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The Making of the Democratic Party. The Emergence of the Party Organizations of the German Social Democratic Workers' Party, the British National Liberal Federation and the Dutch Anti-Revolutionary Party, 1860s-1880s

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IV. Mobilizing and Disciplining

1. Political Community as Family

The representative claims of the inaugural assembly were implemented into the daily practice of the party in the first years after party organization. Among party founders there was a sense of optimism and hope that the masses of ordinary people would soon be heard in national political institutions. But with their large and geographically scattered constituency, political representation was easier said than done. Despite all appeals to the shared interests of Dutch Anti-Revolutionaries, German Social Democrats or British Radical Liberals, developing a common political agenda that could satisfy all followers was a considerable challenge. Party founders agreed that existing social evils had to be abolished. But they differed in their understanding of what constituted political change and how it should be achieved. Men like Abraham Kuyper, August Bebel and Joseph Chamberlain were confronted with the task of finding a way to mobilize the large group of followers into a cohesive political force. One way to emphasize that party members belonged to a political collective was the application of the metaphor of the family. It was no coincidence that Social Democrats called their peers “brothers.”⁵⁰⁰ This metaphor was powerful and not without empirical basis. In early party organizations, family networks constituted an important pillar for party founders who relied on the support of their fathers, siblings, wives and children in the unstable phase of party emergence.⁵⁰¹ But the community of party members soon became more extensive than an ordinary family, requiring a more sophisticated system of representative decision-making. This chapter uses Max Weber’s distinction between traditional, charismatic and procedural authority to analyze the organizational ideas and practices behind the metaphor of the family-like community.⁵⁰² This categorization is not meant to establish a new typology or normatively evaluate the representative capacity of party founders. Rather its purpose is to structure the analysis and show what procedures were available to mobilize and discipline party members. As we have seen in the previous chapters, legitimate rule within all three party organizations

⁵⁰⁰ See, for instance, Staudinger, “Flugblatt Staudinger: Freunde, Brüder, Arbeiter Deutschlands!” See also the Brotherhood of German Workers and other analyses of early German social democracy: Balser, *Sozial-Demokratie, 1848/49-1863*; Berger, *Social Democracy*; Welskopp, *Das Banner der Brüderlichkeit*. Another example is the case of the Dutch Social Democrats who used the family as a metaphor for their community. Veldhuizen, “De Partij,” chap. 5.

⁵⁰¹ The British Radical Joseph Chamberlain relied on his family to build his business career in Birmingham and in times of political crisis. After his split from the NLF, Chamberlain relied on his brother to build up his new organization. Marsh, *Joseph Chamberlain*, 251. Likewise, when the German Social Democratic Wilhelm Liebknecht was imprisoned, his wife helped manage the party correspondence. Bracke to Frau Liebknecht, 23 February 1873, in Eckert, *Aus den Anfängen der Braunschweiger Arbeiterbewegung*, 33. In the Netherlands, Social Democrats relied on family networks to build their organization. Veldhuizen, “De Partij.”

⁵⁰² Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, 218–19.

was based on the tradition of previous political organizations. The chapter focuses specifically on the other two aspects of Weber's categories that distinguished the three early party organizations: charismatic and procedural authority. For this purpose, I first discuss the practices of charismatic representation in the ARP. In a second step, I contrast them with the procedural approach in the German SDAP. In a final step, I show how these two forms of representation could be combined in the hybrid party organization of the British NLF.

2. Charismatic Representation in the Dutch ARP

2.1 Popular Mobilization through Paternalistic Leadership

In less than a decade after its foundation gathering in Utrecht in 1879, the Anti-Revolutionary Party managed to occupy its first cabinet posts.⁵⁰³ The reasons behind this triumph were manifold, including external political factors such as the widening electoral gap that was triggered by the decline of parliamentary Conservatism. Also the willingness of Catholic parliamentarians to participate in the Anti-Revolutionary coalition helped the party to leave its opposition status.⁵⁰⁴ The most decisive factor, however, was the leadership style of Abraham Kuyper, whose charisma attracted the attention of ordinary followers and consolidated their loyal support.⁵⁰⁵ This early success came at a price, especially for other influential Anti-Revolutionary leaders from whom Kuyper demanded complete subordination. A first indication of the future dominance of the Protestant minister were the organizational regulations of the ARP that gave an authoritative status to his single-handedly composed program: "[e]lectoral associations that send the deputies to the assembly of the Central Committee" were "expected to follow the program" and completely adhere to the more-than-500-page declaration of Anti-Revolutionary principles.⁵⁰⁶ Local branches that dared to deviate from this rule were excluded from the party organization.⁵⁰⁷ The other side of this authoritative leadership style was the wide scope of Anti-Revolutionary appeal. At the core of Kuyper's political strategy stood a community of followers that was more comprehensive than the small group of members of local electoral associations. While the latter decisively contributed to electoral campaigns, the former

⁵⁰³ See, for instance, E. H. Kossmann, *De Lage Landen 1780-1940. Anderhalve eeuw Nederland* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1976), 260–64; Velde, "Van grondwet tot grondwet"; Th. B. F. M. Brinkel and J. de Bruijn, *Het kabinet-Mackay: opstellen over de eerste christelijke coalitie (1888-1891)* (Baarn: Arbor, 1990).

⁵⁰⁴ De Jong, "Antirevolutionaire partijvorming."

⁵⁰⁵ Rienk Janssens, "Eenheid en verdeelheid 1879-1894," in *De Antirevolutionaire Partij, 1829-1980*, ed. George Harinck and Roel Kuiper (Hilversum: Verloren, 2001), 73; de Jong, "Antirevolutionaire partijvorming."

⁵⁰⁶ "kiesverenigingen, die Deputaten naar de vergadering van het Centraal Comité" "geacht zich bij dit program aan te sluiten" "Statuten," 5. Kuiper, *Herenmuiterij*, chaps. 2–3; Janssens, *opbouw*, 239–41.

⁵⁰⁷ Kuyper suggested already at the 1879 inaugural assembly that for these associations there was no option other than "to release" ("los te maken") them. "Vergadering van het Voorlopig Centraal Comité," 4.

constituted the basis of Kuyper's political agenda. Addressing ordinary Orthodox Protestants who did not have a formal role in the decision-making process of the party organization, Kuyper could reach the large constituency of faithful Anti-Revolutionaries.⁵⁰⁸

The mobilization of this extensive group of followers was carried out by the newspaper *De Standaard*, which appeared six days a week and made Kuyper a prominent figure in the daily routine of Orthodox Protestant households. The Anti-Revolutionary press was also a way to increase the feeling of solidarity among followers who usually had no formal membership status in the ARP. The local chapters of the party were initially the exclusive territory of a small group of influential Anti-Revolutionaries. In *De Standaard*, however, Kuyper could connect the ordinary lives of his followers with political topics, creating a common identity for his geographically scattered community.⁵⁰⁹ In the first issue of the newspaper, its name and purpose were explained in reference to the Protestant nature of the Netherlands. As in a church prayer, Kuyper asked God "to grant us the holy honor to again hold up the ensign of His word for our Christian people, be of Him our beginning and stand by this work our help in the name of the Lord who created our nation and saved our fatherland."⁵¹⁰

This quote connected Protestant faith with the political entity of the Dutch nation. God had not only created the fatherland, but the future of the nation also rested in His superior hands. Related to these religious connotations was the constituency of Orthodox Protestants that facilitated Kuyper's claim of representation. In *De Standaard*, his ordinary followers could not only read the regular news, but also follow anniversaries, weddings and obituaries in their community.⁵¹¹ A popular feature was the listing of vacancies for teachers and domestic servants, like the request of "[a] miss, 23 years old (Chr[istian] Re[formed] fai[th]" who looked for a new occupation, preferably as a housekeeper or "companion."⁵¹² Under this announcement, two advertisements addressed the physical well-being of Orthodox Protestants, praising Hop-Bitter that "rejuvenates" and "Swiss pills of Rich. Brandt" that cured

⁵⁰⁸ Velde, "Ervaring en zingeving in de politiek"; Kuiper, "De weg van het volk"; de Jong, "Het antirevolutionaire volk."

⁵⁰⁹ Kuyper himself made this connection when he wrote that "Anybody who reads a daily newspaper knows how in the same moment the same speech is read by thousands of others on the same evening" ("Immers wie een dagblad leest, weet, hoe op datzelfde oogenblik door duizenden anderen op dienzelfde avond (...) gelijke toespraak van het blad wordt afgelezen"), quoted in Velde, "Kappeyne tegen Kuyper," 129. The community-building effect of the "imagined communities" in national newspapers has been described by Anderson. *Imagined Communities*. For the history of *De Standaard*, see B. van der Ros, *Geschiedenis van de christelijke dagbladers in Nederland* (Kampen: Kok, 1993), 25–69.

⁵¹⁰ "(...) vergunt Hij ons de heilige eere, om den standaard van Zijn Woord weer voor ons Christenvolk op te heffen, zij van Hem dan ons begin en sta ook bij dezen arbeid onze hulpe in den Naam des Heeren, die ook onze natie geschapen heeft en ons vaderland heeft gered!" "De Standaard," 1.

⁵¹¹ Despite the great success of the paper, there were also many Orthodox Protestants who opposed Kuyper's political course. Houkes, *Christelijke Vaderlanders*.

⁵¹² "[e]en juffrouw, oud 23 jaar (Chr. Geref. Godsd.)" "gezelschapsjuffrouw" "Advertentien," *De Standaard*, May 15, 1883, 4, Delpher.

the “most hopeless sufferings.”⁵¹³ These vacancies and medical products were published next to Anti-Revolutionary political activities. When the ARP advertised its upcoming meetings, they were printed in the largest font in the upper middle of the announcements page.

Despite this strong focus on mobilizing ordinary people, most followers had no formal status or influence in the party organization. Local branches compiled membership lists, but members were often local notaries. In addition, although local branches were obliged to submit the number of their members to the central committee, the party leadership seemed to have no interest in publishing a general account of its membership size.⁵¹⁴ As a consequence, the size of the Anti-Revolutionary membership for the early years can only be roughly estimated. While local studies and sources indicate an approximate membership size of around 40 members for local associations, there must have been ca. 520 active members in the entire party.⁵¹⁵ This limited interest in quantification might seem surprising for a “modern” party organization like the ARP.⁵¹⁶ But despite its commitment to large support numbers, Kuyper did not need exact figures to speak for his constituency. For one, it would have been difficult to convince the broad constituency of ordinary followers to formally enlist in the new party organization. In this sense, not having a central record of membership numbers might have even been an advantage for the initially small party. More importantly, however, was the fact that the early ARP relied on a symbolic form of representation where the interests of ordinary followers were united in the persona of the party leader.

This mass appeal without mass membership worked well in practice, in part because of the emotional language that Kuyper used when speaking at large public meetings.⁵¹⁷ In the historical literature, the national activism in support of the South Africans of Dutch descent during the Boer Wars has often been mentioned as a typical example of Kuyper’s political

⁵¹³ “verjongen” “Zwitsersche pillen van Rich. Brandt” “hopelooste lijden” “Advertentien,” 4.

