
German Conservatism at the Crossroads: Count Kuno von Westarp and the Struggle for Control of the DNVP, 1928–30

LARRY EUGENE JONES

Abstract

The years from 1928 to 1930 witnessed a bitter struggle for the control of the German National People's Party (DNVP), the bastion of German conservatism in the Weimar Republic. One of the principal protagonists in this conflict was Count Kuno von Westarp, chairman of the DNVP from 1926 to 1928 and of the DNVP delegation to the Reichstag from 1924 to 1929. Westarp struggle with great determination to preserve the unity of the party in the face of a concerted effort from the radical Pan-German nationalists around the newly elected party chairman, film and press magnate Alfred Hugenberg. But Westarp's efforts on behalf of party unity ultimately failed as the moderates who stood on the DNVP's left wing abandoned the party in two secessions, the first in December 1929 and the second in July 1930. In the second of these Westarp himself left the party. In the meantime the DNVP had been transformed from a conservative Sammelpartei into an instrument of the radical right.

Between 1928 and 1930 the German National People's Party (Deutschnationale Volkspartei, DNVP) underwent a devastating internal crisis whose outcome, some have argued, foreshadowed the ultimate fate of the Weimar Republic itself. At the centre of this crisis stood the person of Count Kuno von Westarp. Arguably Germany's most influential conservative politician in the first third of the twentieth century, Westarp was elected chairman of the DNVP Reichstag delegation in January 1925 and then to the party's national chairmanship in March 1926. In October 1928, however, Westarp was unseated as DNVP party chairman by the press and film magnate Alfred Hugenberg in what can only be described as a major coup for the forces of the radical right. As Hugenberg and his minions proceeded over the course

Department of History, Canisius College, 2001 Main Street, Buffalo, New York 14208–1098, United States; jones@canisius.edu.

Contemporary European History, 18, 2 (2009), pp. 147–177 © 2009 Cambridge University Press
doi:10.1017/S0960777309004913 Printed in the United Kingdom

of the next two years to transform the party into an instrument of the radical right, Westarp struggled desperately to preserve the unity of the party and to keep it from breaking apart into the diverse social and economic interests that constituted its material base. Westarp received little support in his endeavours from the new party chairman, who steadfastly refused to make any concessions that might have reconciled the more moderate elements on the DNVP's left wing to the substance and style of his political leadership. By winter 1929 a parting of the ways could no longer be avoided, and in early December 1929 twelve prominent DNVP moderates resigned from the DNVP Reichstag delegation in protest against Hugenberg's leadership of the party. To Westarp this represented the total collapse of his own hopes for the future of the DNVP, and he tendered his resignation as chairman of the Reichstag delegation. Over the next several months Westarp continued his efforts on behalf of party unity, but by July 1930 he too had come to the conclusion that his membership in the party was no longer tenable and officially severed his ties with the DNVP as part of a second and ultimately more extensive secession of party moderates and anti-Hugenberg activists.¹

¹ For a general overview of Westarp's role in the DNVP see Larry Eugene Jones, 'Kuno Graf von Westarp und die Krise des deutschen Konservatismus in der Weimarer Republik', in Larry Eugene Jones and Wolfram Pyta, eds., *'Ich bin der letzte Preuße': Der politische Lebensweg des konservativen Politikers Kuno Graf von Westarp (1964–1945)* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2006), 109–46. On the DNVP party crisis, see above all else Thomas Mergel, 'Das Scheitern des deutschen Tory-Konservatismus. Die Umformung der DNVP zu einer rechtsradikalen Partei 1928–1932', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 276 (2003), 323–68, as well as the older studies by Attila Chanady, 'The Disintegration of the German National People's Party, 1924–1930', *Journal of Modern History*, 39, 1 (1967), 65–91, and David P. Walker, 'The German Nationalist People's Party: The Conservative Dilemma in the Weimar Republic', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 14, 4 (1979), 627–47. The author would like to take this opportunity to express his gratitude to the widow of Hans Freiherr Hiller von Gaertringen – Gerda Freifrau Hiller von Gaertringen – and their three children – Rudolf Freiherr Hiller von Gaertringen, Christian Freiherr Hiller von Gaertringen and Verena Gräfin von Zeppelin-Aschhausen – for having granted him access to the private papers of Count Kuno von Westarp and for their generous hospitality on the occasion of his visits to Gärtringen. The author is also grateful to Dr Karl Mayer for his advice and assistance in the early stages of the research for this article. The author first gained access to the Westarp papers in the 1960s through the generosity of Westarp's grandson, Friedrich Freiherr Hiller von Gaertringen, who had rescued the collection from Soviet-occupied Berlin after the end of the First World War. At the time of Hiller's death in 1999, the papers were badly organised, with the result that Hiller's brother and owner of the collection, Hans Freiherr Hiller von Gaertringen, enlisted the help of Dr Karl Mayer, a local archivist who had specialised in the diplomatic history of the inter-war period before shifting his attention to the regional history of south-west Germany, to organise and catalogue the Westarp papers for scholarly use. Before Hans Hiller's death in 2004, Mayer was able to catalogue 132 volumes of the Westarp papers, or about two-thirds of the collection in Gärtringen. These volumes carry the prefix VN for 'provisional number' (*vorläufiger Nummer*). Thanks to a generous grant from the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Canisius College, the author was able to return to Gärtringen, first in summer 2005 and then again in summer 2007, to organise and catalogue that part of the papers that Mayer had not managed to organise himself. These materials, too, covered the period from 1918 to 1933/34 and comprised an additional eighty-eight volumes of archival material that carry the prefix II. These two parts of the Westarp papers will subsequently be referred to, for example, as NL Westarp, Gärtringen, VN followed by the volume number, or NL Westarp, Gärtringen, II followed by the volume number respectively. Of the materials in Gärtringen all that remain unorganised are items of a purely personal or family nature as well as his private and scholarly correspondence from 1933 to 1945. During his lifetime Westarp deposited materials on his political activities before 1920

Westarp's defeat in the struggle for control of the DNVP and his subsequent marginalisation in internal party affairs constituted a decisive moment in the radicalisation of the German right and played a major role in transforming Germany's political landscape in the last years of the Weimar Republic. After assuming the party chairmanship in autumn 1928, Hugenberg proceeded to consolidate his personal control over the party organisation and to purge it of those who opposed his leadership. At the same time, he allied the DNVP with those elements on the radical right that were irreconcilably opposed to the republican system of government inherited by Germany from the November Revolution.² In the meantime, the DNVP moderates who had formerly constituted the nucleus of the party's left wing were cast into a political limbo and never succeeded in rebuilding the base they had once possessed in the DNVP. The leadership crisis in the DNVP thus represented a critical turning point in the history of German conservatism and marked the point at which conservatism and radical nationalism parted company. The purpose of this essay is to examine the role that Westarp played in the tumultuous events of 1928–30 and to determine not only why his efforts at mediation failed so miserably but also why the way in which the DNVP leadership crisis was eventually resolved left those moderates who had attached themselves to Westarp's political star in such a hopeless situation.

I

To all intents and purposes Westarp was the quintessential Prussian conservative for whom loyalty to the state constituted the first commandment of all political action.³ Born in 1864 in the Prussian province of Posen and schooled in the best traditions of Prussian conservatism, Westarp had risen quickly through the ranks of the Prussian civil service before being elected to the Reichstag in 1909. Westarp quickly attached his rising political fortunes to the stalwart figure of Ernst von Heydebrand und der Lasa, the patriarch and leader of the German Conservative Party (Deutsch-Konservative Partei, DKP), and in late 1913 was chosen to lead the DKP Reichstag delegation after having served for several years as heir apparent to this post. With the collapse of the Second Empire and the founding of the Weimar Republic, however, Westarp used all his influence with his former conservative colleagues to ensure their acceptance of the newly founded DNVP at the same time that he worked tirelessly to

in the Reichsarchiv. This amounts to over 240 volumes of correspondence and other documents and is available in the Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichtenfelde as Bestand N2329. The author would also like to express his gratitude to Hans-Dieter Kreikamp of the Bundesarchiv in Berlin and to his former student Edward Snyder, currently at the University of Minnesota, for having facilitated access to documents used in the preparation of this article.

² For further details see Friedrich Hiller von Gaertringen, 'Die Deutschnationale Volkspartei', in Erich Matthias and Rudolf Morsey, eds., *Das Ende der Parteien 1933* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1960), 543–652, as well as the Hugenberg biography by John A. Leopold, *Alfred Hugenberg: The Radical Nationalist Campaign against the Weimar Republic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), esp. 55–138.

³ For the classic statement of Westarp's political philosophy see his essay 'Preußens Verfassung und Verwaltung als Grundlage seiner Führerstellung im Reiche in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart', in *Preussen. Deutschlands Vergangenheit und Deutschlands Zukunft. Vier Vorträge*, with an introduction by Adolph Wagner (Berlin: Reimar Hobbing, 1916), 96–140.

infuse the DNVP's political profile with the ideas and values of Prussian conservatism.⁴ Despite deep-seated opposition from within certain sectors of the DNVP, Westarp was quick to ingratiate himself with the leaders of the new party and rose rapidly through its leadership ranks. In June 1920 Westarp was elected to the Reichstag after his candidacy for a seat in the Weimar National Assembly had been blocked by those elements in the DNVP who regarded his close association with Heydebrand and the pre-war DKP as a stigma that the new party should at all costs avoid. The role that Westarp played in containing the damage that the secession of the DNVP's racist faction in late 1922 and early 1923 had done to the party's national organisation ensured his acceptance into the most intimate circles of the DNVP party leadership. Following Karl Helfferich's untimely death in April 1924 Westarp quickly emerged as the DNVP's most effective parliamentary spokesman leader, and in January 1925 he was elected chairman of its delegation to the Reichstag and then, fourteen months later, to the party's national chairmanship.⁵

Westarp's ascent to the DNVP party leadership coincided with the short-lived and indeed ephemeral stabilisation of the Weimar Republic in the second half of the 1920s, a process that saw the DNVP undertake two experiments in governmental participation, the first in January 1925 when it entered the cabinet of Hans Luther and the second two years later when it participated in the fourth cabinet of Wilhelm Marx, the leader of the German Centre Party (Deutsche Zentrumspartei). The Nationalists' entry into the first Luther cabinet was predicated on the assumption that this would enable them to provide more effective representation for the special economic interests that constituted their party's material base more effectively than they could have done in opposition. In this respect, however, two issues proved particularly difficult for Westarp and the Nationalist party leadership: revaluation and trade policy. In neither case were the Nationalists able to provide the record of positive accomplishment that would have justified the ideological compromises that had accompanied their party's entry into the national government.⁶ As a result, many in the party were only too happy to leave the government when a convenient pretext afforded itself in the Locarno crisis in October 1925. The heavy losses the DNVP

⁴ For further details see Westarp's own account of this period in his life in Kuno von Westarp, *Konservative Politik im Übergang vom Kaiserreich zur Weimarer Republik*, ed. Friedrich Freiherr Hiller von Gaertringen with the collaboration of Karl J. Mayer and Reinhold Weber (Düsseldorf: Droste, 2001), 93–112. See also Jan Striesow, *Die Deutschnationale Volkspartei und die Völkisch-Radikalen 1918–1922*, 2 vols. (Frankfurt/Main: Haag & Herchen, 1981), 9–43.

⁵ In addition to the brief biographical sketch by Friedrich Hiller von Gaertringen in Westarp, *Konservative Politik*, 13–20, see Friedrich Everling, 'Graf Westarp', in Hans von Arnim and Georg von Below, eds., *Deutscher Aufstieg. Bilder aus der Vergangenheit und Gegenwart der rechtsstehenden Parteien* (Berlin: Franz Schneider Verlag, 1925), 453–8.

⁶ On the revaluation question and the DNVP see Larry Eugene Jones, 'Inflation, Revaluation, and the Crisis of Middle-Class Politics: A Study in the Dissolution of the German Party System, 1923–28', *Central European History*, 12, 2 (1979): 143–68. On the conflict over German trade policy, see Dirk Stegmann, 'Deutsche Zoll- und Handelspolitik 1924/25–29 unter besonderer Berücksichtigung agrarischer und industrieller Interessen', in Hans Mommsen, Dietmar Petzina, and Bernd Weisbrod, eds., *Industrielles System und politische Entwicklung in der Weimarer Republik. Verhandlungen des Internationalen Symposiums in Bochum von 12.–17. Juni 1973* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1974), 499–513.

sustained in the Saxon state elections on 31 October 1926 bore dramatic testimony to the erosion of the party's social base, underscored the high price the party had to pay for its failure to live up to the promises that had been used to justify its entry into the government, and put enormous pressure on Westarp and other party leaders to re-enter the national government.⁷

The DNVP's entry into the fourth Marx cabinet in January 1927 was a great personal victory for Westarp and earned him the plaudits and congratulations of the overwhelming majority of his colleagues in the DNVP Reichstag delegation.⁸ Still, his defence of the DNVP's decision to enter the government was every bit as tortured and awkward as it had been two years earlier when the DNVP first entered the national government.⁹ Despite his deep-seated aversion to the republican system of government, Westarp quickly acclimatised himself to what the historian Thomas Mergel has called the parliamentary culture of the Weimar Republic, and, in a matter of months, he became one of its most effective practitioners.¹⁰ Westarp's office in the Reichstag became a virtual clearing house for all the legislation that was to reach the floor of parliament, and he played a major role in advancing the political agenda of the German right, but particularly in the areas of social, economic and agricultural policy.¹¹ All this, however, was deeply resented by Alfred Hugenberg and the leaders of the party's right wing, who worked through their allies in the Pan-German League (Alldeutscher Verband, ADV) to mobilise opposition to the DNVP's political course at the local and regional levels of the party's national organisation. The Pan-Germans were implacably opposed to any accommodation with Germany's hated republican system, and regarded the DNVP's entry into the fourth Marx cabinet as a callous betrayal of its national responsibilities.¹² In September 1927 Hugenberg set aside his reservations about becoming more actively involved in the struggle for control of

⁷ On the DNVP's performance in the 1926 Saxon state elections see Larry Eugene Jones, 'Saxony, 1924–1930: A Study in the Dissolution of the Bourgeois Party System in Weimar Germany', in James Retallack, ed., *Saxony in German History: Culture, Society, and Politics, 1830–1933* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 336–55, esp. 337–43.

