinkame balsuoti en bloc už sekančią formulę ir grįžti Tarybon.

„Lietuvos Taryba savo posėdyje vasario 15 dieną 1918 m. vienbalsiai nutarė kreiptis į Rusijos, Vokietijos ir kitų valstybių vyriausybes šiuo pareiškimu:

Lietuvos Taryba, kaip vienintelė lietuvių tautos atstovybė, remdamos pripažintą tautų apsisprendimo teisę ir lietuvių Vilniuje konferencijos nutarimu rugsėjo 18–23 dien. 1917 metais, skelbia atstatanti nepriklausomą demokratiniais pamatais sutvarkytą Lietuvos valstybę su sostine Vilniuje ir tą valstybę atskirianti nuo visų valstybinių ryšių, kurie yra buvę su kitomis tautomis. Drauge Lietuvos Taryba pareiškia, kad Lietuvos Valstybės pamatus ir jos santykius su kitomis valstybėmis privalo galutinai nustatyti kiek galima greičiau sušauktas Steigiamasis Seimas, demokratiniu būdu visų jos gyventojų išrinktas.

Lietuvos Taryba, pranešdama apie tai Rusijos, Vokietijos vyriausybei, prašo pripažinti nepriklausomą Lietuvos valstybę“.

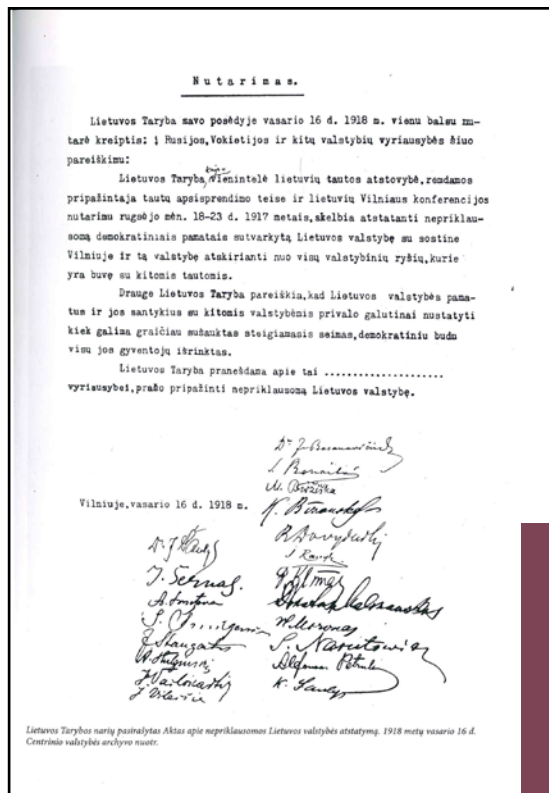
15. II. 1918. *J. Vileišis, S. Kairys, M. Biržiška, Narutowicz*. Vilnius

Notification of M. Biržiška, S. Kairys, S. Narutavičius and J. Vileišis who had left the Lithuanian Council (typewritten version) to the Lithuanian Council Commission. Minutes of the Lithuanian Council 1917–1918. Vilnius, 1991. Pp. 207–

Beginning in the middle of November 1917, the social democrats had started publishing the newspaper *Darbo balsas* (*Labour Voice*) which, despite censorship, made a clear statement on the creation of an independent and democratic Republic of Lithuania, while emphasising the need to ensure the rights of national minorities, as well as protesting against the undemocratic actions of right-wing political forces and against the desire of Polish landlords to annex Lithuania to Poland.

Speaking in favour of creating a democratic state of Lithuania, the left-wing quartet of the Council of Lithuania, following the adoption of the Act in 16 February 1918, suggested that the Council should convene a second Lithuanian

conference as soon as possible and prepare for the elections to the Constituent Assembly, although under the circumstances of those times, this was unrealistic. Germany, recognising only the resolution of 11 December 1917, prevented Lithuania's declaration of independence and, until the very end of the war, stopped any actions by the Council of Lithuania aimed at restoring statehood. Therefore, the majority of the Council sought to find a way out of this situation and, in order to strengthen their position and to stabilise Lithuanian statehood in any form possible, they decided on 11 July 1918 to declare Lithuania a monarchy and to elect Prince Wilhelm von Urach, Count of Württemberg, as king. The social democrats (like the other left-wing parties) protested against this decision. They blamed the majority of the Council of Lithuania for breaching their authority and for usurping the rights of the Constituent Assembly, as they had not taken part in the work



Act on the Independence of Lithuania of 16 February 1918 with all twenty signatures.



Juozas Paknys (1883–1948), one of the most prominent LSDP figures of 1917–1919; the minister of labour and social security of the fourth Provisional Government of Lithuania. Later a famous banker.

of the Council since 12 July 1918. Having withdrawn from the LSDP, in autumn 1918, M. Biržiška returned to work at the Council of Lithuania, which at that time was called the State Council of Lithuania (the 'LVT'), as a private individual rather than as a representative of the social democrats.

From 1915 to 1918, Lithuanian social democracy had a presence not only in German-occupied Lithuania, but also further afield, in Scotland, the United States and Russia. Nonetheless, most of the Lithuanian social democrats who were active in the country during 1917–1918 surrendered to the ideological and

political influence of Russian Bolshevism and became communists. (There is no room here to discuss the latter's ideological-political development and political assumptions regarding Lithuania's statehood.²³)

With the exception of certain positions of the Polish socialists who belonged for some time to the LSDP, in general, there were no significant differences between the ideological and political assumptions of the Lithuanian social democrats in Vilnius in the period 1915 to 1917. In 1918, however, a certain ideological and political differentiation influenced by Russian Bolshevism began to manifest itself in the Lithuanian Social Democratic Movement as well. As a result, in summer and autumn 1918, the Lithuanian-Belarusian Communist Party (LBKP) was created.²⁴ In autumn 1918, the Bolsheviks' LBKP, which was

23. See *ibid.*, pp. 388–516.

24. In 1920 the LBKP split into the LKP and the BKP. For the development of the LBKP see *ibid.*, pp. 517–548.

fully supported by Russia, was very active in Lithuania. It should be noted that Lithuanian social democrats who had remained faithful to social democracy were violently attacked at this time, through written and oral communist propaganda and agitation.

In the second half of 1918, the latter group criticised and negatively assessed Russian Bolshevism in the newspaper *Labour Voice*. During this period, these social democrats, without changing their principles, did not recognise the LVT. They demanded a new regional conference and the election of a new Council of Lithuania, which in turn should strive to organise democratic elections to the Constituent Assembly as soon as possible.

The social democrats did not recognise the formation of the First Provisional Government of Lithuania led by A. Voldemaras. Instead, they discussed the possibility of forming the Lithuanian government only from representatives of the socialist parties. Later, they joined negotiations with these parties on the formation of the Revolutionary Council of Lithuania as a provisional supreme authority. These negotiations were soon transformed into negotiations on the election of the Vilnius Council of Workers' Representatives (DAT), however, which was supposed to have the highest authority in Lithuania until the Congress of Representatives of the Lithuanian Councils of Workers and Peasants. In December 1918, most members of the LSDP's Vilnius organisation supported this idea, with A. Domaševičius at the forefront.

In December 1918, however, other LSDP members in Vilnius and in other cities of Lithuania (in Šiauliai, Rokiškis and Utena they played a major role in the organisation of democratic local municipalities) continued to speak out in favour of a new Lithuanian conference to elect a new LVT, or of a congress composed of delegates from the municipal councils to create a new provisional Lithuanian government. At the end of December 1918, some other prominent figures in the LSDP joined the Second Provisional Government of Lithuania formed by the leader of the Lithuanian Socialist-Populist Democrats (LSLDP), Mykolas Sleževičius, and they began working in the structure of the developing Lithuanian state authority. As a result, the branch of the LSDP that was headed by A. Domaševičius became detached. At that time, he did not recognise

the government that had proclaimed itself the highest authority in Vilnius, which was led by V. Kapsukas and comprised only communists.²⁵



Partisan headquarters established to fight against the Western Russian Volunteer Army. Social Democrats: second from the left in the first row K. Bielinis, first from the right in the first row V. Požela.

