



## CHAPTER 32 The Rise of Proletarian Socialisms

In the wake of the Commune, French socialism would never be the same. The Jacobin mystique, which had lingered among workers and radical intellectuals for so many decades, disappeared almost completely, and the antiroyalism and anticlericalism that had formerly been the province of the Jacobins were absorbed by the more conventional republican parties—notably the so-called Radicals—who commanded a considerable following among shopkeepers, professionals, well-to-do peasants, and even workers. Proudhon's individualistic "mutualism," with its hostility to associations, strikes, and even trade unions, also lost its popular following, to be replaced by syndicalism—an explicitly collectivistic form of federalism structured around trade unions and the most sweeping of working-class initiatives, the general strike. This shift, as we have seen, had been under way well in advance of the Paris Commune. As G.D.H. Cole observes,

against the Proudhonists in the French Trade Union movement were ranged the "collectivists," headed by Eugène Varlin; and by 1871 the collectivists were the dominant group in the Paris area, as well as at Lyons and Marseilles. Varlin, no doubt, had at bottom a great deal more in common with Proudhon than with Marx; but on the issue that was uppermost in the 1860s he and his group found themselves on the same side as Marx because they favoured collective ownership of the means of production.

Varlin, as we have seen, also advanced a program that was distinctly communalistic, with its emphasis on confederations of municipalities, as well as syndicalistic, opening a new vista for libertarians who had formerly been focused on individualistic forms of action. But

Varlin and his associates were by no means "collectivists" in the sense of standing for *State* ownership of land and other means of production. They wanted the land and the instruments of large-scale production to be owned by the local Communes, or when necessary, by federal agencies set up by the communes. They wanted the actual operations of production to be carried on as far as possible by Co-operative societies emanating from the Trade Unions; ... the Trade Unions were thus of fundamental importance in their vision of the new society; indeed they tended, although not very explicitly, to think of the Commune of the future as resting rather on the federated *syndicats* [trade unions] of the locality than on any political foundations.<sup>1</sup>

Tragically, however, Varlin was only thirty-two when he was murdered by the *Versaillais*. Had he lived for another thirty years, this immensely gifted man—in view of his level of insight and his personal popularity with workers—might have had an incalculable effect upon the trajectory of European socialism, possibly pushing it toward a communalistic development as well as a syndicalist one.

### LESSONS OF THE COMMUNE

Significantly, most of the interpretations of the Commune—the "lessons" that the revolutionary theorists of the day derived from it—were institutional rather than economic. The Blanquists pointed to its failures as evidence of the need for a highly centralized, indeed dictatorial, type of regime to ruthlessly crush the bourgeoisie, and they were still enamored of the idea of a Committee of Public Safety. Anarchists, for their part, emphasized the federalist orientation of the Commune and criticized its statist "deformations," as they saw them—namely, its system of representation, as distinguished from a mass democracy—and in varying degrees, Bakunin and Kropotkin lamented its failure to take more socialistic economic measures.

But the Commune's anarchist supporters seemed to understand that Paris had made a clearly communalist revolution in the spring of 1871. Despite its failure to place a strong emphasis on class differences, its hazy celebration of republicanism, and its appeals to patriotism, the Commune, taken as a whole, was as close to a "libertarian municipalist"<sup>2</sup> phenomenon as Paris had come since the heyday of the sectional democracy in 1793. The April 20 program, as we have seen, asserted the right of French communes to function autonomously based on the "contract of association" to "secure the unity of France"; it affirmed the "inherent rights" of the Paris Commune to vote its own budgets and taxes, and to create its own administrative, judicial, and police



apparatus; not only would elections be free, but voters would also have "the permanent right of control and revocation" of all magistrates—in short, the *mandat impératif*, in which delegates were subject to recall if they failed to follow the wishes of their electors. Citizens were to enjoy the right of "permanent intervention into Communal affairs by the free manifestation of their ideas and the free defense of their interests."<sup>3</sup>

Marx's appraisal of the Commune in *The Civil War in France*, while understandably supportive of it against the imprecations rained upon it by the international bourgeoisie, was anomalous in his work as a whole, at least in terms of its attitude toward state power. These writings, which he prepared for the London bureau of the International (and which form most of the *Civil War* book), tend to downplay state power.

The Commune was formed of the municipal councillors, chosen by universal suffrage in the various wards of the town, responsible and revocable at short terms. The majority of its members were naturally working men, or acknowledged representatives of the working class. The Commune was to be a working, not a parliamentary, body, executive and legislative at the same time. Instead of continuing to be the agent of the Central Government, the police was at once stripped of its political attributes, and turned into the responsible and at all times revocable agent of the Commune. So were the officials of all other branches of the Administration. From the members of the Commune downwards, the public service had to be done at *workmen's wages*. The vested interests and the representation allowances of the high dignitaries of State disappeared along with the high dignitaries themselves. Public functions ceased to be the private property of the tools of the Central Government. Not only municipal administration, but the whole initiative hitherto exercised by the State was laid into the hands of the Commune.<sup>4</sup>

Marx was careful not to claim that the Commune had abandoned all the functions of a state—quite to the contrary, he took note of its statist features—but the libertarian ambience of his description is evident, contrasting sharply with his normally centralistic statist views. So deprecatory of the state generally was this book, however, and so ebullient was it about the Commune's anarchistic demand for communal liberties that James Guillaume, Bakunin's closest collaborator in the International, ironically regarded it as evidence of a capitulation to anarchists in the IWMA. Later Marxist leaders even cited Marx's description of the Commune as the model par excellence of a proletarian dictatorship.

Actually, what Marx regarded as important about the Commune was not that it had eliminated the state as such but that it had completely smashed the

*bourgeois* state, with its huge bureaucracy, its military and judicial institutions, and its executive and legislative apparatus, replacing it, so he believed, with a more or less *working-class state* based on broad popular involvement. What he heralded in the Commune was not any antistatism but in fact a new statist dispensation, one in which the working class and its supporters acquired sweeping political rights and authority—or what he called "the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat."<sup>5</sup> What makes Marx's praise of the Commune in *The Civil War in France* anomalous is that he appears to have envisioned this "dictatorship" as institutionally *communalistic* rather than republican, for in nearly all his earlier writings on the state, the "workers' state" was to be marked more by republican features than by quasi-anarchistic, communalistic, and confederalistic ones.

Another consequence of the Commune's defeat was that it opened the way for the introduction of Marxism into France, although it did not take a firm hold among the working class for several generations. And perhaps no single individual contributed more to its dissemination in the country than Jules Guesde, who edited the newspaper *Les Droits de l'homme* in 1870–71. Because his newspaper had expressed support for the Commune, Guesde was obliged to take refuge in Switzerland after its defeat. There he initially became an anarchist, but he was soon won over to Marx's ideas of socialism and became one of its most zealous proselytizers. Indeed, although Marx had a coterie in France that dated back to the beginnings of the International (including two sons-in-law, Paul Lafargue and Charles Longuet), it was Guesde who ultimately gave the French labor movement a strong Marxist imprint. Starting in 1877, as soon as he returned to France, he began publishing a periodical, *L'Egalité*, which gradually evolved from a politically hybrid journal influenced by Blanquism, anarchism, and reformist socialism to a Marxist one. After visiting Marx and Engels in London in 1880, he returned to France determined to build a centralized, unified Marxist party modeled entirely on the German Socialist Workers' Party, and within five years he managed to pull together the centralized, even authoritarian Parti Ouvrier Français (French Workers' Party). Although a centralized political party was alien to the markedly decentralistic spirit of the French working class, the Parti Ouvrier prospered, and the Guesdists became a major force on the French revolutionary socialist landscape.

Finally, the Commune was instrumental in bringing about the end of the IWMA. With the suppression of the Commune, the revolutionary elements in the French working class were either massacred, imprisoned, or sent into exile, where they remained for most of the 1870s. Their absence from the International immensely weakened the federalist influences within it, and the balance of forces shifted markedly in Marx's favor. He made the most of it—in a manner that was far from laudable—to expel his Bakuninist opponents.

This confrontation occurred at the International's last united congress,



which met at the Hague in September 1872. Breaking with precedent, Marx personally attended the Hague Congress and, with Engels's support, dredged up gossipy allegations that Bakunin had used fraudulent methods to gain money. Nor did he dissociate himself from unsavory rumors that the Russian had been a secret tsarist agent. Marx was now able to use the very power that the Basel Congress had granted to the General Council—ironically, with Bakunin's ardent support—to decide what organizations could legitimately belong to the International. Single-mindedly determined to have Bakunin expelled, Marx and the Blanquists (in a completely unholy and short-lived alliance) outmaneuvered the anarchist patriarch and succeeded in expelling him from the International, together with his supporter James Guillaume. (The majority that Marx mustered against Bakunin included the votes of five delegates from specious organizations who represented nothing but themselves.) Thereafter, in a deliberate attempt to kill off the International, which had been threatening to drift toward Bakunin's anarchism, Marx gained the Congress's assent to move the General Council to the United States, where eventually, as he had expected, the IWMA faded into oblivion.