⁸ Ada Gräfin von Westarp to Getraude Freifrau von Gaertringen, n.d. [29 Jan. 1927], NL Westarp, Gärtringen.

⁹ *Verhandlungen des Reichstags*, vol. 391, 8804–6.

¹⁰ On the concept of parliamentary culture and its place in the history of the Weimar Republic, see Thomas Mergel, *Parlamentarischer Kultur der Weimarer Republik. Politische Kommunikation, symbolische Politik und Öffentlichkeit im Reichstag* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 2002).

¹¹ In this respect, see Kuno von Westarp, *Deutschnationale Innenpolitik in der Regierungskoalition*, Deutschnationale Flugschrift, no. 292 (Berlin: Deutschnationale Schriftenvertriebsstelle, 1927), and Kuno von Westarp, *Die deutschnationale Arbeit in der Regierungskoalition. Sommertagung 1927*, Deutschnationale Flugschrift, no. 296 (Berlin: Deutschnationale Schriftenvertriebsstelle, 1927).

¹² For example, see Claß's remarks at the meeting of the ADV managing committee, 12–13 Feb. 1927, in the unpublished records of the Alldeutscher Verband, Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde, Bestand R 8048, 149/42–56. For further details see Barry A. Jackisch, "'Not a Large, But a Strong Right': The Pan-German League, Radical Nationalism, and Rightist Party Politics in Weimar Germany, 1918–1939', Ph.D. thesis, State University of New York at Buffalo, 2000, 287–96. For an intriguing analysis of the factors that contributed to Hugenberg's success in mobilizing grass-roots opposition to Westarp's leadership of the party, see Manfred Kittel, '“Steigbügelhalter” Hitlers oder “stille Republikaner”? Die Deutschnationalen in neuer politikgeschichtlicher und kulturalistischer Perspektive', in Hans-Christof Kraus and Thomas Nicklas, eds., *Geschichte der Politik. Alte und neue Wege*, Historische Zeitschrift, Beiheft 44 (Munich: R. Oldenburg, 2007), 201–35.

the party and launched a determined bid to reverse the DNVP's political course with a highly charged letter to Westarp in which he characterised those who based their political careers on the existing government system as 'inner cripples' and demanded that the DNVP return to a policy of unconditional opposition to the Weimar Republic.¹³

Hugenberg's letter represented a frontal attack on Westarp's leadership of the party and marked the beginning of a pitched battle for control of the party that would continue for the better part of the next three years. The key to Hugenberg's strategy was to mobilise the essentially anti-democratic base of the DNVP's national organisation against Westarp and those Nationalists who had been responsible for the DNVP's two experiments in government participation and were thus prepared to work within the framework of the existing system of government. The immediate effect of Hugenberg's letter was only to isolate him within the upper echelons of the DNVP organisation, a situation that did not change until after the Nationalists went down to a resounding defeat in the Reichstag elections of 20 May 1928, in which they lost nearly two million votes and thirty of their 103 seats in the Reichstag. The underlying cause of the DNVP's defeat was its failure to satisfy the expectations of those who had hoped that the party's entry into the government, first in 1925 and then again in 1927, would reverse the economic decline they had experienced since the founding of the Weimar Republic. In his own post-mortem on the election results Westarp attributed the DNVP's poor performance at the polls to the increasingly materialistic attitude of broad sectors of the German electorate – as manifested in the success of special-interest parties such as the Business Party of the German Middle Class (*Wirtschaftspartei des Deutschen Mittelstandes*, WP) and the Christian National Peasants' and Farmers' Party (*Christlich-Nationale Bauern- und Landvolkpartei*, CNBLP) – and the DNVP's failure to offer an effective antidote to the appeal of special interests.¹⁴ As in the 1926 Saxon state elections, the outcome of the 1928 Reichstag elections bore dramatic testimony to the continued erosion of the DNVP's electoral base.

II

The magnitude of the Nationalist defeat sent shock waves throughout the entire party organisation and afforded Westarp's opponents on the DNVP's right wing all the pretext they needed to resume their attacks on his leadership of the

¹³ Hugenberg to Westarp, 17 Sept. 1927, NL Westarp, Gärtringen, II/25, also in the unpublished *Nachlaß* of Alfred Hugenberg, Bundesarchiv Koblenz (hereafter cited as BA Koblenz, NL Hugenberg), 113/78–83, reprinted in Leo Wegener, *Hugenberg. Eine Plauderei* (Solln-Munich: Verlag der 'Eisernen Blätter', 1930), 53–4.

¹⁴ Westarp's remarks at a meeting of the DNVP Reichstag delegation, 12 June 1928, in the unpublished *Nachlaß* (personal papers) of Otto Schmidt-Hannover, Bundesarchiv Koblenz (hereafter cited as BA Koblenz, NL Schmidt-Hannover), 35. For the DNVP's perspective on the election results see also Lothar Steuer, *Die Deutschnationale Wahl-niederlage am 20. Mai 1928. Ihre Ursachen, Zusammenhänge, Folgerungen* (Anklam: Richard Poettcke Nachf., 1928), and the lengthy memorandum from the Berlin headquarters of the German National Workers' League (*Deutschnationaler Arbeiterbund*) to Westarp, 12 June 1928, NL Westarp, Gärtringen, VN 69.

party. In this respect they were aided by an indiscretion on the part of Walther Lambach, a secretary of the German National Union of Commercial Employees (Deutschnationaler Handlungsgehilfen-Verband, DHV) and a member of the DNVP Reichstag delegation, who on 14 June 1928 published an article in the young conservative *Politische Wochenschrift* suggesting that the DNVP reconsider its commitment to a restoration of the monarchy.¹⁵ Drawing on the support of fifteen of the DNVP's thirty-seven district organisations, Hugenberg and his supporters opened a concerted attack against Westarp's leadership of the party at a two-day meeting of the DNVP party representation (*Parteivertretung*) on 8–9 July 1928, and succeeded in forcing him to resign as the DNVP's national party chairman.¹⁶ Over the course of the next several months the DNVP moderates tried to mobilise their forces in a desperate bid to hang on to control of the party, but they were repeatedly outmanoeuvred by Hugenberg and his supporters on the DNVP's right wing. A proposal from Hugenberg's confederates that Westarp share the leadership of the party in a triumvirate with Hugenberg and Friedrich von Winterfeld, chairman of the DNVP delegation to the Prussian Landtag, was consistently rejected by Westarp from the moment that it first surfaced earlier in the summer.¹⁷ The decisive showdown came at a meeting of the DNVP party representation on 20 October 1928, when Hugenberg was elected to the DNVP party chairmanship by a margin so narrow that it was never made public.¹⁸

Westarp was relieved that he no longer had to deal with the responsibilities of the party chairmanship and was pleased to be able to concentrate his full attention on his job as chairman of the DNVP delegation to the Reichstag. To be sure, fundamental differences of ideology and style separated him from the new party chairman. Still, Westarp was perfectly happy to work with Hugenberg in his capacity as the DNVP's parliamentary leader just as Hugenberg, by all accounts, was pleased that Westarp was willing to continue as chairman of the DNVP Reichstag delegation.¹⁹ But relations

¹⁵ Walther Lambach, 'Monarchismus', *Politische Wochenschrift*, 4, 24 (14 June 1928), 495–7.

¹⁶ For Westarp's account of these developments, see his memorandum to the chairmen of the DNVP district and state organisations, 12 July 1928, NL Westarp, Gärtringen, II/30. For further details see Reichert to Wesenfeld, 9 July 1928, and Reusch, 17 July 1928, both in the unpublished Nachlaß of Walther Lambach, Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, 10a.

¹⁷ Letter from Ada Gräfin von Westarp to Gertraude Freifrau Hiller von Gaertringen, 9 Oct. 1928, NL Westarp, Gärtringen. For further details on the proposal for a triumvirate see the entries in Quaatz's diary, 27 July, 7 and 27 Sept., and 5 Oct. 1928, BA Koblenz, NL Quaatz, 16, reprinted in Hermann Weiß and Paul Hoser, eds., *Die Deutschnationalen und die Zerstörung der Weimarer Republik. Aus dem Tagebuch von Reinhold Quaatz 1928–1933* (Munich: R. Oldenburg, 1989), 45–8.

¹⁸ For the most detailed first-hand account of Hugenberg's election see Reichert to Reusch, 22 Oct. 1928, in the unpublished Nachlaß of Paul Reusch in the corporate records of the Gutehoffnungshütte, Rheinisch-Westfälisches Wirtschaftsarchiv Cologne, Abteilung 130 (hereafter cited as RWWA Cologne, Abt. 130, NL Reusch), 400101293/9. For further information see the entry in Quaatz's diary, 21 Oct. 1928, BA Koblenz, NL Quaatz, 16, reprinted in Weiß and Hoser, *Die Deutschnationalen*, 50–2. See also the secondary accounts in Manfred Dörr, 'Die Deutschnationale Volkspartei 1925 bis 1928', Ph.D. thesis, University of Marburg, 1964, 391–465; and John A. Leopold, 'The Election of Alfred Hugenberg as Chairman of the German National People's Party', *Canadian Journal of History*, 7, 1 (1972), 149–71.

¹⁹ Ada Gräfin von Westarp to Gertraude Freifrau Hiller von Gaertringen, 23 Oct. 1928, NL Westarp, Gärtringen.

between the two began to sour in spring 1929, when Hugenberg, in the course of his efforts to consolidate control over the DNVP party organisation, proposed a change in party statutes that would have given the party chairman the right to make decisions that were binding on the Reichstag delegation in all important political questions, including that of participating in the government. For his own part, Westarp was determined to preserve the autonomy of the Reichstag delegation, and he succeeded in blocking the implementation of Hugenberg's motion by a narrow margin at a special caucus of the DNVP Reichstag delegation in early May 1929.²⁰ Hugenberg, who was intent on transforming the DNVP from a conservative *Sammelpartei* (a kind of people's party) that appealed to a broad spectrum of diverse interests into an instrument of the radical right,²¹ mobilised his supporters in the DNVP executive committee (*Partei Vorstand*) in June 1929 to override the delegation's vote in a move that formally subordinated Westarp and the DNVP Reichstag delegation to the control of the DNVP party chairman.²² To Westarp this represented an unwarranted incursion into the autonomy and prerogatives of the delegation chairman, but he lacked the leverage within the party's governing bodies to reverse what was quickly becoming an intolerable situation.²³

Westarp's differences with Hugenberg on the relationship between the party chairman and the party's delegation to the Reichstag were quickly overshadowed by a far more serious tactical dispute over the struggle against the Young Plan that Gustav Stresemann had negotiated with the Allies as the final settlement of the separations question. In July 1929 Hugenberg and the leaders of other right-wing organisations announced the creation of the National Committee for the German Referendum (*Reichsausschuß für das deutsche Volksbegehren*) in an attempt to block ratification of the Young Plan by popular initiative.²⁴ Like Hugenberg, Westarp regarded the Young Plan as an unmitigated disaster for Germany,²⁵ and he endorsed the idea of a popular referendum despite the fact that he had been left off the National Referendum Committee and was excluded from a direct role in formulating the

²⁰ Entry in Quaat's diary, 2 May 1929, BA Koblenz, NL Quaat, 16, reprinted in Weiß and Hoser, *Die Deutschnationalen*, 70. See also Westarp's correspondence with Hugenberg, 19–22 April 1929, NL Westarp, Gärtringen, VN 122, as well as his letters to Traub, 4 May 1929, *ibid.*, II/37, and Natzmer, 14 May 1929, *ibid.*, VN 102.

²¹ For Hugenberg's concept of the party see his programmatic statement, 'Block oder Brei?', *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 24 and 26 Aug. 1928, nos. 404 and 406.

²² Report of the meeting of the DNVP executive committee, 15 June 1929, in *Unsere Partei*, 7, 13 (1 July 1929), 207–9. See also the entry in Quaat's diary, 18 June 1929, BA Koblenz, NL Quaat, 16, reprinted in Weiß and Hoser, *Die Deutschnationalen*, 72–3, as well as Quaat's letter to Westarp, 19 June 1929, NL Westarp, VN 102.

²³ Westarp to Quaat, 24 June 1929, NL Westarp, Gärtringen, VN 102.

