

Willi Dickhut

That's How It Was...



**Factual Report of a Worker
from Solingen, 1926 to 1948**

Verlag Neuer Weg

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December 2021

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So war's damals

Tatsachenbericht eines Solinger Arbeiters

1926–1948

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Preface

Time and again I am asked what it was like in those days: back in the 1920s, in the days under the regime of the occupation forces – in those long past years... Yes, what was it like?

To the best of my knowledge and belief I present the following factual report, supported by many documents. It is a piece of history written from the standpoint of historical materialism. I personally experienced the historical events and played an active and partly leading role in them. My personal fate was closely connected with the objective occurrences. That has to be taken into account. As a functionary of the working-class movement in more than 50 years of struggle, I would like to convey my experience in the theory and practice of the class struggle to the youth, as far as I am able to do so.

The book deals with three periods: the Weimar Republic, the fascist dictatorship, and the time from occupation to the Adenauer era. The numerous illustrations serve to facilitate understanding of those periods.

My sincere thanks to all friends who helped me publish the book.

Solingen

November 1979

Willi Dickhut

Foreword to the first foreign-language edition

It is very good that for the first time this book now can be made available to an international audience in English. It was originally published in Germany in 1979 under the German title, *So war's damals....* Modest as he was his whole life through, Willi Dickhut subtitled his book, "Factual Report of a Worker from Solingen, 1926–1948."

Willi Dickhut was a selfless and courageous revolutionary, an indomitable resistance fighter against Hitlerite fascism, a working-class leader, an independently thinking and acting communist cadre owing to the high level of his mastery of the dialectical method, and a leading Marxist-Leninist worker-theoretician.

This document provides a unique insight into the first decades of the revolutionary life of a man, who – often underestimated – in his later years was co-founder of the Marxist-Leninist Party of Germany, MLPD.

It deals with three periods.

- I. The Weimar Republic and the struggle of the Communist Party of Germany (KPD)
- II. The illegal resistance during the fascist dictatorship
- III. Reconstruction following World War II under pressure from the Western occupying powers

Willi Dickhut always writes in a succinct, concrete and understandable manner. Everything described in the book is connected with his path in life and in many cases was shaped or determined by him. The book features many original documents.

It contains many messages that were and are of greatest use to the revolutionaries and especially the youth in Germany. Though one must allow, of course, for historical and national peculiarities, this book also will reward readers internationally. It is a handbook for everyday revolutionary work.

It includes manifold critical and self-critical discussions and lessons, only a few of which I cite as examples:

- On revolutionary work in enterprises and trade unions

- First personal experience with the emergence of a new bureaucracy in the then still socialist Soviet Union
- Appraisal of sectarian mistakes of the revolutionary KPD, such as the “social-fascism theory”
- The importance of always independently maintaining a clear orientation through creative theoretical work even under the most difficult conditions, as under Hitlerite fascism
- Indomitability under the worst conditions of fascist dictatorship, and evaluation of the experience of how revolutionary work can be carried out even in the fascist concentration camps
- On the significance of and struggle for cooperation across party lines in local politics in the postwar era
- The importance of penetrating deeply into Marxism-Leninism with the help of the dialectical method. He arrives at this conclusion based on the bitter experience that bourgeois ideology and the petty-bourgeois mode of thinking find ingress into the working-class movement if Marxism-Leninism is adopted merely in a dogmatic and formal way.
- On the significance of revolutionary party building and the social consequences of the anticommunism of the Adenauer era

Soon the second factual report by Willi Dickhut covering the period from 1949 onwards will be published in English.

When Willi Dickhut passed away in 1992 at the age of 88, he long since numbered among the “indispensable ones,” about whom Bertolt Brecht said:

“Those who are weak do not fight.

Those who are stronger might fight for an hour.

Those who are stronger still might fight for many years.

The strongest fight their whole life.

They are the indispensable ones.”