If this measure essentially ended the International, it did not put an end to the conflicting tendencies in socialism that followed upon the failure of the Commune. To the contrary: Marx's renown as the "Red Terrorist Doctor" (as he was called in the British press) was now assured. Bakunin's supporters, in turn, tried to create a more decentralized "Antiauthoritarian International" on the continent. Shortly after the Hague Congress, the new International convened at St-Imier in Switzerland, composed not only of anarchists and anarchist sympathizers but moderate British trade unionists, united primarily by their enmity for the General Council. Unlike the Council-dominated IWMA, the successor St-Imier International was intended to be a voluntary federation of autonomous national federations, each of which was free to follow the policy it preferred. In time, the British moderates drifted away, leaving the anarchists almost entirely on their own.

The last essentially anarchist congress, held a year after Bakunin's death in 1876, was marked by the ascendancy of Kropotkin's anarchist communism. In contrast to Proudhon and Bakunin, with their tolerance for nonexploitative forms of private property, Kropotkin's tendency called for the complete socialization of the means of production and adopted the old communist maxim "From each according to ability, to each according to need." The individualistic artisanal socialism of Proudhon and the collectivistic artisanal socialism of Bakunin thus gave way among many anarchists to libertarian communism.

What is significant about this shift is that Kropotkin's libertarian communism expressly or implicitly presupposed a technologically advanced society. Its underpinning was the conviction that industry and science had

advanced sufficiently to allow the distribution of goods to be guided by needs rather than by the amount of work individuals contributed to society. Anarcho-communists, as they came to be called, no longer thought in terms of the private ownership and association of small-scale enterprises (although Kropotkin himself was a strong proponent of a human scale in all things, from machines to communities); rather, they held the view that the distribution of goods in a communistic society would require advanced technologies, at the very least, and did not oppose the establishment of factories and mass production, with which Proudhon and to some extent Bakunin had been uncomfortable. In short, Kropotkin's version of anarchism made it possible for anarchists to adapt themselves to the new working class, the industrial proletariat, and even hoped to play a leading role in its activities. This adaptation was all the more necessary because capitalism was now transforming not only European society but the very nature of the European labor movement itself.

## THE NEW ECONOMY

In 1870 France and Germany, as we have seen, were both still structured around a predominantly artisan and peasant economy. Like the French artisans, the majority of German workers were either masters who owned small workshops or else journeymen who learned their crafts by going from town to town in what was an essentially preindustrial economy. During the 1870s, however, new enterprises were expanding enormously in both countries. Following the Franco-Prussian War, German industry leaped forward at a dazzling pace, so that within only a matter of decades, Germany was the industrial giant of the European continent—followed by French industry as a laggard cousin.

A comparison of the industrial growth in both countries is basic to assessing not only their respective economies but their respective labor movements and social ideologies. In 1870 Germany produced only slightly more pig iron (1.2 million tons) than France (1.1 million), although it was still only about a fifth of Britain's output (nearly 6 million). But by 1913, German pig iron production had vastly outstripped not only French production (16.7 million tons compared with 5.1 million) but British (10.2 million) and was exceeded only by American production (nearly 31 million). Germany also took the lead throughout Europe in the production of the new dyes and chemical compounds that were becoming indispensable to modern industrial production, and soon led the continent in production of electrical goods. By 1913, German concerns produced approximately three-quarters of all the dyes used in the world, as well as new medicinals.



Of huge importance in this economic tableau was the size of the German industrial enterprises and their degree of capital concentration. As pig iron and steel production soared, the number of enterprises that produced them became smaller, while those few grew ever larger in plant size and number of workers employed. Although the number of blast furnaces declined over time, between 1880 to 1912 their output rocketed from 11,000 to 50,000 tons per furnace—a nearly fivefold increase in productivity. Similar developments occurred at varying paces throughout most German industrial enterprises as a whole. The number of German workers in factories employing 51 or more increased from 1.5 million in 1882 to nearly 5 million in 1907, while the number employed in smaller enterprises (up to 50 persons) remained substantially the same.

Craft manufacturing, by the same token, declined precipitously. In 1875 the number of German woolen handloom weavers numbered 47,000, but by 1907 it had declined to only 19,000. (By contrast, in 1903 French handlooms still outnumbered French power looms by 50,000 to 38,000.) Thus, although German artisans were still a presence in the years immediately preceding the First World War, they were dwarfed in numbers and importance by industrial proletarians, who were now becoming predominant in the European working class as a whole.

France's development was more complex. Small-scale French manufacturing tenaciously held on to its traditional ground, and its artisanal labor force remained sizable. The lead that France retained in quality luxury goods and artistic works gave the country cultural hegemony over other industrial countries, but it now lagged behind in economic power. Doubtless geographical factors militated against the expansion of French steel production: although France was very rich in iron ore, the lack of good coal from which to produce coke and the considerable distances that lay between iron and coal mines made French steel production less profitable than German. France thus tended to export her excellent ores rather than smelt them and was obliged to turn to Belgium and Germany for a large part of her coal. Thus, even as the nineteenth century drew to close, a two-tiered economy still persisted in France with relatively little change. To some extent French peasants drifted from the land to cities and industrial centers, as rural people did throughout Western Europe, but the number of food cultivators did not decline significantly: from 48 percent of the French population in 1866, they fell to only 41 percent in 1911—that is to say, a mere 7 percent decline in about half a century of hectic change in most of Western Europe. The number of small landholdings actually increased between 1892 and 1908, from 28.6 million to 31.5 million acres, and traditional rural constraints on the expansion of the domestic market were still very much at work, albeit less tenaciously than in past years.

But the French economy was gearing up to produce an appreciable number of industrial proletarians. By the turn of the century, mechanization almost

completely replaced handwork in the manufacture of most fabrics (although the silk industry still used a large number of handlooms), giving rise to large textile factories. In Normandy, for example, the production of cotton cloth, from spinning to weaving, was performed completely by machines, as were woolen fabrics in mills in various parts France. The number of steam engines more than tripled between 1870 and 1913, from 27,000 to 81,000. The giant steel—and armaments—plants in the center of the country, such as the Le Creusot works, as well as the textile plants in the west and the rich iron-ore mines in French Lorraine, involved very large-scale operations. Although France uniquely retained its tier of relatively small workshops and a patronal form of capitalism, the country nonetheless ranked second on the continent as an industrial power and fourth in the world in terms of economic strength.

The lead on the continent in all these fields fell to Germany, whose giant steel plants, machine shops, and chemical and electrical enterprises by far overshadowed those of France and England. In the years leading up to the First World War, Germany, united into an immense empire by the Hohenzollern monarchs of Prussia, became the greatest industrial power in the world after the United States. Her industries were not only highly concentrated but highly rationalized, equipped with the most advanced technologies. By the same token, the German industrial proletariat was proportionately larger, with respect to the rest of the population, than was the French, where industrial workers were still a minority. Thus, within the span of little more than a generation, a new economy had emerged, and with it a new working class—an unskilled proletariat that brought nothing but its own labor power (or capacity to work) to the service of a new kind of bourgeoisie—the owners of large capital-intensive factories, whose operations were based on a narrowing division of labor in which mechanization replaced skills. In this mutually interdependent industrial machine, it became impossible to identify the specific contribution of the worker to the making of a finished product, in contrast to the artisanal worker. Moreover, the industrial worker had no independent means of obtaining an income apart from factory earnings, in contrast to the traditional artisan, who often owned his own workshop and marketed his own products.

The personal independence of the skillful artisan, the deep sense of self-worth that comes with the possession of tools and handworked machines, and the pride and dignity of the self-sustained craftsman all but disappeared from the sensibility of the unskilled modern industrial worker. Where the artisan was able to encounter his own kind in favored cafés frequented by men of his own trade, and where he possessed an extraordinary degree of literacy that made radical ideas accessible to him, the proletarian commonly frequented a tavern where alcohol was a source of solace rather than the occasion for sociability. Neglected by society, even viewed haughtily by skilled artisans, the industrial



worker was woefully uneducated, often even rustic—uncomfortable with industrial lifeways and their rhythms.

## THE CHANGE IN SOCIALISM

This growing shift from an artisanal to an industrial economy gave rise to a gradual but major shift in socialism itself. For the artisan, socialism had meant producers' cooperatives composed of men who worked together in small shared collectivist associations, although for master craftsmen it meant mutual aid societies that acknowledged their autonomy as private producers. For the industrial proletariat, by contrast, socialism came to mean the formation of a mass organization that gave factory workers the collective power to expropriate a plant that no single worker could properly own. These distinctions led to two different interpretations of the "social question" or, in the language of 1848, the nature of a "democratic and social republic." The more progressive craftsmen of the nineteenth century had tried to form networks of cooperatives, based on individually or collectively owned shops, and a market knitted together by a moral agreement to sell commodities according to a "just price" or the amount of labor that was necessary to produce them. Presumably such small-scale ownership and shared moral precepts would abolish exploitation and greedy profit-taking. The class-conscious proletariat of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, on the other hand, thought in terms of the complete socialization of the means of production, including land, and even of abolishing the market *as such*, distributing goods according to needs rather than labor.