²⁴ *Unsere Partei*, 7, 14 (15 July 1929), 230–3. See also the circular from Hugenberg to the members of the DNVP executive committee and the chairmen of the DNVP precinct organisations (*Kreisvereine*), 11 July 1929, BA Berlin, R 8048, 262/11–12. By far the most useful study of the DNVP's campaign against the Young Plan and the two secessions from the DNVP that it triggered in December 1929 and July 1930 is Elisabeth Friedenthal, 'Volksbegehren und Volksentscheid über den Young-Plan und die deutschnationale Sezession', Ph.D. thesis, University of Tübingen, 1957.

²⁵ For example, see the text of Westarp's speech in Berlin-Schöneberg, 10 June 1929, reprinted in Kuno von Westarp, *Die deutschnationale Reichstagsfraktion und die Pariser Tributverhandlungen* (Berlin: Berliner Zentral-Druckerei, n.d. [1929]), 100–3.

campaign's strategy.²⁶ But the campaign for a referendum against the Young Plan quickly assumed a tone and direction that Westarp could not easily countenance. The inclusion of a paragraph in the official text of the so-called Freedom Law that sought imprisonment for those government officials held responsible for negotiating the Young Plan struck Westarp as little more than political demagoguery pure and simple.²⁷ Not only the use of such language in the campaign against the Young Plan but also the fact that Hugenberg proceeded to release the text of the proposed Freedom Law on 12 September without having first secured the approval of Martin Schiele and Karl Hepp from the National Rural League (Reichs-Landbund, RLB) provoked widespread outrage among the leaders of the RLB and greatly exacerbated the tensions that had developed between their organisation and the DNVP with the creation of the so-called Green Front in spring 1929.²⁸ Westarp quickly recognised the danger this posed to the party's standing in the German agricultural community, and urged Hugenberg to soften the offending language for the sake of a compromise that would satisfy both parties.²⁹

In an effort to mediate an end to the crisis that threatened to tear the DNVP apart, Westarp called a special meeting of party leaders on 20 September 1929.³⁰ But Hugenberg, who had just returned from Munich where he had met the Nazi party leader Adolf Hitler, insisted on the retention of the imprisonment paragraph with all its offensive language, and refused to consider any change in the text of the proposed Freedom Law that might endanger the unity of the national front.³¹ Hugenberg's

²⁶ On Westarp's reaction to his exclusion from the National Referendum Committee see his letters to Hugenberg, 11 July and 19 Aug. 1929, both in NL Westarp, Gärtringen, VN 122. Westarp was eventually invited to join the committee but only after most of the major decisions about the form and substance of the proposed 'Freedom Law' had been taken. For Hugenberg's position see his letter to Westarp, 29 Aug. 1929, *ibid.*

²⁷ For Westarp's immediate reaction to the proposed referendum see the letter to his son-in-law Berthold Freiherr Hiller von Gärtringen, 6 June 1929, NL Westarp, Gärtringen, VN 82.

²⁸ In this respect see the letter from RLB president Martin Schiele to the headquarters of the National Referendum Committee, 13 Sept. 1929, NL Westarp, Gärtringen, VN 122. See also the entries in Quaatz's diary, 11–12. Sept. 1929, BA Koblenz, NL Quaatz, 16, reprinted in Weiß and Hoser, *Die Deutschnationalen*, 76–8, as well as Wilmowsky to Krupp, 14 Sept. 1929, in the unpublished correspondence between Wilmowsky and Gustav Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach, Historisches Archiv Krupp, Essen (hereafter cited as HA Krupp), FAH 23/503. For a detailed statement of the RLB's position see 'Stellungnahme gegen §4 des Gesetzesvorschlages gegen die Versklavung des deutschen Volkes', 17 Sept. 1929, appended to the letter from the RLB headquarters to Westarp, 17 Sept. 1929, in the unpublished records of the Reichs-Landbund, Bundesarchiv Berlin, Bestand R 8034 I (hereafter cited as BA Berlin, R 8034 I), 120b/324–8. For further information on the rift between the DNVP and RLB over the language of the so-called Freedom Law see Andreas Müller, *Fällt der Bauer, stürzt der Staat. Deutschnationale Agrarpolitik 1928–1933* (Munich: Utz, 2003), 123–56; and Dieter Gessner, *Agrarverbände in der Weimarer Republik. Wirtschaftliche und soziale Voraussetzungen agrarkonservativer Politik für 1933* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1976), 222–7, as well as Markus Müller, *Die Christlich-Nationale Bauern- und Landvolkpartei 1928–1933* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 2001), 118–38. The recent monograph by Stephanie Merkenich, *Grüne Front gegen Weimar. Reichs-Landbund und agrarischer Lobbyismus 1918–1933* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1998), contains surprisingly little on the RLB's role in the campaign against the Young Plan.

²⁹ Westarp to Hugenberg, 17 Sept. 1929, NL Westarp, Gärtringen, VN 122.

³⁰ Invitation from Westarp, 18 Sept. 1929, NL Westarp, Gärtringen, II/35.

³¹ Westarp's note on a meeting of DNVP party leaders, 20 Sept. 1929, *ibid.* See also the entries in Quaatz's diary, 21–23 Sept. 1929, reprinted in Weiß and Hoser, *Die Deutschnationalen*, 79–81.

refusal to drop the controversial paragraph or to soften its language came as a sharp rebuff to Martin Schiele and the leaders of the RLB, who complained bitterly, first to the presidium of the National Committee for the German Referendum and then to Hugenberg himself about the way in which the entire matter had been misrepresented in the German press and how their organisation had been obliged to identify itself with a position that it did not support.³² To rectify this situation both the RLB and the CNBLP publicly dissociated themselves from the imprisonment paragraph, although they continued to support the referendum in general as well as the other three paragraphs of the proposed Freedom Law.³³ Not only did relations between Hugenberg and the leaders of the National Rural League remain extremely strained throughout autumn 1929,³⁴ but this had also begun to produce serious divisions within the leadership cadre of both the DNVP and the RLB. Just as the DNVP Reichstag delegation had begun to reveal signs of a growing split within the party and a potential mutiny against Hugenberg's leadership, it had also become increasingly difficult to paper over the cleavages that had developed within the National Rural League between those who supported the CNBLP and those who remained loyal to Hugenberg's wholesale assault against the hated Weimar system and the policy of fulfilment.³⁵

As much as they might deny it, Schiele and the leaders of the RLB were fearful that their own organisation's political effectiveness and its ability to represent the economic interests of the German farmer could be severely affected by its participation in Hugenberg's crusade against the Young Plan. By no means, however, were these concerns limited to Schiele and the leaders of the party's agrarian wing. Ever since the Lambach affair in summer 1928, the leaders of the party's working-class and white-collar constituencies had been moving in the direction of a break with the DNVP. In August 1928 the leaders of the DNVP's Christian-Social faction met in Bielefeld to found the Christian-Social Reich Association (Christlich-Soziale Reichsvereinigung, CSRV) in an attempt to unite all of those within the DNVP who embraced the social and political gospel of the late Adolf Stöcker and, in so doing, strengthen the

³² In this respect see the letters from Schiele to the members of the National Referendum Committee, 20 Sept. 1929, in the unpublished records of the Reichs-Landbund, Bundesarchiv Berlin, Bestand R 8034 I, 120b/320–23, and to Hugenberg, 20 Sept. 1929, NL Westarp, Gärtringen, VN 122.

³³ In this respect see the article by Schiele, 'Vorwärts mit aller Kraft für das Volksbegehren', *Sächsische Bauern-Zeitung*, 36, 42 (20 Oct. 1929), 424–5.

³⁴ For example, see the correspondence between Schiele and Hugenberg, 25 Sept.–16 Oct. 1929, NL Westarp, Gärtringen, VN 122. For the Hugenberg perspective see the entry in Quatz's diary, Oct. 1929, as well as the letter from Quatz to Hugenberg, 13 Oct. 1929, BA Koblenz, NL Quatz, 16, reprinted in Weiß and Hoser, *Die Deutschnationalen*, 83–5.

³⁵ For example, see the particularly bitter debate at the meeting of the RLB executive committee, 1 Nov. 1929, in the unpublished records of the National Rural League, Bundesarchiv Berlin, Bestand R 8034 I, 120a/123–37. For further information see the documents published in Dieter Gessner, "'Grüne Front" oder "Harzburger Front". Der Reichs-Landbund in der letzten Phase der Weimarer Republik zwischen wirtschaftlicher Interessenpolitik und nationalistischem Revisionsanspruch', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 29, 1 (1981), 110–23.

Christian-social influence at all levels of the DNVP party organisation.³⁶ Although the founders of the new organisation were committed to pursuing their objectives within the framework of the DNVP, they also hoped to establish closer ties to like-minded groups from throughout the country that stood outside the immediate orbit of the DNVP.³⁷ At the same time, the Christian-Socials were adamantly opposed to Hugenberg's bid for the DNVP party chairmanship and privately hoped that Westarp could be persuaded to stand for re-election.³⁸ The presence of outspoken social reactionaries such as Paul Bang from the League for National Economics (Bund für Nationalwirtschaft) in Hugenberg's immediate entourage only added to the uneasiness that the Christian-Socials felt about Hugenberg's election, and fuelled their fears that the social and economic achievements of the previous decade had come under siege.³⁹ By the same token, the Christian-Socials were lukewarm to Hugenberg's crusade against the Young Plan, and in summer 1929 began to make rumblings about the need for a sweeping realignment and reform of the German party system. No one was more outspoken in this regard than Gustav Hülser, a DNVP Reichstag deputy and Christian-Social activist who openly criticised the DNVP at the CSRV's second national congress in August 1929 at the same time that he praised the efforts of the Young German Order (Jungdeutscher Orden) and its allies in the younger generation to bring about a regeneration of the existing party system.⁴⁰

III

As the crusade against the Young Plan drew to a climax in late autumn 1929, the divisions within the DNVP Reichstag delegation, if not within the party as a

³⁶ Protocol of the national congress (*Reichstreffen*) of the Christian-Socials in Bielefeld, 19 Aug. 1928, in the unpublished Nachlaß of Reinhard Mumm, Bundesarchiv Berlin (hereafter cited as BA Berlin), NL Mumm, 282/181–95. For the best secondary account of the Christian-Social mutiny against Hugenberg see Nobert Friedrich, *Die christlich-soziale Fahne empor! Reinhard Mumm und die christlich-soziale Bewegung* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1997), 230–56.

³⁷ See in particular Büchenschütz's remarks at the national congress of the Christian-Socials, 19 Aug. 1928, BA Berlin, NL Mumm, 282/185. The leaders of the CSRV were particularly interested in defining their relationship to the Christian People's Service (Christlicher Volksdienst), the Evangelical People's Service (Evangelischer Volksdienst) and similar groups that had sprung up in Württemberg and other parts of the country. For further details see Günter Opitz, *Der Christlich-soziale Volksdienst. Versuch einer protestantischen Partei in der Weimarer Republik* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1969), 33–133.

³⁸ Lambach to Rippel and Koch, 11 October 1928, NL Westarp, Gärtringen, VN 91. For further information on the uneasiness of the DNVP's Christian-Social wing see Treviranus to Westarp, 1 and 8 Aug. 1928, *ibid.*

³⁹ In this respect see the speech by Gustav Hülser, 'Die Sozialpolitik und ihre Gegner', in *Niederschrift der Verhandlungen des 12. Kongresses der christlichen Gewerkschaften Deutschlands Frankfurt a. Main 15. bis 18. September 1929* (Berlin-Wilmersdorf: Christlicher Gewerkschaftsverlag, n.d. [1929]), pp. 249–67. On the plight of the Christian labour leaders within the DNVP see the detailed study by Amrei Stupperich, *Volksgemeinschaft oder Arbeitersolidarität. Studien zur Arbeitnehmerpolitik in der Deutschnationalen Volkspartei* (Göttingen and Zurich: Muster-Schmidt, 1982), 146–70.

⁴⁰ Draft of Mumm's speech, 'Wir Christlich-sozialen und die Parteikrise der Gegenwart', n.d. [July–Aug. 1929], BA Berlin, NL Mumm, 283/168–70. See also Hülser, 'Christlich-soziale Realpolitik', *Der Deutsche*, no. 171, 24 July 1929, and Hülser, 'Christlich-sozialer Aufbruch', *Der Jungdeutsche*, no. 175, 30 July 1929.

whole, became more and more pronounced. Not only had the leaders of the party's agrarian wing become increasingly disaffected from Hugenberg and the DNVP party leadership,⁴¹ but Christian-Social preparations for the founding of a new party that would serve as a Protestant counterweight to the Centre Party had gained considerable momentum.⁴² All of this came as a bitter pill for Westarp, who had become increasingly critical of Hugenberg's dependence on Hitler and believed that 'a sharp confrontation with the National Socialists could no longer be avoided'.⁴³ In late summer and early autumn 1929 Westarp left no stone unturned in his efforts to placate the leaders of the DNVP's agrarian wing and to keep the Christian-Socials from breaking away from the party.⁴⁴ Many of Hugenberg's opponents within the party hoped that the proposed Freedom Law would not receive enough signatures in the plebiscite stage of the process for it to be sent to the Reichstag. This could then be used to force Hugenberg's resignation as DNVP chairman at the party's national congress, scheduled to take place in Kassel at the end of November.⁴⁵ But these calculations were completely upset when the proposed Freedom Law, including the controversial imprisonment paragraph, received 10.02 percent of the signatures of all eligible voters, with the result that it would now go to the Reichstag for final action. Now both Hugenberg and his opponents on the DNVP's left wing had to scramble in preparation for the congress. For Hugenberg the immediate priority was to re-establish his authority as party chairman and to carry the struggle against the Young Plan to a conclusion in the upcoming session of the Reichstag, even if this meant a secession on the part of those who opposed the substance and style of his political leadership. For his opponents, on the other hand, the moment to decide whether they would remain with or leave the party had come. For Westarp it was a question of doing everything in his power to preserve the unity of the party and to contain whatever damage a secession on the part of the DNVP's left wing might do to the party's political effectiveness and its future as a viable political force.