⁵¹⁴ “Elke Kiesvereniging, die zich aansluit, is gehouden (...) een opgave van haar ledental bij den Secretaris van het Centraal Comité in te zenden” (every electoral association that subscribes is expected to submit an overview of its membership to the central committee). “Statuten,” 7.

⁵¹⁵ This is a very rough estimate since the number of members differed considerably. At the 1881 ARP deputy assembly, 14 delegates represented 13 local associations. These figures exclude representatives of national and regional parliamentary assemblies who were often not members of local electoral associations. In 1879 *De Standaard* even mentioned in its description of the founding congress in Utrecht “electoral associations (...) among which are even some that count 750 members.” “Kiesverenigingen (...) waaronder er zelf zijn die 750 leden tellen”. “Het Centraal Comité,” *De Standaard*, April 5, 1879, 1, Delpher. In Delft the local electoral association had 38 and 13 external members. A. van der Wees, *1866-1980: Grepen uit de Geschiedenis van de ARP-Delft* (n.p., 1980), 48.

⁵¹⁶ See, for instance, Liagre Böhl, “Hoofdlijnen in de politieke ontwikkeling,” 213.

⁵¹⁷ See, for instance, Velde, *Stijlen van leiderschap*, 92; Koch, *Abraham Kuyper*, chap. 3; Hoekstra, “De kracht van het gesproken woord”; van Helden, “De ‘kleine luyden’ van Abraham Kuyper”; Kuiper, “De weg van het volk”; Janssens, *opbouw*, chap. 17.

style.⁵¹⁸ In February 1881, Kuyper joined the Amsterdam Committee for Transvaal (Amsterdamsch Comité voor Transvaal) that organized a large gathering. *De Standaard* only briefly mentioned this first meeting, probably because Kuyper initially disapproved of the populist support for Dutch military intervention in South Africa.⁵¹⁹ When three years later, Patrimonium (the Dutch union of Christian workers) organized a meeting in the Plancius building in Amsterdam, Kuyper had abandoned these doubts. Not only did he become the main speaker, he also used all his rhetorical talents to defend the cause of the small nation in South Africa. While the traditional Dutch political elite had relied on a sober and pragmatic rhetorical style, the controversial ARP leader united the experiences of his audience in his political persona. Kuyper's vocabulary was characterized by a strong emotional component that emphasized the unified political action of the attendees.⁵²⁰ The speech started with Kuyper telling the audience that he spoke to them "from the heart to the heart."⁵²¹ United by their compassion for Krueger and his troops, the speaker and his listeners had followed the distant battle in South Africa "with our heart."⁵²² This motive dominated the rest of the speech, and the word "heart" was mentioned nineteen times to connect speaker and audience. When Kuyper used the inclusive "our" to describe his emotions, he verbally joined the ranks of his followers. On this metaphorical level, there was no difference in the emotions of the powerful chairman and his audience.

2.2 Resistance to Party Discipline

Not all party members appreciated Kuyper's omnipresent position within the party. In particular, those Anti-Revolutionary activists who were actively involved in the political business of the organization developed a critical attitude. Two years after the founding meeting, a small rebellious faction created an independent electoral association.⁵²³ Presenting themselves as faithful Protestants and loyal Royalists, the defectors called their organization Marnix, after the "bosom friend of our first William," the seventeenth-century Marnix of Saint-Aldegonde, a close

⁵¹⁸ Anne Petterson, *Eigenwijs vaderland. Populair nationalisme in negentiende-eeuws Amsterdam* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2017), 182–83; Velde, *Stijlen van leiderschap*, 26–33; Roel Kuiper, *Zelfbeeld en wereldbeeld: antirevolutionairen en het buitenland, 1848-1905* (Kampen: Kok, 1992), 126–28.

⁵¹⁹ Petterson, *Eigenwijs vaderland*, 177.

⁵²⁰ Velde, *Stijlen van leiderschap*, 100.

⁵²¹ "uit het hart tot het hart" Abraham Kuyper, *Plancius-rede* (Amsterdam: J.H. Kruyt, 1884), 5, <http://archive.org/details/planciusrede00kuyper>.

⁵²² "met ons hart" Kuyper, 6.

⁵²³ In addition to 'Marnix' also the 'Buytendijkians' formed an opposition to Kuyper. See Janssens, *opbouw*, 230–52. For other Protestant alternatives to Kuyper see Houkes, *Christelijke Vaderlanders*, chapter 7.

associate of William of Orange, alleged writer of the national anthem and devoted Calvinist.⁵²⁴ The first meeting took place in the *Liggende Os* in Utrecht where 14 men elected Lindeboom and Wierema as president and secretary. Already at this first gathering, they justified their decision to split with the way the ARP was governed. The group had “no peace (...) with the attitude of the central committee and the Anti-rev. electoral associations.”⁵²⁵ In particular, “their attitude towards art. 168 and 194 of the constitution” had alienated the former supporters from the party.⁵²⁶ They were disappointed that the ARP did not adhere to its mission to restrict the influence of the Dutch state on the Protestant community. Article 194 regulated the influence of national authorities on public schools. Article 168 stated that the salaries of religious authorities like ministers and teachers were covered by the national budget. For the members of Marnix, the ARP ignored its obligations to the free school movement. Even worse, they suspected that the party leader’s hesitation was caused by strategic considerations and a desire to retain the support of the publicly funded Protestant clergy.⁵²⁷

This programmatic criticism was related to a more fundamental structural problem. The charismatic authority of Kuyper was essential in mobilizing a large group of informal followers, but it obstructed the influence of active members. As chairman of the central committee, Kuyper demanded complete submission to his political course. Those who had different preferences had not many options other than leaving the party.⁵²⁸ For the men of Marnix, this meant that the different groups in the ARP had made so many concessions that the original position of the party had been abandoned: “[t]he history of the last years had clearly shown that the spokespersons of the antirev. party so deliberately arrange the words that also the mutually exclusive feelings make the impression of unity and we are, thus, condemned to the prison of inactivity.”⁵²⁹

⁵²⁴ “boezemvriend van onzen eersten Willem” “Concept-reglement, met toelichting, van de Chr. Hist. Kiezersbond ‘Marnix,’” 1881, 5, <http://www.delpher.nl/nl/boeken/view?coll=boeken&identificer=MMUBVU02:000003859>.

⁵²⁵ “geen vrede (...) met de houding van het Centraal Comité en de Anti-rev. Kiesverenigingen” “Concept-reglement,” 3.

⁵²⁶ “hun houding tegenover art. 168 en 194 der Grondwet” “Concept-reglement,” 3. The Protestant historian Smitskamp has argued that there were only minor differences between the demands of Marnix and the ARP. H. Smitskamp, “De Christelijk-Historische Kiezersbond ‘Marnix’ (1881 - ca. 1892),” in *Anti-Revolutionaire Staatskunde*, ed. J. Schouten, vol. 23 (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1953), 87–91.

⁵²⁷ “Concept-reglement,” 15.

⁵²⁸ Economist Hirschman, who has argued that members of an organization have only three options exit, voice or loyalty. *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970).

⁵²⁹ “De geschiedenis der laatste jaren heeft allerduidelijkst doen zien, dat de woordvoerders der antirev. partij de woorden met opzet zóó schikken, dat ook de elkaar uitsluitende gevoelens de vertooning van eenheid maken en wij dus tot de werkeloosheid der gevangenis veroordeeld worden.” “Concept-reglement,” 14.

In his quest to unify the different groups of the Orthodox Protestant community under a single coherent political strategy, Kuyper had lost track of the diversity in the unorganized and rather loose movement.⁵³⁰ In this way, the men of Marnix offered a crucial observation with their protest. Kuyper regularly neglected party members' concerns about the political course of the ARP when they did not fit his own agenda. Well knowing that sensitive topics could be harmful for internal coherence, he obstructed any discussions about political strategy. Not even the major representative institution of the party could act independently. When in 1881 delegates to the first deputy assembly started to discuss the program of the ARP, Kuyper cut off the discussion. A few days later he announced the installation of a commission to elaborate the contested financial relationship between state and church.⁵³¹ When in 1883 the electoral association of Dokkum suggested a discussion of article 168, Kuyper postponed the topic by announcing that this point would be addressed at the following deputy assembly.⁵³²

It is no surprise that this ruthless imposition of political conformity posed a problem for the young party organization. Although not all opponents of Kuyper chose Marnix' strategy of open confrontation, there was a silent opposition among active Anti-Revolutionaries. Just before the 1881 elections, Kuyper noted the limited enthusiasm among electoral associations for the coming campaign. In many districts, the individual Anti-Revolutionary supporter "sits still way too long."⁵³³ In the same year, the chairman mentioned the problem of "the division that appears in the party."⁵³⁴ But instead of adjusting his course, Kuyper insisted on ideological coherence, warning about the "in practice appearing phenomenon how (...) our principles have not yet had effect."⁵³⁵ Blaming his internal critics, he argued that it was necessary for them to commit to the "more serious study of the demands that our principles put to us."⁵³⁶ In other words, Kuyper's rhetoric of unification demanded full-fledged support. Those who were not unconditional supporters ran the risk of being declared an enemy of their former party organization. This also meant that despite the obvious problems, the party leader played down the division of his party. Its threat to the organization could not be denied, but the scope of dissatisfaction was "in truth still small," especially in comparison to "what can be seen in other parties."⁵³⁷

⁵³⁰ For the diversity in the Orthodox Protestant community, see Houkes, *Christelijke Vaderlanders*.

⁵³¹ "Deputatenvergadering, gehouden te Utrecht, in het Gebouw voor Kunsten en Wetenschappen," *De Standaard*, May 9, 1881, 2, Delpher; "Art. 168," *De Standaard*, May 9, 1881, 1, Delpher.

⁵³² "Deputaten-Vergadering," *De Standaard*, May 17, 1883, 2, Delpher.

⁵³³ "veel te lang stil zit" "Verloren Districten," *De Standaard*, April 5, 1881, 1, Delpher.

⁵³⁴ "de verdeeldheid, die zich in de partij openbaart" "Deputatenvergadering," *De Standaard*, September 5, 1881, 2, Delpher.

⁵³⁵ "in de praktijk openbarende verschijnsel, hoe onder (...) onze beginselen nog niet hebben doorgewerkt" "Deputatenvergadering," 2.

⁵³⁶ "ernstiger studie van de eischen, die onze beginselen ons stellen" "Deputatenvergadering," 2.

⁵³⁷ "in waarheid nog klein" "wat onder andere partijen wordt gezien" "Deputatenvergadering," 2.