The split in the social democrats was deepened at the beginning of 1919. Some members of the LSDP, such as S. Kairys, J. Paknys and others, actively participated in the restoration of Lithuanian statehood at that time. Meanwhile, in January 1919, the section of the LSDP led by A. Domaševičius, in contrast to the position it had declared in December 1918, recognised V. Kapsukas' communist government 'brought' to Lithuania by the Bolshevik Red Army on behalf of the entire LSDP. The group collaborated with this government, and was finally named the Communist Party of Lithuania or LKP (creating the so-called 'A. Domaševičius' LKP') and proposed that the LBKP should open

25. For information about the assumptions and the political position of the LSDP in the second half of 1918, see *ibid.*, pp. 548–651.

negotiations on a merger. For various reasons, however, this did not happen and the new LKP gradually collapsed and disappeared.

Following these events, in 1919 the only group of social democrats continuing to act on behalf of the LSDP was the group led by J. Paknys and S. Kairys, who maintained a negative attitude towards Bolshevism and whose representatives were members of the second and fourth provisional Lithuanian governments, under the leadership of M. Sleževičius.

The social democrat ministers S. Kairys and J. Paknys, who were in the fourth provisional Lithuanian government that played an important role in the struggle for independence, were also sharply critical of the anti-democratic developments in the new state of Lithuania, and constantly demanded faster organisation of elections to the Constituent Assembly and the municipalities. Following the fall of the fourth provisional government in autumn 1919, the representatives of the LSDP refused to enter the fifth provisional government led by Ernestas Galvanauskas and sharply criticised its policies and those of the LVT.

In summer and autumn 1919, the social democrats began reorganising the party. On 3 October 1919, the LSDP was registered for legal activities in the Republic of Lithuania. At that time, a new version of the 1896 programme was adopted.



Vladas Požela (1879–1960), one of the Lithuanian leaders of the Social Democrats in Russia 1916–beginning of 1917. Member of Central Committee of the LSDP before and after the First World War; later member of the Constituent Assembly of the Seimas. A famous lawyer.



LSDP faction at the constituent assembly of the Seimas (from 1921). Seated (from the left): S. Digrys, V. Čepinskis, K. Bielinis, K. Venclauskis, S. Kairys, V. Požela, E. Šukevičius; standing (from the left) J. Daukšys, P. Šemiotas (Šemetas), J. Pakalka, A. Povylis, B. Cirtautas. LCVA.



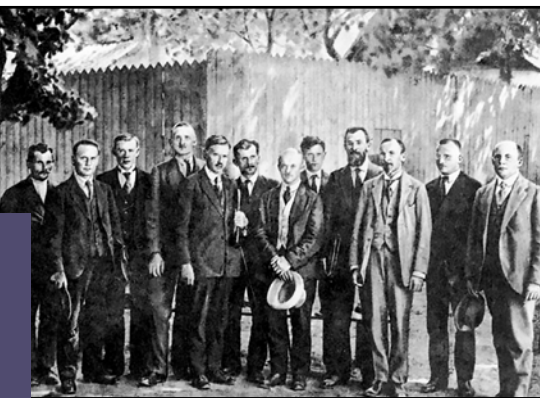
3 | SOCIAL DEMOCRACY IN THE CONSOLIDATION OF LITHUANIAN STATEHOOD (1920–1922)



Despite the demands of the social democrats, in 1918–1919 there were no opportunities to convene elections to the Constituent Assembly. Therefore, these elections took place only on 14–16 April 1920 (notably, they did not take place in the Polish-occupied region of Vilnius). The elections were won by the most influential political force at that time, the former Christian Democratic Bloc (KDb), which received 317,300 votes (out of 682,291), and 59 (out of a possible 112) representatives in the Constituent Assembly. Second place was taken by the Peasant Populist Bloc (VLb), which received 155,600 votes and 29 representatives.

The LSDP, which was extremely weak in organisational terms, harassed by the government and fiercely attacked by the communist workers, received 87,051 or 13 per cent of the votes and 13 (12.5 per cent) representatives in the Constituent Assembly. In the circumstances, this was a success. By comparison, the Party of National Progress

(TPP) led by A. Smetona, which had played an important role in the political life of Lithuanians in 1917–1919 received only 12,000 votes, and no representatives in the Constituent Assembly.



Social Democratic faction of the Constituent Assembly of the Seimas in 1920. J. Daukšys, V. Požela, P. Šemiotas (Šemetas), J. Plečkaitis, S. Kairys, V. Sirutavičius, A. Purėnas, J. Pakalka, K. Lekeckas, V. Čepinskis, S. Digrys, B. Cirtautas.

Among the social democrats elected to the Assembly, there were some well-known figures from the national liberation and socialist movements, including some who played a significant role in the history of Lithuania in the twentieth century (S. Kairys, Kipras Bielinis). Almost

half of the members of the parliamentary group had been arrested and imprisoned in Tsarist Russia (and one of them in Bolshevik Russia).²⁶ The LSDP refused to enter the rul-

26. For information about the performance of LSDP at the elections of the Constituent Assembly and the members of its parliamentary group, see *Socialdemokratai Lietuvos Respublikos Seimuose* (Vilnius, 2006: 65–66, 105–109, 111–124, 136–140, 145–146, 155–156, 161–178, 184–194)

ing coalition of the KDb and VLb, forming part of the opposition in parliament, despite the fact that the parties that had joined the VLb were its closest political associates in 1919. In their radical declaration about the new government, the social democrats declared that they would 'not be in power' until they saw 'the possibility of using it for matters of the working people'. The LSDP parliamentary group also stated that it 'came here to defend the concerns of the working people' and that 'for that purpose, every occasion and every opportunity will be used'.²⁷

Both the declaration of the LSDP parliamentary group, and its position in the debate on the drafting of the provisional Constitution adopted on 10 June 1920, as well as of the permanent Constitution adopted on 1 August 1922, and the statements, inquiries and interpellations of its members show that the social democrats devoted a lot of attention to the radical democratisation of Lithuania. For example, in discussing the drafts of the constitutions, the social democrats spoke in favour of a radical parliamentary republic in which the Seimas expressed the 'power and authority' of the sovereign and, at the same time, was the most important public authority, whose ministers could only be members of the Seimas. There would be no presidential authority at all, and all the functions provided for this authority would be carried out by the chairman of the Seimas. They justified their position against a presidential authority not only by the fact that this option was too expensive for Lithuania, but also because it was opposed to the 'authority of Seimas as a sovereign government' and was even an

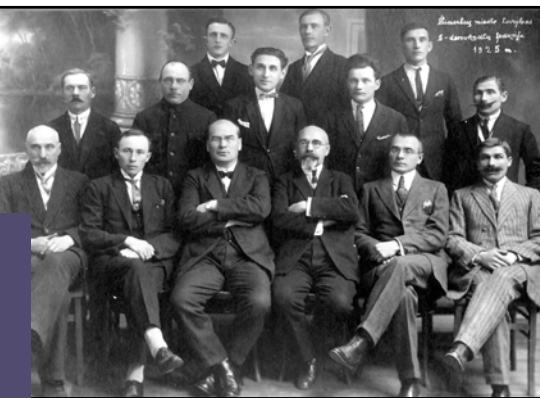


Kipras Bielinis (1883–1965), a famous figure of the national revolution of 1905, one of the LSDP leaders between the two world wars and in the emigration after the Second World War

27. Ibid., pp. 67–68, 677–682. For more information, see Mitrulevičius, G., 'Socialdemokratų santykis su Lietuvos Respublikos demokratizacijos procesu Steigiamojo Seimo darbo metu 1920–1922', *Parlamento studijos*, 9 (2010), 79–124.

'anti-democratic institution' opposed to democracy in general.

Apparently, at that time, the social democrats did not adequately assess the powers of the presidential authority provided for in the draft constitutions. In addition to the more general factors that will be mentioned later, the position of the LSDP at that time was determined by an extremely negative assessment of the Lithuanian experience in 1919. Moreover, the 'spirit of the time' was determined by the collapses of undemocratic monarchies that took place in 1917–1918, as well as the democratic thrust of its radically 'French' parliament. These factors, together with ideological traditions, underpinned other LSDP positions, such as their demand that elections to the Seimas and municipal councils would take place not every three years, but every two; that judges would be 'elected and re-appointed by the people' and that all privileges, titles and orders be abolished.



LSDP faction of the Council of the city of Šiauliai 1925, Archive of Aušra museum.