It was partly in adaptation to the industrial worker, engaged in mass production by the thousands in single plants, that the new kinds of socialism were formulated. They advocated *public* ownership of the means of production, whether by the state or by the working class organized in trade unions. A socialist movement that tried to advance this program to workers necessarily had to create a mass organization, such as a trade union, party, council, or all of these to one degree or another. It would have been difficult, albeit not impossible, to address thousands of industrial workers, let alone mobilize them in loosely organized local societies, clubs, or mutual benefit societies of the kind that existed among artisans. But such mass organizations tended to become breeding grounds for bureaucracies, whose functionaries often had professional interests that stood at odds with those of the workers they were supposed to service, and statesmenlike leaders who often resembled in mentality and behavior the very bourgeois politicians they were expected to oppose. Thus it was capitalism *itself* that was changing both the scale and the

visions on which socialists of all kinds—revolutionary anarchists and Marxists as well as moderate socialists—based their social theories and organizing practices.

Whether these changes were an improvement over past conditions or a deterioration, their development was inexorable as the nineteenth century phased into the twentieth. But the shift from a predominantly artisan economy to an industrial one should not be permitted to obscure the fact that modern industry—the huge plants and mills as well as the adjunct workshops that were still needed—overwhelmingly employed untrained and often illiterate proletarians, who were engaged in routinized and unskilled labor. In fact, the artisan persisted even within the factory as well as in the specialized workshops adjacent to it. He was usually a skilled metalworker or fabric designer, a maintenance man or a schooled technician—that is, an *artisan-proletarian*, who shared an independent spirit and a high degree of literacy with the craft masters and journeymen of the old artisanal economy.

Commonly this artisan-proletarian, who appears in the historical record as early as 1848 under the name of *mécanicien* in France, was a metalworker who operated complex machinery within the factory; he could also be a printer, furniture maker, leather worker, or similar skilled craftsman. According to Charles Tilly and Lynn N. Lees in their monograph "The People of June, 1848," surveying those who were arrested and convicted for participating in the June uprising, the artisan-proletarian cohort constituted the second-largest trade group, second only to construction workers.<sup>6</sup> It was principally from these artisan-proletarians that worker militants were recruited, providing both the factory and the neighborhood with their authentic proletarian vanguard. More often males than females (women were rarely permitted to acquire the skills and schooling needed to engage in well-paying, complex productive tasks), they were most susceptible to socialistic ideas and were likely to be consulted by unskilled workers for guidance in demonstrations, strikes, and uprisings as well as to articulate their demands. They would come into their own as the most militant, indeed revolutionary workers by the turn of the century, especially during the Russian and German revolutions between 1917 and 1923.

## PROLETARIAN SOCIALISM: SYNDICALISM

The ideas of Karl Marx were by no means the only tendency in socialism to provide guidance for a movement appropriate for the industrial proletariat. While Marx's contribution was indeed enormous, other proletarian socialisms coexisted with it until the success of the Russian Bolsheviks in 1917 gave



sweeping preeminence to Lenin's version of Marxist ideas over all other movements for proletarian emancipation.

In fact, Marxian socialism never gained a major footing in Great Britain. The English proletariat was drawn to other socialisms, especially to notions of a peaceful transformation to the public ownership of property, ranging from the municipal to the parliamentary level, and commonly structured around cooperatives and associations. British socialist movements largely based their hopes for a new society on legislative means, not on strikes and insurrections. By contrast, in France, proletarian socialism still retained strong federalist and antipolitical tendencies that were antithetical to Guesde's emphasis on centralism and participation in national elections, slowly giving rise, in the 1880s and 1890s, to a major movement—revolutionary syndicalism—that advanced the general strike as the main weapon for basic social change.

Doctrinally, syndicalists opposed the capitalist system and all its instruments of power, particularly the state, which they viewed as the principal source of society's ills. They strongly believed it had to be completely dismantled if humanity were to be freed of exploitation and oppression. Eschewing parliamentarism as a corruptive strategy for a revolutionary movement, they condemned political attempts to participate in, let alone reform, the state apparatus, as a way of honoring its legitimacy. Hence they opposed the establishment of political parties and firmly refused to participate in elections. Rather, they called for the collective acquisition of economic power by the proletariat, the outright expropriation of the bourgeoisie, and the management of industrial and agricultural enterprises through democratically elected workers' and farmers' committees, all of whose delegates were expected to function according to the *mandat impératif*—that is, subject to instant recall. A socialistic society that was structured around syndicalist principles would be one that was managed by industrial, craft, and agricultural workers through confederated enterprises organized into *syndicats* or trade unions.

Syndicalist unions, in turn, were to be organized in two parallel structures (a Proudhonist scheme) based respectively on geography and industry. Geographically, the syndicates would link together workers' delegates in a given town, region, and country in administrative confederal labor councils. Industrially, the syndicates would unite the delegates from enterprises within the same trade or industry in a pyramid of industrial confederal councils. Thus the diverse plants in a given region, preferably a municipality, each managed by its own duly elected factory committee, would be linked by one labor council with all the other industries and agricultural enterprises in that area. Simultaneously, each particular factory—say, a steel plant—would be linked to all the other steel plants in the country in a confederal council of delegates from their specific industry. At the apex of this parallel system of confederated unions, there were to be two “chambers” of delegates—one for the geographical

confederation, the other for the trade confederation. Together they would administer a syndicalist society. These bodies at the higher levels of the confederation, syndicalists argued—the municipal, regional, and national councils—would diminish in decision-making authority the farther removed they were from the municipal or local councils. Indeed, all the important policy decisions affecting society would be made by the factories, farms, and shops that formed the economic base of a given area and industry.

How was this confederal syndicalist society, based on trade unions, to be attained? Syndicalists were generally agreed that once the working class—rural as well as industrial—was mobilized into confederal labor unions in sufficient numbers, they would declare a revolutionary general strike that would paralyze the capitalist system. The army would have difficulty attacking the strikers because syndicalist transportation workers would block the movement of troops; the state would be unable to function in other respects because its administration would be brought to a halt by the general strike; and finally the bourgeoisie would be brought to its knees because it would cease to make profit or even acquire the raw materials needed to keep its enterprises working.

Capitalism and the state, in effect, would be paralyzed and therefore compelled to capitulate to a united, purposeful, and revolutionary working class. Few syndicalists were so naive as to believe that this capitulation would be brought about peacefully; almost certainly, the state would try to use every means at its disposal to break the general strike, employing troops wherever it could to forcefully cajole the workers back to their factories. But the workers, simultaneously arming themselves and appealing to the soldiers as “brothers,” could hope to eventually win out by a combination of strikes, propaganda, and where necessary, outright force. At that point the new society would emerge in which the stratified confederations—geographical and trade—would administer all economic and public affairs within their given municipalities, regions, and nations.<sup>7</sup>

This account of syndicalist theory is admittedly highly schematic and even idealized. Syndicalist ideas emerged gradually over the nineteenth century, from the “Grand Holiday” proposed by British workers in 1833, through the multitude of ideas proposed by artisanal socialists, to the use of general strikes against an impending war. Syndicalism was neither predominantly English nor French in origin but developed accretively over the span of nearly a century. It emerged in a transitional period, when there were still enough artisans—and certainly enough of the artisanal tradition—to create a union movement that was localist in its orientation, even expressly decentralistic. At the same time, industrial workers were becoming sufficiently numerous to require a high degree of coordination in their actions, culminating if necessary in regional or even national general strikes.

As a result of this gradual development, the specific ideas of syndicalism



were highly diverse by the time the doctrine became preeminent among French workers in the late 1890s and early 1900s. Nor was it accepted in a very clear-cut form even by self-avowed syndicalist workers, let alone by the French working class as a whole. Some workers within the syndicalist fold wanted their unions to be concerned exclusively with conventional bread-and-butter issues and simply ignored the goal of the general strike. Other workers were attracted by the movement's emphasis on localism, reflecting the artisans' customary orientation toward their own communities. Finally, still others adopted the general strike more as an alternative to political measures than because of its revolutionary implications. They were sufficiently disenchanted with the Third Republic to be alienated from political action in any form; indeed, at the time when syndicalism emerged, the French government was wracked by internal scandals, monarchist and clerical attacks, an attempt at a Bonapartist-type coup, and the ugly Dreyfus affair, a patent judicial frame-up in which the hated general staff of the French army falsely accused a Jewish officer of performing acts of espionage, for which he was convicted and sent to Devil's Island.

In 1884 the Third Republic once again legalized the right of workers to form trade unions, which quickly gave rise to the establishment of a wide variety of them. Although the largest unions were controlled by the Church and the employers, two years later, in 1886, French workers established the independent National Federation of Syndicates (NFS), or trade unions, which was quickly taken over by the Guesdists, finally providing Marxists with a tangible base in the French labor movement. Not surprisingly, the NFS became closely associated with the Guesdist Parti Ouvrier.

In addition to trade unions, the late 1880s and the 1890s also saw a revival of the *bourses du travail*, or employment centers, where workers and potential employers met to negotiate wages and working conditions for jobs. Subsidized by the municipalities, these labor exchanges had been in existence in many towns in France for years, but after the legalization of unions, they expanded their functions enormously, becoming centers where the new unions held meetings, organized educational courses and lectures, established libraries, and disseminated information about jobs and social ideas. They were usually under the control of the various unions in a given trade—such as baking or tailoring—within a particular city. Finally a Federation of Bourses du Travail was set up in 1892, which became the leading syndicalistic rival of Guesde's National Federation of Syndicates.