Kuyper's comparison of the ARP to other political parties only partially captured the situation in the Netherlands. It was true that the secret behind the party's success was its unified nature. But traditional parties like the Liberals did not need a centrally administered organization to win elections. Their political legitimacy was based on a much more traditional form of political authority.⁵³⁸ Kuyper had initiated a new era where the interests of ordinary Orthodox Protestants replaced the traditional legitimacy of aristocratic candidates. For many Anti-Revolutionaries, this seemed like the end of deferential politics, but in practice Kuyper's charismatic authority created a new hierarchy in the party community where his persona stood above all other Orthodox Protestants.⁵³⁹ His understanding of mass mobilization demanded internal unity to legitimize the representation of the extensive constituency in the persona of a single leader. Concealing the artificial nature of this political coherence, Kuyper underestimated the possible negative consequences of his political authority. In the 1890s, disappointed Anti-Revolutionaries around Savornin Lohman left the ARP. Their exit shows how charismatic leadership can cause the split of party, even though Kuyper's ARP was able to extend its political power after the exodus of dissatisfied members.⁵⁴⁰

3. Procedural Representation in the German SDAP

3.1 Party Organization under Pressure

In Germany representation took a path unlike the charismatic model of the ARP. Instead of relying on a single powerful leader with a small group of followers, the Social Democratic Workers' Party invited all party members to participate in the planning of its future. In contrast to Abraham Kuyper who, as we have seen, relied on his persona to mobilize and discipline ordinary followers, the leaders of the SDAP used a procedural approach to incorporate the response of their constituency. In other words, German Social Democrats invited party members to climb up the stairs to become speakers themselves.⁵⁴¹ This procedural model was possible because of the different conceptualizations of the immediate audience of the SDAP. In contrast to the national community of Anti-Revolutionaries, German Social Democrats relied on a close community of party members that actively participated in the politics of local branches. This comparably small group of dedicated activists came to their decisions together, choosing

⁵³⁸ De Jong, *Van standspolitiek naar partijloyaliteit*, 72–73. In the 1870s a new generation of Dutch Liberals took a more outspoken partisan standpoint. Haan, *Het beginsel van leven en wasdom*, 173–80.

⁵³⁹ Haan and te Velde, "Vormen van politiek," 181.

⁵⁴⁰ Janssens, "Eenheid en verdeelheid"; Koch, *Abraham Kuyper*, chap. 7; L. C. Suttorp, *Jhr. Mr. Alexander Frederik de Savornin Lohman 1837-1924: zijn leven en werken* ('s-Gravenhage: A.A.M. Stols, 1948), 186–210.

⁵⁴¹ The emancipatory effects of such an approach have been discussed for twentieth-century movements Polletta, *Freedom Is an Endless Meeting*.

from their midst the most capable members to rule the organization for a year or two.⁵⁴² In contrast to Kuyper's rule, the SDAP regularly replaced the five members of its board with a new leadership group. While *De Standaard* was controlled by Kuyper, Social Democratic board officers were not allowed to be editors of the party newspaper *Der Volksstaat*. This rule also applied to the control commission that provided another opportunity for party members to rise to the higher ranks of the party. The party congress provided another option for party members to control their leadership. Ordinary members could exercise considerable influence on the assembly, either as one of the participating delegates or by instructing their local representatives about the content of their statements and their votes.

Unlike the ARP, which relied on short deputy assemblies in bi-annual rhythm, the SDAP congresses took place annually and lasted between three and five days. In the early years of the ARP, attendance numbers were low because Kuyper primarily aimed at the coordination of electoral campaigns. Even when ordinary members started to gain a more prominent role in ARP deputy assemblies, their task was mainly to support Kuyper's agenda with cheerful applause.⁵⁴³ At SDAP congresses, elections were also an important topic, but more importantly, German Social Democrats comprehensively discussed the program and organization of their party. The sophisticated discussion procedures made SDAP assemblies a festive celebration of participatory culture.⁵⁴⁴ On the first day, delegates elaborated about and voted on the chairman of the meeting and determined the specific agenda and debating rules. This usually led to a dilemma that delegates had to balance practical considerations of limited time against their desire to include all delegates in the debate.⁵⁴⁵ At the 1870 party congress in Stuttgart, for instance, several delegates suggested limiting the length of the debate, but the assembly decided against this rule.⁵⁴⁶ This changed two years later in Eisenach, when the congress determined that speakers had to formally register with the chairman and limit themselves to

⁵⁴² This flexible leadership structure changed later when the party extended its membership to the industrial working classes, experienced suppression under the Socialist Laws, and became more focused on its parliamentary representation. Mittmann, *Fraktion und Partei*, 67–74; Kupfer, "Die organisatorische Entwicklung der Sozialdemokratie." For a local study of the impact of the Socialist Laws on party organization, see Karl-Alexander Hellfaier, "Die sozialdemokratische Bewegung in Halle/Saale (1865 - 1890)," *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 1 (1961): 69–107.

⁵⁴³ Janssens, *opbouw*, chap. 17.

⁵⁴⁴ This was part of a longer tradition of workers' assemblies and associations. Welskopp, *Das Banner der Brüderlichkeit*, 291–338; Sperber, *Rhineland Radicals*, chaps. 5–6; Waling, "1848 Clubkoorts en revolutie"; Birker, *Die deutschen Arbeiterbildungsvereine*.

⁵⁴⁵ Heyer, "Manipulation or Participation?" For a sociological study of this dilemma, see Austin Choi-Fitzpatrick, "Managing Democracy in Social Movement Organizations," *Social Movement Studies* 14, no. 2 (March 4, 2015): 123–41.

⁵⁴⁶ "Protokoll über den ersten Congreß der sozial-demokratischen Arbeiterpartei zu Stuttgart am 4., 5., 6. und 7. Juni 1870," in *Protokolle der sozialdemokratischen Arbeiterpartei*, reprint (Glashütten im Taunus: D. Auvermann, 1971), 9, 14, 21.

three statements per theme.⁵⁴⁷ But, even under these stricter regulations, the delegates could not bring themselves to limit their discussion time on default. Rather, the majority voted that no debate could be finished until at least one delegate in favor and one against the issue at hand had been heard.

3.2 Internal Power Struggle

The first years of the SDAP were dominated by the Franco-Prussian War that put the procedural representation within the young party under unexpected pressure. Disagreement about the appropriate course for the new political situation led to a dramatic power struggle between its leading members, who all felt entitled to determine the political course of the party. But the emphasis on procedural practices also became a valuable mechanism that guaranteed survival in times of recurring crisis. The founding congress in Eisenach had determined that the local branch of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel was the first chapter to host the SDAP board. Following party regulations, the members of the local branch elected Johann Heinrich Ehlers as first chairman, Samuel Spier as his co-chairman, Wilhelm Bracke as treasurer, Leonhard von Bornhorst as secretary and Friedrich Neidel as assessor. The first practical test for the authority of the Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel group appeared after the Prussian Chancellor Otto von Bismarck skillfully maneuvered the French Emperor Napoleon III into an armed conflict in July 1870. The French army was the military aggressor in the eyes of most Germans, including the political elite and many ordinary citizens.⁵⁴⁸

For the SDAP board, still occupied with unifying its scattered branches into the new party organization, the French mobilization posed a serious challenge. Although the party leadership opposed the autocratic Prussian state, it could not ignore the danger of the French army invading German towns and villages. In these chaotic circumstances, the board decided to refrain from criticizing the defensive response of the German army, even when it acted under Prussian command.⁵⁴⁹ The neutral position of the Braunschweig board was not shared by all party representatives. In fact, the party's procedural form of representation facilitated the expression of different opinions, even though the board would soon try to establish control over the course of the party. The most outspoken critics were August Bebel and Wilhelm

⁵⁴⁷ "Protokoll über den fünften Congress der sozial-demokratischen Arbeiterpartei zu Eisenach am 23., 24., 26., und 27. August 1873," in *Protokolle der sozialdemokratischen Arbeiterpartei*, reprint (Glashütten im Taunus: D. Auvermann, 1971), 1.

⁵⁴⁸ Pracht, *Parlamentarismus und deutsche Sozialdemokratie*, 24; Dieter Groh, *"Vaterlandslose Gesellen": Sozialdemokratie und Nation 1860-1990* (München: Beck, 1992), 21.

⁵⁴⁹ Eckert, "Aus der Korrespondenz des Braunschweiger Ausschusses der Sozialdemokratischen Arbeiter-Partei," 110. A more favorable account of the years has been dominant in the extensive GDR literature, see Seidel, *Wilhelm Bracke*, 68–76.

Liebkecht, who maintained their critical stance towards the Prussian authorities.⁵⁵⁰ When the board instructed Liebkecht to support their call “against all and every brutal presumptions of Casarism” in *Der Volksstaat*, the editor ignored this order.⁵⁵¹ Making their dissatisfaction public, the two parliamentarians Liebkecht and Bebel even refused to vote on the additional military budget in the parliamentary assembly of the *Reichstag*.⁵⁵² The Braunschweig board responded furiously to this unauthorized diversion from the formal course. The question was: who was in charge of the party’s political course?

On the next day, the two board officers Bracke and Spier wrote to the chairman of the control commission, August Geib, to complain about the “terrible damaging of the party”, demanding “energetic action.”⁵⁵³ The typically abbreviated style of the telegram fit the aggressive content of the message that concluded with these instructions: “Call Tonight Control Commission Tomorrow Night Necessary Here You Board. Sunday you Spier Bracke Leipzig Wire Response.”⁵⁵⁴ The hastily wired words asked Geib to immediately hold a meeting of the control commission and attend a meeting of the board the following day which was to be followed by a trip to Leipzig where Bebel and Liebkecht were situated. The purpose of this emergency procedure was, as the telegram put it: to “make Liebkecht obey or dismiss him.”⁵⁵⁵ The board was especially annoyed with Liebkecht, whom they considered removing as editor of *Der Volksstaat*. Although Geib as chair of the control commission refused to further escalate the conflict, the disagreement could not be resolved. At the end of the month, the board complained about the “evil dissonance” created by Liebkecht’s self-centered behavior, continuing that “Truly, Geib, it looks bad for the party.”⁵⁵⁶ Liebkecht, on the other hand, was so enraged about the angry response of the board that he threatened to emigrate to “England or America.”⁵⁵⁷ In the meantime, the board even sought advice from the trusted authority of

⁵⁵⁰ Mehring, *Geschichte der deutschen Sozialdemokratie: Von Lassalles “Offenem Antwortschreiben” bis zum Erfurter Programm, 1863 bis 1891*, 2:373–75.

⁵⁵¹ “gegen alle und jede brutale Anmaßung des Caesarismus” ‘Der Braunschweiger Ausschuss to Wilhelm Liebkecht’, 17 July 1870, in Eckert, “Aus der Korrespondenz des Braunschweiger Ausschusses der Sozialdemokratischen Arbeiter-Partei.,” 130.

⁵⁵² *Verhandlungen des Außerordentlichen Reichstages des Norddeutschen Bundes. I. Legislaturperiod.* (Berlin: Julius Sittenfeld, 1870), 14, http://www.reichstagsprotokolle.de/Blatt3_nb_bsb00018315_00016.html.