The social democrats also defended and continued to develop their 1896 programme with new social and economic requirements, the nature of which shows their characteristic understanding of social and economic democracy and their attempt to implement it. Through this prism, the social democrats also considered the adoption of a Land Reform Bill, which was extremely important for Lithuania as an agrarian

country. The LSDP parliamentary group led a real fight against anti-democratic developments, first of all, under the conditions and consequences of the war, including the arbitrary behaviour of military commanders, censorship, the repression of the workers' movement, the arrest of its leading figures and beatings of political prisoners. Its aim was to defend freedom of thought, the rule of law and the rights of the members of the Seimas as the nation's elected representatives. It was also in favour of separating

VINCAS ČEPINSKIS (1871 –1940)



Vincas Čepinskas 1919.

Vincas Čepinskas was a prominent scientist and one of the pre-eminent social democratic activists during the period of the Constituent Assembly of Lithuania (1920–1922), as well as minister of education (1926) and a diplomat (1919).

Born to a peasant family, Čepinskas attended the Šiauliai Gymnasium (graduating in 1890). He then studied physics and chemistry at St Petersburg University (1890–1894), prior to working as an intern with the famous chemist Mendeleev for a period of eighteen months. From 1897–1900, he studied and worked in Zurich; from 1902 to 1915 he taught at the Liepaja School of Commerce, later becoming its principal; and from 1916 to 1918 he was a lecturer at St Petersburg University. In 1918, Čepinskas returned to Lithuania and began working at the Ministry of Education in November. From the end of 1918 he worked as a diplomat and the representative of Lithuania in Latvia, and in 1919 he became its representative in the United Kingdom.

Čepinskas joined the political life in 1905–1906, but due to educational and administrative work he quit politics until he returned to Lithuania. Upon his return in 1918, Čepinskas joined the Social Democratic Party of Lithuania (LSDP) and actively participated in its activities. In 1920, he was elected a member of the Constituent Assembly of Lithuania and served the full term of office (1920–1922). He was one of the leading speakers of the LSDP faction of the Constituent Assembly and a central figure during the deliberations on the constitution, education and science, and foreign policy. Čepinskas was one of the most highly-educated members of the Constituent Assembly. The speeches of this erudite and intellectual man always included a multi-sided analysis of the issues and ‘hundreds of references to history, philosophy, Holy Scripture and the sciences’. According to the historians, he was remarkably ‘erudite, a true representative of the Age of Positivism, a humanist in the deepest understanding of the term, and a tolerant man’. He wrote several works aimed against dictatorship (such as *Democracy and Dictatorship*), as well as a number of articles on political issues.

Prior to taking up his position in the Constituent Assembly of Lithuania, he gave lectures at the Higher Institution, and later at the Lithuanian University (established in 1922 on the basis of the former institution) as a professor. He wrote the first Lithuanian physics and physical chemistry textbooks. Čepinskas was elected twice as the Vice-rector of the Lithuanian University (1922 and 1928) and three times as its Rector (1923, 1929 and 1930). He was a very productive scientist and an active promoter of education.

Čepinskas returned to active political life in 1926, but only for a short while, when after the victory of the left-wing party in the elections of the III Seimas, he accepted the position of minister of education. He took up the office of minister of education in the second half of 1926 (until 17 December 1926), while at the same time holding the position of Deputy Prime Minister. During this time, he sought to implement the ideas on educational reform he had previously promoted.



Prominent LSDP figures: seated (from the left) L. Purėnienė, S. Kairys and V. Požela; standing (from the left) A. Purėnas and K. Bielinis. Kaunas, 1921.

church from state, politics and school; it supported the adoption of the Amnesty Law and the abolition of the death penalty; and it defended the rights of national minorities.

The social democrats from the KDb were accused of defending the communists, with suggestions that 'Moscow was standing behind them and directing them'. They strongly rejected such accusations, however.

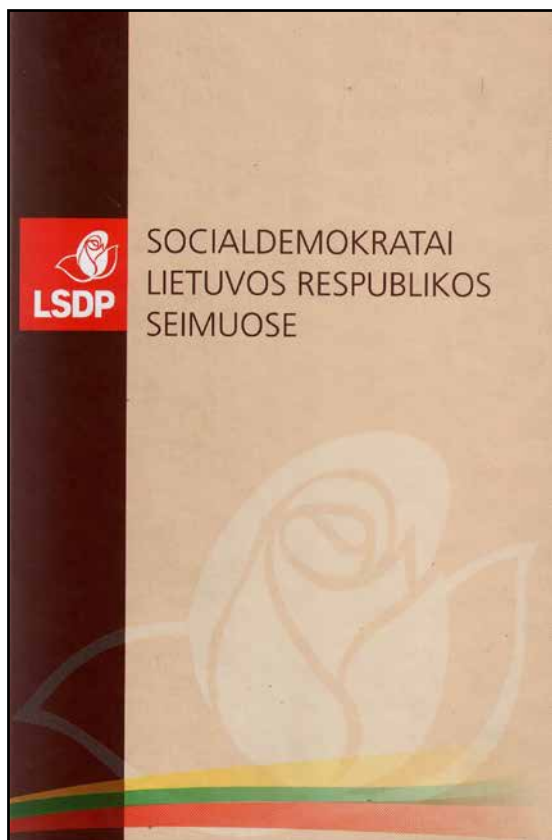
They criticised and condemned Russian Bolshevism for the events that took place in Lithuania during 1918 and 1919, as well as for the rejection of democracy and the anti-democratic methods applied in the creation of socialism, as well as for the repressions and terror in Russia and for the 'occupation of socialist Georgia'.²⁸ The LSDP also clearly criticised the LKP's actions as 'very false and unacceptable tactics with regard to the workers', which was encouraging 'artificial revolutions' and 'pushing the workers' movement in erroneous directions', as well as contributing to the 'depletion and division of labour forces' and 'giving an opportunity' to the Lithuanian authorities to suppress and even 'terrorise the Lithuanian workers' movement'. The social democrats blamed the communists for 'impudent demagoguery', describing the 'tactics of slander and lies that the communists followed in their press and agitation' against the LSDP. The social democrats described the communists as their enemies on the left, and as one document said, 'the ideological struggle against the communists and against their tactics is becoming one of the most important tasks of the social democrats'. The social democrats also emphasised, however, that they 'fight with the communists ... only ideologically' and that they 'fight against their views' in an attempt to 'persuade the workers of Lithuania that the communists are wrong'. Therefore, the LSDP did not support the government's approach to fighting the communists by 'putting them in

28. For more on this topic, see Mitrulevičius, G., Lietuvos socialdemokratų požiūris į rusiškąjį komunizmą 1919–1922 metais, *Gairės*, 5 (2006), 31–36; No. 6, 25–31.

prison, with trials in military courts and the death penalty'. According to the social democrats, 'in Lithuania, if it wants to be a democratic country, everyone should be given the opportunity to present their views freely'.²⁹

In view of the relationship of the LKP with national statehood and with Soviet Russia, however, as well as its actions during those days, it can be argued that, by pursuing only an ideological struggle against the communists, the social democrats, or at least a considerable part of them, did not always adequately assess communist actions. Nonetheless, their position was consistent with their statement about unconditional 'genuine' democracy.

Such a political attitude was determined by both the ideological-political traditions of socialism and by adherence to what, at that time, was one of rather radical, but not Bolshevik, and 'left-socialist' Marxism. That is why, at the LSDP Conference held in 1921, when the Third International and the restored Second International parties were criticised, it decided to 'support' the so-called Second and a Half International, created at the beginning of 1921. It was one of the social democratic parties who called themselves 'the followers of revolutionary socialism' and who distanced themselves from both Bolshevism and,



The book *Socialdemokratai Lietuvos Respublikos Seimuose* (Social Democrats in the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania) (Vilnius, 2006).

29. On the approach of the LSDP to the communists, see *Socialdemokratai Lietuvos Respublikos Seimuose*, pp. 76–77.

according to these 'revolutionary socialists', from the 'opportunists of the Second International'. In 1922, however, when the Second and a Half International started to come closer to the Second International, a merger took place in 1923 into the Labour and Socialist International Parties, to whom the LSDP belonged from the beginning.



Liuda Purėnienė (1884–1972), an active Social Democrat, a member of the Central Committee of the LSDP from 1922, a lawyer.



Ona Leonaitė – Kairienė (1898–1958), an active LSDP figure, a collaborator and editor of Social Democratic publications, second wife of S. Kairys.

As we have seen, the social democrats played an important role in the Lithuanian national movement and, despite the subsequent split of the communists, in the process of the re(construction) of Lithuanian statehood. During the work of the Constituent Assembly, that is, during the period of the establishment of statehood, as has been briefly outlined, they put a lot of effort into making the Republic of Lithuania as democratic and as socially just as possible.