Gabi Fechtner

MLPD Party Chairwoman, December 2021



The Weimar Republic and the Struggle of the KPD

KOMMUNISTISCHE PARTEI DEUTSCHLANDS



PROLETARIER ALLER LÄNDER VEREINIGT EUCH!

Membership book of the KPD in the 1920s

The Factory, a Battlefield of Class Struggle

“Every factory must be our stronghold!” (Lenin)

It was a Sunday afternoon in the autumn of the year 1925. It was a day like any other day, but it proved to be decisive for my entire life.

In the narrow two-room flat of my cousin Anna I talked with her husband about things that had to do with the factory. Richard and I were employed at the same Solingen plant.

There was a knock at the door and an older worker came in.

“A good afternoon to all of you,” he greeted us.

“Hello, Hein,” Richard said and went to get a small red booklet from a drawer.

Without saying another word, the man glued a couple of stamps into the red booklet, collected money and left. Obviously, he was so reserved because of my presence.

I picked up the red booklet. On the cover there was a drawing of the globe in chains. A worker smashed the chains with a heavy hammer. Above, it said: COMMUNIST PARTY OF GERMANY, and below: WORKERS OF THE WORLD, UNITE!

This made me thoughtful: Workers, unite! Yes, why am I not a member of the Communist Party?

At that time I was 21 years old and therefore had the right to vote. The Reich presidential election had taken place in April 1925. All bourgeois parties, from the reactionary to the liberal wing, had supported Hindenburg’s candidacy. Hindenburg was reactionary to the bone. As field marshal general in World War I, in the midst of the most horrible slaughter and destruction he is reported to have said about himself:

“War is good for me, like a cure at a spa!”

I hated all warmongers, my only brother having died on the last day of the war in a military hospital. He had been drafted together with the last recruits, the 18-year-olds, and died, weakened by years of hunger, from the results of the brutal drill. I detested all those hard-hearted brass hats, the likes of Hindenburg, Ludendorff, Tirpitz and others.

The KPD had chosen Ernst Thälmann as opposition candidate for the presidential election. The party had not raised illusions about the elections among the masses, but called on them in its appeal of 11 April:

Workers, you who are exploited!

Not *together with* the bourgeoisie – only in struggle *against* its black-red-gold agents will you be able to prevent greater exploitation and oppression, prevent being sacrificed as cannon fodder for new imperialist wars.

Only the revolutionary proletariat, who smashed the monarchy in November of 1918, who fought for a socialist republic and were bloodily suppressed by Ebert and Hindenburg, who beat back the Kapp *Putsch*, who in 1923 marched up to drive away the fascists, who demonstrated in 1924 against the “German Days” promoting the monarchy – only the revolutionary proletariat, united as a class, led by the Communist Party, under the red flag, can wage the battle against the reactionary bourgeoisie....

Organize mass struggle against the bourgeois dictators, against Hindenburg and Marx! [This man Marx was then a leading politician of the Center Party and Chancellor of the Reich – W. D.]

Take to the streets for mass demonstrations against the monarchist reaction, against its pacemakers, the black-red-gold reactionaries!

For the red class front of the proletariat!

For the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship!

Not election of the president of the bourgeoisie, but demonstration on behalf of the class struggle, a commitment to the proletarian revolution – let that be the vote

on 26 April for Ernst Thälmann!



Ernst Thälmann

Ernst Thälmann

These arguments had convinced me, and I voted for Ernst Thälmann. But I was not a communist yet.

I had been organized in the German Metal Workers' Union since January 1921. But is this enough? By my joining a union, my class consciousness had been awakened, but it was developed only weakly by the transition from unorganized worker to organized union member. Sure, as an apprentice I had participated in the general strike against the Kapp Putsch in 1920. But this had been motivated more by curiosity than by class consciousness.