The DNVP's Kassel party congress convened on 21 November amidst widespread speculation that Hugenberg's opponents would use the congress as a forum for

⁴¹ For example, see Lind to Hugenberg, 6 May 1929, NL Westarp, Gärtringen, VN 83; Richthofen-Bogulsawitz to Westarp, 6 May 1929, *ibid.*, 102; and Gereke to Westarp, 28 June 1929, *ibid.*, II/35, as well as Wilmowsky to Hugenberg, 11 Oct. 1929, BA Berlin, R 8034 I, 120a/148–9. For further information on the problems the CNBLP was creating for the DNVP see Boedicker to Westarp, 9 Aug. 1929, NL Westarp, Gärtringen, II/35.

⁴² For further details see William L. Patch, Jr, *Christian Trade Unions in the Weimar Republic 1918–1833: The Failure of 'Corporate Pluralism'* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 148–53; and Hartmut Roder, *Der christlich-nationale Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund (DGB) im politisch-ökonomischen Kräftefeld der Weimarer Republik* (Frankfurt a.M., Bern, and New York: Lang, 1986), 461–6.

⁴³ Westarp to Dous, 8 Nov. 1929, NL Westarp, Gärtringen, VN 110. For a more extensive discussion of Westarp's views on National Socialism see Karl J. Mayer, 'Kuno Graf von Westarp als Kritiker des Nationalsozialismus', in Jones and Pyta, *'Ich bin der letzte Preuße'*, 189–216.

⁴⁴ In this respect see the untitled twenty-four-page memorandum on the origins and course of the DNVP party crisis, November–December 1929, that Westarp wrote most likely in December 1929 (hereafter cited as Westarp, Niederschrift über die DNVP-Parteikrise, 1929), NL Westarp, Gärtringen, II/61.

⁴⁵ See Westarp's recollection of his conversation with Lindeiner-Wildau in late October 1929, *ibid.*

executing their resignation from the party.⁴⁶ In his speech before the DNVP executive committee on the first day of the congress, Westarp tried to salvage what remained of party unity by speaking out against a resolution introduced by Hugenberg stipulating that all organs of the party, including the Reichstag delegation, had to support the proposed Freedom Law in its entirety and that any member of the delegation who either voted against the controversial imprisonment paragraph or abstained from voting on it would be subject to disciplinary action by the executive committee.⁴⁷ But Hugenberg's supporters on the DNVP party executive committee, many of whom were intent on driving Hugenberg's opponents from the party,⁴⁸ rallied behind the beleaguered party chairman and rebuffed Westarp's efforts at mediation by a decisive, if not overwhelming, margin.⁴⁹ At this point the committee turned its attention to an incident involving G. R. Treviranus, a member of the DNVP Reichstag delegation and one of Westarp's most trusted associates in the party. In early November Treviranus had written a letter to a long-time family friend in Bremen in which he sharply criticised Hugenberg's leadership of the party and alluded to the growing interest of civil servants, industrialists and white-collar employees in a possible secession from the DNVP. In this context Treviranus suggested that if a change in the DNVP party leadership was no longer possible it would be necessary to find 'a new form from which a progressive conservative politics that is not afraid to call itself conservative could be pursued'.⁵⁰ Through an indiscretion the letter fell into the hands of Hugenberg's confederates, who used it to discredit Treviranus and to initiate expulsion proceedings against the impulsive young deputy. Westarp protested strenuously against the use of a private letter in circumstances such as these, criticised Hugenberg for the way in which he had handled the matter and urged all parties to accept a compromise on the imprisonment paragraph that would preserve the unity of the party in the upcoming parliamentary vote on the referendum against the Young Plan.⁵¹ Once again Hugenberg and his supporters failed to heed Westarp's advice and decided to proceed with expulsion proceedings against the renegade Treviranus.⁵²

The meeting of the DNVP executive committee on the eve of the Kassel party congress did little to ease the tensions that existed within the ranks of the party. If

⁴⁶ For example, see the detailed report from Blank to Reusch, 30 Oct. 1929, RWWA Cologne, Abt. 130, NL Reusch, 4001012024/6.

⁴⁷ Westarp's first statement before the DNVP executive committee, 21 Nov. 1929, NL Westarp, Gärtringen, II/61. For the text of Hugenberg's speech before the DNVP executive committee see BA Berlin, R. 8005, 54/3–5.

⁴⁸ See in particular the resolution adopted and published by the DNVP district executive committee (Landesvorstand) in Potsdam II, 6 Nov. 1929, NL Westarp, Gärtringen, 1929, II/35.

⁴⁹ Westarp to Wallraf, 26 Nov. 1929, NL Westarp, Gärtringen, II/37.

⁵⁰ Treviranus to Ahlefeld, 1 Nov. 1929, BA Koblenz, NL Schmidt-Hannover, 73. The text of the letter may also be found in an apologetic by G. R. Treviranus, 'Rückblick', Als Manuskript gedruckt (n.p., n.d. [1930]), p. 4, a copy of which may be found in NL Westarp, Gärtringen, as well as in the unpublished Nachlaß of Ferdinand Freiherr von Lüninck, Vereinigte Westfälische Adelsarchive, Münster, 823.

⁵¹ Westarp's second statement before the DNVP executive committee, 21 Nov. 1929, NL Westarp, Gärtringen, II/61.

⁵² Treviranus, 'Rückblick', 7.

anything, the meeting only revealed how deep the gulf separating Hugenberg from his critics on the party's left wing actually was. In his keynote address on the following evening Hugenberg stressed above everything else the need for unity if the campaign against the Young Plan was to succeed.⁵³ But it was unity on Hugenberg's terms, with the clear implication that anyone who did not follow his lead was a traitor both to the party and the national cause it so dearly represented. Even Hugenberg's critics embraced the language of national unity in jockeying for position within the party, although with a markedly different twist. Emil Hartwig, chairman of the German National Workers' League (Deutschnationaler Arbeiterbund) and one of the leaders of the Christian-Social movement, delivered an impassioned speech in which he highlighted the crusade against Marxism as the first priority of the German right and implied that fratricidal conflicts like that over the imprisonment paragraph deprived the national front of the unity it needed in order to carry the struggle against Marxism to victory.⁵⁴ But none of this did much to assuage the deep depression of Westarp, who, in the eyes of one observer, sat through Hugenberg's speech with a face full of the greatest concern and deep solemnity. Only once did Westarp do so much as to applaud silently during the standing ovations that were being orchestrated by Hugenberg's confederates.⁵⁵ In reflecting back on the Kassel congress, Westarp lamented the lack of support that his efforts had received from the DNVP party leadership and criticised Hugenberg in particular for his refusal to drop expulsion proceedings against Treviranus in order to salvage what remained of party unity.⁵⁶

IV

The Kassel party congress thus failed to heal the divisions that had developed within the DNVP during the course of the campaign against the Young Plan. The Christian-Socials under Hülser and Hartwig remained bitterly opposed to Hugenberg's leadership of the party and were intent on using the conflict over the controversial imprisonment paragraph as the pretext for leaving the party. In this respect they hoped to trigger a more general secession on the DNVP's left wing that would fully discredit Hugenberg and his policies as DNVP party chairman. Westarp, on the other hand, hoped to limit the scope of the secession and to prevent it from developing into a full-scale mutiny against Hugenberg's leadership of the party. In this respect Westarp hoped that the deputies who refused to support the controversial imprisonment paragraph – here the estimates ranged from a dozen or so to more than thirty – either by voting against it or by not taking part in the final vote could be prevented from leaving the party by being allowed to read a

⁵³ Alfred Hugenberg, *Klare Front zum Freiheitskampf! Rede gehalten auf dem 9. Reichsparteitag der Deutschnationalen Volkspartei in Kassel am 22. November 1929*, Deutschnationale Flugschrift 339 (Berlin: Deutschnationale Schriftenvertriebsstelle, 1929), esp. 3–5, 7–8.

⁵⁴ Hartwig's speech before the DNVP party congress, Kassel, 22 Nov. 1929, BA Berlin, R 8005, 55/44–53.

⁵⁵ Breuer, 'Bericht über den deutschnationalen Parteitag in Kassel vom 21.–23.11.1929', in the unpublished records of the Reich Chancery, Bundesarchiv Berlin, Bestand R 43 I (hereafter cited as BA Berlin, R 43 I), 2654/288–96.

⁵⁶ Westarp to Wallraf, 26 Nov. 1929, NL Westarp, Gärtringen, II/37.

statement to the Reichstag in which they explained the reasons for their action. On the evening of 27 November Westarp met with a group of more than twenty DNVP deputies under the leadership of Hans Erdmann von Lindeiner-Wildau in Berlin's fashionable Hotel Continental. Westarp spoke out strongly against the idea of a secession and rejected a draft statement that had been prepared by Lindeiner-Wildau on the grounds that it was too sharply worded and highlighted the reasons for opposing the imprisonment paragraph without underscoring the extent to which the dissidents too were adamantly opposed to the Young Plan and the policy of fulfilment. At the same time Westarp announced his intention to vote for the Freedom Law in its entirety and urged those who opposed the imprisonment paragraph to remain in the party despite their differences with the party chairman.⁵⁷ Westarp then proceeded to fashion a statement for the dissidents that stressed their unequivocal opposition to the Young Plan despite differences over the language of the imprisonment paragraph, in the hope that this might be acceptable to all factions in the party.⁵⁸

Westarp's compromise received strong support from the RLB's Martin Schiele, who had decided not to take part in the vote on the imprisonment paragraph but also to explain his action in a separate statement to the Reichstag. As Hugenberg himself indicated to Schiele in a private conversation on 29 November, he was amenable to this solution as long as the dissidents supported all other provisions of the Freedom Law and did not vote against the imprisonment paragraph but simply absented themselves from the Reichstag when the decisive vote took place.⁵⁹ But when Westarp had taken the issue to the DNVP Reichstag delegation on the evening of 28 November, he had run into a storm of criticism from Hugenberg's confederates, most of whom seemed more intent on purging the party of its unreliable elements than salvaging party unity. This was particularly true of Hugenberg's close friend and associate Reinhold Quaat, who attacked Westarp not just for having taken part in the meeting of DNVP dissidents the night before but also for having consistently failed to preserve the unity of the delegation at critical points in the party's history. What began as criticism of Westarp's effort to placate the anti-Hugenberg elements on the DNVP's left wing thus quickly escalated into a full-scale attack on Westarp's record as DNVP party leader, first as the party's national chairman and then as its parliamentary leader in the Reichstag.⁶⁰ In the meantime, Westarp's efforts to prevent a secession on the DNVP's left wing were undercut by the unresolved status of the Treviranus affair. At the meeting of the DNVP Reichstag delegation on 28 November Treviranus had taken the floor to defend his indiscretion as a purely private remark to a personal associate and to deny any involvement in the preparations for the founding of a new party.⁶¹ But Treviranus's disclaimer only further inflamed the pro-Hugenberg elements on the party's right wing and did little to ease the tensions within the party.

⁵⁷ Westarp, Niederschrift über die DNVP-Parteikrise, Dec. 1929, NL Westarp, Gärtringen, II/61.

⁵⁸ The text of Westarp's draft has been preserved in NL Westarp, Gärtringen, II/61.

⁵⁹ Westarp, Niederschrift über die DNVP-Parteikrise, Dec. 1929, NL Westarp, Gärtringen, II/61.

⁶⁰ Ibid. See also the entry in Quaat's diary, n.d. [29 Nov. 1929], BA Koblenz, NL Quaat, 16, reprinted in Weiß and Hoser, *Die Deutschnationalen*, 91–92.

⁶¹ Westarp, Niederschrift über die DNVP-Parteikrise, Dec. 1929, NL Westarp, Gärtringen, II/61. See also Treviranus's account of these developments in Treviranus, 'Rückblick', 7–9.