A similar political stance was maintained by the social democrats during the years of the First and Second Seimas (1923–1926), when they again became unanimous in their opposition to the ruling KDb (and in 1923–1924, also to the coalition of the KDb and the LVLS). In the second half of 1926, after the elections to the Third Seimas, the

Results of the participation of the LSDP and other political parties of Lithuania in the elections to the Seimas during the democratic period of the Republic of Lithuania (1920-1926)

Party	Const. Assem- bly of Lithuania, 1920-1922		I Seimas 1922 - 1923		II Seimas 1923 - 1926		III Seimas 1926 - 1927	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
LCDP ⁽¹⁾								
Votes obtained, in thousands	317,3	46,5	337,9	41,6	394,5	43,8	321,2	31,5
Places obtained	59	52,7	38	48,7	40	51,3	30	35,3
LPPU ⁽²⁾								
Votes obtained, in thousands	155,6	22,8	145,2	17,9	161,2	7,9	225,8	22,3
Places obtained	29	25,9	19	24,4	16	20,5	22	25,9
LSDP								
Votes obtained, in thousands	87,1	12,8	84,6	10,4	101,8	11,3	173,3	17,0
Places obtained	13	12,5	10 (11)	14,1	8	10,3	15	17,7
LTS ⁽³⁾								
Votes obtained, in thousands	11,9	1,7	23,6	2,9	18,6	2,0	43,8	4,3
Places obtained	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3,5
LKP ⁽⁴⁾								
Votes obtained, in thousands	-	-	52,0	6,4	34,4	3,8	22,5	2,2
Places obtained	-	-	5	6,4	-	-	-	-
Kitos ⁽⁵⁾								
Votes obtained, in thousands	110,4	16,2	168,4	20,7	190,8	21,2	230,7	22,7
Places obtained	10	8,9	5	6,4	14	17,9	15	17,6
Votes obtained, in thousands	682,3	100,0	811,7	100,0	901,3	100,0	1017,3	100,0
Places obtained	112	100,0	78	100,0	78	100,0	85	100,0

(1) Together with the Lithuanian Farmers' Union and the Lithuanian Labour Federation.

(2) Prior to the fall of 1922, the Lithuanian Popular Socialist Democratic Party and the Peasant Union.

(3) Prior to 1924, the Party of National Progress and the Economic and Political Union of Lithuanian Farmers.

(4) Lists of candidates to the communist party put forth in the names of the Workers' Company, Workers and Poor Peasants, and Workers and the Rural Poor.

(5) Largest ethnic minority populations – Jewish, Polish, German, and Russian parties and organisations.

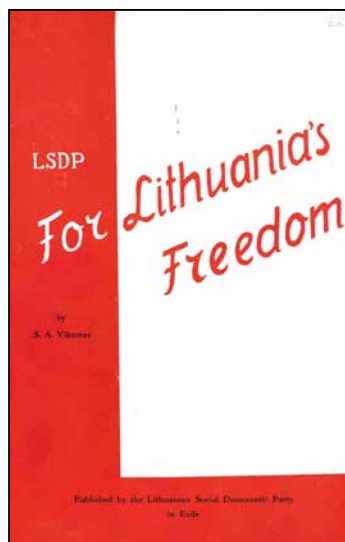
Table taken from Truska L. Features of Parliamentarianism during the I Republic of Lithuania (1918 -1940), and Studies in Parliament, 2, Vilnius, 2004, p. 92 (compiled on the basis of the following: the Statistical Yearbook of Lithuania. 1924-1926, t. 1, p. 5, 72-73)

LSDP entered a coalition with the ruling majority of (democratic) left-wing parties, which strongly democratised the country's politics and sought to implement other elements of its programme. However, these processes were discontinued in 17 December 1926, due to the overthrow of the government. Following this and after the abolition of democracy, the political activities of the LSDP, like those of the other parties, were restricted and later completely banned. It is understandable that, during the years of the Soviet regime, legal activities on the part of the social democrats were out of the question. Lithuanian social democracy was able to express itself only in emigration.

As Lithuania celebrated 2018 the 100th anniversary of the creation of a modern state, today's Social Democrats, in remembering their historical 'namesakes', could learn much about ideological consistency and strength, as well as political integrity, the unconditional defence of democracy and the resolve to defend the ideals of social democracy.



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Summaries of the country studies (English)



Austria

The Social Democratic Workers' Party of Austria (Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei Österreichs, SDAP) became a decisive political force within a few decades after the unification party congress at Hainfeld in 1888/1889 and in the wake of the 1907 elections was the second largest party in the Imperial Council (*Reichsrat*) of the Cisleithanian (northern and western) part of Austria. Under the leadership of Victor Adler there was a change of course towards a peaceful transition from the wartime Habsburg dictatorship to a democratic republic and the transformation of the state bureaucracy at central-state and federal level towards the end of the war in 1918. Although after the 1911 elections the Social Democratic MPs were the weaker grouping in the provisional National Assembly, over against the Christian Social Party and the German National Party, Karl Renner was nevertheless elected state chancellor on 30 October 1918. The central departments in the areas of foreign relations and social affairs were taken by Social Democrats Victor Adler and Ferdinand Hanusch. Otto Glöckel and Julius Deutsch were dominant undersecretaries in the areas of home affairs and the armed forces. Karl Seitz served as both president of the National Assembly and state president.

Cooperation with the centre-right parties worked surprisingly well because of the extreme external pressure exerted by worries about a communist revolution and because the problems involved in transforming parts of the former Cisleithania were virtually unmanageable. Given the economic dependence on the Entente powers and the centrifugal trends in individual conservative-dominated Länder such as Salzburg, Tyrol and Vorarlberg to leave the federated state again a socialist revolution seemed an illusion. Despite its revolutionary wing the majority of the SDAP remained loyal to a coalition with the Christian Social Party even after the successful elections of February 1919, in which it garnered around 40 per cent of the vote. At the same time, Julius Deutsch was able, with the help of Friedrich Adler, to channel the anarchist-revolutionary tendencies in the army and to implement some of the most progressive social policy legislation in Europe. An eight-hour working day and a law on a chamber of labour and works councils are only a few examples of their achievements. Nationalisation projects such

as in coal mining, the iron industry and the large forest estates were planned but were unable to command a majority.

It did not prove possible to integrate the German-speaking territories of the newly established Czechoslovakia into the new federated state on the basis of President Wilson's 14 Points or to bring about union (*'Anschluss'*) with Germany. The territorial claims of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia to parts of Carinthia, however, were averted by military means and by a referendum. In the end the German-speaking South Tyrol was affiliated to Italy in the peace accords.

Already under the Habsburg Monarchy the SDAP's orientation was pan-German, entirely in the spirit of the 1848 revolution, whose political symbolism had been adopted by the liberals, and despite its Marxist rhetoric the party was politically pragmatic and sought to stabilise democracy. Despite the resignation of Otto Bauer, who had taken over from Victor Adler – who had died on 11 November 1918 – as secretary of state for foreign affairs, and the collapse of the coalition in June 1920, a collective constitutional compromise was achieved in parliament on 1 October 1920. This still provides the basis for the current constitution of the Austrian Republic, with amendments.

Although, despite the severity of the circumstances, the SDAP was able to influence social issues, introduce social policy innovations, prevent a communist revolution and help shape a democratic parliamentary constitution, it ultimately ran aground on the national question; in other words, the attempt to create a pan-German state including all German-speaking territories together with the German Reich. The peace treaty of Saint Germain-en-Laye in 1920 set in stone the small independent state of Austria and prohibited the name 'German-Austria' and the 'union' with Germany.

Belarus

It is impossible to recount the history of the Republic of Belarus without taking into account the country's socialist movement. The Belarusian Revolution started after an attempt to create the Belarusian Revolutionary Party in 1902 and the establishment of the Belarusian Socialist Hramada (BSH) in 1903 (*'hramada'* means *'commune'* or *'community'*). The Party's first manifesto described its strategic goal, which became the objective of the whole Belarusian movement in the twentieth century and remains that of democratic forces in Belarus in the twenty-first century, namely the establishment of an independent democratic republic. The period from 1902 to 1917 can be characterised one of ideological revolution.