The year 1923, the climax of the galloping inflation – at year's end, one goldmark was worth a trillion marks as paper money – had contributed substantially to the development of my class consciousness. As the exchange rate of the mark collapsed by the hour, wages were paid on a daily basis. After work, the workers stormed the stores to turn their money into goods as fast as possible. The real wages sank at an accelerated pace, while the big capitalist racketeers and speculators made gigantic profits by selling their material assets. The masses were starving, and there was permanent unrest. Large sections of the working people were seized by a revolutionary, militant spirit, especially in Central Germany and Hamburg. All this made a strong impression on me.

Then in early 1924, when the 48-hour week was to be rigorously dismantled and working time extended to 57½ hours per week, the workers – in Solingen too – went on strike to defend the eight-hour working day. In Solingen, as many as 20,000 workers participated in the walkout. At that time I was employed at the Kampschulte company, whose workforce took an active part in the struggle, which dragged on for five to six weeks.

At the request of the KPD group in the Solingen city council, the municipal authorities set up soup kitchens to supply hot soup to the strikers, for they received no strike pay. This weeks-long, bitterly fought strike and the disciplinary action taken by the management – I

was dismissed without notice – revealed to me my class situation and strengthened my class consciousness. I recognized the necessity of a revolutionary way out, especially when the state intervened in the struggle, determined a weekly working-time of 56 hours by arbitration verdict, and so put an end to the strike.

I was one of the many workers who needed only a little impetus from outside to join the revolutionary working-class party, the KPD. This impetus came on that memorable day in the fall of 1925.

Richard was no agitator; he was a quiet worker, a communist rather by instinct. Until that day, I had not even known that he was a KPD member.

Richard was quietly watching me as I held his membership book in my hands, thinking.

“Are your brothers members too?” I asked him.

“Arthur is, but not Waldemar!”

“And why is Waldemar not a member?”

“He has different interests!”

Richard’s whole family lived in one of the *Höfe*, quite frequent in Solingen. Old hamlets, they were originally self-contained units. But as the city had expanded, they became incorporated in the new residential neighborhoods. Nevertheless, they still had preserved a certain character peculiar to the *Bergisches Land*, the Country of Berg.

Richard’s brother Arthur lived two houses down the street. He was married to a strict Catholic. His wife, encouraged by the local priest, gave him a hard time because of his political outlook. She made life hell for Arthur. One year later he killed himself...

Waldemar, Richard’s second brother, was one year older than me. He worked in another factory. For what reason had he not become a communist, too? What prevented him?

I put the red booklet back on the table and made a far-reaching decision: I will become a member of the Communist Party.

But was I to come empty-handed? No! I made up my mind to win Waldemar for the KPD.

I sought Wally's friendship, and we went on weekend hikes, at first the two of us, later on together with the *Naturfreunde*.

The Tourist Club "Friends of Nature," *Naturfreunde*, was a workers' sports organization, like the workmen's swimming club, or the workmen's outdoor sports club and others, and was politically influenced by Social Democrats and communists. But this caused some friction. After a while, two wings took shape, reflecting the different attitudes towards the class struggle: a reformist wing and a revolutionary wing. As a result there were many debates on fundamental questions – until the tourist club's district leadership expelled the Solingen branch and other Bergisches Land groups from the *Naturfreunde* national association.

The overwhelming majority of the tourist club's Solingen members decided in favor of communist politics. A small number, mostly SPD members, established a separate Tourist Club "Friends of Nature," called the "Pfaffenbergers" because they had built their *Naturfreunde* house on the slopes of the Wupper hills near the hamlet Pfaffenberg. Those *Naturfreunde* influenced by the communists built a larger club house near the "Theegarten" and so were called the "Theegarteners." Reunification never took place, not even after World War II.

Wally and I joined the "Theegarten" group. During our walking tours there were many political discussions – about the overall situation, about municipal politics, about political work in the factory and union. The KPD comrades included Wally and me in their conversations. We asked them many questions, which they patiently answered. In this way we gained a political overview, which also aroused Wally's interest and caused me to "work" on him more intensely. A couple of months later the time had come.