The guiding spirit behind the newly expanded *bourses* was Fernand Pelloutier, a tubercular young intellectual who managed to break away from his stringent Catholic background and bring his talents to the service of working-class causes. Initially a member of the Parti Ouvrier, Pelloutier broke with its injunction against the general strike as a revolutionary tactic and in 1893 became an adherent of Kropotkin's anarchist communism. More than any

single individual, this devoted man promoted the *bourses* as educational nuclei for a libertarian communist society, indeed, firmly opposing all attempts to turn them into political entities for parliamentary ends. The task of the *bourses*, in his eyes, was to inform and educate workers, encourage them to take the initiative in fostering social change, and impart to them the skills and knowledge they would need to administer a syndicalist society. Between 1894 and 1902, largely under his direction, the Federation of Bourses du Travail became the largest independent workers' organization in France. Although Pelloutier was not an insurrectionary, the Federation became the rallying center for militants who favored revolutionary industrial action over the parliamentary strategy of Guesde's socialists. After Pelloutier died in 1901 at the age of thirty-four, he was to be revered by the French working class, which treasured his memory for generations to come.

Throughout the 1890s, between the syndicalistic Federation of Bourses du Travail and the Marxian-socialistic National Federation of Syndicates, the question of strategy—of direct economic action through the general strike versus strict parliamentarism—was debated intensively. The Marxists, in fact, were no less critical of the syndicalists than the syndicalists were of the Marxists. In a sharp attack on Spanish Bakuninists, Engels had mocked syndicalism as completely unrealistic, because, as he wrote, the workers would quickly use up their strike funds before the capitalists would surrender their control of the economy. Engels, like Marx after him, totally ignored the insurrectionary role that the strike was meant to play. Guesde, for his part, vehemently opposed the strike as a step toward insurrection, which he felt was no longer feasible in Western societies in view of the sophistication of armaments and military tactics.

Neither Engels nor Guesde, however, were able to lay these differences to rest. At the 1892 Congress of the National Federation of Syndicates at Marseille, a bitter conflict erupted between the proponents of the general strike and supporters of parliamentarism, and over the furious objections of the Guesdists, the Congress passed a resolution favoring the general strike. Since 1890, the struggle for support of the general strike within the Parti Ouvrier had been led by Jean Allemane, a worker-Communist who had been deported to New Caledonia after being taken prisoner on a barricade. Along with his supporters, the Allemanists, he figured very significantly in the subsequent syndicalist radicalization of the French trade union movement. Although the Allemanists accepted many basic theoretical concepts of the Marxists, they were virtual anarchists in their outlook and consistent revolutionaries. They fought their way to the leadership of the Parti Ouvrier against the Guesdists and the so-called "Possibilists," led by the former anarchist-terrorist Paul Brousse, who was moving steadily toward a reformist position—advocating local municipal control within the framework of the nation-state.



At length, at a congress in Nantes in 1894, the Guesdists withdrew entirely from the National Federation of Syndicates and tried to form a labor organization of their own. The sentiments of the workers in the NFS, however, remained mainly with the syndicalists. In 1895, the NFS and the Federation of Bourses du Travail merged to establish an entirely new organization, the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT) or National Confederation of Labor. It was a complete victory for syndicalism over parliamentarism. As a revolutionary syndicalist federation, the CGT eschewed all reliance on parliamentary measures to advance the interests of the working class and adopted the general strike as its cardinal weapon for the transformation of society.

Before the establishment of a unified French Socialist Party in 1905 under the leadership of Jean Jaurès, the socialist parties in France numbered five: Guesdists, Allemanists (who had split from their syndicalistic comrades), Broussists, Blanquists, and independents. Their history, laden with internecine warfare, is too tangled to unscramble in a few sentences, but in 1896 they were at least able to agree that in elections, while they could oppose one another on the first ballot, whichever socialist candidate survived would gain their united votes on the second.

These divisions and the growing parliamentary orientation of the socialists had little influence on the newly formed Confédération National du Travail. For nearly two decades after its formation, the CGT remained a revolutionary syndicalist union, repeatedly advocating the strategy of the general strike as an alternative to parliamentary socialism. Serious French anarchists—those who were not enamored of terrorism—gained union positions in its growing apparatus and added enormously to its militancy, imbuing the CGT with a spirit of direct action and even sabotage. But the CGT was very loosely organized and marked by considerable local autonomy, its individual *syndicats* pulling the confederation in many different directions. Its militant, indeed revolutionary appearance to the contrary notwithstanding, the confederation remained a battleground between reformists and revolutionaries, as well as those who preached a compromise between the two wings, and still others who adventuristically demanded small strikes as a kind of revolutionary gymnastics for the working class.

During its predominantly syndicalist period, the CGT conducted many major strikes that involved hundreds of thousands of workers. As Peter Stearns observes:

Despite important fluctuations, all indices of strike activity showed growing intensity during most of the [pre-World War I] period. The first attempt at a nation-wide strike occurred in 1906; the first effective industry-side strike began with the miners' rising of 1902. During the two decades before World War I, almost every conceivable method of striking was tried, often for the

first time. None of this involved more than a minority of the working class, but it was a sizeable minority. During the whole period from 1899 through 1914, strikes by industrial and transport workers involved a total of 3,304,482 participants. Many workers struck several different times, of course; but it can be assumed that at least a million manufacturing workers went on strike at least once.<sup>8</sup>

Indeed, at its peak membership in 1912, the CGT claimed to have 600,000 members, although only 450,000 paid dues to the organization. During the same years, well over fifty percent of all French unionized workers belonged to the CGT, making it the largest labor organization in the country.

But by no means should this statistic be interpreted as evidence of strong syndicalist sentiment among the French industrial proletariat. CGT militancy was undeniably attractive to the growing industrial workforce, as is evidenced by the large number of strikes that swept over the country in 1912; but it is highly unlikely that most CGT members were committed to syndicalism as a social doctrine and a revolutionary general strike. In fact, despite the fiery oratory of syndicalist leaders and the resolutions of their congresses, the CGT never tried to stage a revolutionary general strike. Nor, for that matter, did its rhetoric about direct action and calls for sabotage ever amount to much more than a nuisance for the French bourgeoisie. At the turn of the century, French workers were more prudent in dealing with their employers than their artisanal forefathers had been; indeed, many did not accept syndicalism or else they gave it a nodding acknowledgment. Of the strikes conducted by the CGT between 1899 and 1913, by far the greatest number, involving the most workers, occurred early on, in 1900, when French artisans still formed a very large percentage of the working class.

The nearest the CGT militants ever came to conducting a revolution or a initiating a revolutionary general strike was in 1910, when the railway workers on the Paris-Nord system went on strike in October. A strike committee thereupon called for a general strike, hoping that the Paris-Nord action would spread to the western division of the railroad system and finally to all industries in the country. But the strike in the western division was quickly crushed by Prime Minister Aristide Briand, himself a former anarchist and fervent advocate of the general strike who had since become a socialist parliamentarian, and what was even more demoralizing, the workers in the eastern and southern railroad divisions simply refused to join their fellow workers in the west in a strike, even within the railway system. The union's defeat was thus complete and humiliating.

Finally, as the war approached, the CGT leadership, including its bureaucratic infrastructure, drifted more and more toward the conventional trade unionism of the British variety. During and after the war the CGT turned into a



conventional bread-and-butter trade union, mainly addressing economic issues within the framework of the capitalist economy. Its anarchist and syndicalist components split away and became marginalized within the working class. Following the Russian Revolution, the French Communists took control of the union, overloading it with labor bureaucrats and a leadership that warily accommodated itself to changing Communist policies while maintaining a steady, quasi-independent hold of the union's reins. Syndicalism, which had shown so much promise in the first decade of the twentieth century, receded almost everywhere in the postwar period—except in Spain, where it became the ideology of the country's huge labor movement well into the civil war of 1936–39.

Although the French proletariat did carry out general strikes later in the twentieth century, even as late as 1995, it did not link them to revolutionary demands on any serious scale. Barricades appeared from time to time, but merely as symbols of protest, not as ramparts of insurrection. Ebullient and aggressive as the French workers remained, they have never again returned to revolutionary action.

## PROLETARIAN SOCIALISM: MARXISM

Karl Marx did not live long enough to see the profound impact his ideas had upon the world. Nor did he witness the schematization of his ideas into a quasi-religious dogma in the years following the Bolshevik seizure of power—a debasement that would certainly have appalled him. After spending about half his life in exile, mostly in London, deeply involved in organizational as well as scholarly activities, he died in 1883, and the staggering body of then-unpublished manuscripts, notes, and correspondence that he left behind, as well as the works he published during his lifetime, attest to a single-minded and remarkable commitment: to formulate a thoroughgoing critical analysis of social development, particularly of capitalism, and to advance a politics that would provide workers with the guidance needed to replace bourgeois society with socialism.

The value of his endeavor cannot be measured simply by the sheer volume of his work. Proudhon published as much, if not more, in a shorter lifespan. But in contrast to Proudhon, who often leaped into print with any passing idea that occurred to him, Marx usually published his views only after long and careful reflection. His theoretical goal was *coherence*, and he disdained the patently incomplete, often hazy, and poorly formulated ideas of his radical contemporaries.