When the DNVP Reichstag delegation resumed its deliberations on the morning of 29 November, Hugenberg's supporters intensified their attacks on the dissidents and on their plans to release a statement explaining their reasons for not supporting the controversial imprisonment paragraph. At the urging of Westarp and Schiele, who had caucused with the dissidents during the course of the meeting, all the dissidents with the exception of Hülser finally relented and agreed simply to absent themselves during the critical vote without issuing a public explanation of their behaviour. All of this represented a modest victory for Westarp and Schiele, who earned expressions of gratitude from Hugenberg and several of his supporters for their tireless efforts on behalf of party unity.⁶² This arrangement, however, quickly fell apart when, after the decisive vote on the so-called Freedom Law on the morning of 30 November – a vote in which thirteen Nationalist deputies including Treviranus and Lindeiner-Wildau refrained from voting on the imprisonment paragraph, while another ten, some for reasons of poor health, missed the session altogether⁶³ – Hartwig, Hülser and Lambach issued a statement identifying themselves with the position taken by Schiele, declaring their solidarity with Treviranus, and criticising the DNVP party leadership for its inability to tolerate differences of political opinion.⁶⁴ This violated the arrangement to which Hugenberg had reluctantly assented, whereupon the DNVP party chairman called for an emergency session of the DNVP executive committee on 3 December for the purpose of initiating expulsion proceedings against the three renegade deputies.⁶⁵

Over the weekend Westarp negotiated furiously with all the concerned parties in an attempt to prevent the crisis from escalating into a major secession on the DNVP's left wing. But he was repeatedly frustrated, not just by the mutual intransigence of both Hugenberg and the Christian-Socials but also by the lingering uncertainty regarding the disposition of the Treviranus affair.⁶⁶ Consequently, when the DNVP executive committee convened on the morning of 3 December to deal with the implications of the split in the Reichstag vote on the Freedom Law, the lines had hardened to the point where no compromise was possible.⁶⁷ Hugenberg opened the meeting with a motion calling for the expulsion of three Christian-Socials for having done severe damage to the image of the party.⁶⁸ In the debate that followed Hartwig, who began by announcing that he already considered himself expelled from the party, offered an impassioned defence of the statement he and his colleagues had issued after the Reichstag vote on the Freedom Law and complained bitterly about the way in

⁶² Westarp, Niederschrift über die DNVP-Parteikrise, Dec. 1929, NL Westarp, Gärtringen, II/61.

⁶³ *Verhandlungen des Reichstags*, vol. 426, 1.

⁶⁴ For the text of this statement see *Klärung und Sammlung. Der Wortlaut der wichtigeren Veröffentlichungen gelegentlich der Klärung im deutschnationalen Lager*. Als Handschrift gedruckt (N.p., n.d. [1929–30]), 8.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁶⁶ Westarp, Niederschrift über die DNVP-Parteikrise, Dec. 1929, NL Westarp, Gärtringen, II/61.

⁶⁷ For example, see the article by Lambach, 'Gegen Erstarrungserscheinungen im politischen Leben', *Berliner Börsen-Zeitung*, 2 Dec. 1929, no. 562, reprinted in *Klärung und Sammlung*, 3–6. See also the entry in Quatz's diary, 2 Dec. 1929, reprinted in Weiß and Hoser, *Die Deutschnationalen*, 92–3.

⁶⁸ *Klärung und Sammlung*, 9. A synopsis of the meeting from the perspective of the DNVP party leadership may be found in DNVP, Mitteilung no. 51, 5 Dec. 1929, in the unpublished Nachlaß of Alfred Diller, Forschungsstelle für Zeitgeschichte in Hamburg (hereafter cited as FZG Hamburg, NL Diller), 10.

which the so-called Freedom Law had come into existence without the co-operation or involvement of the DNVP Reichstag delegation. All of this, concluded Hartwig, underscored the lack of genuine leadership skills on the part of the DNVP party chairman, who had failed to build the necessary consensus for an action as ambitious as the referendum against the Young Plan.⁶⁹ Westarp, on the other hand, expressed disappointment with the decision of the dissidents to issue a public statement on the reasons for their refusal to vote for the imprisonment paragraph, for in his mind this was clearly designed to force the introduction of expulsion proceedings against them. Westarp then proceeded to draw a parallel to the situation before and during the First World War, when the splintering of the German right had resulted in total impotence, and implored all the party leadership and the dissidents of whatever stripe to resolve their differences for the sake of party unity.⁷⁰ But Westarp's entreaties were to little avail, as Hugenberg and his supporters prevailed by a margin of sixty-five to nine, with three abstentions, including that of Westarp himself, in a vote to approve the beginning of expulsion proceedings against the three Christian-Socials and Treviranus for the damage they had presumably caused to the image of the party and the unity of the national front.⁷¹

All of this represented a clear repudiation of the general policy that Westarp had pursued since the beginning of the crisis. At a meeting of the DNVP Reichstag delegation later that afternoon, Westarp appealed once again for the various factions within the party to set aside their differences for the sake of party unity and solidarity in the struggle against the Young Plan.⁷² As in the past, Westarp's words went unheeded, this time by the Christian-Socials, who were determined to leave the party and were no longer interested in any compromise that might save party unity. Immediately after the meeting Hülser and Lambach announced their resignation from the party and the DNVP Reichstag delegation. Over the next twenty-four hours they were joined by ten other DNVP Reichstag deputies, among them several of Westarp's most trusted associates in the party.⁷³ The secession might very well have been far more extensive had not Schiele decided to remain with the DNVP in the hope that it still might be possible to force a change in the party's national leadership.⁷⁴ As it was, however, the secessionists' hopes of triggering a full-scale rebellion against Hugenberg at the grassroots of the DNVP party organisation failed to materialise as the leaders of one district organisation after another came out in support of the beleaguered party

⁶⁹ Hartwig's speech before the DNVP executive committee, 3 Dec. 1929, BA Berlin, R 8005, 55/19–27, reprinted in its entirety in *Klärung und Sammlung*, 9–18.

⁷⁰ Westarp's speech before the DNVP executive committee, 3 Dec. 1929, NL Westarp, Gärtringen, II/61.

⁷¹ DNVP, Mitteilung no. 51, 5 Dec. 1929, FZG Hamburg, NL Diller, 10.

⁷² Westarp to Wallraf, 5 Dec. 1929, NL Westarp, Gärtringen, II/37.

⁷³ The text of their statements and resignation letters have been reprinted in *Klärung und Sammlung*, 18–30, as well as in the official DNVP publication, *Die Abtrünnigen. Die Geschichte einer Abspaltung, die die Festigung einer Partei brachte*, Deutschnationales Rüstzeug, no. 16 (Berlin: Deutschnationale Schriftenvertriebsstelle, 1930), 13–20. See also the account of the DNVP secession in Blank to Reusch, 5 Dec. 1929, RWWA Cologne, Abt. 130, NL Reusch, 4001012024/6.

⁷⁴ Wilmowsky to Krupp, 7 Dec. 1929, HA Krupp, FAH 23/503.

chairman.⁷⁵ Ever since Hugenberg's election to the party chairmanship in autumn 1928 the Pan-Germans had worked tirelessly to gain control of the party's local organisation,⁷⁶ with the result that the DNVP moderates no longer possessed the support they had once enjoyed at the local and district levels of the DNVP party organisation. For Hugenberg and his confederates, on the other hand, the secession was less a leadership crisis than a purge by which the DNVP had cleansed itself of unreliable elements that had become superfluous in the struggle for a fundamental change in the existing political order.⁷⁷

V

For Westarp the lack of support he had received from Hugenberg and his supporters in the struggle to prevent a secession on the party's left wing revealed just how little the DNVP party chairman valued his efforts on behalf of party unity, and at a meeting of the DNVP Reichstag delegation on 4 December he submitted his resignation as the party's parliamentary leader, despite a strenuous and apparently sincere effort on Hugenberg's part to dissuade him from taking such a step.⁷⁸ Westarp's resignation as chairman of the DNVP Reichstag delegation brought to a close one of the most productive periods in his long political career. Since his election to this post in January 1925 he had been close to centre of power in Weimar Germany, sometimes on the outside, trying to influence the formulation and implementation of policies over which he and his party had very little direct control, and at other times from the inside, where his party was able to use its leverage within the government to exercise a major influence on the shape and substance of German domestic and, to a lesser extent, foreign policy. Now, over the course of the next seven months, Westarp would wage a rearguard action against Hugenberg's efforts to bring all aspects of life in the DNVP under his personal control. Although Westarp was careful not to do anything that might cause Hugenberg or the DNVP further embarrassment, he would find it increasingly difficult to go along with Hugenberg's *Katastrophenpolitik* (literally, politics of catastrophe) and would seek ways to bring the full force of Germany's conservative establishment to bear on the rapidly deteriorating situation throughout the country.

⁷⁵ In this respect see 'Kundgebung der deutschnationalen Führer', *Mitteilungen der Deutschnationalen Volkspartei*, 6 Dec. 1929, NL Westarp, Gärtringen, II/38, repr. with supporting materials in *Unsere Partei* 7, no. 24 (15 Dec. 1929), 417–28.

⁷⁶ Claß to Wegener, 24 May 1929, in the unpublished Nachlaß of Leo Wegener, Bundesarchiv Koblenz, 23. This can be seen particularly well in the case of Saxony. For further details see Jones, 'Saxony', 343–54.

⁷⁷ In this respect see the letter from Count von Seidlitz-Sandreczki, chairman of the Central Association of German Conservatives, to Westarp, 6 Dec. 1929, NL Westarp, Gärtringen, II/37, as well as the article by Hugenberg's close supporter Paul Bang, 'Nicht Führerkrise, sondern Fraktionskrise', *Deutsche Zeitung*, no. 287, 7 Dec. 1929. See also the account of the secession by Hugenberg loyalist Lothar Steuer, *Absplitterung von der D.N.V.P.*, Volk und Vaterland, nos. 160–2 (Kassel: Volk und Vaterland, 1930), 1–8.

⁷⁸ Westarp to Wällraf, 5 Dec. 1929, NL Westarp, Gärtringen, II/37. See also Westarp's letter to Countess Sanna von Westarp, 14 Dec. 1929, *ibid.*, VN 104, as well as his account in Westarp, Niederschrift über die DNVP-Parteikrise, Dec. 1929, *ibid.*, II/61.

Despite the fact that he was no longer chairman of the DNVP Reichstag delegation, Westarp remained very much at the centre of various scenarios for a realignment of forces on the German right and the establishment of a new national government based on the parties of the middle and moderate right. It was in this context that Westarp met Reich President Paul von Hindenburg on 15 January 1930. In asking for a meeting with Westarp, Hindenburg was trying to determine whether or not the DNVP under Hugenberg's leadership might be willing to participate in the formation of a new coalition government that would be free from Social Democratic influence and that would derive its legitimacy not from a parliamentary majority in the Reichstag but from the authority of the Reich President himself. Without committing himself to such a project, Westarp responded that while the DNVP would certainly welcome an end to the socialist presence in the national government, he doubted that the DNVP would participate in the formation of a new government as long as Hugenberg remained at the helm of the party – and, if then, only under conditions that the president and his entourage would find difficult to meet. Westarp went on to say that he did not foresee a change in the DNVP leadership at any time in the near future, inasmuch as Hugenberg and his supporters were in firm control of the party's governing bodies and its local organisation. If anything, Westarp added, the recent secession of the twelve moderates from the DNVP Reichstag delegation had only strengthened Hugenberg's position in the party. Of Hugenberg's opponents who had remained in the party, only Schiele possessed a power base of his own, and even that, Westarp continued, was under siege. Given his pessimistic view of the situation within the DNVP and his deep reservations about Hugenberg's leadership ability, Westarp saw little chance that the DNVP would be able to play any sort of positive role in the political changes the Reich President had in mind.⁷⁹

Over the course of the next two and a half months the stability of Germany's parliamentary democracy became more and more suspect as it wrestled with the social and fiscal consequences of the deepening economic crisis that had descended on Germany in the last months of 1929. With the dismissal of the government headed by the Social Democrat Hermann Müller in late March 1930 the fate of Weimar democracy was effectively sealed. Against the background of these developments Germany's military elite and its allies in the conservative establishment began to explore alternatives to the existing political system that would have decoupled the exercise of executive authority from the will of the people as manifest in the constantly shifting party relationships of the Reichstag.⁸⁰ For his own part, Westarp had little direct role in the series of events that led to the experiment in presidential government

⁷⁹ Westarp's memorandum on his conversation with Hugenberg, 15 Jan. 1930, NL Westarp, Gärtringen, II/61, reprinted in Ilse Maurer and Udo Wengst, eds., *Politik und Wirtschaft in der Krise 1930–1932. Quellen zur Ära Brüning*, 2 vols. (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1980), I, 13–18. For Schiele's own position on the situation within the DNVP see his letter to Traub, 4 Feb. 1930, in the unpublished Nachlaß of Gottfried Traub, Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, 67/106–7.