⁵⁵³ “furchtbare Schädigung der Partei” “energisches Handeln” ‘Telegramm Wilhelm Bracke and Samuel Spier to August Geib’, 22 July 1870, in Eckert, “Aus der Korrespondenz des Braunschweiger Ausschusses der Sozialdemokratischen Arbeiter-Partei.,” 132.

⁵⁵⁴ “Berufe heute Abend Controllcommission Morgen Abend Du nothwendig hier Auschuß. Sonntag Du Spier Bracke Leipzig Drahtantwort” ‘Telegramm Wilhelm Bracke and Samuel Spier to August Geib’, 22 July 1870, in Eckert, 132.

⁵⁵⁵ “Liebkecht fügen oder absetzen” Telegramm Wilhelm Bracke and Samuel Spier to August Geib, 22.7.1870, in Eckert, 132.

⁵⁵⁶ “böse Dissonanz” “Wahrlich, Geib, es sieht schlimm aus mit der Partei.” ‘Wilhelm Bracke to August Geib’, 29 July 1870, in Eckert, 133–34.

⁵⁵⁷ “England oder America” ‘Wilhelm Liebkecht to Wilhelm Bracke’, 30 August 1870, in Eckert, 136..

Karl Marx in London, who instructed Friedrich Engels to mediate between board and Liebknecht.⁵⁵⁸

The tense situation within the SDAP was resolved only when the German army defeated the French military forces in Sedan in the beginning of September. As much as international politics had split the young party, the declaration of the Third Republic now united the SDAP. For the German Social Democrats, the Paris Commune made the French state a Socialist project that deserved sincere and public support. As official leadership of the party, the Braunschweig board quickly adjusted its position and published a manifesto “to all German workers” in *Der Volksstaat* to announce its solidarity with the French, and specifically, the Socialists in the neighboring country.⁵⁵⁹ Boldly declaring that it would “not tolerate the annexation of Alsace and Lothringia,” they directly positioned themselves against the German military forces.⁵⁶⁰

This provocative announcement caused a second crisis for the party, which was now threatened by outside pressure, instead of internal conflict. As a consequence of their criticism of the German army, the military authorities arrested the board members Wilhelm Bracke, Samuel Spier, Carl Kühn, Heinrich Gralle and Leonhard von Bonhorst. The five men were brought to the Fortress Lötzen on the eastern border of Prussia in today’s Poland. For several months, the Braunschweig group remained imprisoned; Bonhorst was the last to return by Christmas.⁵⁶¹ In this situation, the procedural practices of the SDAP showed their true strength, because the party had encouraged the creation of a flexible leadership structure. Like the ancient monster Hydra whose heads were cut off by Heracles, the party replaced its violently removed leadership with a new board.

The control commission quickly responded to the new situation and designated Dresden as the location of a provisional board. Announcing in *Der Volksstaat* that “extraordinary circumstances demand extraordinary measures,” they also took care of the allocation of the offices.⁵⁶² One day after the Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel arrest, they proclaimed that “we have decided to appoint 3 persons in Dresden for the substitute board”:

⁵⁵⁸ Engels advised that participation in the national movement was advisable, but the brotherhood between ordinary Germans and Frenchmen should be similarly emphasized. Eckert, 128.

⁵⁵⁹ “An alle deutschen Arbeiter” “die Annexion von Elsaß und Lothringen *nicht dulden*” Vorstand, “Manifest,” *Der Volksstaat*, November 9, 1870, 1. For a contemporary description of the events, see also Wilhelm Bracke, *Der Braunschweiger Ausschuss der socialdemokratischen Arbeiter-partei in Lötzen und vor dem Gericht* (Braunschweig: Verlag der Expedition des “Braunschweiger Volksfreund, 1872), 7–10.

⁵⁶⁰ “An alle deutschen Arbeiter” “die Annexion von Elsaß und Lothringen *nicht dulden*” Vorstand, “Der Volksstaat,” 1. For a contemporary description of the events, see also Bracke, *Der Braunschweiger Ausschuss*, 7–10.

⁵⁶¹ Mehring, *Geschichte der deutschen Sozialdemokratie: Von Lassalles “Offenem Antwortschreiben” bis zum Erfurter Programm, 1863 bis 1891*, 2:379.

⁵⁶² “außerordentliche Zustände erheischen außergewöhnliche Maßregeln” Centralkommission, “An die Parteigenossen,” *Der Volksstaat*, September 17, 1870, 3.

Otto Walster as chairman, Köhler as treasurer and Knieling as assessor.⁵⁶³ This rapid response guaranteed the survival of the party organization in the following months. Less than a week later, the German authorities executed the next “hard strike” and arrested the leading members of the control commission Theodor Yorck and August Geib.⁵⁶⁴ Yorck was soon released, but Geib was transported to Lötzen “for the involuntary control of the Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel board” as the report of the control commission sarcastically put it.⁵⁶⁵ In December, a third wave of imprisonment followed when the authorities arrested the parliamentarians Bebel and Liebknecht under the same charges as the Braunschweig board.⁵⁶⁶ Together with the editor of *Volksstaat* Adolf Hepner, the two men were detained until March 1871 and had to return to prison in September 1872.

The arrest of Bebel and Liebknecht had also an effect on the SDAP’s approaching electoral campaign whose success was now threatened by the absence of its popular candidates. Again, the Social Democrats relied on the procedural strength of their party organization. As the control commission reported, its actions were based on ordinary members’ request: they “received the wish from different sides to aim for a tighter centralization for the Reichstag election.”⁵⁶⁷ In February 1871, one month before the election, the control commission relieved the provisional Dresden board of its responsibilities, and Leipzig became the new location of the party leadership. In contrast to the Dresden board, for which the control commission had determined the allocation of offices, the party returned to its original procedures. The allocation of the offices of the Leipzig board happened “of course in consideration of § 12 of the party organization”.⁵⁶⁸ Relying on the expertise of ordinary members, the party reinstalled its bottom-up approach. The officers of the new board were elected by the members of the local branch in Leipzig.

⁵⁶³ “Bezüglich der Parteileitung (...) haben wir beschlossen, 3 Personen in Dresden zum stellvertretenden Auschuß zu ernennen.” “August Geib to G.A. Müller,” September 13, 1870, Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR, Bundesarchiv.

⁵⁶⁴ “harter Schlag” Centralkommission, “An die Parteigenossen,” 3.

⁵⁶⁵ “zur unfreiwilligen Kontrolle des Braunschweig-Wolfenbütteler Auschußes” “Protokoll über den zweiten Congreß der sozial-demokratischen Arbeiterpartei, abgehalten zu Dresden, am 12., 13., 14., und 15. August 1871,” in *Protokolle der sozialdemokratischen Arbeiterpartei*, reprint (Glashütten im Taunus: D. Auvermann, 1971), 65.

⁵⁶⁶ Hugo Friedländer, *Interessante Kriminal-Prozesse von Kulturhistorischer Bedeutung*, vol. 3, 1–12 vols. (Hermann Barsdorf Verlag, 1911), <http://www.zeno.org/nid/20003607089>; Mehring, *Geschichte der deutschen Sozialdemokratie: Von Lassalles “Offenem Antwortschreiben” bis zum Erfurter Programm, 1863 bis 1891*.

⁵⁶⁷ “von verschiedenen Seiten der Wunsch zugeing, zu den Reichstagswahlen eine straffere Zentralisation der Partei anzustreben” “Protokoll über den zweiten Congreß,” 65.

⁵⁶⁸ “natürlich mit Berücksichtigung des § 12 der Parteiorganisation” “Protokoll über den zweiten Congreß,” 66.

3.3 The Disciplining Strength of the Brotherly Community

The Franco-Prussian War also had an impact on the financial strategy of the SDAP. The party depended on the ordinary members of local branches to pay their membership dues on time. Even before the war, this had caused problems with the board reporting that financially “we truly cannot be satisfied with the performances of the party.”⁵⁶⁹ In 1870 Bebel suggested publishing a list in *Der Volksstaat* of all associations that had failed to pay their dues.⁵⁷⁰ Although some delegates opposed this proposal, remarking that this would put further pressure on the empty pockets of working-class families, it was quickly accepted. The SDAP was not the only party organization to use this administrative instrument of public naming. Dutch party leader Abraham Kuyper applied a similar disciplinary method and mentioned in *De Standaard* individual local associations that did not adequately engage in electoral campaigns. The difference with the SDAP was that German Social Democrats used a more positive approach that fit the party’s understanding of procedural representation. Unlike the ARP chairman who relied on a top-down approach, the SDAP board gave its members the opportunity to defend their indebted branches.

For the SDAP, a year after its introduction, the list of party branches owing back dues was an important point of discussion at the party congress in Dresden. Delegate Eberlein from Meerane was the first to explain why his local chapter had failed to pay its membership contribution. His statement cited the many difficulties experienced by local branches during the Franco-Prussian War: “when the Reichstag elections took place, the people’s electoral association of Meerane was dissolved and in fact by the authoritative decision of the city council. We factually did not exist, and had to file a lawsuit which took a lot of time.”⁵⁷¹ Eberlein argued that extraordinary circumstances prevented the Meerane branch from paying its party dues. The financial burden was unreasonably high, because local members had financed a court case for their electoral campaign. Moreover, the group had financially supported Liebknecht, who was the parliamentary representative of their district. This long defense speech at the congress was not the only statement on this topic. Delegates saw it as their responsibility to prevent their local branch from losing the respect of the brotherly community. Despite their contentious political rhetoric, Social Democrats aspired to the bourgeois ideal of respectable members of society.⁵⁷² After Eberlein, the delegate Albert from Glachau described to the

⁵⁶⁹ “wir wahrlich nicht mit den Leistungen der Partei zufrieden sein können” Bericht des Ausschusses der sozialdemokratischen Arbeiter-Partei zum Congress in Stuttgart am 4. 5. 6. Und 7. Juni 1870, in Georg Eckert, “Der Rechenschaftsbericht der Sozialdemokratischen Arbeiter-Partei für den Stuttgarter Parteitag Juni 1870,” *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 3 (1963): 507, http://library.fes.de/jportal/receive/jportal_jparticle_00010012.

⁵⁷⁰ “Protokoll über den ersten Congreß,” 44.

⁵⁷¹ “als die Reichstagswahl stattfand, ward der Volkswahlverein in Meerane aufgelöst und zwar durch Machtspruch des Stadtraths. Wir bestanden faktisch nicht, und mußten einen Prozeß führen, der lange gedauert hat” “Protokoll über den zweiten Congreß,” 75.