From a distance of a century and a half, Marx is difficult to read today partly because the theoretical standards and literacy characteristic of his era—

influenced as it was by the high intellectual level and hopes of the Enlightenment—suffered a steady attrition in the years following his lifetime. Yet the rich insights in his writings are an immeasurable treasure that, for all their failings, thinking people can ignore only at the cost of their cultural and intellectual development.

Marx seems to have set himself two principal tasks: the first, to unmask the hidden nature of capitalist exploitation and the trajectory of the capitalist development; the second, to establish the theoretical basis for a consistently revolutionary practice. Before his writings gained influence, capitalism had successfully fashioned an image of itself as the natural economic framework for a free, juridically egalitarian, and basically just society. Despite the vast and obvious differences in wealth between bourgeois and proletarian, capitalist ideology had considerable success in presenting its economic order as based on a fixed conception of “human nature” rather than on historically conditioned class interests. Society was understood to be guided by a “natural” desire for personal gain, by which every parsimonious and hardworking individual could hope to attain material security, independence, and even wealth, irrespective of the social status into which (usually) he was born. Bourgeois apologists, in effect, regarded capitalist society not so much as a system of social relations as an agglomeration of competitive individuals, each autonomously capable of making his (or less commonly, her) fortune through free enterprise.

Adam Smith, perhaps the most moralistic of the classical economists, had added to this ideology the notion of an “invisible hand” of competition, in which the self-interest of each individual allegedly redounded to the general good. Capitalism was thus extolled as the rational fulfillment of thousands of years of human development—a truly free society in the sense of finally giving full expression to individual self-interest. Self-interest itself acquired a beneficent and socially constructive form, since the maximization of an individual's interests was said to ultimately advance the material conditions of life for all, promoting invaluable technological advances that ultimately benefited humanity, and fostering peace and mutual understanding through the worldwide growth of commerce.

Marx shattered this image, not only by decrying the injustices and cruelties of capitalism but by systematically demonstrating its inherent irrationality. Profoundly influenced by Hegel's historical and developmental way of thinking, he demonstrated that capitalism was neither naturally expressive of a basic human desire for gain nor free of inherent and potentially fatal contradictions. Far from being a classless agglomeration of self-interested individuals, Marx argued, capitalist society was torn by bitter conflicts between the proletariat and the industrial bourgeoisie. These two fundamental *classes* had irreconcilable interests, and their conflict would result either in the overthrow of the capitalist social order by the industrial workers, opening the



way to socialism, or—as Marx and Engels put it in *The Communist Manifesto*—in the common ruin of both classes and, by inference, the breakdown of civilized social life.

Hence, far from being a uniquely natural society that marked the culmination of history, capitalism was historically transitory, a phase (indeed, the closing phase) in humanity's long attempt to rise from animality to the full realization of its creative powers and consciousness in a rational society—one in which property would be communally owned and the production and distribution of goods would be guided entirely by the satisfaction of human needs.

Had Marx argued for communism in merely ethical terms, he would have been no more or less important than many other socialist and communist thinkers of his day. But his argument was instead far more historical and economic or, as he conceived of it, "scientific," than those of his socialist contemporaries. Not only did his writings denude capitalism of all its benign but mythic pretensions, showing how it had emerged out of the breakdown of feudalism and how the wealth and property that became socially dominant were accumulated by theft and violence. He further showed that capitalism was far more than merely a system to reward the capitalist with profit for his entrepreneurial abilities. Rather, he said, it was based on the hidden exploitation of the working class. What appeared on the surface to be a fair transaction—the exchange of wages for labor power—actually concealed the expropriation of "surplus" labor, or labor over and beyond that which workers actually required to satisfy their own needs, delivering it unknowingly to the bourgeoisie. It was precisely this objective analysis of capitalist exploitation—as opposed to moral denunciations of injustice or unfairness, intuitive criticisms of capitalism, or various notions about interest as the source of profit, often made by his socialist and Proudhonist contemporaries—that Marx regarded as the scientific component of his analysis.

In unmasking capitalism as a system of exploitation—whose real operations were concealed by myths of personal autonomy, or by the administrative contributions of capitalists to the process of production—Marx tried to show that the success of individual entrepreneurs in a necessarily competitive marketplace inevitably led to the elimination of rival capitalists and, by absorption as well as growth, to the concentration of capital in fewer and fewer hands. Their "anarchic" competition for an ever greater share of the market not only gave rise to periodic economic dislocations, or crises; it was ultimately destined to produce a general, indeed chronic crisis in the entire system, in which the great mass of proletarianized people would be pitted against ever fewer capitalist magnates. In *Capital*, in a ringing passage that culminates his chapter on the "Historical Tendency of Capitalist Accumulation," Marx declared that in the course of capitalist competition,

One capitalist always kills many. Hand in hand with this centralisation, or this expropriation of many capitalists by few, develop, on an ever extending scale, the co-operative form of the labour-process, the conscious technical application of science, the methodical cultivation of the soil, the transformation of the instruments of labour into instruments of production only usable in common, the economising of all means of production by their use as the means of production of combined, socialised labour, the entanglement of all peoples in the net of the world-market, and this, the international character of the capitalistic régime. Along with the constantly diminishing number of the magnates of capital, who usurp and monopolise all advantages of this process of transformation, grows the mass of misery, oppression, slavery, degradation, exploitation; but with this too grows the revolt of the working-class, a class always increasing in numbers, and disciplined, united, organised by the very mechanism of the process of capitalist production itself. The monopoly of capital becomes a fetter on the mode of production, which has sprung up and flourished along with, and under it. Centralisation of the means of production and socialisation of labour at last reach a point where they become incompatible with their capitalist integument. This integument is burst asunder. The knell of capitalist private property sounds. The expropriators are expropriated.<sup>9</sup>

History has yet to render a verdict on all the prognoses that Marx advanced in this passage. But what is arresting is that a book published in 1867, when artisanal production and peasant agriculture still dominated the European economy, contained such an extraordinary insight into the trajectory of capitalism, even its transformation from a relatively localized form into a global economy.

More than any contemporary work of revolutionary socialism, Marx's prognoses were overwhelmingly premised on the industrial capitalist economy; the centralization and mechanization of industry; the impossibility of managing production except along socialized lines; and the abolition of private property in all major spheres of production. Most contemporary socialist and Proudhonist theorists, by contrast, gained their support from artisans and grounded their ideas within the framework of an artisanal economy. They were unprepared to demand such a sweeping transformation of society, least of all the complete abolition of private property. As we have seen, nearly all so-called "utopian" socialists, even Owen—the most labor-oriented—as well as Proudhon—essentially sought the equitable distribution of property. Very few were prepared to exclude all capitalistic forms of private property ownership from a socialist society. Indeed, at one time or another, many socialists and Proudhonists essentially voiced the aspirations of the small-scale producer in a preindustrial world, even by appealing for collaboration between



artisans and industrial capitalists. Marx, however, addressed himself not to artisans (although he often referred to them as "proletarians") but to the industrial working class. Not surprisingly, the large proletarian parties of the late nineteenth century, like Guesde's *Parti Ouvrier*, found his views more relevant than those of any other theorist of the time.

Had Marx confined his work to the critique of capitalism and the sources of class struggle in modern society, his work would still have been of imperishable value. But contrary to the myth that he was only a theorist, Marx was deeply involved throughout his life with the workers' movements of his day, and he also advanced a concrete practice, or politics. This constitutes what he considered to be his second major contribution to socialism. Unfortunately, his politics was filled with so many ambiguities that after his death it created a mixed legacy for his followers. Indeed, clarifying what Marx had meant became a source of conflict among individuals who shared the name Marxist. As a result, various tendencies within "scientific socialism" were pitted against one another, often with grim effects on the workers' movement as a whole.

With the outbreak of the First World War, verbal disputes over Marxist politics escalated into major splits in the movement. Within the Marxist fold an immense literature emerged that denounced not only other socialist tendencies but also other Marxists, eventually leading not only to divisions but ultimately to armed struggles between self-professed Marxian movements. In the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, Marxists inflicted repressive actions against those who claimed to provide more authentic versions of Marx's ideas, not to speak of conflicts with non-Marxist schools of socialism.

The source of the conflict was not Marx's political writings alone. Marxist movements were by no means insulated from the bourgeois society they opposed—indeed, like the former anarchist Aristide Briand, they easily became integrated into it and eventually worked to countervail the revolutionary milieu from which they had originally emerged. Their decidedly parliamentary orientation made them particularly vulnerable to cooptation by bourgeois society, especially in the years following the defeat of the Paris Commune.

Moreover, contradictory as it may seem, Marx himself strongly favored the further development of capitalism in the nineteenth century, an outlook that excused or fostered in his followers a tendency toward accommodation to the capitalist system. Throughout his life, Marx had advanced a theory of historical development that assigned to capitalism the role of advancing technology, hopefully to a point where it would be possible to free humanity from the demanding "socially necessary" work needed for subsistence. The achievement of socialism—or more properly, its most advanced stage, communism—required that the means of production be developed to a point where human beings could be freed from material scarcity and toil to manage society and cultivate their intellectual and artistic sensibilities. Thus the development of

capitalism, particularly its revolutionary role in advancing labor-saving technology, was seen by most Marxists as a historical and economic prerequisite for the emergence of socialism.