The BSH, which was the only Belarusian party at that time, remained a faction of Marxists and *narodniks* ('populists') until 1 May 1918. Social democrats played a major role in the Party. Aliaksandr Burbis, Vaclaŭ Ivanoŭski, Ivan and Anton Łuckievič and Aliaksandr Ułasau were close to the Central Committee elected in January 1906. Social democrats Źmicier Źyłunovič, Jazep Dyła and Arkadź Smolič were in the forefront of the Party in 1917–1918. As the Belarusian nation was still not completely formed by the early twentieth century, the Party had to perform a culture- and nation-forming function as well. At the same time the Belarusian movement became part of the liberation movement of peoples in the Russian Empire, and BSH was an active participant in the Socialist movement in Russia.

The political stage of the Belarusian Revolution started after the fall of Tsarism. The Party initiated the Congress of Belarusian Organisations in March 1917 and the Congress of Belarusian Organisations and Parties in July of the same year. BSH adherents played a leading role in the Central Council of Belarusian organisations established in July, as well as in the Great Belarusian Council, which commenced activities in October.

Belarusian socialists called for the autonomy of Belarus in the Russian Democratic Federal Republic. The Party did not welcome the Bolshevik takeover. The Great Belarusian

Council launched an initiative to hold an All-Belarusian Congress in Minsk. The same initiative was also proposed by the Belarusian Regional Committee at the All-Russian Council of Rural Deputies. The All-Belarusian Congress (5–18 December 1917) supported unity with democratic federal Russia and decided to form the All-Belarusian Council (Rada) of rural, soldier and worker deputies from its ranks. Bolsheviks in the 'Western region' (as they called Belarus) and the war front broke up the Congress, but its delegates, who held a meeting at the Minsk depot of the Libava-Romen railway, transferred power in Belarus to the All-Belarusian Congress. The majority of seats in the Rada went to BSH members.

BSH members played the decisive role in declaring the Belarusian People's Republic (BPR) on 9 March 1918. The Rada of the All-Belarusian Congress on 19 March, became the BPR Rada after representatives of ethnic minorities joined it. On 25 March, with the help of the BSH members' votes the BPR Rada declared Belarus independent. The Republic was seen by its founders as a democratic social state based on the rule of law. The Great Powers, however, first of all France, saw no interest in Belarus and Ukraine seceding from Russia.

In autumn 1917 some BSH members left it because they supported the Bolshevik manifesto. First, they established the Belarusian Social-Democratic Worker's Party, and from 1918 they started to set up Belarusian sections of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks). Ex-members of BSH initiated the declaration of the Socialist Soviet Republic of Belarus (SSRB) on 2 January 1919. The SSRB, proclaimed as an alternative to the BPR, did not last long. After its existence had been declared for the second time on 31 July 1920 it became a predecessor of the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic (BSSR), which was legitimised in 1927. On 25 August 1991 the BSSR became a de facto independent state. On 19 September that year the Republic of Belarus appeared on the map. On 10 December, after renunciation of the Agreement of 1922 on the Establishment of the Soviet Union, the Republic of Belarus became a de jure independent state.

Czechoslovakia

Slovakia

Prior to 1914, Slovak social democracy was formed in cooperation with Hungarians in Budapest, Germans in Bratislava and Czechs in Vienna. Its contacts with Czech social democracy in the Austrian part of the monarchy contributed substantially to the growth and implementation of the idea of Czecho-Slovak mutuality and, ultimately, the idea of a common Czecho-Slovak state.

After the Czechoslovak Republic (or Czechoslovakia) was established in October 1918, the Czech social democratic party merged with its Slovak counterpart in December 1918 to form the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Workers Party. Unified Czecho-Slovak social democracy became firmly embedded in the political structure of the new state. It participated in the drafting of the Constitution, electoral law and laws related to public administration, unification and the rights of ethnic minorities. Even though the leaders of social democracy used revolutionary rhetoric in response to the post-war radicalisation of broad swathes of the population, they pursued reform policies in political and social practice.

The first elections to the Chamber of Deputies in Czechoslovakia were held on 18 April 1920. The social democratic party emerged as the strongest political party in Czechoslovakia. In Slovakia, social democrats achieved electoral victory as well. They obtained 39.4 per cent of the valid votes and, combined with the votes for the Hungarian-German Social Democratic Party, more than 46 per cent. Social democracy played a major role in the creation of the first common state of Czechs and Slovaks. Between 1918 and 1920, the first two social democratic governments laid the foundations of a modern and democratic political system, functioning parliamentary democracy and democratic political culture.

Czechia

Czech social democracy, as an ideological current, broad social movement and political party (ČSDSD) was formed in the last third of the nineteenth century. It developed along similar lines to social democratic movements in the other industrialised countries of central and western Europe. During the First World War, the Social Democrats abandoned their original aim of the democratic transformation of Austro-Hungary in favour of the creation of an independent democratic state, the Czechoslovak Republic (ČSR). They made a significant contribution not only to the creation and stabilisation of the ČSR, but during the whole period of its existence they provided it with firm support, even in the face of the decision by one wing of the party to split off and form the Communist Party, which then competed fiercely with the Social Democrats.

Social democratic ideas on political democracy played a significant role in shaping the constitutional order of the new state, and for most of the period from 1918 to 1938 the Social Democrats were participants in coalition governments. The party was the driving force behind projects such as the new system of sickness, invalidity and old age insurance and pensions, land reform, the eight-hour working day, days off, unemployment insurance, health and safety at work, a number of education reforms and the introduction of a modern civil code. In the 1930s this developed into an attempt to cope with the Great Depression and its mass unemployment. The Social Democrats also exerted influence through their strong representation at regional and municipal level and their broad base resulting from co-operative enterprises and the unions.

The ambitions of the social democratic movement were greater than this, however. They wanted democracy to penetrate economic relationships, or more precisely, the sphere of production, as well as social relationships in general. In this, however, the ČSDSD was not as successful as it had hoped; its policy was realised only in certain areas or for short periods of time. The Social Democrats also believed that while social

democratic policy should issue from sovereign states, it should not be confined to their borders. Still, although the movement undertook more international activities than any other political force in the ČSR, here, too, it was more a question of beginnings and unrealised visions.

The complicated relations between minorities in the ČSR, which were the legacy of previous historical developments, at first hindered cooperation between social democratic currents, especially the Czech/Czechoslovak and the German ones. Attempts to find common solutions gradually grew stronger, however, and by the end of the 1920s the German Social Democrats in the ČSR had become a governing party. At the same time there were increasing attempts to find a new order that would allow Czech Germans to see Czechoslovakia as 'their own' state, while preserving its democratic character and its existing borders. The opportunity to impose more of a social democratic imprint on the ČSR that existed in the early 1920s was not to be repeated in later years.

The Czechoslovak Republic of 1938 to 1938 represents the first major attempt in the Czech lands to implement social democratic ideas in practice. It is an attempt that is still inspirational today, both where it succeeded and where it remained unfulfilled.

Estonia

At the beginning of the twentieth century urban social democratic organisations were formed in Estonia, which belonged to the Russian Social Democratic Workers Party. The Russian Social Democratic Workers Party famously split into Bolsheviks and Mensheviks; in the case of Estonia there was a similar split into Federalists and Centralists. By 1917, however, Estonian social democrats had established some sort of coexistence between nationalism, parliamentary democracy and class consciousness. The Estonian political parties with a social democratic orientation played a decisive role in the development from province of the Russian empire to autonomous province to independent state.

By the end of 1917 the idea of Estonian autonomy among social democrats had developed into a strong conviction that Estonia should become an independent state. The first definite concept of Estonian independence was declared by the Estonian Socialist and Revolutionary Party in the memorandum on the Workers' Republic of Estonia. The first practical steps for announcing the republic in February 1918 were made by politicians of the Estonian Labour Party, with Jüri Vilms at the forefront. After the German occupation, on 11 November 1918 the Estonian Provisional Government was able to re-establish itself and the Estonian Socialist Workers' Party took part in it. In a difficult war situation it was important for the consolidation of the people.

The Estonian Constituent Assembly of 1919, in which social democratic parties played a leading role, laid the foundation for the Estonian state and society. Land reform was adopted; manorial lands belonging to Baltic Germans were expropriated and given to farms. Peace was concluded with Russia. The educational laws adopted by the Constituent Assembly introduced the principle of the comprehensive school, the church was separated from the state and its importance in public life declined rapidly.