⁵⁷² Welskopp, *Das Banner der Brüderlichkeit*, 369–71.

assembly how his association had spent a considerable sum for agitation, even covering the debts of neighboring constituencies. Because of this unusual situation, the Glachau branch had been released from paying its dues by the Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel board. When the congress decided to move to another topic, three additional speakers - Thiele of Leipzig, Engelhard of Zwickau and Imhof of Erfurt – intervened to justify the missing payments of their branches. Finally, Leyendecker terminated the debate with a balanced statement, praising the organization of the party: “Our organization is not deficient if only every member works proficiently on its basis. The organization is not at fault that the fees are not paid, no, it is only the will and the police circumstances that have hindered us.”⁵⁷³

This sort of explanation was a common rhetorical frame in the SDAP. The oppressive circumstances in Germany enabled members to divert attention from the many internal discrepancies in the party organization. At the same time, although leadership culture differed from that of the Dutch ARP, German Social Democrats suffered from a similar dilemma, being caught between membership mobilization and discipline.⁵⁷⁴ The SDAP members, who were responsible for the functioning of the party organization, did their best to keep up the optimistic spirit. Geib, as the chairman of the control commission, praised the metaphorical “cast-iron ship” of the party’s “program and its organization.”⁵⁷⁵ He thought the “current party organization can be called a good one.”⁵⁷⁶ Other delegates did not hide their frustration over the difficulties of communicating with local branches. As the former chairman of the Dresden board, August Otto Walster told the congress that he had “constantly worried about this matter.”⁵⁷⁷ Five months in the party leadership had given him less flattering stories to tell: “What was definitely not the case with our party organization was the immediate rapid voluntary intervention of the Social Democrats of Germany, namely in the cities where our party comrades were organized.”⁵⁷⁸ Here spoke a man whose laborious efforts had not been matched by the necessary support of his peers. Walster clearly felt that his provisional board had done “everything possible to bring our party members to the fulfillment of duties.”⁵⁷⁹ But his peers had ignored his call for action, not responding to his numerous letters. Even worse,

⁵⁷³ “Unsere Organisation ist nicht mangelhaft, wenn nur jedes Mitglied tüchtig auf ihrer Basis arbeitet. Die Organisation ist nicht Schuld, daß die Beiträge nicht bezahlt werden, nein nur der Wille und die polizeiliche Verhältnisse sind es, die uns daran gehindert haben.” “Protokoll über den zweiten Congreß,” 78.

⁵⁷⁴ Heyer, “Manipulation or Participation?”

⁵⁷⁵ “festgezimmerten Schiffe” “Programms und ihrer Organisation” “Protokoll über den zweiten Congreß,” 66–67.

⁵⁷⁶ “jetzige Parteiorganisation (...) als eine gute bezeichnen zu können” “Protokoll über den zweiten Congreß,” 66–67.

⁵⁷⁷ “tagtäglich seine Sorgen über diese Angelegenheit” “Protokoll über den zweiten Congreß,” 67.

⁵⁷⁸ “Was bei unserer Parteiorganisation ganz unbedingt nicht der Fall war, das war das sofortige rasche freiwillige Einschreiten der Sozialdemokraten Deutschlands, namentlich da, wo unsere Parteigenossen in den Städten organisirt waren.” “Protokoll über den zweiten Congreß,” 67.

⁵⁷⁹ “alles Mögliche (...) um unsere Parteimitglieder zur Pflichterfüllung zu bringen” “Protokoll über den zweiten Congreß,” 68.

party members, “from all sides, where we had the least expected” accused the Dresden officers of neglecting their leadership duties.⁵⁸⁰ Walster’s criticism shows that establishing unity among the nationally scattered membership was a complicated task. Party members had to constantly be disciplined to maintain organizational routine, but often their response was insufficient, lacking enthusiasm and commitment. How then exactly did the SDAP manage to mobilize its financially struggling and politically oppressed members during the imprisonment of its most prominent leaders in the early years of party organization?

3.3 A Close Community of Brave Men

The procedural practices of representation enabled the SDAP to focus on its core membership in the oppressive circumstances of the German Empire.⁵⁸¹ The party suffered not only from oppression by local and national authorities, but also the impoverished living conditions and political illiteracy of its working-class supporters caused problems. Immediately after the founding congress, local branches had to be removed from the party’s list, because of “reprimands which were exercised partially by the authorities, partially by the employers.”⁵⁸² An example was the local branch of Gräfentonna that was lost, because of “the great hardship of the workers.”⁵⁸³ Also in other places, workers could not afford the membership fee and had to be suspended from the organization. The board further reported that “the regrettably too low level of education” among its working-class audience made it difficult to recruit new party members.⁵⁸⁴ Also the more professional members caused problems, but their actions were more threatening to the party’s reputation. In particular agitator Windsheimer and his “various swindles” are mentioned for having caused considerable damage to the SDAP’s reputation in Bavaria.⁵⁸⁵ Other activists were highly committed to the organization, but broke down under the intensive work pressure. For instance, W. Schmidt who campaigned for the Social Democratic cause in North Holstein had to “travel home – to Hadamar c[lose] to Limburg a[n] der Lahn- for the restoration of his health.”⁵⁸⁶ When the Franco-Prussian War escalated, things got even more difficult on a general scale. One indication was the decrease in the number of delegates at the party congress, as well as in the number of the members that they

⁵⁸⁰ “von Seiten, wo wir es am wenigsten erwartet hatten” “Protokoll über den zweiten Congreß,” 68.

⁵⁸¹ State suppression was particularly a problem for the electoral campaign where the lack of financial resources and government persecution became serious problems. Sperber, *The Kaiser’s Voters*, 48. For the Socialist Laws, see e.g. Kupfer, “Die organisatorische Entwicklung der Sozialdemokratie.”

⁵⁸² “Maßregelungen welche theils die Behörden, theils die Arbeitgeber ausübten” Eckert, “Der Rechenschaftsbericht der Sozialdemokratischen Arbeiter-Partei für den Stuttgarter Parteitag Juni 1870,” 506.

⁵⁸³ “der großer Noth der Arbeiter” Eckert, 505.

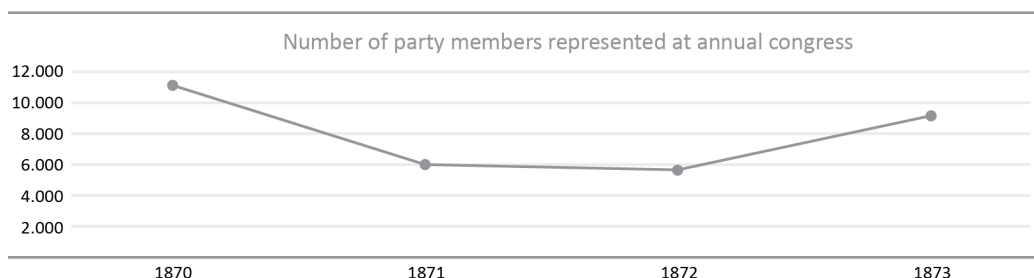
⁵⁸⁴ “der leider (...) zu geringe Bildungsgrad” Eckert, 506.

⁵⁸⁵ “verschiedene Schwindeleien” Eckert, 504.

⁵⁸⁶ “zur Wiederherstellung seiner Gesundheit in die Heimath, - nach Hadamar b. Limburg a/Lahn, - reisen.” Eckert, 504.

represented.⁵⁸⁷ In June 1870, one month before the declaration of war, a total number of 66 delegates attended the gathering, speaking for more than 11,000 members.⁵⁸⁸ In the following year, this number diminished with only 56 delegates travelling to the congress in Dresden. More significantly, they represented only 6,000 members, representing a membership decrease of almost 50%.⁵⁸⁹ This trend continued in 1872 with 5,753 members. Only in 1873 would this downward slope be stopped with a rise to 9,224 members.⁵⁹⁰

Graph 9: SDAP membership numbers



Confronted with this pronounced membership decline, the party needed to develop practices that would allow for continued agitation under the increasingly oppressive circumstances of the German Empire. The most important component of its mobilizing efforts was an emancipatory internal party culture that portrayed the party's leading members as heroic survivors.⁵⁹¹ Their brave behavior became exemplary to all party members. Courage and determination were demonstrated when imprisonment was endured. This experience of hardship was used to criticize the existing political order. Standing literally with their backs against the walls of their prison cells, prominent party members launched a public opinion campaign to set their own heroic narrative against the Imperial accusations that they had betrayed their fatherland. In addition to articles in *Der Volksstaat*, the party representatives published brochures and books about their experiences in court. After his arrest, Wilhelm Bracke wrote a brochure about his experience during the trial of the Braunschweig board.⁵⁹²

⁵⁸⁷ These figures need to be seen as an approximate value of membership numbers, because not all party branches could afford representation at annual congresses.

⁵⁸⁸ "Protokoll über den ersten Congreß," 133–34. In the secondary literature, even 13,000 members are mentioned. Franz Osterroth and Dieter Schuster, "4./7. Juni 1870," *Chronik der deutschen Sozialdemokratie* (Electronic ed.) (Bonn: FES Library, 2001), <http://library.fes.de/fulltext/bibliothek/chronik/>.

⁵⁸⁹ "Protokoll über den zweiten Congreß."

⁵⁹⁰ "Protokoll über den 3. Congreß der social-demokratischen Arbeiter-Partei abgehalten zu Mainz am 7., 8., 9., 10. und 11. September 1872," in *Protokolle der sozialdemokratischen Arbeiterpartei*, reprint (Glashütten im Taunus: D. Auvermann, 1971), 55–56; "Protokoll über den fünften Congress," 80.

⁵⁹¹ See also Welskopp, *Das Banner der Brüderlichkeit*, 335–37; Kupfer, "Die organisatorische Entwicklung der Sozialdemokratie."

⁵⁹² Bracke, *Der Braunschweiger Ausschuß*.

Even more attention was given to the high-treason trial against the parliamentarians Bebel and Liebknecht.⁵⁹³ In particular, Liebknecht used the opportunity to expose a corrupt justice system in a 600-page publication about *Der Hochverraths-Prozeß wider Liebknecht, Bebel, Hepner vor dem Schwurgericht Leipzig* (On the High Treason Trial against Liebknecht, Bebel, Hepner in the Jury Court Leipzig).⁵⁹⁴ In this manifesto, it was argued that the evidence presented in court was irrelevant, if not falsified. Neither Liebknecht nor Bebel had shown any initiative for revolution, based on violent overthrow. To the contrary, their “party is truly essentially a party of peace.”⁵⁹⁵ Well aware of the opportunities of this public forum, Liebknecht explicitly referred to the mobilizing potential of suppression. The brochure finished with the provocative call to the German authorities: “persecute us! Every act of violence gives us greater intensive strength, increases the number of our adherents. This trial is more worth to us than ten years of the most productive propaganda.”⁵⁹⁶

This proud attitude of resistance was shared by the rest of the party’s leading members. After the imprisonment of the Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel board, Bebel wrote to Geib that “by the way, the blow will be withstood.”⁵⁹⁷ Also the arrested Braunschweig officers described their difficult situation in a humoristic tone. Published in *Der Volksstaat*, their violent imprisonment sounded like a sociable trip to the east of the Empire:

Now, that our almost three-day chain jewelry has been taken away after a journey of ca. 136 miles, I send you the conventional greetings of the “board that is prisoner of state” ... Wishing you that you might be spared from the same or similar destiny, the Lötzen-Boyen colony of the Braunschweig Seven gives its regards.⁵⁹⁸

⁵⁹³ William Harvey Maehl, *August Bebel: Shadow Emperor of the German Workers* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1980), 93–95.