During the revolutions of 1848–49, Marx felt that workers were obliged to render critical support for the creation of a bourgeois republic, free of all feudal encumbrances and obstacles to free trade and nationhood. They were even expected to subordinate their own movements in the interest of advancing capitalist development in relatively undeveloped countries. Only later, in the "Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League," did Marx and Engels call for the establishment of a workers' party that aimed to establish its own "revolutionary workers' governments, whether in the form of municipal committees and municipal councils or in the form of workers' clubs and workers' committees."<sup>10</sup> This party, Marx and Engels now believed, should remain independent of all permanent alliances with the bourgeoisie and well-off peasants.

But this document, which became pivotal in decades of disputes among Marxists, was itself a source of ambiguity. It trailed off in programmatic demands to escalate bourgeois-democratic proposals for more equitable taxes, the nationalization of railways and factories, and state debts. No further mention was made of "revolutionary workers' governments" or workers' "municipal committees and municipal councils." Indeed, the workers were abjured from proposing "any directly communistic measures."<sup>11</sup> Thus, except for their writings on the Paris Commune, Marx and Engels advanced the demand for a highly centralized—indeed, antifederalist—republic as the political goal of a workers' party.

Marx's writings on the Commune, as we have seen, were a further source of ambiguity. At best, they may be regarded as a short-lived flirtation with federalism. And in a letter to Domela Nieuwenhuis that he wrote shortly before his death, Marx dismissed the Commune as a needless and wasteful municipal uprising, "of one city in exceptional circumstances," that could have been avoided—and should have been—had the Communards shown better judgment in their dealings with the National Assembly.<sup>12</sup>

To complicate matters further: a cardinal theme in Marx's praise for the Commune was the need to completely smash the bourgeois parliamentary state. But he later expressed ambiguous views about even that goal and suggested instead that in certain capitalist countries the working class could take power through the existing capitalistic electoral machinery—removing the very need for insurrection. In September 1872, Marx noted that there are different roads by which the working class could achieve "political supremacy."

We know that the institutions, customs and traditions in the different countries have to be taken into account, and we do not deny the existence of



countries like America, England, and ... Holland, where the workers may achieve their aims by *peaceful* means. That being true we must also admit that in most countries on the Continent it is force which must be the lever of our revolution; it is force which will have to be resorted to *for a time* in order to establish the rule of the workers.<sup>13</sup>

This ambiguity became even more disturbing when Engels, later in life, added France to Marx's list. In fact, shortly before his death in 1895, Engels wrote a new introduction to *The Class Struggles in France*—Marx's work on the 1848 Revolution—that seemed to deprecate the military feasibility of street fighting by armed workers against trained armies. Others were even more eager to vitiate insurrection: over Engels's protests, Karl Kautsky, the editor of the German Social Democratic theoretical organ, *Die Neue Zeit*, watered down the introduction, leaving the impression that insurrectionary measures were completely obsolete—and, by inference, that parliamentary means were the preferred road to “revolutionary” social change. In a remarkably pedestrian interpretation of syndicalist doctrines, Engels, as we have seen, also contended that the general strike was destined to fail as a means for changing society because the workers would run out of strike funds.

There are sufficient passages in their collected works to justify a portrayal of Marx and Engels as either evolutionary or revolutionary in their views about the transformation of capitalism into socialism. Nor can we tell with certainty what kinds of institutions they finally thought would replace the parliamentary system if a workers' party took power: the equivalent of a workers' House of Representatives or Chamber of Deputies? Municipal committees and councils? Workers' clubs (the institutions of choice in Parisian revolutions) and committees? What can be said with certainty is that Marx favored a strongly centralized workers' state, as distinguished from confederations, to administer economic and social life—and, as his behavior in the International showed, a highly centralized party apparatus to lead the socialist movement.

The Marx-Engels writings provided ample justification for the Guesdist argument that the sole way for the workers to gain state power was by parliamentary methods rather than by a general strike or insurrection, as they also did for Rosa Luxemburg and V.I. Lenin's commitment to an armed proletarian uprising. It is not surprising that, as European Marxist parties were established, they became primarily parliamentary machines for electing candidates to public office in the bourgeois state—leading to bitter disputes with the remaining minority of Marxian revolutionaries who, with growing anguish, felt that their most cherished ideals were being betrayed by reformists.

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## NOTES

1. G.D.H. Cole, *Socialist Thought*, vol. 2: *Marxism and Anarchism* (London: Macmillan, 1961), p. 168.
2. For an exposition of libertarian municipalism, see Murray Bookchin, *From Urbanization to Cities* (1986; London: Cassell, 1996).
3. Originally published in English in the *London Times* (April 21, 1871), with corrections in Stewart Edwards, ed., *The Communards of 1871*, Documents of Revolution series (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press; London: Thames & Hudson, 1973), pp. 81–3.
4. Karl Marx, *The Civil War in France*, in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 22: *Marx-Engels 1870–71* (New York: International Publishers, 1986), p. 331.
5. Karl Marx, “Critique of the Gotha Programme,” in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 24: *Marx and Engels 1874–1883* (New York: International Publishers, 1989), p. 95.
6. Charles Tilly and Lynn H. Lees, “The People of June, 1848,” in *Revolution and Reaction: 1848 and the Second French Republic*, ed. Roger Price (London: Croom Helm, 1975).
7. The idea of two parallel confederations—one linking local or municipal trades, the other linking industries—was pioneered by Proudhon in *Du Principe fédératif* (1863), volume 15 of *Oeuvres complètes de P.-J. Proudhon* (Paris: Librairie Marcel Rivière et Cie, 1959). He called the industrial structure “*fédération agricole-industrielle*.” But Proudhon would have opposed the general strike, insurrections, local economic strikes, and revolutionary militancy associated with syndicalism, which makes the extent of his contribution to the doctrine highly arguable.
8. Peter A. Stearns, *Revolutionary Syndicalism and French Labor* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1971), p. 5.
9. Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, vol. 1, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, ed. Frederick Engels (Charles H. Kerr, 1906; republished by New York: Modern Library, n.d.), pp. 836–7. Due in no small part to Engels's role in preparing it, this translation preserves Marx's Hegelian modes of expression better than others.
10. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, “Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League” (or “Address of the Central Authority to the League”) in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 10: *Marx-Engels 1849–1851* (New York: International Publishers, 1978), pp. 277–87.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 286.
12. Marx to Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis (February 22, 1881), in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 46: *Marx and Engels 1880–1883* (New York: International Publishers, 1992), p. 66.
13. Karl Marx, “On the Hague Congress,” originally published in *La Liberté*, no. 37 (September 15, 1872), in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 23: *Marx and Engels, 1871–1874* (New York: International Publishers, 1988), p. 255; emphasis added.



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of formation, in many European countries, among them Germany, Russia, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Sweden.

## THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL

As these parties emerged, a strong sentiment developed to link them together in another International, with conferences, congresses, and a secretariat to coordinate their international relations. Although international labor congresses of one kind or another had been held since the demise of the First International in 1872—mainly to coordinate a joint struggle for the eight-hour day—a Marxist-oriented Second International did not come into being until 1889. In that year two congresses were called in Paris on the centenary of Bastille Day, both of which were intent on creating a new International. One congress, overwhelmingly French, met at a hall in the Rue Lancry, under the auspices of a socialist tendency known as the Possibilists, inspired by Paul Brousse. Brousse, a former anarchist whose enthusiastic embrace of “propaganda by the deed” had made him a zealous supporter of terrorism, became in the 1870s a mild-mannered, even respectable advocate of municipal socialism, based on reforms and the pursuit of what was “possible”—hence the name that was given to his movement.

The other congress convened within walking distance of the first, at a hall in the Rue Pétrelle. Although its participants were fewer in number, they were far more international in composition: they included men and women who were to become the major figures in international Marxism, such as Wilhelm Liebknecht, August Bebel, Eduard Bernstein (who had not yet become a Revisionist), Carl Legien (the head of the German Free Unions), and Clara Zetkin, from Germany; Eleanor Marx-Aveling; Jules Guesde, Paul Lafargue, Charles Longuet, and Edouard Vaillant, from France; William Morris, from Britain; George Plekhanov, the “father” of Russian Marxism; and Victor Adler, whose formative role in Austrian social democracy was comparable to Bebel’s in Germany. It was from this gathering that the so-called Second International, greatly influenced by the Marxism of these delegates, was formed, with branches—consisting mainly of political parties—in all major countries where workers’ parties were legal.

What partly induced the Second International to constitute itself as a formal organization was an appeal from the American labor movement to endorse a new proletarian “holiday,” to be commemorated on May 1, 1890, with the object of gaining the eight-hour working day. The Americans had called upon workers all over the world to simultaneously go on strike on behalf of the demand—and in the process to demonstrate proletarian

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## CHAPTER 33 The Social Democratic Interregnum

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Despite the considerable public reputation Karl Marx acquired as the “red terrorist doctor” who guided the International during the Paris Commune, his most important writings and theories had only limited influence during his lifetime. By the time of his death in 1883 in London, *Capital* had been translated into only two languages—Russian and French—and Marxism as a credo was largely unknown except among small groups of radical intellectuals. Virtually ignored in England, it was popularized to a limited extent in France due to the efforts of the indefatigable Guesde. For the rest of the continent, Marxism was too exotic to gain wide acceptance. Italians, Spaniards, and Russians were more strongly influenced by anarchism, as were a sizable number of French syndicalists, who, around the turn of the century, formed the most militant and impressive working-class movement in Europe.

