The absence of reliable sources is as much a problem in dealing with the later years of Richard Müller’s life as it was for his childhood and youth. When I began my research, there was almost nothing in the literature on Müller’s life after 1925. Even the date of his death was unknown. I was able to fill this gap in part and verify the fact that Müller became active in a small, semi-syndicalist union called the Deutscher Industrie-Verband (DIV) before withdrawing into private life and starting a new career in real estate. By 1930, Müller had made quite a fortune as an entrepreneur, leading to accusations and defamation by both former comrades in the KPD and new enemies in the Nazi Party. This chapter is based on what information I was able to piece together though, as the reader will see, large gaps still remain.

**The DIV, the ‘Construction Issue’ and Union Fragmentation**

Although Richard Müller established his credentials as a historian and could have used his hoard of documents for further historical work, he did not. The reason why is unclear. Müller gave up not just writing, but his publishing business as well: by 1928, Phöbus-Verlag was no longer a publishing house but was listed in the business register as Phöbus-Treuhand-Baugesellschaft m.b.H., a construction company owned by Müller alone; his partners Eckert and Malzahn had left. We might suppose that neither the publishing company nor the bookstore fared particularly well and therefore had to be abandoned. If so, it may well be that Phöbus-Verlag only ever published one book, Müller’s own, *Der Bürgerkrieg in Deutschland*, in its brief history.

Richard Müller probably came to the construction business through his connection with Paul Weyer, an old comrade from the Revolutionary Shop Stewards. Weyer had been expelled from the KPD in September 1924 when he clashed with the party leadership over the union question. He had always supported the position opposite to Müller’s and pleaded for the communists to leave the reformist unions. Weyer was initially active in the metalworkers’ section of the Union of Manual and Intellectual Workers, a communist union that had developed out of the syndicalist FAU Gelsenkirchen and two
other unions. When the KPD committed to a unified trade-union policy in 1924, it demanded that its members join the Social Democratic unions of the ADGB and forced its own communist union to disband. A number of workers, including Weyer, would not go along with the change. They were expelled from the KPD and organised themselves into left-communist unions. That was when Paul Weyer founded and led the Deutscher Industrie-Verband (German Industrial Association, DIV), established in March 1924. In November 1927, Müller and Weyer transformed the former publishing house into a construction company with a capital infusion of 20,000 Reichsmarks. It was to be an arm of the DIV and build housing for union members, but this institutional relationship became very fraught in time.

The DIV was one of several ‘revolutionary industrial unions’ which supported an undogmatic Marxism and were active in various industries. We know that Richard Müller became involved with the Deutscher Industrie-Verband no later than January 1928 because at the time the Kampf-Front, its weekly paper, announced presentations by him on labour legislation and works councils to be given in March that year. Müller attended the union’s national congress the same year as a representative of its head office and appears to have even led the association alongside Weyer. However, the dominant figure in the DIV was not Müller but Weyer, who was the union’s national leader. He set the course for the DIV and the direction for the union’s newspaper from Berlin. While Weyer

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1 He was supported by Cläre Casper, at least in the initial phase. See Cläre Derfert-Casper, Memories, LArch Berlin, C Rep 902-02-04, no. 1.
2 Die Rote Fahne reports on a general company meeting on 1 November 1927 in which Weyer and Müller founded Phöbus Construction as a trust company of the DIV with 20,000 RM. Since the company name and commercial register number remained the same, it was in fact a conversion rather than a new establishment. See the article ‘Mieterschutz gibt’s bei Müller nicht’ (No Tenant Protection for Müller), in Die Rote Fahne 18 April 1930 and the Berlin commercial register (Handelsregister), section 2, 1928.
4 The presentation was slated for 14 February with a follow-up on 3 March and another on 11 March, 1928. See Kampf-Front – Proletarische Wochenschrift, issue no. 1 (4th year), 16 January 1928; no. 7, 27 February 1928; no. 9, March 1929. Unfortunately, I had access to issues of Kampf-Front only from the years 1928–9, and not to its entire run, which began in 1924. I must thank Dr. Otto Langels, who first provided me with some copies of the periodical, without which I could not have completed this chapter. While doing research for this English edition I was able to locate all issues from January 1928 to April 1929 in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, which included some more information about Müller.
5 Kampf-Front, no. 48, 17 December 1928, and ‘Leichen-Müller als Häuserbesitzer’ (Müller-the-corpse as Homeowner), Die Rote Fahne, 17 April 1930.