⁵⁹⁴ Wilhelm Liebknecht, *Der Leipziger Hochverrathsprozess: ausführlicher Bericht über die Verhandlungen des Schwurgerichts zu Leipzig in dem Prozess gegen Liebknecht, Bebel und Hepner, wegen Vorbereitung zum Hochverrath, vom 11. - 26. März 1872*, ed. Karl-Heinz Leidigkeit (Berlin: Rütten & Loening, 1872).

⁵⁹⁵ “Partei ist ganz wesentlich eine Partei des Friedens” Liebknecht, 550.

⁵⁹⁶ “v e r f o l g t u n s ! Jeder Gewaltakt giebt uns größere intensive Kraft, vermehrt die Zahl unserer Anhänger. Dieser Prozeß ist uns mehr werth als zehn Jahre der fruchtbarsten Propaganda.” Liebknecht, 558.

⁵⁹⁷ “im Übrigen wird sich der Schlag aushalten lassen” ‘August Bebel to August Geib’, 12 September 1870, in Eckert, “Aus der Korrespondenz des Braunschweiger Ausschusses der Sozialdemokratischen Arbeiter-Partei,” 139.

⁵⁹⁸ “Nun, nachdem uns beinahe dreitägiger Kettenschmuck nach einer Reise von ca. 136 Meilen wieder abgenommen, entsende ich Dir den biderben (sic!, AH) Gruß des „staatsgefangenen Ausschusses“ ... Indem wir wünschen, ihr möget vor gleichem oder ähnlichem Schicksal bewahrt bleiben, empfiehlt sich euch bestens die Lötzen-Boyener Kolonie der Braunschweiger Sieben.” Quote is from Centralkommission, “An die Parteigenossen,” 3. See also Wilhelm Blos, *Denkwürdigkeiten eines Sozialdemokraten*, vol. 1 (München: Hirt, 1914), n.p., <http://www.zeno.org/Kulturgeschichte/M/Blos,+Wilhelm+Joseph/Denkwürdigkeiten+eines+Sozialdemokraten/1.+Band/Der+Volksstaat>. The phrase Braunschweig Seven is probably a reference to the Göttinger Sieben (Göttingen Seven), a group of seven professors who protested against the abolition of the constitution in Hannover in the first half of the nineteenth century.

This “*Galgenhumor*”, gallows humor, was a typical response of the SDAP to outside pressure.⁵⁹⁹ The members of the party created an alternative reality. In this rhetorical world, chains transformed into jewelry, and the prosecuted could become fearless heroes. Regardless of the severity of the situation, the leaders of the party managed to maintain their dignity, fighting with their wit and intellect against their imprisonment. Endurance under persecution became a demonstration of manly strength that was meant to provide hope to family and party members who were left behind.⁶⁰⁰ At the party congress in Dresden in 1871, August Bebel optimistically evaluated the situation. Although the organization of the endangered party had stood at the abyss, its community had gained strength.

From all sides the social democratic party was slandered; with all means available it was attempted to suppress it (...)! Today where we are gathered for our party congress, we can speak out with pride and satisfaction that everything our enemies did – is far from weakening our lines, lowering our bravery, it has in contrast contributed to increasing our lines and steeling our bravery!⁶⁰¹

Based on the actual membership numbers shown above, Bebel’s optimism has to be seen as a wild exaggeration. Instead of increasing its ranks, the party membership considerably diminished under military pressure. Even *Der Volksstaat* had to confess to its members that it had lost more than 300 subscribers because of the “precarious circumstances.”⁶⁰² What, Bebel had correctly described, however, was the spirit of the delegates. Those activists who had maintained their membership were now more strongly committed to the organization than ever before. For those attending, this annual gathering provided a much-needed relief, after one piece of bad news after another had sent shock waves through their local branches. The fact that the previously imprisoned Bebel could speak to the delegates was seen as a signal of hope, inflicting new energy into the exhausted organization. Like Kuyper, Bebel directly appealed to the hearts of the delegates. But in contrast to the Dutch party founder, the Social Democratic rhetoric was based on the direct involvement of party members in the SDAP. Procedures had helped the party to survive during hardship. Sharing leadership responsibilities among many activists had made them even more dedicated to the contested organization.

⁵⁹⁹ Quote is from Mehring, *Geschichte der deutschen Sozialdemokratie: Von Lassalles “Offenem Antwortschreiben” bis zum Erfurter Programm, 1863 bis 1891*, 2:377.

⁶⁰⁰ The party community also looked after the family of prosecuted party members. For instance, after the imprisonment of Liebknecht, the board promised him that “for everything else the friends will take care off.” (“für alles Andere werden die Freunde sorgen”) ‘Bracke to Liebknecht’, 29 May 1872, in Eckert, *Aus den Anfängen der Braunschweiger Arbeiterbewegung*, 30.

⁶⁰¹ “Von allen Seiten hat man die sozial-demokratische Partei geschmäht; mit allen Mitteln, die zu Gebote standen, hat man sie zu unterdrücken gesucht (...)! Heute, wo wir hier zu unserem Parteikongresse versammelt sind, dürfen wir mit Stolz und Genugthung es aussprechen: alles, was unsere Gegner gethan haben, - weit entfernt, unsere Reihen zu schwächen, und weit entfernt, unsern Muth sinken zu machen, hat es im Gegentheile dazu beigetragen, unsere Reihen zu vergrößern, unseren Muth zu stählen! ” “Protokoll über den zweiten Congreß,” 5.

⁶⁰² “mißlichen Zeitumstände” Centralkommission, “An die Parteigenossen.”

4. Hybrid Representation in the British NLF

4.1 *Master and Darling of his Town*

While German Social Democrats and Dutch Anti-Revolutionaries adhered to different practices of representation, the British National Liberal Federation established a hybrid model by incorporating features of both the procedural and charismatic model. In the metaphor of the family from the beginning of this chapter, Chamberlain was the charismatic father who spent his work weeks in the capital and saw his family only for the weekends. In the first couple of years, the distance between party leader and headquarters worked well for the NLF. The organization became a powerful political player, and Chamberlain soon secured a government post. After less than two years, the NLF could proudly announce a growth from 46 associations to 101.⁶⁰³ Chamberlain applauded the organization for its public attention: “Now, we cannot complain, I think, that since the formation of this association, our existence has been ignored – on the contrary we have been the subject of innumerable essays and leading articles, and almost countless speeches from persons in every class, and of very varied extent of information.”⁶⁰⁴ But with this sudden rise came considerable obstacles in managing the young organization. Despite its remarkable growth, the NLF soon encountered the tension between procedural and charismatic membership participation. While procedural representation relied on the community of members who could all potentially serve as leaders, charismatic representation elevated one man above ordinary activists. Balancing between the two, however, turned out to be an impossible task at least for the young organization under the ambitious Chamberlain. Caught in its attempt to combine a truly “popular basis” with a single charismatic leader, the NLF’s hybrid form led to the separation from its prominent spokesman.⁶⁰⁵

In the beginning an early split seemed impossible. Chamberlain was the ideal leader for this new type of political organization. As the prominent representative of Radical Liberalism, he shared many features with the paternalistic Abraham Kuyper who ruled the Anti-Revolutionary Party in the Netherlands. Both men were known for their emotional political rhetoric, commanding immediate public attention.⁶⁰⁶ Especially in the NLF stronghold

⁶⁰³ National Liberal Federation, “First Annual Report, Presented at a Meeting of the Council Held in Leeds on Wednesday, January 22nd, 1879” (The “Journal” Printing Offices, 1879), 10, Proceeding of the Council of National Liberal Association, Special Collections, University of Bristol.

⁶⁰⁴ National Liberal Federation, 21.

⁶⁰⁵ “Proceedings,” 7.

⁶⁰⁶ Abraham Kuyper’s rhetoric has been compared to that of the British politician William Gladstone. Hoekstra, “De kracht van het gesproken woord”; Velde, *Stijlen van leiderschap*, 60. For a comparison between Chamberlain and the popular politician Gladstone, see Graham D. Goodland, “Gladstone and His Rivals: Popular Liberal Perceptions of the Party Leadership in the Political Crisis of 1885-1886,” in *Currents of Radicalism: Popular Radicalism, Organised Labour and Party Politics in Britain, 1850-1914*, ed. Eugenio F. Biagini and Alastair J. Reid (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 134–83. For Chamberlain’s

Birmingham, Chamberlain connected his ordinary audience with the high politics of parliament in a single speech. An attentive observer of the public and private man, the young Beatrice Potter described the talented orator's popularity among the inhabitants of the city.⁶⁰⁷

Chamberlain, the master and the darling of his town is received with deafening shouts. The Birmingham citizen (unless he belongs to the despised and down trodden minority) adores "Our Joe", for has he not raised Birmingham to the proud position of one of the great political centres of the universe!⁶⁰⁸

In more private circumstances, Chamberlain evoked respect among his Birmingham followers as well. In the evening of the day of the speech, local NLF representatives assembled for dinner at the Chamberlain estate. While the meal was served "[t]he Chief sat silent" and "[h]is faithful followers talked amongst themselves on local matters (...) and looked at him from time to time with respectful admiration."⁶⁰⁹ Chamberlain's closest circle of friends and family had to accept his "insistence on subordination," as his most comprehensive biographer Peter Marsh wrote.⁶¹⁰ Chamberlain's friend Jesse Collings declared his devotion to the party leader's success when he wrote that "[t]here is only one thing I care about that is what you name Chamberlains electors. If I thought I could secure a single vote or give reasons why he ought to have support I would gladly do what I am asked."⁶¹¹ As he assured in this letter, Collings was determined to adjust his political agitation to the advantage of Chamberlain's electoral campaign. This subordination of close supporters also characterized Kuyper who expected similar devotion from those around him.

What made Chamberlain's experience different from Kuyper's is that the British politician failed to maintain the powerful position of his Dutch counterpart in his party organization. Ironically, it was the growing success of the NLF that triggered the diminishing influence of the party leader. In its early years, Chamberlain had controlled the organization with a strong Birmingham delegation. Chamberlain as the parliamentary representative of Birmingham was elected as the first president and his allies gained important offices, too. Most importantly, the responsibilities of the influential Francis Schnadhorst, secretary of the

political style, see also Biagini, *British Democracy and Irish Nationalism*, chap. 5. Chamberlain's biographer Judd emphasizes his "aggressive personality" Judd, *Radical Joe*, 5.

⁶⁰⁷ Potter later married Sidney Webb and became the famous Labour activist Beatrice Webb. She was not only in close contact with the Chamberlain's children, but also had a romantic liaison with their father. Marsh, *Joseph Chamberlain*, 227–32. For a study of women and political power in Britain, see Hanneke Hoekstra, *De dictatuur van de petticoat: vrouwen en macht in de Britse politiek 1900-1940* (Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek, 2011).