The 7th of March 1926 became the most important day of my life. Wally and I went to the city center, to Hohe Gasse, where the party office was located.

"We should go in and ask for information about joining," I said encouragingly.

We went inside. In the outer room there was a counter blocking off further access. The secretary for the subdistrict looked up and asked what we wanted.

“We would like to have information about joining the party,” I said. “We want to become members, you know.”

Perhaps this last point went a little further than intended, but the time had come to go ahead and do it.

The secretary gave us two admission forms and said:

“I suggest that you fill them in right now. Can you give me the names of two comrades who can vouch for you?”

In those days there was no candidacy period at the end of which a decision is reached on someone’s membership; instead, two long-standing members had to vouch for an applicant. Since we came to know many party members during our walking tours, it was not difficult for us to give him the names of some reliable comrades. I started filling in my admission form. After hesitating a little, Wally did the same.

The secretary shook both our hands and said:

“After a week or so a comrade will come and tell you what to do.”

About ten days later an older comrade came to see me and, shaking my hand firmly, handed me the little red booklet, already familiar to me. A feeling of pride overcame me: I am part of the proletarian vanguard now.

“You can collect the dues of the street party group. There are 18 members. Here’s the list. Come on, I’ll acquaint you with the comrades!” he told me. We left the house and he introduced me to every comrade as the new cashier.

And so I became a functionary right away. Every week I went to see the comrades. I not only collected dues, but also delivered them invitations to party meetings of the street group. In addition, I offered them the monthly functionaries’ organ, *Der Parteiarbeiter* (The Party Worker), and other brochures.

I tried to discuss political issues with every comrade. That was not easy for me in the beginning. The comrades wanted to know the party's position on various events and what activities were planned. In 1926 the discussions centered around the issue of compensation for the former ruling houses of Germany. The party was for expropriation of the princes without compensation because they had squeezed and oppressed the people for centuries. I gave the comrades as much concrete information as I could.

At the time I joined the party a referendum had been initiated by the SPD executive committee, the KPD central committee and the committee for the expropriation of the princes. The former German princes, above all ex-Kaiser Wilhelm, had demanded billions in financial compensation from the German state, i.e., the German people, for their lost privileges. The petition for a referendum was intended to let the voters decide this issue. 12.5 million voters opted to carry out a referendum against the princes' campaign to plunder billions. The point was now to get the necessary 20 million votes in the referendum itself.

To inform the comrades, and for agitation among non-members as well, *Der Parteiarbeiter* was a great help for me. I took a particular interest in the monthly leading articles with views on new political developments, and in articles under the header "From practice, for practice." For this reason I also got hold of older issues.

Eagerly, I studied all articles about political work in the factory, about building a party group there, about producing workers' news-sheets, how to prepare a strike and experience in struggle, and about political work in the labor unions.

After six weeks of party membership I knew what had to be done: to organize a party group in our factory, Ritterwerk. The name *Ritterwerk* (literally: Knight Works) originated from the time when the firm was still producing cold steel weapons: sabers, swords, bayonets, and officers' daggers. Now, they were producing hair clippers and razors. The owner was a civil engineering firm, Pack & Sons.

I talked to Richard and asked him who in the factory was a member or sympathizer of the KPD. We realized soon that altogether we were five male comrades and one female comrade in the Ritterwerk, working in the most important departments: Hugo Butz, Willy Rüttgers and my cousin Richard Röttger in the assembly department where the hair clippers were put together, Maria Stamm and Willy Decker in the milling department, and I myself in the fitters' shop.

As a maker of tools, jigs and fixtures, I was able to move quite freely within the factory, so I went to see the comrades in the other departments and talk to them about building a factory party group.

This actually was not so easy since the social-democratic principle of organization – organizing at neighborhood level – was still strongly rooted in the party. The Bolshevik principle of organization – organizing in factories – had not yet gained acceptance everywhere within the party.