The Estonian Constitution, which was adopted in 1920, was created primarily by social democrats and the Estonian Labour Party. The Constitution established a parliamentary republic and universal suffrage (in other words, including women). Among other things, the Constitution granted cultural autonomy to national minorities. In the 1920s and 1930s, the Estonian Social Democrats' platform remained unchanged; the main focus was on reforms to improve workers' social and economic situation. As the years went by, however, tactics became more flexible; it was no longer considered a problem to be in a coalition with right-wing parties. The Social Democrats made progress. From 1926 to 1932, the Estonian Social Democratic Workers' Party was the largest parliamentary group. Although in the second half of the 1930s the influence of the Social Democrats in Estonia was small, important steps were taken in terms of Estonian statehood.

Finland

Social democracy entered Finland in its German form via Scandinavia at the turn of the twentieth century when Finland was an autonomous Grand Duchy within the Russian Empire. The breakthrough to a real mass movement in what was still a very agrarian country was boosted by the 1905 revolutionary turmoil that led to a radical democratic reform.

The labour movement was the driving force in pushing through a unicameral parliament, elected by universal suffrage, including women. In the first elections in 1907 the Social Democratic Party won 37 per cent of the vote and 80 out of 200 seats. The reformist way forward was halted, however, by the autocratic Tsar, who could refuse to verify proposed bills and dissolve parliament at will.

The Russian revolution of March 1917 opened up opportunities to strive for the dual objective of national and social liberation. A new all-party coalition government was formed in Finland, and Oskari Tokoi became, in effect, the first socialist prime minister in the world. National unity did not last. The middle class did not trust the socialists, who were radicalised by worsening living conditions and revolutionary Russian comrades. Military guards were formed and armed on both sides. Independence was declared in December 1917, but the nation was trapped in a vicious circle of inner hostilities. Finland drifted into civil war.

After three months of bloody fighting the socialist revolution ended in a devastating defeat. Those reds who were exiled to Soviet Russia founded the Finnish Communist Party, which operated in Finland under the cover of front organisations and trade unions. The labour movement was split, the Social Democrats retaining approximately two-thirds of its public support during the 1920s. 'White' hegemony continued, but alongside punitive measures towards labour there were also integrative forces. The Social Democrats were needed to battle both domestic communism and the foreign

Soviet threat. In 1926–1927 Väinö Tanner even led a Social Democratic minority government that included the first woman, Miina Sillanpää, to hold a ministerial post. Tougher laws outlawing communism were adopted in 1930, but otherwise Finnish democracy endured the challenges of right-wing radicalism. Thus the political system developed in the opposite direction from its counterparts in central and eastern Europe. The dividing line from the Civil War was crossed in 1937 when the two mass parties, the Social Democrats and the Agrarians, formed a coalition government. Finland took its place as the fourth member of the Nordic family. The ‘red-soil’ cooperation and Nordic neutralism did not save Finland from two wars with the Soviet Union, although they did make the country strong enough to avert military occupation. This made it possible for the Finns to follow the Scandinavian path after the Second World War instead of landing in the Soviet-led communist bloc.

The Nordic (very social democratic) model of welfare state provided a road map for Finland, which by international comparison has achieved top rankings in almost every category. What is more, the Finns achieved the dual objective of national and social liberation that the vanguard of early social democracy dreamt about. The challenge remains how to carry the national story of success into the ever-more globalised twenty-first century.

Georgia

After the First World War several new independent republics emerged in Eastern Europe. Social democratic movements actively participated in the political constitution of many of the new states. Unexpectedly, the first social democratic government in Europe was created not in one of the western industrial nations, but in Georgia, an agricultural country formerly in the Russian Empire, adjoining the Near East.

The design of socialism and thus social democracy in Georgia was always deeply influenced by its unique conditions. While the nineteenth century was deeply imprinted by Tsarist oppression of Georgian culture and people, the first democratic movements were nationalistic and elitist as Georgia was an agricultural country with only a small industrial proletariat. It is not surprising therefore that only in 1892 was the first left-wing union formed in Zestafoni, one of the biggest industrial centres in Georgia at the time. The first manifesto of the Georgian left was published in 1894, written by Noe Zhordania, the future leading figure among the Georgian social democrats. The manifesto already exemplifies the distinct character of Georgian socialism, recognising the lack of an industrial proletariat and the need to include the peasants and other non-bourgeois classes by democratic means.

After achieving independence in 1918 the social democrats were the leading force of the fledgling Georgian republic, winning more than 80 per cent of the votes in the first democratic elections. Due to their inclusivity they created a state that was contrary to Bolshevik ideas and instead followed the lead of the German SPD and Karl Kautsky in particular. Equal rights, emancipation of minorities and women, decentralisation and a mixed economy favouring social justice were the pillars of the newly founded republic. The living conditions of workers and peasants alike were to be improved not by revolution, but through gradual progress. But the biggest challenge for the social democratic republic was the foreign threat from Bolshevik Russia, the Ottoman Empire, Armenia and Soviet Azerbaijan. In this hostile environment the social democratic government's goal was to stay neutral but still defend its territorial integrity.

Although the Social Democratic Republic of Georgia was internationally recognised and lauded as a spearhead of social democracy by many representatives of the Second International, such as Karl Kautsky, Ramsay MacDonald and Emile Vandervelde, it nevertheless succumbed to Soviet Russia in 1921 and lost its independence. Today the social democratic past is a distant memory for many Georgians. During the regimes of Shevardnadze and Saakashvili and the current government led by the 'Georgian Dream' party, Georgia's focus has been on neoliberalism and a 'free market economy'.

Despite the fact that 'Georgian Dream' describes itself as a social democratic party and is registered as an observer with the European Party of Socialists, it does not portray itself as inheritor of the social democratic past.

Hungary

The Hungarian labour movement sought to emulate its German counterpart and its leaders were influenced by the ideas of Lassalle, Kautsky and Bernstein (the name of Lenin was unknown in Hungary until 1917). The Social Democratic Party of Hungary (Magyarországi Szociáldemokrata Párt, MSZDP) – which was founded in 1890 – commenced its political activities in accordance with the directives of the Second International.

The aim of the Hungarian Social Democrats was not a revolutionary takeover, but becoming a mass party and entering the Hungarian parliament. The MSZDP easily became a mass party, but their most important demand, the universal, equal and secret ballot, was rejected. For this reason, the MSZDP, which wanted to achieve its demands in a democratic way, did not manage to get even one MP into the Hungarian Parliament until 1918, even though it had become the strongest and most organized party of Hungary by then, with a rapidly growing membership. Membership of the party soared after 1917, reaching almost 1 million by autumn 1918.

After defeat in the First World War and the 'Aster Revolution' on 30–31 October 1918, the opposition came to power and the Social Democrats were included in the government under the leadership of the so-called 'red count', Mihály Károlyi. Ernő Garami, leader of the MSZDP, became Minister of Commerce and later on other Social Democrat politicians entered the government. The MSZDP firmly demanded that the independent Hungary become a republic, and on 16 November 1918 Hungary was proclaimed a 'people's republic' with a unicameral parliament (without a House of Lords).

The MSZDP wanted a universal, equal and secret ballot for every citizen over the age of 20, regardless of gender. But this demand was realised to only a limited extent: only men over 21 got the right to vote and literate women over 24. After transforming the 'people's republic' into a Soviet Republic with the collaboration of the Communists in the spring of 1919, everyone over 18 got the right to vote, but the so-called 'reactionaries' (including clerics and 'kulaks') were excluded.

The issue of land was the other hot topic in Hungary at that time. The Social Democrats demanded the nationalisation and collectivisation of medium-sized and large estates, but they were unable to prevail in the civic democratic Károlyi regime. The old demand of the MSZDP, the nationalisation of factories, was not accomplished either during the period of coalition government, only later, during the Hungarian Soviet Republic, when every factory employing more than 10 workers was nationalised.

The Social Democratic Party of Hungary had hostile relations with the Party of Hungarian Communists ('Kommunisták Magyarországi Pártja', KMP), resumed after an interlude of rapprochement in the wake of the revolutions of 1918–1919. When a hostile occupation by the entente powers threatened Hungary in March 1919, the Social Democrat and Communist parties were unified under the name of the Socialist Party of Hungary ('Magyarországi Szocialista Párt', MSZP), in order to create a 'worker unit' to defend Hungary in alliance with Soviet Russia. The 'dictatorship of the proletariat' was proclaimed. Although the Social Democrats and Communists could work together successfully in the Revolutionary Government Council, the Hungarian Soviet Republic was short-lived due to the catastrophic internal and external situation, which could not be managed either peacefully or with violence. When the dictatorship of the proletariat failed, the Communists and the left-wing Social Democrats emigrated from Hungary.