Apart from Guesde’s small Parti Ouvrier, founded in 1882, no Marxist party came into existence while Marx was alive. In 1875, Wilhelm Liebknecht and August Bebel, Marx’s principal spokesmen in Germany, had muted the old man’s more radical ideas in order to create a unified German socialist party at Gotha—but to Marx’s fury, the new party’s program was so reformist that he and Engels seriously thought of denouncing it and had to be persuaded to limit themselves to criticizing it intramurally. Indeed, Marx’s *Critique of the Gotha Program* was not published until a decade after his death and only at Engels’s insistence. Thus not even German workers, in whose political activities Marx took a strong interest, formed a Marxist party during his lifetime. Yet within a decade of his death, his works were widely translated and carefully studied, and in many parts of the Western world they had come to be viewed reverentially as an indispensable guide to creating a socialist society. In time, social democratic parties that expressly adhered to Marxism were formed, or were in the process



strength, international solidarity, and militancy. (As we shall see, however, the "May Day" resolution that the congress passed was not exactly the one that its American proponents had advocated.) Thereafter the annual congresses that the International held passed resolutions not only for an eight-hour working day and the improvement of living conditions for the proletariat, but also for far more radical demands, such as the substitution of citizens' militias for regular armies. It also made commitments to fight for universal suffrage and engage in parliamentary activity, resolutions that were markedly distinct from the demands of anarchists and syndicalists. Finally, at its Zurich Congress of 1893, the International formally adopted Marxism as its doctrine of choice, in the presence of a beaming Engels, who thus lived to see his name, together with Marx's, enshrined as co-founders of the largest socialist movement in history, indeed one that, in the decades following his own death two years later, would achieve an influence comparable to that of a world religion.

It says something about the political mood of the time, however, that the congress in the Rue Pétrelle was also very ecumenical. The International's founding members included not only most of the world's leading Marxists but also Peter Lavrov, a leading Russian Populist; Domela Nieuwenhuis, who was soon to become the most outstanding anarchist in the Netherlands; and Gustav Landauer, one of Germany's most celebrated libertarian socialists. To the chagrin of the German social democrats, the congress also had a complement of highly demonstrative individualistic anarchists. Even after the International officially adopted Marxism in 1893, anarchists—principally the sizable number of French syndicalists with an expressly anarchist orientation—doggedly continued to reappear at International congresses. Only in 1896, at a stormy meeting of the congress in London, where the two opposing camps from the old First International resurfaced, were all anarchists expelled, whereupon they abandoned any attempt to re-enter the International and turned variously to terrorism and to syndicalism as their strategies of choice.

## BACKGROUND TO COMPROMISE

As early as the founding meeting in the Rue Pétrelle, the Germans began to establish organizational and programmatic hegemony over the new International. Indeed, the sweep of Marxism over the world actually had its beginnings in Germany, where its popularity clearly stemmed from the failure of the German ruling classes to arrive at a *modus vivendi* with the industrial proletariat. Whatever power and appropriateness Marx's ideas may have had on their own for mobilizing the industrial working class, they were given an enormous impetus by Bismarck's manic fear of socialism and his attempt to

suppress it. As it turned out, the spread of socialist ideas had no better friend than the "Iron Chancellor," whose unrelenting efforts to efface their influence over a span of twelve years—from 1878 to 1890—ultimately did more to invigorate the revolutionary tone of social democracy than its own most eloquent agitators and organizers.

Ironically, once the factory system took hold in central Europe, Germany might well have followed a social trajectory comparable to that of Britain, whose nobility and bourgeoisie had shrewdly coopted the industrial proletariat, eventually absorbing it into the emerging capitalist social order. In principle there was no reason why this could not also happen in Germany. The German workers were not particularly militant, let alone revolutionary like the French; nor did they suffer as bitterly as did British workers during the transition to an industrial economy. In the decades following the suppression of the Paris Commune, when the German industrial revolution got fully under way, Europe enjoyed a considerable degree of social peace. In fact, the passivity of the German workers can be traced to the revolutionary years of 1848-49, when German craftsmen—the working class of that day—allowed themselves, for the most part, to be led by middle-class liberals in their assault upon the despotic monarchies and duchies of central Europe. In contrast to their French brethren, the Germans produced no major independent working-class movement of their own, still less an uprising comparable to the June insurrection in Paris. Thus, German workers remained fairly tame well into the latter half of the nineteenth century; indeed, such working-class organizations that they formed were mainly educational and welfare associations, many of them influenced by Catholic and Protestant clerics.

The writings of socialists like Moses Hess, Wilhelm Weitling, and Karl Grün had far more influence among German exiles and journeymen abroad than they did at home, playing only a minor role among craftsmen in the German uprisings of 1848 and 1849. Radical artisanal organizations such as the *Verbrüderung* (literally, "fraternization") did surface during the revolution, particularly in Berlin and Leipzig, but most German workers followed in the tow of the liberals—notably, academics, professionals, and bureaucrats who had been recruited from the existing parliaments of various German sovereignties to form a short-lived pan-German national legislature. Meeting in Frankfurt, this Assembly, obsessed with legalisms and constitutional niceties, ineffectually squandered its opportunity to create a modern unified nation out of the innumerable quasi-feudal states, duchies, free cities, and bishoprics of the German-speaking world outside of Austria. In the end, the Assembly tried to bestow the role of all-German constitutional monarch on Frederick William IV of Prussia, who soon brushed the offer aside, after which the Assembly disappeared in the flood of reaction that followed the revolutions of the period.

The failure of the 1848-49 revolutions in the various German-speaking



states, particularly in Prussia and Austria, left open the problem of forming a united German nation. Unification, when it did occur, was ultimately brought about not from below, by liberals and socialists, but from above, by the Prussian monarchy, under the stern guidance of Otto von Bismarck and his cohort of semifeudal reactionary militarists, the Junker landowners from east of the Elbe River. Indeed, for more than a quarter of a century, from 1862 to 1890, Bismarck presided over German affairs in a career that was little less than cyclonic. Having been elevated to the position of Prussian prime minister in 1862, he soon turned his well-trained Prussian armies on Austria in 1866, victoriously removing Vienna from the race for German hegemony and in the same year absorbed Hanover, Schleswig, and Holstein into the Prussian creation known as the North German Confederation. These annexations were followed, between 1868 and 1871, by the absorption of major southern German sovereignties such as Saxony, Bavaria, Baden, and Württemberg and, after the Franco-Prussian War, Alsace and Lorraine. In less than two decades, Bismarck had created a powerful German Empire, or Reich, under the Prussian emperor (or Kaiser) Wilhelm I, while he himself became its first chancellor in 1871. That it was Bismarck and the militaristic and authoritarian Prussian Junkers who established and ruled the Reich—rather than the liberal democrats, who were hapless spectators to the militaristic unification—was tragic not only for Germany but for Europe as a whole.

In the same year that Bismarck embarked on his career, a determined workers' movement finally began to emerge in Germany, soon to be led by a brilliant young Jewish lawyer, Ferdinand Lassalle. Lassalle, invited to address a German artisans' organization in Berlin on April 12, 1862, delivered a peroration, later published as the "Workers' Program," that was partly rooted in Marx's ideas and that drew its inspiration from the *Communist Manifesto*. Not only had Lassalle read Marx's available writings, he had known Marx fairly well from the 1840s onward. Later, as the young lawyer began to gain considerable prestige among the German workers, he visited Marx in London, and the two men maintained an ongoing correspondence. To all appearances, in fact, Lassalle seemed to regard Marx as his theoretical mentor and tried to find German publishers for his work.

Moreover, Lassalle's career as a labor leader was truly meteoric. In the mere two years that passed between his emergence as a workers' leader and his death in a duel over a love affair in 1864, his activities gained him a legendary status in the history of social democracy. During that short time span he toured Germany, stirring up the latent sentiment for a working-class party that would function independently of the liberals in parliamentary politics. Idolized by thousands of workers, his fervent, often theatrical oratory, his organizational talents (which he exercised quite high-handedly), and his manifesto directly inspired thousands of German workers to create their own organizations and,

under his guidance, to gather at an ad hoc workers' congress in Frankfurt in May 1863, where they agreed to establish the General German Workers Association (Allgemeine Deutsche Arbeiterverein, or ADAV). Thus, within a single year, Lassalle found himself at the head of the largest—and for a brief time, the only—working-class party in Germany, as a result of which he left a profound imprint upon the German workers' movement for decades after his death.

But his close personal ties to Marx notwithstanding, Lassalle was not in fact a Marxist. Indeed, he and Marx embodied two distinct, even opposing tendencies in the German working-class movements. Where Marx was a revolutionary and a socialist, Lassalle was basically a reformist, parliamentarian, and cooperativist. These differences in political orientation were rooted in profound differences in philosophy and social theory. Where Marx's large body of economic writings were nothing if not social, Lassalle's sparse economic theories were rooted far more in pseudo-biological facts—especially in Malthus's theories of population. Lassalle more or less believed that population numbers directly influenced the availability of the means of subsistence, and he agreed with Ricardo's so-called "iron law of wages," according to which workers' wages fluctuated around the barest subsistence level necessary to sustain life. If population increased more rapidly than food supply, an overabundance of workers available for exploitation would ensue and wages would decline. This wage decline would then reduce the number of available workers, causing a renewed demand for labor that would increase wages once again. Although these oscillations would recur indefinitely, workers' wages would remain as low as possible, altered only by changes in the availability of labor. To Marx, this "iron law of wages" was entirely specious: he attributed the decline in working-class living standards primarily to capitalist competition and the capitalist imperative to increase profits. The "iron law" served only to conceal the real role of capitalist social relations by subsuming them to pseudo-biological factors.