In our party bookstore, located on Hochstrasse, the bound volumes of the 1924 und 1925 editions of the monthly magazine *Die Internationale* were available. I could buy them for a low price from the bookseller, comrade Oskar Deutschländer. I wanted to get more information about the parties on an international level, because I often heard the term “bolshevization of the party.” I knew that the Russian word “bolshe” means “more” and “menshe” means “less”; accordingly, Bolsheviks means “the ones in the majority” and Mensheviks means “the ones in the minority.” But that didn't help much. What does “bolshevization of the party” actually mean?

Since the establishment of the Third International in March 1919, the communist parties of Europe were urged to align their party organizations to the model of the Bolshevik Party of Russia, ideologically, politically and organizationally. That meant rebuilding them ideologically on the basis of the theories of Marx, Engels and Lenin, of Marxism *and* Leninism. Politically, they were to link

with the working people through broad mass work and become a communist mass party. In organizational terms it meant concentrating on the factories, in particular big factories, and organizing the members wherever possible in factory party groups. This was not easy to achieve even in the KPD.

The heritage of the USPD (Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany), which had split from the SPD in 1917 and vacillated between the reformist and the revolutionary current, also played a role in this question. At the Party Congress of 1920, the USPD split and by 1922 had gradually dissolved. Most of the members returned to the SPD, while a part, often entire local branches, went over to the KPD. In Solingen too, the USPD branch went over to the KPD almost in a body, taking its daily newspaper *Bergische Arbeiterstimme* with it. The ballot showed 3,535 votes in favor of switching to the KPD and joining the Third International; only 451 members opposed this. The vote not only proved the Solingen working class's will to unity, but also its sense of proletarian internationalism.

Some of these comrades, however, also brought along reformist or revisionist ideas, and they all knew only the organizational principle of neighborhoods – local branches and districts. This was where the political activities took place, mostly municipal politics and education. Most comrades balked at the idea of systematic political work in the factories. Though they did not openly reject the organization of factory groups, they passively resisted the reorganization.

Patently, I explained to the comrades the significance of a factory group. We met after work in a little pub where I expounded what I had learned about the work of a factory group from *Der Parteiarbeiter*, and about the “bolshevization of the party” from the German magazine *Die Internationale*. This was not known to them all; everybody was organized in a different street group. But soon they realized the importance of the factory group.



Company letterhead

We decided to establish such a factory group. The comrades chose me to be the group's political officer, although I was the youngest. All the others were between 30 and 40 years old and married, except Willy Decker and me.

At the first group meeting, right away we were in the thick of things:

“Comrades, I suggest two points for the agenda: May Day and the election of the works council. We have only one week until the International Workers’ Day, but with intensive agitation we can win the whole workforce to walk out together.”

In those days taking part in May Day activities involved some risk. The International Workers’ Day was not a public holiday then as it is in Germany today: a factory worker participating as an individual person could be punished, i.e. dismissed without notice.

Comrade Hugo probably had this in mind when he expressed doubts:

“The workforce has never before celebrated May Day collectively.”

“Then it’s time they learn now,” I declared impatiently. “Maria, what about the women? They will be the hardest to mobilize.”

“I’ll do my best, Willy can help me, you know.”

That was true. Willy Decker was the machine setter in the milling department. Each of the women workers had to operate three or four milling machines. Often it depended on the setup man whether they coped with their piecework. Willy had created a comradely relationship among the women and therefore had quite some influence on them. We planned the agitation for each department.

“We now proceed to the second point: election of the works council.”

The Solingen cutlery industry has many small and medium-sized enterprises. That alone makes it difficult to organize works council elections. There were particular difficulties in many factories with a mixed workforce, where both men and women worked together. As a rule, the women were not organized in the labor union at that time and their class consciousness was not very developed. In addition, there was the behavior of the Solingen “manufacturers,” who liked to flaunt their lord-of-the-manor attitude. Since they often worked alongside the workers and still were linked with production, they themselves immediately settled any differences that arose with the blue- or white-collar worker concerned.