The moderate Social Democrats, who remained in Hungary, formed the Peidl government, but this was overthrown by a right-wing coup after only a weeks on 6 August 1919. A 'White terror' started – persecution of leftists who played a role in the revolutions of 1918–1919 – and for this reason, the MSZDP boycotted the election of 1920. The

Social Democrats participated only in the election of 1922, after the new Social Democratic leader, Károly Peyer, made a pact with the rightist prime minister István Bethlen. The MSZDP became the legal leftist opposition of the Horthy regime for two decades.

Iceland

Social democrats in Iceland founded the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the Icelandic Confederation of Labour in 1916, both of which remained under one rule for four decades. Following the SDP's founding, significant strides were made in spreading and increasing the influence of social democracy and trade unionism.

Frequent splits and conflict within the SDP would later hamper its efforts to retain political power, but it still exerted a major influence in shaping Icelandic society, including the enactment of legislation on fishing vessels' working hours, social security and workers' dwellings in the party's earliest years and during the first years after Iceland regained sovereignty. The SDP formed various coalitions with other parties, thereby implementing a range of social democratic policies.

The party split five times, first of all in 1938 when one of its most prominent members joined the Communists. From that time onwards, there was always a powerful party to the left of the SDP, fragmenting the left wing of Icelandic politics until the parties reunited as the Social Democratic Alliance at the end of the twentieth century. The labour-based parties' combined share of the vote, excluding the Progressive Party, ranged between 35 and 40 per cent, compared with the SDP's average share of 15 per cent until the formation of the Alliance.

The biggest milestone on Iceland's journey towards sovereignty and independence was achieved in 1918 when the Act of Union with Denmark was passed. Up to that point, Iceland had been part of the Kingdom of Denmark. Through the Act of Union, Denmark

officially relinquished its claim to Iceland and declared it a free and sovereign state in a personal union with the Danish king. Although this formally ended foreign control over Iceland, the last step remained, namely the founding of a republic completely independent of Denmark and with an Icelandic president as head of state.

During the First World War, a new, class-based party system emerged in Iceland. All the parties avoided making electoral promises on the relationship with Denmark, and Iceland's first coalition government, formed in 1917, can be said to have settled the issue without party-political conflict. The resolution of the sovereignty issue was thus not a party-political issue for the new class-based parties.

The SDP and Icelandic social democrats in general had a substantial influence on the conclusion of the Act of Union and the sovereignty agreement with Denmark, however. The contributions made by representatives of the fledgling social democratic movement were even critical to reaching an agreement with the Danish negotiation team. The greatest of these contributions was made by the SDP member Ólafur Friðriksson, who travelled to Denmark to win support from members of the Social Democracy party.

Different views on the founding of the Republic of Iceland during the Second World War were to prove problematic for the SDP, whose approach to how and when to found the republic was opposed by the majority of Icelanders and all the other parties. The debate was not about whether to found a republic, but how and when, with Denmark under German occupation. At the centre of the debate was the choice between a rapid separation between the two countries or a divorce along legal lines based on the 1918 Union agreement, with the SDP favouring the latter option.

The Social Democrats in Iceland have a proud and colourful history reaching back to the SDP's founding over a century ago. They have had a profound influence on many aspects of Iceland's social model, shaping it in the form of classical social democracy despite becoming fragmented into two to three parties for over six decades.

Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes

There were several social democratic parties in the territory of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, a complex state that came into existence on 1 December 1918 with the unification of the Kingdom of Serbia, Montenegro and the lands inhabited by South Slavs within Austria-Hungary. The oldest was the Social Democratic Party of Croatia and Slavonia (founded in 1894). In Serbia, the Social Democratic Party of Serbia had existed since 1903, while in Slovenian territory and in parts of Istria inhabited by Croats, the Yugoslav Social Democratic Party had been active since 1896.

The last to be founded was the Social Democratic Party of Bosnia and Herzegovina (1909). Workers' parties were relatively small and weak in countries that were minimally industrialised, predominantly agrarian and poor. The role of social democrats was thus relatively invisible when Austria-Hungary began to disintegrate and a new country emerged. Soon, as in the rest of Europe, impressed by the October Revolution and then by the activities of Béla Kun in Hungary, the Left experienced a split between the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (KPJ) and social democrats. The KPJ, which had attracted a large number of members, was banned in 1921 following its success in the first general elections, after which it had become the third strongest party in the parliament. Politicians who were more inclined to parliamentarianism and opposed to revolution entered the government and were attacked as 'sterile ministers'. One faction of the social democratic parties united in 1919 to form the Yugoslav Social Democratic Party (JSDS), while in 1920 another group founded the Social Democratic Party of Yugoslavia (SDSJ), which had somewhat fewer supporters.

The two social democratic parties began negotiations in the summer of 1921 and finally merged at the end of that year as the Socialist Party of Yugoslavia (SPJ). This was a united social democratic party led by Dragiša Lapčević and Vitomir Korać (as political secretary), whose platform was decidedly against revolution and against communism. Although it profited materially when the authorities distributed all the property of the outlawed communist parties and their trade unions to the social democrats, the effects were small.

Though illegal, the KPJ continued to operate through trade unions and organisations that were de facto under its control, causing a rift among social democrats, who had difficulty reaching the working class. The SPJ never became a significant factor in the political life of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (later renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia), although it fought for the interests of workers and participated in the theoretical debates of that time.

Latvia

The Latvian Social Democratic Workers' Party (LSDSP) was the main Latvian political movement before the First World War and its role in state-building has not previously been fully evaluated. Of course, relations between Social Democrats and independent nation-statehood have often been problematic, not only in Latvia but in most central and eastern European countries. Nationalists and socialists have opposed each other fiercely and relations between class and nation were often seen as contradictory and even antagonistic. In practice, however, there have been multiple overlaps and forms of cooperation; the support of Leftist forces for new statehood has often been crucial.

The Latvian socialist movement was born out of the split in the Latvian nationalist movement, when the energetic younger generation of intellectuals, such as Eduards Veidenbaums, Jānis Pliekšāns-Rainis, Pēteris Stučka, Aspazija and others, found themselves unwilling to remain within the conservative structures dominated by the Riga Latvian Society (RLB). The »New Current«, as they called themselves, was not a Marxist party. It included many facets of European modernism of the time, including realism in literature, Darwinism in science various democratic, Leftist and feminist ideologies coming from both Western Europe and the main Russian cities of Moscow and St Petersburg. The »New Current« was crushed by the Tsarist authorities, however, and henceforth the underground movement became increasingly social democratic.

The LSDSP was established in 1904 as a social democratic party for Latvians; ideologically, it followed the German SPD and Karl Kautsky. In political terms, however, it joined forces with Russian Social Democrats, especially after the Revolution of 1905, when the party had its first experience in mass organizing. Despite the strong influence of Lenin, the LSDSP retained its independence and did not split into Bolsheviks and Mensheviks until 1917. In that year, after the February Revolution in Russia, the Latvian Bolsheviks split off and prepared themselves for an armed insurrection in order to overthrow the Provisional Government. The Latvian Mensheviks, however, established an independent party and planned for a democratic, autonomous Latvia. Their support was decisive for the establishment of Latvian statehood in 1918; they were the only Latvian political force that enjoyed something like mass legitimacy.

The LSDSP, led by Fricis Menders and Pauls Kalniņš, played a prominent role in the first period of democracy. It helped to draft a democratic, parliamentary constitution (*Satversme*), adopted in 1922. The party also made an important contribution to the defence of workers' rights and social justice. Despite having the largest faction in all three inter-war convocations of the Latvian parliament (*Saeima*), however, the LSDSP did not join any ruling coalitions (except for two brief periods) and was mainly in opposition. Probably for this reason the party was unable to prevent the 1934 coup d'état by the right-wing agrarian Kārlis Ulmanis. After the coup the party merged with the communists and went underground, only to re-emerge briefly after the Soviet occupation of 1940. Some Social Democrats collaborated with the Soviets. Many, including the leaders Menders and Kalniņš, joined with other democratic politicians and called for the restoration of democratic Latvian statehood. Many Social Democrats fought for the restoration of 1918 Latvia, both as severely repressed Soviet dissidents and as exiles living in the West.