⁶⁰⁸ Beatrice Webb, "Beatrice Webb's Typescript Diary," February 15, 1869, 363, LSE Digital Library, <http://archives.lse.ac.uk/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=PASSFIELD%2F1>.

⁶⁰⁹ Webb, 366.

⁶¹⁰ Marsh, *Joseph Chamberlain*, 199.

⁶¹¹ "Jesse Collings to Schnadhorst," August 2, 1883, Manuscript papers relating to Francis Schnadhorst and the organisation of the Liberal Party, Special Collections University of Bristol.

Birmingham Liberal Association, were extended to the NLF. In addition, J.S. Wright, president of the Birmingham Liberal Association, was the first treasurer. The future mayor of Birmingham, Jesse Collings was elected as Honorary Secretary. William Harris, Birmingham vice-president, became the chairman of the general committee.⁶¹² Despite its strong Birmingham connection, the NLF's political campaign depended on the support of Liberals in other constituencies. To provide these supporters with an incentive and avoid the impression of an unbalanced leadership, the organization established a leadership principle that was similar to the multiple centers of power within the SDAP. While there is no indication of a direct exchange between the two organizations, they both had roots in the highly formalized culture of meetings, gatherings and conventions of the two countries.⁶¹³ The leaders of the SDAP coordinated their actions with different local branches that were in charge of board and control commission, not to speak of the independently minded editors of *Der Volksstaat*. In the NLF, the Birmingham majority in the party's leadership was balanced by the appointment of a growing number of vice-presidents who represented the interests of influential local associations like Newcastle-on-Tyne or Liverpool. Even the Birmingham competitors, Manchester and Leeds, were officially recognized with their delegates Leake and Clarke becoming vice-presidents. In a similar way, the large council meetings took place at locations other than Birmingham.

Although publicly committed to the popular model of his organization, Chamberlain opposed this procedural form of representation and discreetly tried to solidify the central position of Birmingham representatives. This went so far that, four years after foundation, he attempted to drive the Manchester group with their "less robust Liberalism" out of the NLF.⁶¹⁴ Their absence from the annual meeting was to be justified to the other delegates by citing "the pressure of their local work and their active connection with local organizations."⁶¹⁵ Also the lower classes of ordinary people, that Chamberlain invoked so frequently, had little influence in the NLF leadership that was dominated by the Liberal elite of Birmingham. Formally, the organization was, of course, based on "popular" representation, but NLF founders preferred to keep things in their own hands. As the historian James Owen has shown, the popular character of the NLF could even mean a limitation of the number of working-class delegates at annual meetings. The NLF rejected associations with strong labor connections, because they did not

⁶¹² Watson, *The National Liberal Federation*, 21; "Proceedings," 30.

⁶¹³ Balfour suggests that Chamberlain had read Marx' Communist Manifesto, but there was a longer tradition of assemblies in both countries that emerged in close connection to parliamentary procedures. Balfour, *Britain and Joseph Chamberlain*, 75. Parssinen, "Association, Convention and Anti-Parliament"; Welskopp, *Das Banner der Brüderlichkeit*; Sperber, *Rhineland Radicals*; Pracht, *Parlamentarismus und deutsche Sozialdemokratie*; van Rijn, *De eeuw van het debat*.

⁶¹⁴ "Joseph Chamberlain to Schnadhorst," April 5, 1883, Manuscript papers relating to Francis Schnadhorst and the organisation of the Liberal Party, Special Collections, University of Bristol.

⁶¹⁵ "Joseph Chamberlain to Schnadhorst." Already in 1877, Chamberlain tried to prevent the attendance of delegates from Liberal strongholds like Manchester and Leeds, arguing they would threaten the unity of the Federation. Owen, *Labour and the Caucus*, 94 Footnote 3; Hanham, *Elections and Party Management*, 1978, chap. 7.

adhere to the middle-class-dominated Birmingham organizational structure that served as a compulsory model.⁶¹⁶

Already in the first years after the inaugural assembly, it became apparent that this approach was not sustainable. Chamberlain could not impede the influence of other local associations who used NLF's procedures to diversify its leadership. The national assemblies were hosted not only by Birmingham, but also other cities used the opportunity to strengthen their position within the organization. After gathering in Leeds (1879) and Darlington (1880), the NLF returned back to Birmingham for its third meeting (1881), but then continued to pay attention to its periphery in Liverpool (1881), Ashton-under-Lyne (1882), Bristol (1883), Stoke-on-Trent (1884) and Bradford (1885). More importantly, was the change in the leading offices of the organization. Whereas most working-class representatives had to wait much longer for their inclusion into the higher ranks, more privileged members of Liberal constituencies soon gained influence. The third and fourth NLF presidents were recruited from outside of Chamberlain's sphere of influence: in 1881, Henry Fell Pease, the vice-president of the Liberal Association in Darlington, was elected as president.⁶¹⁷ He was followed in 1883 by James Kitson, who was the president of the Leeds Association.⁶¹⁸

This shifting power balance was further manifested by Chamberlain's increasing abstention from party business. After the electoral victory in 1880, he had successfully negotiated for a position as President of the Board of Trade in the Gladstone administration. His satisfaction with government office, however, was quickly clouded by increased frustration. As a junior cabinet member, Chamberlain was expected to follow the lead of the more experienced ministers, reducing the chances for his populist campaign for his Radical version of Liberalism.⁶¹⁹ Chamberlain maintained his aggressively populist political rhetoric, but government duties increasingly required his presence in London. This inevitably left more room to others to take care of the daily business of the NLF. Often Chamberlain's private secretary William Woodings had to inquire about party business with Secretary Francis Schnadhorst. This gave Schnadhorst the opportunity to become more independent in his office.⁶²⁰ As an NLF report put it in 1885:

⁶¹⁶ Owen, *Labour and the Caucus*, 94–95; Griffiths, "The Caucus and the Liberal Party."

⁶¹⁷ National Liberal Federation, "Fourth Annual Report, Meeting of the Council, Held in Liverpool" (The "Journal" Printing Offices, 1881), Proceedings of the Council of National Liberal Association, Special Collections, University of Bristol.

⁶¹⁸ National Liberal Federation, "Sixth Annual Report Presented at a Meeting of the Council Held in Bristol" (The "Journal" Printing Offices, 1884), Proceedings of the Council of the National Liberal Federation, Special Collections, University of Bristol.

⁶¹⁹ Michael Barker, *Gladstone and Radicalism: The Reconstruction of Liberal Policy in Britain, 1885-94* (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1975), 1–4.

⁶²⁰ McGill, "Francis Schnadhorst," 38–39.

the demands upon Mr. Schnadhorst, the secretary of the Federation, have been incessant and severe; and his colleagues in the management cannot too strongly express their sense of the manner in which he has met the numerous claims upon him, or of the value of his services alike to the Federation and the Liberal cause throughout the country.⁶²¹

After this praise, it was explained that Schnadhorst's services were of such a "special and urgent importance" that the secretary had to abstain from a parliamentary career of his own, even though several associations had inquired about a possible candidacy.⁶²² For Schnadhorst, this abstention was more difficult than he admitted to the public, but in retrospect it was a wise choice. This becomes especially apparent if we consider Chamberlain's diminishing role in the organization. Already in 1881, he told Schnadhorst that political office demanded distance from his role in the NLF: "[i]f our meeting is held about that time I should not like to accept another engagement elsewhere. It does not do for a Cabinet Minister to have too many speeches to make at a time when perhaps he may find it very awkward to know what to say."⁶²³ The overworked cabinet member left the final decision on party matters to Schnadhorst, telling the secretary "[p]ersonally I have no objection to the Annual Meeting being fixed for October."⁶²⁴ Later Chamberlain assigned the communication about one of the NLF's large conferences completely to the secretary, claiming that the diplomatic Schnadhorst would be more successful in convincing the Liberal Party's great men to speak at a demonstration in Birmingham.⁶²⁵ Schnadhorst arranged the event. Probably the location was changed to Leeds where John Bright and John Morley attended the conference on parliamentary reform in October 1883.⁶²⁶

4.2 The Great Party Split

Chamberlain's diminishing influence in the NLF was further aggravated by his controversial political course. In the mid-1880s, Chamberlain was increasingly occupied by his escalating conflict with Prime Minister William Gladstone. Gladstone was a viable and dangerous opponent of the younger politician. The popular Prime Minister was a skilled statesman; even

⁶²¹ National Liberal Federation, "Eighth Annual Report Presented at a Meeting of the Council Held in Bradford" (The "Journal" Printing Offices, 1885), 26, Proceedings of the Council of the National Liberal Association, Special Collections, University of Bristol.

⁶²² National Liberal Federation, 27.

⁶²³ "Joseph Chamberlain to Schnadhorst," May 8, 1881, Manuscript papers relating to Francis Schnadhorst and the organisation of the Liberal Party, Special Collections, University of Bristol.

⁶²⁴ "Joseph Chamberlain to Schnadhorst."

⁶²⁵ "Joseph Chamberlain to Schnadhorst," September 4, 1883, Manuscript papers relating to Francis Schnadhorst and the organisation of the Liberal Party, Special Collections, University of Bristol.

⁶²⁶ "Conference on Parliamentary Reform at Leeds" (The "Journal" Printing Offices, 1883), Proceedings Relating to Francis Schnadhorst and the Organisation of the Liberal Party, Special Collections, University of Bristol.

more important he had acquired a reputation for moral authority in the Liberal community.⁶²⁷ Chamberlain underestimated the support and stamina of Gladstone, because he saw himself as the future leader of the Liberal Party, impatiently awaiting Gladstone's retirement. To his friends, the ambitious politician wrote that: "Mr. Gladstone himself has positively, although privately, announced his intention of retiring at the end of the present Session."⁶²⁸ Careful not to reveal his own ambitions, he argued, more broadly, that it was time to take action: "the Radical Members of the Government will no longer be able to shield themselves (...), but must face their responsibility themselves."⁶²⁹ In order to prepare the renewal of the Liberal Party, Chamberlain asked his allies to write a number of articles in the *Fortnightly Review*, developing a new Radical program in 1883 and 1884. When a year later, Gladstone decided to call for new elections, Chamberlain used these articles to announce his unofficial program in a number of speeches. Although the Radical politician became more conciliatory towards the Gladstone administration before polling started in November 1885, the public punished the entire parliamentary Liberal Party for its internal division.⁶³⁰ The announcement of the electoral result was more than "something of a disappointment for the Liberal Party," as the great chronicler of the NLF Watson put it euphemistically.⁶³¹ Liberal candidates had lost support in all parts of the country. Only for a fortunate few, including Chamberlain, did the outcome turn out to be favorable.⁶³² In parliament, however, the Liberal government was left with a small majority instead. For Gladstone this was reason enough to announce that he intended to remain Prime Minister to help navigate his party through the crisis.