“What do we need a works council for? We can settle things ourselves,” they used to say, and most of the time they succeeded.

The Ritterwerk workers were not directly confronted with the owner of the company. As a civil engineering entrepreneur the owner concerned himself very little with the factory – he employed a commercial director and a technical director to take care of his interests there.

However, the technical director responsible for production was also a man who demonstrated a “lord of the manor” attitude. This provoked the workforce, which now wished to have a works council to represent its interests in dealings with the management.

“We must begin with the preparations immediately,” I suggested. “If you agree, we will put up Maria, Hugo and Willy Decker as candidates. We then have to make a special effort to drum up support for them.”

Then we discussed in detail what was to be done to prepare and carry out the election of the works council.

For a week, our party group discussed the meaning of May Day with the colleagues, men and women. We called for taking part in the morning rally of the ADGB (General Federation of German Trade Unions) and sold tickets for the evening event of the KPD.

Our agitation was successful. The day before May Day, several workers told the management that the workforce would celebrate the day. That was a surprise. Technical director Loebel tried to break up the closed ranks:

“Do you also want to march under red flags tomorrow?” he confronted individual workers.

“Shall we reserve a place for you?” was the quick-witted reply of one of the women. He gave up.

May Day was a great success. Except for a few white-collar workers, the walkout at Ritterwerk on May Day was complete. Apparently our influence was growing, and this had an effect on the preparation of the works council election. As a result, the election was also successful for us. All three comrades were elected.

Our party group meetings were not in the pub anymore, but in Maria's flat, not too far away from the plant. We had to be careful because the management was getting suspicious.

We had to carry out political work in the factory in a covert way – that was one thing we learned very quickly. At the same time we had to make use of all legal means – that too we realized. In all questions, the magazine *Der Parteiarbeiter* was a great help for us.

June 1926 was marked by lively political controversy in Germany. The referendum against the billions in compensation for the princes was to be held on June 20. For this referendum to be successful, 20 million votes were needed. Although the initiators of the referendum, SPD and KPD, together got eleven million votes during the previous election, the

goal was not achieved. In Solingen, though, the voting result was excellent: more than 58,000 voters, at that time 61 percent of those entitled to vote, voted “Yes” in favor of expropriating the princes.

All bourgeois parties had taken an official stand against expropriation. A gigantic propaganda wave – pro and con – enveloped the masses.

But within the bourgeois parties a struggle took place which could not be disguised anymore. On the day of the referendum, the KPD central organ, *Rote Fahne*, published an article written by Ernst Thälmann headlined: “The Significance of the People’s Movement for Expropriating the Princes.” It also dealt with the differences within the bourgeois parties:

The workers who will go to the polls on June 20 must do so with this in mind: that a new stage of the struggle is beginning, in which the bourgeoisie has completely shed its threadbare cloak of democracy and the iron armor of its armed civil war gangs will menace the working class.

But the significance of the movement for expropriating the princes is not limited to this alone. Never before in Germany have such large segments of the masses, declassed and pauperized during the previous years, been hurled into the whirl of the class struggle. The petty-bourgeois parties are trembling under the assault of followers “infected” by the class struggle. The shabby remnants of political centralism, which these parties could indulge in because they represent opposite class strata, are scattered under the impact of the masses. The situation in the Democratic Party is a big mess, proponents and opponents of the princes’ expropriation fighting each other in the columns of the same newspapers. In the Center Party, the conflict between the social interests of the masses and their religious bondage is growing into an open struggle that threatens to topple the walls of this “proud” party. In this hour of peril, the executive committee of the Center Party appealed to the bishops, who pour imploring phrases over the heads of their rebellious Christian flock in leading articles of the *Germania* [a leading Catholic newspaper of the twenties – W.D.]. But to no avail!