⁸⁰ For the classic analysis of this process see Werner Conze, 'Die Krise des Parteienstaates in Deutschland 1929/30', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 178 (1954), 47–83. On the political strategy of Germany's military elite see Thilo Vogelsang, *Reichswehr, Staat und NSDAP. Ein Beitrag zur deutschen Geschichte 1930–1932* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1962), 65–80.

in spring 1930. It was only after Schiele had been persuaded by Hindenburg to assume the ministry of agriculture in the new cabinet of the Centre's politician Heinrich Brüning that Westarp was drawn once again into the vortex of events. Westarp met with Schiele for the better part of two days after he had been invited to join the new government, and played a major role in drafting the set of conditions that Schiele attached to his entry into the cabinet. Here Westarp sought to sharpen the substance and tone of the conditions that Schiele was to submit to the chancellor-designate in the hope that they would prove unacceptable to the architects of the new government and thus lead to the collapse of the cabinet negotiations.⁸¹ But once his appointment became official, Schiele proceeded to resign his Reichstag mandate as well as his seat in the DNVP executive committee so that he might have the freedom of action necessary to address the increasingly desperate situation in the German countryside and to put together a comprehensive programme of agrarian relief.⁸²

All this placed Westarp and his supporters in the DNVP Reichstag delegation in a particularly difficult situation. For not only was Brüning a profoundly conservative politician who enjoyed strong support among the twelve deputies who had left the DNVP in December 1929,⁸³ but the new cabinet was far more conservative in terms of its basic composition than any of its predecessors and included two of Westarp's closest political associates, Schiele and Treviranus. More importantly, the new chancellor enjoyed the full support of Reich President von Hindenburg and had been promised extensive emergency powers, including the special powers that Article 48 of the Weimar constitution had vested in the office of the Reich president, to deal with the deepening agrarian crisis along with the other problems that had descended on Germany with the onset of the world economic crisis. Westarp realised that the formation of the of the Brüning cabinet placed the already fragile unity of the DNVP at renewed risk, and he was concerned that the party might very well fall apart in any new parliamentary test. At a caucus of the DNVP Reichstag delegation on 1 April 1930 Westarp lined up behind his party chairman and insisted that the DNVP had no other choice but to take a strong stand against the new cabinet.⁸⁴ But once it became

⁸¹ Westarp, untitled memorandum on the formation of the Brüning cabinet and the negotiations through the rejection of the first no-confidence motion on 3 April 1930, n.d. [Apr. 1930], NL Westarp, Gärtringen, II/61, reprinted in Maurer and Wengst, *Politik und Wirtschaft*, I, 112–14. Schiele's conditions are outlined in a letter to Brüning, 29 Mar. 1930, in the unpublished Nachlaß of Hermann Pünder, Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, 131/231–34. On the circumstances and strategic considerations that surrounded the formation of the Brüning cabinet see William L. Patch, Jr, *Heinrich Brüning and the Dissolution of the Weimar Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 73–89; and Herbert Hömig, *Brüning. Kanzler in der Krise der Republik. Eine Weimarer Biographie* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2000), 149–57.

⁸² Schiele to Hugenberg, 31 Mar. 1930, BA Berlin, R 8005, 36/120–21.

⁸³ Ulrich Roeske, 'Brüning und die Volkskonservativen (1930)', *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, 19 (1971), 904–15. See also Erasmus Jonas, *Die Volkskonservativen 1928–1933. Entwicklung, Struktur, Standort und politische Zielsetzung* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1965), 63–65.

⁸⁴ Notes on the meeting of the DNVP Reichstag delegation, 1 Apr. 1930, BA Koblenz, NL Schmidt-Hannover, 72a/81–83, reprinted in Maurer and Wengst, *Politik und Wirtschaft*, I, 107–8. For further information on the situation within the DNVP see Blank to Reusch, 2 Apr. 1930, RWVA Cologne, Abt. 130, NL Reusch, 4001012024/6, and Westarp's memorandum on the formation of the Brüning

clear that the new government was prepared to make agrarian relief its first and highest priority, Westarp began to modify his position in the face of growing opposition from the leaders of the DNVP's agrarian wing to Hugenberg's political course.⁸⁵ When the delegation met again on 2 April, twenty-eight deputies supported Hugenberg in his decision to oppose the new government, while no fewer than eighteen – and possibly more in the light of a large number of abstentions – favoured supporting the Brüning cabinet.⁸⁶ On the following day Hugenberg averted what would almost certainly have been another major secession on the DNVP's left wing when, after securing an ironclad commitment from Brüning that his government's first order of business would be to implement an emergency farm programme, he announced to the great relief of almost everyone in the delegation that the DNVP would support the new cabinet in the vote of confidence that was scheduled to take place in the Reichstag later that afternoon.⁸⁷ In defending this decision before the Reichstag, Hugenberg claimed credit for having saved the Brüning government from an embarrassing defeat at the hands of the Social Democrats and having thus given it the time it needed to implement a comprehensive programme of agrarian relief.⁸⁸

Westarp no doubt breathed a sigh of relief when Hugenberg relented and avoided what would have certainly been an irreparable split in the DNVP Reichstag delegation by instructing it to vote against the motion of no-confidence that the Social Democrats brought against the Brüning cabinet on 3 April 1930. But to Westarp the Brüning government was still a government that was dependent on the will of the parties that supported it. In this respect, it was no different from any of its predecessors, and it was, in his mind, only a matter of time until it too would have to be driven from office. Moreover, Westarp believed that the formation of the new government was part of a concerted effort by the forces behind Brüning to split the DNVP in two and thus render it ineffective as a member of the national opposition. That being the case, however, it was still imperative, Westarp argued, to do everything possible to prevent the complete collapse of Germany's agricultural economy, so that when the showdown with the new government finally came, the DNVP would not have to run into the teeth of organised agricultural interests embittered by the party's failure to do what it could to help the German farmer in his hour of need. It was

cabinet, n.d. [Apr. 1930], NL Westarp, Gärtringen, II/61, both reprinted in Maurer and Wengst, *Politik und Wirtschaft*, I, 110–14.

⁸⁵ Westarp's remarks at a meeting of the DNVP Reichstag delegation, 2 Apr. 1930, BA Koblenz, NL Schmidt-Hannover, 72a/83–86, reprinted in Maurer and Wengst, *Politik und Wirtschaft*, I, 108–10.

⁸⁶ Entry in Quatz's diary, 2 Apr. 1930, BA Koblenz, NL Quatz, 16, reprinted in Weiß and Hoser, *Die Deutschnationalen*, 107.

⁸⁷ See Obeföhren's report at a meeting of the DNVP Reichstag delegation, 3 Apr. 1930, BA Koblenz, NL Schmidt-Hannover, 72a/86–87, reprinted in Maurer and Wengst, *Politik und Wirtschaft*, I, 112, as well as the entry in Quatz's diary, 3 Apr. 1930, BA Koblenz, NL Quatz, 16, reprinted in Weiß and Hoser, *Die Deutschnationalen*, 107. See also DNVP Parteizentrale, Sondermitteilung no. 12a, 16 Apr. 1930, BA Berlin, R 8005, 11/31–35.

⁸⁸ Hugenberg's interpellation in the Reichstag, 3 Apr. 1930, reprinted in *Unsere Partei* 8, no. 7 (4 Apr. 1930), 61–62. For a somewhat tortured defence of this decisions see Hugenberg to Hitler, 3 Apr. 1930, BA Koblenz, NL Schmidt-Hannover, 30, reprinted in Maurer and Wengst, *Politik und Wirtschaft*, I, 114–16.

therefore necessary for the DNVP to tolerate the Brüning cabinet at least until its farm programme had been enacted into law.⁸⁹

The crisis, however, was far from over. On 5 April Brüning, a fiscal conservative committed to reducing the overall level of government spending, announced that adoption of the agrarian programme was contingent on the passage of a sweeping reform of German finances that included, among other things, substantial tax increases on the consumption of non-essential items such as tobacco and beer. Hugenberg and his associates in the DNVP party leadership assailed the chancellor's linkage of agrarian reform to tax reform as a ploy to secure the passage of new taxes that otherwise would have been rejected.⁹⁰ Buoyed by the strong declarations of support he had received from the DNVP executive committee and DNVP party representation on 8 and 9 April respectively,⁹¹ Hugenberg instructed his party's parliamentary deputies to vote against the proposed tax bill when it came to the floor of the Reichstag, even though this almost certainly meant that the government would drop its plans for a comprehensive farm relief programme, dissolve the Reichstag and call for new elections in which the DNVP would be at a distinct disadvantage.⁹² Hugenberg's action evoked a storm of protest from the DNVP's agrarian deputies and raised the spectre of an immediate and far-reaching secession on the party's agrarian wing.⁹³ Determined to prevent a further weakening of the DNVP, Westarp led a contingent of thirty-one deputies who on 12 April ignored Hugenberg's instructions and voted for the measure combining the government's tax and farm bills into a single bill, thereby securing its passage by a narrow margin. This scenario repeated itself throughout the rest of the day and then again on 14 April as the group of DNVP dissidents led by Westarp continued to support the various measures that Brüning and his cabinet brought to the floor of the Reichstag.⁹⁴

Throughout the April crisis Westarp's overriding concern was to prevent a major secession on the part of the DNVP's farm leaders. To do this, it was imperative that

⁸⁹ Westarp, 'Das Kabinett Brüning und die Deutschnationale Volkspartei', *Neue Preussische (Kreuz-) Zeitung*, 6 Apr. 1930, no. 98.

⁹⁰ For example, see Quaat, 'Kabinett Brüning und deutsche Bauernnot', *Der Tag*, 12 Apr. 1930, no. 88.

⁹¹ *Unsere Partei* 8, no. 8 (16 April 1930), 78–79. For a more detailed account of the proceedings of the DNVP executive committee, 8 Apr. 1930, see the unpublished memoirs of Hans Hilpert, 'Meinungen und Kämpfe. Meine politischen Erinnerungen', Nachlaß Hans Hilpert, Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Munich (hereafter cited as BHStA Munich, NL Hilpert), 22/4263–65.

⁹² In this respect see Hugenberg's remarks before the DNVP Reichstag delegation, 11–12 Apr. 1930, NL Schmidt-Hannover, 72a, reprinted in Maurer and Wengst, *Politik und Wirtschaft*, I, 132–138.

⁹³ In this respect see Richthofen-Boguslawitz to Hugenberg, 13 Apr. 1930, BA Koblenz, NL Schmidt-Hannover, 74. See also Lind to Kriegsheim, 2 May 1930, with attachments, BA Berlin, R 8034 I, 99/4–24. For further details see Müller, 'Fällt der Bauer, stürzt der Staat', 158–82.

⁹⁴ On 12 April 1930 the DNVP Reichstag delegation split thirty-one to twenty-three in favour of the government's decision to combine the tax and farm bills into a single bill. On 14 April 1930 the margin in the DNVP Reichstag delegation was thirty-six deputies in favour of the government's tax and farm bills and twenty opposed. In both cases there were eight absences, three for reasons of health. For further details see Reichert, 'Die parlamentarische Vorgänge in den Tagen vom 1. bis 14. April 1930', n.d. [Apr. 1930], BA Koblenz, NL Schmidt-Hannover, 74, as well as the entries in Quaat's diary, 10–14 April 1930, BA Koblenz, NL Quaat, 16, reprinted in Weiß and Hoser, *Die Deutschnationalen*, 108–11.

the DNVP help secure passage of the measures Schiele and the Brüning government deemed necessary to prevent the complete collapse of Germany's agricultural economy, even if this meant accepting political conditions that the DNVP found objectionable.⁹⁵ Westarp's worst fear was that an open war might develop between the DNVP and its one-time allies in the German agricultural community, with disastrous consequences for the party in the event of new national elections.⁹⁶ None of this, however, played a role in Hugenberg's political calculations. In the aftermath of the split in the DNVP vote in the Reichstag on 12 and 14 April 1930 the DNVP leadership launched a full-scale attack on Schiele and the leaders of the National Rural League for having sabotaged the unity of the national front by placing the special interests of organised agriculture before the national welfare.⁹⁷ At the same time that an open war had erupted between the DNVP and RLB, Hugenberg moved quickly to mobilise his supporters at the local and district levels of the DNVP party organisation in an effort to impose even tighter discipline on the party's Reichstag delegation.⁹⁸ The issue came to a head at a special meeting of the DNVP executive committee on 25 April, when Hugenberg introduced a resolution that would make the decisions of the party executive committee and party leader binding on all members of the party's delegations in the Reichstag and sundry state parliaments throughout the country. Failure to observe these decisions would result in expulsion from the party.⁹⁹ Westarp protested vigorously against the resolution, denouncing it as 'a tyrannical suppression of the deputy's responsibility to his conscience, to his electorate, to the interests standing behind him, and to the other political parties'.¹⁰⁰ But in the final analysis such entreaties were to no avail, and the resolution was approved by an overwhelming four-fifths majority of the committee members.¹⁰¹ Unfazed by these developments, Westarp wrote to Hugenberg on 2 May on behalf of the twenty-eight Nationalist deputies who had gathered around him to defend their vote in the Reichstag and register their refusal to abide by the resolution the DNVP executive committee had adopted at its meeting on 25 April.¹⁰²

⁹⁵ Westarp, 'Agrarprogramm und Steuervorlage', *Neue Preußische (Kreuz-)Zeitung*, 17 Apr. 1930, no. 108. See also Westarp to Hugenberg, 16 Apr. 1930, BA Koblenz, NL Schmidt-Hannover, 74, also in BA Berlin, R 8005, 11/45–51.

⁹⁶ Westarp to Foertsch, 28 May 1930, NL Westarp, Gärtringen.

⁹⁷ For example, see 'Kampf des Hugenberg-Kreises gegen den Landbund', n.d. [Apr. 1930], and 'Politische Methoden der parteioffiziösen Presse im Kampf gegen Minister Schiele und das Kabinett Brüning', 23 Apr. 1930, both in NL Westarp, Gärtringen, VN 20.

⁹⁸ For example, see the resolution adopted by the DNVP district organisation in Potsdam II, reprinted in *Der Tag*, no. 96, 22 Apr. 1930.