Lithuania

The emergence and development of social democracy in Lithuania at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth was influenced by the rise of social democratic movements in various countries, as well as the specific circumstances in Lithuania: the agrarian nature of the country, the delay in capitalist development, the diversity of the ethnic composition of the urban population, the presence of Lithuania in the autocratic Russian empire, the latter's policy of national oppression, as well as emerging processes of national regeneration and national movements .

The ideology and programme of the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party (LSDP), as representative of Lithuanian social democracy, at the turn of the twentieth century, were characterised, like those of many other social democratic parties at that time, by the primacy given to Marxism. For most of the period, however, national liberation was presented as a precondition for social liberation.

As a result, Lithuanian social democracy became an integral part of the Lithuanian national liberation movement, and in 1905, when the 'national revolution' began in Lithuania, the LSDP was the most active 'political' force in the ensuing events. The defeat of the revolution dealt a severe blow to the LSDP's organisation, operational capabilities, influence on society and programme, however, and from 1907 until the First World War, the LSDP advocated autonomy within the Russian Empire.

The beginning of the First World War and the German occupation of Lithuania meant that the social democrats' approach to the future of Lithuania had to be adapted. LSDP members, in anticipation of the possibility of war-driven changes in the political map of Europe, began to call for an independent democratic Republic of Lithuania established in a democratic way, and actively promoted it (including in its publication *Labour's Voice* in 1917–1918), including participation in joint action by various political currents focused on achieving national liberation.

Social Democrats Steponas Kairys and Mykolas Biržiška, elected together with two left-wing members of the Lithuanian Council, Jonas Vileišius and Stanislovas Narutavičius, were the main opponents of Lithuania's 'strong and everlasting union' with Germany, proclaimed by a resolution of the Council of Lithuania on 11 December 1917 and established by four conventions. They were also, in essence, the main authors of the Lithuanian Independence Act, which was adopted on 16 February 1918. Protesting against the decision by the right-wing majority of the Lithuanian Council to proclaim Lithuania a monarchy and elect a king, the Social Democrats withdrew from the Council of Lithuania, arguing that it had exceeded its powers.

Although from 1917 to 1919 some Lithuanian Social Democrats, especially outside Lithuania, became communists, those who remained faithful to the ideological tradition of social democracy, during the creation of Lithuanian statehood in 1918, in the autumn of 1919 and then in the period of the establishment of statehood, from 1920 to 1922, constantly emphasised the necessity of a free democratic state in Lithuania, but also a democratic approach to creating such a state. They had no illusions about the ideology and political practices of the Russian Bolsheviks and entered the Lithuanian government to fight the Bolsheviks for Lithuania's independence. They also clearly opposed the aspirations of Polish land owners to annex Lithuania to Poland. In 1919, 1920, 1922 and in subsequent years, the Social Democrats protested unequivocally against undemocratic tendencies in the ideology and actions of right-wing political currents and strove hard to achieve the radical democratization of Lithuanian society and to make the Republic of Lithuania as democratic and socially just as possible.

Poland

After the failure of the January Uprising in 1864, many Polish political emigrants joined the international workers' movement. Socialists from various countries therefore supported the Poles' independence efforts. The International Working Men's Association was established in the same year (often called the First International), on a wave of solidarity with the January Uprising. The greatest advocate of Polish independence was Karl Marx himself. The closest collaborator of the author of *Capital*, Friedrich Engels, wrote that 'Polish independence and the Russian revolution are conditional upon each other' and in a letter to Karl Kautsky in 1882 stated emphatically:

The Polish socialists, who do not make the liberation of their country the key point of their programme, remind me of the German socialists who do not demand, in particular, the abolition of laws against socialists, the freedom of the press, association and assembly. To be able to fight, you first need ground beneath your feet, air, light and space. Otherwise everything is just hot air.

The Polish Socialist Party (PSP), founded in 1892, was the first Polish workers' group that made the fight for its country's independence a political priority. The PSP combined the national-independence demand with a programme of radical social and political reforms aimed at establishing socialism and parliamentary democracy. This programme led to disputes at the heart of the socialist movement. The issue of moving the fight for independence to the forefront caused arguments from the Left of the party, for whom revolution was supposed to be the solution to national oppression. The difference of opinion led to splits in the party.

Among all the political movements, PSP was most consistent in its position on independence. Conservatives favoured a loyal approach to the foreign occupiers, while the National Democrats (right-wing nationalists) were in favour of Polish autonomy within the Russian Empire. These differences became evident during the 1905 revolution, when

militia associated with the right-wing nationalists attacked socialists from the PSP and the revolutionary left-wing movement.

In 1904 the PSP created its own militia organisation, which was supposed to form the nucleus of an army of uprising, according to its supporters in the party management. On the day before the First World War broke out, Józef Piłsudski, then leader of the PSP, began to create military organisations with a wider political platform than a socialist one, to fight alongside the Austro-Hungarian empire.

In the first days of Poland's independence in 1918, the socialists took the political initiative by creating the Provisional People's Government of the Republic of Poland, with Ignacy Daszyński at its head and a progressive manifesto demanding political and social rights. The cabinet of the socialist Jędrzej Moraczewski – nominated by new head of state Józef Piłsudski – which followed afterwards, introduced democratic electoral law (including the right of women to vote), equal rights for ethnic and national minorities, an eight-hour working day, social insurance and institutions to protect jobs.

In the following years, due to the country's agricultural basis and thus the huge number of rural voters, PSP was unable to count on mass support, so it defended the country's independence and parliamentary democracy as an opposition force. In 1920, the socialists were involved in the defence of the country against the Red Army. They protected democratic institutions from the right-wing nationalists and the political groupings focused around the former socialist Józef Piłsudski, who created an authoritarian political system in the 1920s. The wide influence of PSP on society continued through the trade unions and social organisations (for young people, education, women, housing, culture and sport).

Ukraine

The history of the Ukrainian Social-Democratic movement can be traced from the Ukrainian Social Democratic Party (1899) in the Austrian part of Ukrainian ethnic territories and the Ukrainian Social-Democratic Workers' Party (USDRP) in the Russian part. In their activities, both parties tried to combine social and national issues. This combination led to conflict with the neighboring Polish and – even more so – with Russian Marxists. Above all, this conflict manifested itself during the revolution of 1917, when, after the Bolshevik coup d'état, revolutionary Russia and revolutionary Ukraine went to war.

Even though the Ukrainian social democrats were never the largest party in the revolutionary Ukrainian government, they played a leading role. This reflected their longer political experience and higher level of sophistication compared with other leaders of the Ukrainian revolution. To a large extent, thanks to the Ukrainian Social Democrats the Ukrainian national government managed to make significant progress in mobilising the peasantry and securing rights for national minorities.

It is reasonable to assume that if revolutionary Ukraine had been left alone it would have constituted itself as a social democratic state. In the event in 1917–1920 the Ukrainian ethnic territories became the focus of several conflicts, which resulted in a kind of 'war of all against all'. Under such dire external and internal circumstances, the Ukrainian revolution was defeated. Its defeat cannot be considered to have been complete, however. In particular, the USSR was created as a socialist federal state by Lenin and the Bolsheviks largely in response to the challenges of national movements in the borderlands, among which the Ukrainian revolution proved to be one of the strongest.

The Ukrainian Social Democrats had to pay a heavy price for their defeat. They disappeared as a party from the Ukrainian political scene and remain a 'great unknown' in Ukrainian historical memory. One can only hope that the current Ukrainian crisis can provoke the emergence of a new Ukrainian Social Democratic Party, which, in turn may restore public interest in the history of Ukrainian social democracy.

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The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) is the oldest political foundation in Germany with a rich tradition in social democracy dating back to its foundation in 1925. The foundation owes its formation and its mission to the political legacy of its namesake Friedrich Ebert, the first democratically elected German President. The work of the FES focuses on the core ideas and values of social democracy – freedom, justice and solidarity. This connects the FES to social democracy and free trade unions. As a non-profit institution, the FES organizes its work autonomously and independently.

The FES promotes:

- a free society, based on the values of solidarity, which offers all its citizens the same opportunities to participate on political, economic, social and cultural levels, regardless of their origin, sex or religion
- a lively and strong democracy; sustainable economic growth with decent work for all
- a welfare state that provides more education and improved healthcare, but at the same time combats poverty and provides protection against the challenges that life throws at citizens
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- strengthening democracy and active civil society
- supporting the European integration process
- contributing to the development of a common European foreign and security policy
- promoting a fair and sustainable development of economic and social policies in the Baltic States and in the EU

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