For weeks, our factory group had been discussing the question of the referendum and what we could contribute to make the campaign a success. Above all, we had to educate the workforce. To achieve this goal, our verbal agitation was not enough.

“Comrades, we must publish a factory newsheet for the workers,” I declared, pulling the *Parteiarbeiter* out of my pocket, which I used to carry with me like most functionaries. I read to them what had to be done.

“We need a nameplate. Any suggestions?”

Willy Decker suggested:

“What do you think about *Ritterwerksprolet*? The name is very long though.”

“Hell no, the knights were not proletarians, they were robber barons!”

Maria laughed:

“That’s exactly it! Let’s call the newsheet *Der Raubritter* [The Robber Baron], because the capitalists do rob us workers pretty much.”

“Great, and next to it the picture of director Loebel.”

This was the detested technical director, who often yelled at the workers when something did not suit him.

I took over the job of producing the nameplate, carefully drawing the name *Der Raubritter* and a portrait of the technical director with his mouth wide open.

Then I borrowed a hectograph. With hectograph ink I laboriously wrote the text in block letters on a piece of paper. In the middle, the slogan “*Not a penny to the princes!*” was placed as an eye-catcher. Besides short political articles we wrote about some grievances in the factory. Then I made about 50 copies. It was more of a leaflet, but it was after all a beginning. We distributed the paper unobtrusively in the plant. None of us were discovered.

It was payday. For the first time we had not received our full wages. The rest would be paid in a few days, they said.

The colleagues were excited and stood together talking. Our simple little paper was passed from hand to hand. We persuaded our fellow workers to go to the director's office to demand their money. On this occasion, one of the women secretly put our little paper on the technical director's desk. Everybody was amused that someone had played a trick on him. Loebel went wild.



But we needed a real newsheet, one written with a typewriter. So I went to the party office after work every day, to learn “typing,” of course with the “hunt and peck” method. After four weeks I could more or less type so that we could also use stencils (wax matrices). To make drawings and draw headlines in block letters was more difficult, but practice makes perfect.

Every issue of our workers' newsheet had the same arousing effect on our colleagues. It enhanced our verbal agitation in the factory and strengthened our influence on the workforce.

Our party published the daily newspaper *Bergische Arbeiterstimme* (Voice of the Workers of Bergisches Land), printed in the same house where the party office, the editorial staff and the party bookstore also were located.

The *Bergische Arbeiterstimme* was established in 1890 after the fall of the anti-socialist law and published as a daily since 1901. The circulation rose from 12,000 in 1913 to 21,000 at the time I joined the KPD.

These figures were only exceeded by the bourgeois daily *Solinger Tageblatt*. Distribution went as far as the Rhine.

Some of the editors of the *Bergische Arbeiterstimme* were especially prominent in the twenties.

In 1921/1922 Dr. Richard Sorge was editor-in-chief, responsible for politics. After he left, he was trained to be an intelligence agent for the Soviet Red Army, and later worked successfully for the Soviet Union, mainly in East Asia, his last station being Japan. In October 1941, Richard Sorge and his collaborators were arrested by the Japanese secret police. In September 1943 he was sentenced to death by a Tokyo court and executed in November 1944.

Fritz Jung was the leading local editor from 1926 to 1933. As a Solingen worker he spoke and wrote often in the Solingen dialect, particularly the weekend commentary, "Der rude Bertes" (The Red Bertes). He also directed the paper's movement to develop correspondents from the working class. He was arrested by the Nazis and sent to the floating concentration camp on the ship *Cap Arcona*, which was bombed by Allied aircraft on 3 May 1945. Fritz Jung also was among the dead.

Bergische Arbeiterstimme

Organ der Rheinisch-Westfälischen Bergarbeitergewerkschaft, Stiftung des 1. Internationalen

Nr. 106

Freitag, den 1. Mai 1922

25 Jahre

Vereint euch gegen die Imperialisten!



Bergische Arbeiterstimme. "Unite against the Imperialists!"