This was the moment when Chamberlain started to respond with open opposition to Gladstone's administration. Focusing on the topic of Home Rule in Ireland, he escalated the conflict in a policy area where compromise became difficult because of intense moral connotations. Whereas Chamberlain's main goal was social reform in the entire United Kingdom, Gladstone strongly advocated independent Irish legislation, including an autonomous parliament.⁶³³ In this tense situation, Chamberlain hoped for the support of the NLF. The organization quickly issued a circular to local associations, calling for "the most serious

⁶²⁷ Goodland, "Gladstone and His Rivals."

⁶²⁸ "Joseph Chamberlain to Schnadhorst," May 21, 1885, Manuscript papers relating to Francis Schnadhorst and the organisation of the Liberal Party, Special Collections, University of Bristol.

⁶²⁹ "Joseph Chamberlain to Schnadhorst."

⁶³⁰ C. H. D. Howard, "Joseph Chamberlain and the 'Unauthorized Programme,'" *The English Historical Review* LXV, no. CCLVII (1950): 477–91.

⁶³¹ Watson, *The National Liberal Federation*, 54.

⁶³² Recent research even suggests that Chamberlain and his Unauthorised Program decisively influenced the public discourse during the electoral campaign, especially in regard to rural areas. Luke Blaxill, "Joseph Chamberlain and the Third Reform Act: A Reassessment of the 'Unauthorized Programme' of 1885," *Journal of British Studies* 54, no. 01 (January 2015): 88–117.

⁶³³ Biagini, *British Democracy and Irish Nationalism*, 217–74. For a more detailed account of the division in 1886 between Chamberlain and Gladstone, see Marsh, *Joseph Chamberlain*, 214–54; Jenkins, *The Liberal Ascendancy*, 203–16; Barker, *Gladstone and Radicalism*, 11–53.

consideration to the Ministerial plans.”⁶³⁴ The procedural aspect of the NLF’s organizational model was highlighted when the officers affirmed that

It is only by such action, and the expression of opinion consequent upon it, that the judgement of the Liberal party can be ascertained in a manner which will entitle it to the consideration of the Government and of Parliament; and in the highest interests of both, and of the country at large, it is necessary that this judgement should be clear, and should not be delayed.⁶³⁵

The circular asked each association to vote on the matter of Home Rule in a local assembly, determining the NLF’s position on the contested issue. Chamberlain responded to this suggestion by organizing a meeting in Birmingham. It was no surprise that the audience of his political base provided their popular representative with a comfortable majority for his opposition to the Gladstone policy.⁶³⁶

But Chamberlain had lost his position as the powerful leader who had once controlled the inaugural conference to his advantage. In his absence, the NLF had grown independent, and its new leadership established contact with Gladstone through Secretary Schnadhorst.⁶³⁷ Because of the severity of the situation, it was decided to summon a meeting of the large representative body of the NLF to coordinate further action. This general council was not held in Birmingham but confined to neutral territory in the Westminster Palace Hotel in London on the May 5th. The “number of delegates attending was unprecedented,” making it difficult for Chamberlain to control the outcome of the event.⁶³⁸ In front of this large audience, the current president of the NLF, James Kitson, directly blamed Chamberlain for his double strategy. Kitson’s argument was that although Chamberlain had promised “confidence in Gladstone,” his demand for the “retention of Irish representatives at Westminster” was a clear betrayal of the Prime Minister’s policy on Home Rule.⁶³⁹ This speech impressed the delegates who voted in favor of “the principle of self-government (...) of the Prime Minister.”⁶⁴⁰ The “great party split” was formalized with the general council quickly confirming its new political allegiance by sending a copy to Gladstone.⁶⁴¹

After their defeat, Chamberlain’s supporters resigned from their offices. The response of the NLF was polite, and they expressed their “hope that the time is not far distant when they

⁶³⁴ National Liberal Federation, “Ninth Annual Report Presented at a Meeting of the Council Held at Leeds” (The “Journal” Printing Offices, 1886), 13, Proceedings of the Council of the National Liberal Federation, Special Collections, University of Bristol.

⁶³⁵ National Liberal Federation, 13.

⁶³⁶ Marsh, *Joseph Chamberlain*, 242–43.

⁶³⁷ For Gladstone’s relationship with Schnadhorst, see Barker, *Gladstone and Radicalism*, 108–9.

⁶³⁸ Watson, *The National Liberal Federation*, 55.

⁶³⁹ National Liberal Federation, “Ninth Annual Report,” 15.

⁶⁴⁰ National Liberal Federation, 15.

⁶⁴¹ Watson, *The National Liberal Federation*, 59.

will again be willing to co-operate in promoting the work of the National Liberal Federation.”⁶⁴² This invitation was not extended to Chamberlain, whose return was out of the question:

The Committee cannot record this fact without expressing their sense of the distinguished services rendered by Mr. Chamberlain in the formation of the Federation, and during the subsequent eight years of its existence; and their great regret that he should have felt it necessary to terminate his connection with it.⁶⁴³

This defeat spurred Chamberlain on to the creation of a new organization. Initially, there was little support for his version of Radical Unionism, forcing him to cooperate with his opponents in the Conservative Party.⁶⁴⁴ While Chamberlain would eventually defeat Gladstone’s Home Rule bill, the former hero of Radical Liberalism had become an outcast in his political community. For his new organization, he had to rely on family members and friends to fill the offices.⁶⁴⁵ Even Chamberlain’s private secretary William Woodings left his former master to accept a position as special secretary responsible for voter registration in the NLF.⁶⁴⁶ Even more painful for Chamberlain was probably the formal integration of the NLF into the parliamentary Liberal Party. Not only did more than seventy MPs and fifty new associations join the NLF after his exit.⁶⁴⁷ In addition, the organization moved its offices to London next to its former organizational competitor the Liberal Central Association (LCA).⁶⁴⁸ Schnadhorst was appointed to a double role as secretary of both organizations, merging NLF and LCA for a joint electoral campaign. His responsibilities included administrative tasks, but also finances and the selection of candidates of the Liberal Party.⁶⁴⁹ The secretary “became practically the official representative of the Federation; the referee to whom all the difficulties and doubts of Liberal constituencies were submitted.”⁶⁵⁰ Until his decreasing health forced him to resign in 1893, the former Chamberlain supporter remained in the power center of the Liberal Party.⁶⁵¹

⁶⁴² National Liberal Federation, “Ninth Annual Report,” 16.

⁶⁴³ National Liberal Federation, 16.

⁶⁴⁴ See for instance, Birmingham where Conservatives and Liberal Unionists formed an alliance that left the city as a Conservative stronghold after 1890 Christopher Green, “Birmingham’s Politics, 1873-1891: The Local Basis of Change,” *Midland History* 2, no. 2 (January 1, 1973): 84–98.

⁶⁴⁵ Marsh, *Joseph Chamberlain*, 251.

⁶⁴⁶ McGill, “Francis Schnadhorst.”

⁶⁴⁷ National Liberal Federation, “Ninth Annual Report,” 17.

⁶⁴⁸ Hanham, *Elections and Party Management*, 1978, 349–56. Three years earlier, Chamberlain had called the LCA the organization of “enfeebled Whigs”, “Joseph Chamberlain to Schnadhorst,” October 8, 1883, Manuscript papers relating to Francis Schnadhorst and the organisation of the Liberal Party, Special Collections, University of Bristol.

⁶⁴⁹ McGill, “Francis Schnadhorst.”

⁶⁵⁰ Watson, *The National Liberal Federation*, 60.

⁶⁵¹ McGill, “Francis Schnadhorst,” 38–39.

5. Three Models of Party Organization

The three nineteenth-century party organizations discussed in this chapter offer two lessons. The first is about the diversity of organizational solutions to the challenge of establishing a functioning mass membership organization. The second demonstrates the practical consequences of these solutions. In the Netherlands, the Anti-Revolutionary Party achieved the representation of its constituency through the charismatic organizational model that focused on the omnipresent political leader Abraham Kuyper. The success of the ARP did not depend on the influence of active members in party procedures, but the mobilization of the broad community of Orthodox Protestant farmers, ministers and workers. Despite the occasional appearance of internal opposition within the party organization, for instance by the electoral organization of Marnix, Kuyper succeeded in disciplining the ARP and constituting his position as party leader for the rest of the century.⁶⁵² This strong basis allowed the Protestant minister to transform a loosely organized social movement of dissatisfied Orthodox Protestants into an effective political organization whose popular appeal made him Prime Minister at the beginning of the twentieth century.

For the German Social Democratic Workers' Party, this sort of massive mobilization was unattainable in the early years. Although the working classes were the primary object of the party ideology, most workers did not respond enthusiastically to mobilizing attempts, either deliberately abstaining from party membership or not even knowing about the organization. In accord with its commitment to membership participation, the SDAP built a procedural model of organization that focused on empowering ordinary members within its own organization. This turned out to be a valuable strategy, because it created a considerable number of committed and qualified party members. When state persecution became especially grave, the arrested Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel board could be replaced with the provisional board of the party branch in Dresden. In the following years oppression strengthened the identity and bond among party members, alleviating internal conflict in the face of a powerful and dangerous adversary. The leadership of the party understood this mechanism and the need to include their members into its procedures, soon returning to its procedural participation. When the board moved to Leipzig, it was again local members who chose the officers of the leadership of the party. At the party congress in 1871, the party returned to its original procedures and the delegates selected Hamburg as the location of the board, leaving it to local members to determine who exactly would fulfil the individual posts of the leadership.

The study of these two party organizations provides a new perspective for understanding why Joseph Chamberlain failed to maintain control of the NLF. The establishment of a national membership organization required drastic decisions from party

⁶⁵² Only when Kuyper became prime minister his leadership could be actively challenged by other Anti-Revolutionary leaders. Roel Kuiper, "Uit het dal omhoog," in *De Antirevolutionaire Partij, 1829-1980*, ed. G. Harinck, Roel Kuiper, and Peter Bak (Hilversum: Verloren, 2001), 91–112.

leaders. The Dutch party leader Kuyper ensured the coherence of ARP agitation by becoming the omnipresent leader of the party. The founders of the SDAP were similarly adept: they followed the command of their members, accepting that this inevitably meant limiting their own influence. Chamberlain, however, the man who was so popular for the content of his politics, was not willing to accept such extreme measures in his political organization. He erected a hybrid organization relying both on his charismatic leadership and the procedural inclusion of political activists. This strategy worked as long as the majority of active members agreed with the political course chosen by Chamberlain. Only when Chamberlain started to boldly diverge from the preferences of his followers on the contested issue of Home Rule did the representatives of his organization rebel against their former president. While Chamberlain tried to conduct his charismatic politics like the paternalistic Kuyper, the procedural commitment of his organization forced the controversial politician to withdraw from the NLF in 1886. In the light of Chamberlain's decisive role in establishing the organization, this split was a remarkable process. But it did not mean the end of the party organization of the NLF. Rather it serves, like the examples of the charismatic and the procedural practices in ARP and SDAP, as a reminder of the inherent difficulties of implementing representation.