⁹⁹ See Hugenberg's remarks at the meeting of the DNVP executive committee, 25 Apr. 1930, BA Koblenz, NL Schmidt-Hannover, 72a, reprinted in Maurer and Wengst, *Politik und Wirtschaft*, I, 138–49.

¹⁰⁰ Westarp's speech before the DNVP executive committee, 25 Apr. 1930, NL Westarp, Gärtringen, II/61.

¹⁰¹ *Unsere Partei* 8, no. 9 (1 May 1930), 86–7.

¹⁰² See the correspondence between Westarp and Hugenberg, 2–5 May 1930, BA Koblenz, NL Hugenberg, 190, reprinted in Maurer and Wengst, *Politik und Wirtschaft*, I, 153–4.

VI

This turn of events represented a disappointing defeat for Westarp, who had tried unsuccessfully to preserve the autonomy of the Reichstag delegation ever since Hugenberg's election to the party chairman in autumn 1928. At the same time, however, Westarp did not believe that this should be used as the pretext for the founding of a new party and, along with Schiele, did his best to dissuade the anti-Hugenberg forces within the DNVP from leaving the party.¹⁰³ But the anti-Hugenberg sentiment was so strong on the DNVP's agrarian wing that another full-scale secession was all but inevitable as long as Hugenberg remained at the helm of the party. After the first secession from the DNVP in December 1929, Treviranus and his circle of supporters tried to create a single organisation in which all those who had broken away from the DNVP could unite, but they were unable to overcome the centrifugal forces that were at work among the more moderate elements of the German right.¹⁰⁴ Those defectors with close ties to German agriculture invariably gravitated toward the Christian-National Peasants and Farmers' Party,¹⁰⁵ while the Christian-Socials joined forces with kindred groups from throughout the country to found the Christian-Social People's Service (Christlich-Sozialer Volksdienst, CSVD) at the end of December 1929.¹⁰⁶ Under these circumstances Treviranus, Lindeiner-Wildau and those former DNVP parliamentarians who did not belong to either of these two factions proceeded to found the People's Conservative Association (Volkskonservative Vereinigung, VKV) in late January 1930 as the crystallisation point around which all of those conservatives who had been left politically homeless by the recent events in the DNVP could coalesce for the purpose of making a positive contribution to the reconstruction of the German state.¹⁰⁷

For his own part Westarp deplored the increasing fragmentation of the German right and held out little hope that Hugenberg and the defectors would ever reconcile their differences or that the latter would ever return to the party.¹⁰⁸ During the first months of 1930 Westarp had little in the way of direct contact with the twelve deputies who had seceded from the DNVP in December 1929. By the same token, he showed little interest in the appeal of Ernst Scholz, the national party chairman of

¹⁰³ Westarp, 'Betr. Trennungsabsichten', [undated manuscript from before July 1930], NL Westarp, Gärtringen, XII/61.

¹⁰⁴ For the most detailed record of these negotiations see the entries in Passarge's diary, 5–30 Jan. 1930, in the unpublished Nachlaß of Hans Passarge, Bundesarchiv Koblenz (hereafter cited as BA Koblenz, NL Passarge), 2/8–26.

¹⁰⁵ For further details see Markus Müller, *Die Christlich-nationale-Bauern- und Landvolkpartei 1928–1933* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 2001), 139–161.

¹⁰⁶ On the founding of the CSVD see *Um die neue Front. Die Vereinigung der Stöckerschen Christlich-Sozialen mit dem Christlichen Volksdienst. Ein Rückblick auf die Berliner Verhandlungen vom 27./28. Dezember 1929*, Schriften des Christlichen Volksdienstes, no. 5 (Kornthal-Stuttgart: Christl. Volksdienstverl., n.d. [1930]). The course of these negotiations can be reconstructed from materials in BA Berlin, NL Mumm, 284. See also Opitz, *Volksdienst*, 150–5.

¹⁰⁷ *Volkskonservative Stimmen. Zeitschrift der Volkskonservativen Vereinigung* 1, no. 1 (1 Feb. 1930): 1. See also Gottfried Treviranus, *Auf neuen Wegen*, Volkskonservative Flugschriften, no. 2 (Berlin: Volkskonservative Vereinigung, 1930), 5–8. For further details see Jonas, *Volkskonservativen*, 57–60.

¹⁰⁸ Westarp to Berg, 19 Jan. 1930, NL Westarp, Gärtringen, VN 1.

the Democratic People's Party (Deutsche Volkspartei, DVP), at the party's Mannheim party congress in March 1930 for 'a closer union' of all those state-supporting bourgeois forces committed to a policy of positive and constructive co-operation, an appeal that carried the address of the twelve Nationalist defectors and their sympathisers on the DNVP's left wing.¹⁰⁹ Nor did the situation change to any appreciable degree after the DNVP Reichstag delegation had split in the votes on the government's tax and farm bills in the first half of April 1930. For although the leaders of the DNVP's agrarian wing had been prepared to break away from the party at a moment's notice, Westarp repeatedly counselled them to wait for a more propitious moment when they stood a better chance of bringing a significant part of the DNVP's grass-roots organisation along with them. Here Westarp was quite happy to defer to Schiele, who in a meeting with a group of DNVP dissidents on 28 April expressed the hope that it still might be possible to force a change in the DNVP party leadership. But in the event that this would no longer be possible, Schiele proposed the creation of a new conservative people's party that might be in a better position than the DNVP even, without Hugenberg to reintegrate into a larger political constellation the CNBLP and the various regional agrarian tickets that were almost certain to take part in new Reichstag elections.¹¹⁰

In the short run, the reconstruction of the German right was hampered by the fact that the twelve defectors and their allies in the CNBLP were now part of the government coalition, while the party to which Westarp still belonged was part of the opposition.¹¹¹ Westarp and Schiele were thus obliged to put plans for the creation of a new conservative party on hold until a moment that offered a greater chance of success presented itself.¹¹² The situation in the DNVP Reichstag delegation remained highly volatile throughout the remainder of the spring and into the early part of the summer, and it was only a matter of time until the opportunity for which Westarp and Schiele had been waiting presented itself.¹¹³ In July, as the Brüning cabinet tried to secure passage of a budget proposal that included a number of new taxes, the Nationalists found themselves confronted with a decision that was not all that dissimilar to the one they had faced in April. By now Hugenberg was more or less oblivious to the consequences of another secession. As far as he was concerned, a new secession would only help to clarify the situation within the

¹⁰⁹ See the report of Scholz's speech in Reichsgeschäftsstelle der Deutschen Volkspartei, ed., *8. Reichsparteitag der Deutschen Volkspartei in Mannheim vom 21. bis 23. März 1930* (Berlin: Reichsgeschäftsstelle der DVP, n.d. [1930]), 3–6. For the strategic calculations that lay behind this speech see Scholz's speech at a meeting of the DVP national committee (Reichsausschuß), 2 Mar. 1930, in the unpublished records of the German People's Party, Bundesarchiv Koblenz, Bestand R 45 II, 32/25–27. For further details see Larry Eugene Jones, *German Liberalism and the Dissolution of the Weimar Party System, 1918–1933* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 355–8; and Ludwig Richter, *Die Deutsche Volkspartei 1918–1933* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 2002), 615–21.

¹¹⁰ Westarp, 'Betr. Trennungsabsichten', NL Westarp, Gärtringen, II/61.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² For further details see Blank to Reusch, 24 May 1930, RWWA Cologne, Abt. 130, NL Reusch, 4001012024/6, reprinted in Maurer and Wengst, *Politik und Wirtschaft*, I, 174–6.

¹¹³ Westarp to Schultz-Bromberg, 28 June 1930, NL Westarp, Gärtringen, VN 24.

DNVP and make it possible for him and his supporters to establish control over the entire party organisation, including the mutinous DNVP Reichstag delegation. As a result, Hugenberg and his confederates had no inclination whatsoever to strike a compromise with the Brüning cabinet that would permit the passage of its proposed budget or to postpone the dissolution of the Reichstag and new national elections. And if the dissidents on the DNVP's left wing refused once again to follow his lead, then the time for a final and definitive break had come.¹¹⁴

On 16 July 1930 the Reichstag rejected the government's tax bill by a margin of 256 to 193, with the overwhelming majority of the Nationalist delegation voting against the government. The government then announced that it intended to enact its budgetary proposals with presidential emergency powers, although in a somewhat modified form in order to circumvent a provision in the Weimar Constitution that prohibited a government from enacting by emergency powers a bill that had already been rejected by the Reichstag. By eschewing parliamentary approval of its budget and the tax increases it contained, the Brüning cabinet effectively abandoned parliamentary government for a more authoritarian style of political leadership.¹¹⁵ While the Nationalists hailed this as 'a stake in the heart of parliamentarism [*ein Stoß ins Herz des Parlamentarismus*]',¹¹⁶ the Social Democrats responded by introducing a motion that sought to suspend the government's emergency powers. Acceptance of this motion would almost certainly have meant the dissolution of the Reichstag and a call for new national elections. At a stormy session of the DNVP Reichstag delegation on the morning of 17 July, Hugenberg claimed that the party's tactical situation was strong, but only as long as all members of the delegation stood behind the party leadership in its negotiations with the Brüning cabinet and were united in their resolve to support the Social Democratic motion to suspend the government's emergency powers if the DNVP's negotiations with the cabinet failed. Hugenberg then introduced a resolution to this effect that would be binding on all members of the delegation should it prove impossible to reach agreement with the government.¹¹⁷ Hugenberg's resolution triggered a lengthy and heated debate that was still unresolved when the delegation broke off its deliberations in the early afternoon. For while Westarp and his supporters endorsed Hugenberg's decision to initiate negotiations with the government, they were reluctant to give him the blank cheque he was seeking and refused to make any binding commitments regarding

¹¹⁴ See Hugenberg's remarks before the DNVP Reichstag delegation, 2 and 10 July 1930, BA Koblenz, NL Schmidt-Hannover, 72a, reprinted in Maurer and Wengst, *Politik und Wirtschaft*, I, 272–3, 277–81.

¹¹⁵ On the general background of the July crisis see Patch, *Brüning*, 89–94, and Hömig, *Brüning*, 167–90, as well as the classic study by Karl Dietrich Bracher, *Die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik. Eine Studie zum Problem des Machtverfalls in der Demokratie*, 4th edn (Villingen/Schwarzwald: Ring Verl., 1960), 335–47.

¹¹⁶ Entry in Quaat's diary, [ca. 17–18] July 1930, BA Koblenz, NL Quaat, 16, reprinted in Weiß and Hoser, *Die Deutschnationalen*, 114–15.

¹¹⁷ Hugenberg's remarks at the morning session of the DNVP Reichstag delegation, 17 July 1930, BA Koblenz, NL Schmidt-Hannover, 72a, reprinted in Maurer and Wengst, *Politik und Wirtschaft*, I, 286–9.

their vote on the Social Democratic motion to suspend the government's emergency legislation.¹¹⁸

In the meantime Hugenberg and Ernst Oberföhrer, Westarp's successor as chairman of the DNVP Reichstag delegation, met Brüning and the Reich finance minister Hermann Dietrich on the afternoon of 17 July, but were unable to secure acceptance of their party's conditions for a postponement of the vote in the Reichstag, the most important of which was for an immediate reorganisation of the state government in Prussia.¹¹⁹ When the DNVP Reichstag delegation resumed its deliberations later that evening, the debate became increasingly heated as Hugenberg pressed for unanimity in the upcoming vote on the Social Democratic motion for a suspension of the government's emergency powers. In the final analysis, however, Hugenberg and his supporters prevailed, first by a thirty–twenty–five margin and then by a thirty–four–twenty–one margin, as several dissident deputies agreed to go along with the will of the delegation majority. As for himself, Westarp reserved his decision until the following morning and asked his supporters to meet him separately after the DNVP Reichstag delegation had concluded its deliberations.¹²⁰ When the DNVP Reichstag delegation met on the morning of 18 July prior to the decisive vote in the Reichstag, Westarp read a statement indicating that he and twenty–one other members of the delegation, in direct breach of Hugenberg's instructions, would not support the motion proposed by the Social Democrats to lift the government's emergency powers and that they were therefore, in accordance with the resolutions adopted by the DNVP executive committee on 25 April 1930, separating themselves from the party. At the same time Westarp implored Hugenberg to reconsider his position and at the very least accept a postponement in the crucial vote until the autumn, a stratagem that had been under discussion in the negotiations with the government and one that would have deferred the crisis within the DNVP.¹²¹ When Hugenberg remained adamant in his determination to force a dissolution of the Reichstag and refused to reconsider his decision to support the Social Democratic motion to lift the government's emergency powers, Westarp and a group of approximately thirty members of the DNVP Reichstag delegation announced their resignation from the party.¹²²

For Westarp his separation from the DNVP was the source of great pain and regret. Ever since the collapse of the Second Empire Westarp had worked tirelessly to unite the various factions that stood on the German right into a cohesive political force, and now his life's work lay in ruins. Although the immediate cause for Westarp's resignation had been the conflict with Hugenberg and the DNVP

¹¹⁸ Minutes of the morning session of the DNVP Reichstag delegation, 17 July 1930, *ibid.*

¹¹⁹ On Brüning's meeting with Hugenberg and Ernst Oberföhrer from the DNVP party leadership on 17 July 1930 see Pünder's memorandum of 19 July 1930, BA Berlin, R 43 I, 2654/235–6.

¹²⁰ Minutes of the evening session of the DNVP Reichstag delegation, 17 July 1930, BA Koblenz, NL Schmidt–Hannover, 72a, reprinted in Maurer and Wengst, *Politik und Wirtschaft*, I, 296–9.

¹²¹ Text of Westarp's statement before the DNVP Reichstag delegation, 18 July 1930, NL Westarp, Gärtringen, II/61.

¹²² *Neue Preußische (Kreuz-)Zeitung*, nos. 203 and 205, 20 and 22 July 1930.

executive committee over the autonomy of the DNVP Reichstag delegation, a more fundamental reason, as Westarp argued in an article in the *Neue Preußische (Kreuz-) Zeitung* in late August 1930, was Hugenberg's failure to appreciate the political conception that had inspired the DNVP's founding a decade earlier. The DNVP had been founded as a socially and confessionally heterogeneous conservative *Sammelpartei* of the German right, and its purpose had been to construct a strong counterweight to the revolutionary currents of the day. But since his election to the DNVP party chairmanship in autumn 1928, Westarp continued, Hugenberg had set out to transform the DNVP from a socially heterogeneous *Sammelpartei* into a party of exclusion and ideological conformity. Compromise as a tried and proven principle of political leadership had given way to a doctrinaire insistence on loyalty to the party chairman that severely damaged the interests of German agriculture, the white-collar movement and the Christian trade unions. As the splintering of these elements took place, the heterogeneous character of the DNVP was slowly but surely destroyed.¹²³

Following his exit from the DNVP Westarp joined forces with G. R. Treviranus, Hans-Erdmann von Lindeiner-Wildau, Paul Lejeune-Jung and the leaders of the December session to found the People's Conservative Party (Konservative Volkspartei, KVP) at a demonstration in Berlin's fashionable Hotel Kaiserhof on the afternoon of 23 July 1930.¹²⁴ Westarp played no direct role in the negotiations that preceded the founding of the KVP, but reserved himself instead for what he regarded as the pressing task of the German right, namely to restore the organic relationship between the forces of political conservatism and German agriculture that Hugenberg's policies as DNVP chairman had done so much to destroy.¹²⁵ In this respect, Westarp once again worked closely with Schiele, who had also severed his ties with the DNVP during the most recent secession and now sought to use his influence as president of the National Rural League to forge close political ties between organised agriculture and the newly founded KVP.¹²⁶ But not even Schiele was able to overcome the deep-seated opposition that many of his associates in the RLB leadership felt toward an alliance with the more ideologically oriented KVP, with the result that the vast majority of those farm leaders who defected from the DNVP during the first half of 1930 proceeded to affiliate themselves with the CNBLP, a party that placed the representation of agricultural economic interests before all ideological

¹²³ Westarp, 'Die Gründe der Trennung von der Deutschnationalen Volkspartei', *Neue Preußische (Kreuz-) Zeitung*, nos. 238–9, 24 Aug. 1930.

¹²⁴ For the founding ceremonies of the KVP see the report in the *Neue Preußische (Kreuz-) Zeitung*, no. 208, 25 July 1930. For further information on the behind-the-scene negotiations that led to the founding of the KVP see the detailed reports from Blank to Reusch, 21, 23 and 24 July 1930, RWWA Cologne, Abt. 130, NL Reusch, 4001012024/7, reprinted in Maurer and Wengst, *Politik und Wirtschaft*, I, 305–13. On Westarp's role in these negotiations see his letters to Buch, 23 and 29 July 1930, NL Westarp, Gärtringen, VN 1. See also Jonas, *Volkskonservativen*, 79–82.

¹²⁵ Westarp, 'Das Ziel konservativen Zusammenschlusses', *Neue Preußische (Kreuz-) Zeitung*, 25 July 1930, no. 208.

¹²⁶ Schiele, 'Schließt die Reihen! Ein Appell an das Landvolk', *Reichs-Landbund. Agrarpolitische Zeitschrift* 10, 33 (16 Aug. 1930), 315. See also the report of an interview with Schiele, *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, nos. 355–6, 2 Aug. 1930, and the letter from Schiele to Seeckt, 20 Aug. 1930, in the unpublished Nachlaß of Hans von Seeckt, Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv Freiburg, 131.

considerations.¹²⁷ About all that Westarp could accomplish during the 1930 election campaign was to mediate an electoral truce between the parties of the middle and moderate right in support of the so-called ‘Hindenburg Programme’ for Germany’s national recovery.¹²⁸ But none of this did much to heal the deep divisions that had surfaced on the moderate right in the wake of the fragmentation of the DNVP’s left wing.

Although Westarp was chosen to head the KVP’s national ticket in the September 1930 Reichstag elections, the KVP went down to a devastating defeat that left the party with only four deputies, including Westarp, in the new Reichstag. On balance, the KVP experiment was a dismal failure that not only obliged Westarp to compromise his own monarchist principles but failed to provide him with a reliable political base for his brand of political conservatism.¹²⁹ With only four deputies in the Reichstag, the KVP never succeeded in establishing itself as a viable political force, and in March 1931 its patron organisation, the Conservative People’s Association, adopted a new political programme that categorically dissociated itself from attempts to realise its ideals in the form of a political party.¹³⁰ In the meantime, Westarp’s efforts to compensate for the KVP’s numerical weakness in the Reichstag through the creation of a parliamentary coalition, or *Arbeitsgemeinschaft*, with the smaller non-socialist parties that stood to the left of the DNVP encountered strong opposition from the CNBLP and the Business Party (Reichspartei des deutschen Mittelstandes or WP) and never produced anything more elaborate than a loose parliamentary alliance with the Christian-Social People’s Service.¹³¹ Westarp was deeply pained by the fragmentation of the German right and its inability to re-establish itself as a viable political force in the last years of the Weimar Republic. Though an early advocate of the so-called ‘taming strategy’ that ultimately led to Hitler’s installation as chancellor in January 1933,¹³² Westarp remained deeply suspicious of the Nazi movement and was careful to dissociate himself as discretely as possible from the alliance of right-wing forces that came together in Bad Harzburg in early October 1931 in an attempt to bring down the Brüning cabinet.¹³³ Westarp went on to play a major role in

¹²⁷ On the course of these negotiations see Westarp, ‘Meine Verhandlungen zwischen dem 18. Juli und dem 18. Oktober 1930’, NL Westarp, Gärtringen, II/61. For further details see Larry Eugene Jones, ‘Sammlung oder Zersplitterung? Die Bestrebungen zur Bildung einer neuen Mittelpartei in der Endphase der Weimarer Republik 1930–1933’, *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 25, 3 (1977), 265–304, here 269–71.

¹²⁸ Westarp, ‘Bericht über die Verhandlungen mit der DVP wegen Zusammenwirkens für das Hindenburgprogramm’, n.d. [Aug. 1930], NL Westarp, Gärtringen, II/40. See also Blank to Reusch, 28 Aug. 1930, RWWA Cologne, Abt. 130, NL Reusch, 4001012024/7, reprinted in Maurer and Wengst, *Politik und Wirtschaft*, I, 375–7.

¹²⁹ Westarp to Wallraf, 28 July 1930, NL Westarp, Gärtringen, VN 5.

¹³⁰ In this respect see Volkskonservative Vereinigung, ed., *Konservatives Manifest*, no. 4 (Berlin: Volkskonservative Vereinigung, n.d. [1931]).

¹³¹ Westarp, ‘Meine Verhandlungen’, NL Westarp, Gärtringen, II/61.

¹³² Westarp, ‘Was nun?’, *Neue Preußische (Kreuz-)Zeitung*, 17 Sept. 1930, no. 266. For an elaboration of the strategy that lay behind Westarp’s proposal see his letter to Fumetti, 20 Sept. 1930, NL Westarp, Gärtringen, II/40.

¹³³ For Westarp’s acerbic reaction to the Harzburg Front see the letter from Gräfin v. Westarp to Freifrau Hiller v. Gaertringen, 12 Oct. 1931, NL Westarp, Gärtringen.

Hindenburg's re-election in spring 1932,¹³⁴ but his efforts to unite the parties of the middle and moderate right into a cohesive political force – first at the time of the reorganisation of the Brüning cabinet in autumn 1931 and then again in preparation for the Prussian state elections in April 1932 – ended in repeated failure.¹³⁵ Following the call for new elections in summer 1932, the 68-year-old Westarp announced that he would not stand for re-election, thus ending a parliamentary career that had lasted for more than twenty years.

VII

Why did Westarp and his supporters in Germany's conservative establishment fail in their struggle to retain control of the DNVP? The capture of the party by the radical nationalists around Hugenberg, after all, was one of the seminal turning points in the politics of the Weimar Republic, and it had a profound impact on the subsequent course of events right up to and including Hitler's appointment as chancellor in January 1933. Although the answer to this question is far from simple, the following seems clear. In the first place, the DNVP's two experiments at government participation in 1925 and 1927 aroused expectations among the special economic interests that constituted the DNVP's material base that could not be satisfied given the general state of the German economy. At the same time, the DNVP's participation in the national government severely compromised its ideological integrity and raised questions as to whether or not the benefits of participation justified the sacrifice of ideological principle.¹³⁶ The combined effect of these two factors was to leave the party vulnerable to the agitation of the radical nationalists who would mobilise the DNVP's popular base against those DNVP parliamentarians who had championed the party's entry into the government. Much of this was directed against the person of Westarp, who, as the architect of the DNVP's entry into the fourth Marx cabinet in 1927, was sharply attacked for having abandoned the principles on which the party had been founded. By summer 1928 Westarp had already lost control of much of the DNVP's organisational base, a factor that played no small role in his decision to step down as DNVP party chairman in summer 1928 and that proved decisive in his struggle with Hugenberg over the course of the next two years. As a result, neither Westarp nor the DNVP moderates commanded the support within the party that would have been necessary either to force a change in the party leadership or to take significant parts of the DNVP's grass-roots organisation with them if and when they left the party.

Westarp's dogged determination first to prevent a secession on the DNVP's left wing and then to minimise its scope only hurt the prospects for a successful secession, yet failed to earn the gratitude of Hugenberg loyalists who now attacked him for

¹³⁴ For further details see Larry Eugene Jones, 'Hindenburg and the Conservative Dilemma in the 1932 Presidential Elections', *German Studies Review*, 20, 2 (1997), 235–59.

¹³⁵ For further details see Jones, 'Sammlung oder Zersplitterung?', 273–81.

¹³⁶ For Westarp's own analysis of this dilemma see his article 'Der Konservative im heutigen Staat', *Der Ring* 3, 7 (16 Feb. 1930), 123–5.

weakness and vacillation in his leadership of the DNVP Reichstag delegation. The strong sense of loyalty that Westarp and Schiele felt toward the DNVP and their reluctance to become involved in the intrigues of the party dissidents only worked to the advantage of Hugenberg's confederates and gave the time they needed to complete their purge of Westarp's supporters at the state and district levels of the DNVP's national organisation. As a result, Hugenberg and his supporters were able to retain almost complete control of the party's national organisation when Westarp left the party in the summer of 1930, thereby condemning the ill-fated Conservative People's Party – and with it Westarp's hopes of creating a comprehensive conservative *Sammelpartei* to the left of the DNVP – to almost certain failure.

Westarp's defeat in the struggle for control of the DNVP and his subsequent marginalisation in the politics of the German right were symptomatic of a far deeper and more significant crisis on the German right. Ever since the last years of the Second Empire the German right had embraced two distinct and ultimately incompatible traditions, one a governmental conservatism associated with the names of men like Karl Helfferich, Oskar Hergt and Martin Schiele and the other a radical nationalism represented by Alfred Hugenberg and the ADV's Heinrich Claß. For the balance of his career Westarp had tried, with varying degrees of success, to bridge the gap between these two traditions. With the political and economic stabilisation of the Weimar Republic in the second half of the 1920s and the DNVP's two experiments at government participation in 1925 and 1927, however, the latent antipathy between the two factions of the German right was transformed into an open split that continued through the end of the Weimar Republic and into the early years of the Third Reich. By the last years of the Weimar Republic, Germany's conservative elites had become so fractured along political as well as structural lines that they were no longer capable of formulating any sort of coherent response to the rise of Nazism and the threat that this posed to their place in German political life. Westarp deeply regretted the fragmentation of the German right and the effect this had on its ability to withstand the challenge of Nazism. From his perspective, Hitler's rise to power and the establishment of the Third Reich were possible only because the internecine conflict within the German right had effectively neutralised Germany's conservative elites as a force that, had they been more united, might have prevented Hitler from coming to power. For not only would a unified and cohesive German right have impeded the rise of Nazism as a mass political party, but had the leaders of the German right negotiated with Hitler in the last fateful months of the Weimar Republic from a position of strength rather than from one of weakness, then the outcome of those negotiations would have been significantly different from the way they turned out. In the final analysis, the disunity of the German right, as Westarp himself clearly recognised, constituted a prerequisite for the Nazi seizure of power that was every bit as important as the dissolution of the bourgeois middle or the schism on the Marxist left.