The main source of conflicting tendencies that would persist in German social democracy for decades, however, was the profound political differences that existed between the two men. According to Lassalle, the only way that workers could avoid the impact of the "iron law of wages" was to gain control of the state for themselves and establish a government that would foster producers' cooperatives under workers' control. Such a state would provide capital and credit to a network of producers' and consumers' cooperatives, which hopefully would eventually replace the capitalist economy.

In fairness, it should be noted that Lassalle contrasted his state-subsidized cooperatives to voluntary private attempts to establish them. Voluntary endeavors, he believed, were too limited to produce more than isolated enterprises, with little effect upon capitalism as a whole. He even regarded trade



unions as too limited in scope to provide a basis for recreating society along cooperative lines. By contrast, Marx held that unions were important for attaining better working conditions and as living schools for instilling class consciousness in the proletariat. As for Lassalle's emphasis on state-subsidized producers' cooperatives, Marx saw it as a naive archaism redolent of Louis Blanc's social workshops.

Nor did Marx agree with Lassalle's expectation that the working class could use the state on its own behalf. As we have seen, Marx viewed the state as a historical phenomenon rooted in class rule and, his own statist socialism notwithstanding, he generally rejected the notion that the bourgeois state apparatus could be an instrument for any class but the bourgeoisie. Lassalle, by contrast, contended that the state could be used by workers to enhance their interests and even transform society along cooperativist lines. This belief stemmed from his reverential, even quasi-mystical view of the state, largely rooted in the tradition of German philosophical idealism, as a national expression of the German *Volk* and hence as a neutral force that could serve the interest of the people as well as their rulers. In the context of conflicting class interests, Lassalle's acceptance of the state served to foster reformist tendencies within the German labor movement, while his tendency to think in terms of a German *Volksgeist* was essentially reactionary in its implications.

Moreover, Lassalle shared Bismarck's view that German national unification should be guided by Prussia. Marx, who earnestly believed in the need for German national unification, deeply distrusted the Iron Chancellor's attempts to achieve national hegemony, especially with the backing of Prussian militarists. Indeed, Lassalle so detested the liberals, who represented the interests of capitalism, that he came perilously close to making common cause with the Prussian Junkers who, for their own reasons, affected to be antibourgeois, with the result that Lassalle's behavior was often highly unprincipled and included private negotiations with Bismarck against German liberals.

How would the workers create a state that would foster worker-controlled cooperatives? Lassalle's strategy, as we have seen, was mainly electoral and reformist. Lassalleans contended that workers should establish their own party and fight above all for universal adult male suffrage, in order to be able to elect their own candidates to the legislative bodies of the existing state. This essentially reformist parliamentary strategy contrasted dramatically with Marx's revolutionary view that the workers had to take power, if necessary by insurrection, smash the old state machinery, and replace it with a new worker-controlled state apparatus. According to Marx, such a workers' state would exist only long enough to subdue bourgeois opposition, nationalize property, and plan production to meet human needs, after which it would

fade away for want of any other function to perform. To use the famous aphorism of the time: the administration of men would be replaced by the administration of things. Apart from the exceptions Marx made regarding the United States, England, and perhaps Holland, there is no reason to believe that he gave up on these strategic goals, the many ambiguities in his writings notwithstanding.

Lassalle's ADAV did not long remain the only or even the principal workers' party in Germany. On May 17, 1863, a hundred and ten delegates from workers' educational associations in forty-five cities throughout Germany convened at Frankfurt to form the Union of German Workers' Leagues (Verband Deutscher Arbeiterverein, or VDAV) with a view toward coordinating their efforts along political lines. By contrast to the Lassallean ADAV, which was highly centralized and managed, as many workers complained, along dictatorial lines, the Verband was more of a federation than a party, allowing its constituent groups to enjoy considerable local autonomy. In fact VDAV groups were not necessarily socialist and, if they so wished, were free to ally themselves politically with progressive bourgeois parties.

Initially, the Verband's goals were diffuse. But the socialists within the VDAV steadily radicalized its goals, and at the two congresses that followed its founding (1867 and 1868), it tightened its structure, began to function as a political party, and very significantly, joined the First International, which meant that the Verband was expected to demand social ownership of the means of production. As its leader, the Verband elected a young wood-turner from Leipzig, the twenty-seven-year-old August Bebel, who would go on to become the most dynamic and influential figure in German socialism after Lassalle died.

In fact, Bebel had been won over to Marxism by Wilhelm Liebknecht, and between them the two men were to do for German socialism what Guesde did to foster Marxism in France. Following in Marx's footsteps, the Verband, in contrast to the ADAV, rejected state aid in any form as well as the formation of cooperatives. Instead the organization called for the formation of trade unions, which placed it squarely in the emerging tendency of proletarian socialism, rather than artisanal socialism. In 1869 at Eisenach, the Verband merged with the Saxon People's Party, originally a populist party composed predominantly of workers, to form an explicitly workers' socialist party, the Social Democratic Workers' Party (Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei, or SDAP).

Owing to Bebel's and Liebknecht's convictions, the SDAP was undoubtedly the first working-class organization in Germany to be led by avowed Marxists, although its program still resembled the relatively ecumenical manifestos that Marx had written for the First International rather than the expressly revolutionary views he had been advancing in the pamphlets and books published under his own imprimatur. But if the SDAP was not formally Marxist,



it was the first German party, since the old Communist League, with which Marx and Engels had a direct association and on which they exercised a major influence.

The relationship between the SDAP and the ADAV was anything but cordial. So bitter was the rivalry between the two workers' parties and so acrimonious the relations between their leaders that any prospect of collaboration seemed completely foreclosed. It was not only its more radical positions—its strong internationalism and its bitter hostility to the Prussian government—that distinguished the SDAP from the reformistic ADAV. In 1870, for example, from his seat in the Reichstag of the North German Confederation, Liebknecht abstained from voting for war credits to support the Franco-Prussian War. (His reason for abstaining was that he refused to abet the imperialism of Louis Napoleon as well as Bismarck, which earned him two years of imprisonment for high treason.) Indeed, once the treaty terms were announced, he adamantly opposed the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine. By contrast, the ADAV accommodatingly went along with Bismarck and gave the war its full support—an act that the SDAP regarded as a betrayal of proletarian internationalism.

The Paris Commune, however, unnerved the Iron Chancellor, who now began to denounce and harass all socialist organizations in Germany. Both socialist parties were confronted by a state that meant to suppress them if it could, and it was only by overcoming their bitter rivalry and joining forces that they could hope to mount an effective resistance to the increasingly repressive imperial regime. Between May 22 and 27, 1875, in the Thuringian town of Gotha, the ADAV (or Lassalleans, as they were generally known) and the SDAP (Bebel and Liebknecht's Eisenachers) finally convened to form a united Social Democratic Party of Germany, initially under the name of Socialist Workers' Party (Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands, or SAPD). Attended by 130 delegates, this Gotha Congress represented 25,000 members, of whom sixty percent were Lassalleans and the remainder Eisenachers.

What probably made possible the establishment of the SAPD was the enormous ideological concessions that the Eisenachers (led by Liebknecht in the negotiations) made to the Lassalleans. For the Eisenachers, the program of the new party—known as the Gotha Program—marked a definite retreat for the Eisenachers. As Gary P. Steenson tells it:

Judged by its program, the new party was a victory for the ADAV, and this was certainly the evaluation of Marx and Engels, who were sitting in England. In fact, the two "old ones," as they were called in party circles, had tried to forestall the program by sending severe criticisms of the draft to Bebel, Liebknecht, Bracke, and others in the SDAP with whom they had some influence. Ever jealous of their old nemesis Lassalle, and of what they considered their special relationship with the German workers' movement,

Marx and Engels denounced the new program as confused, state-socialistic, and too great a concession for the unity even they considered necessary. Although Marx's criticism is now more famous . . . , Engels too sent detailed commentary to Bebel and Liebknecht. Attacking the notion of "one reactionary mass," the iron law of wages (with its implicit anti-trade unionism), the concept of a free people's state, and many other aspects of the program, Engels predicted that unity on this basis would not last a year.<sup>1</sup>

Actually, it was hardly jealousy that induced Marx and Engels to reject the new program. The Gotha Program, which Marx trenchantly critiqued in a lengthy letter to a few of his leading supporters, contained major formulations that were so reformist, as we have seen, that he and Engels seriously considered publicly dissociating themselves from the document. Aside from relatively minor errors, Marx found statements that were opaque at best and intolerable at worst. The program committed the members of the new party to "strive" for their "emancipation . . . within the framework of the present-day national state"—a demand that Marx regarded as totally inconsistent with the worldwide unity of the working class. He might have added that the program's emphasis on the "present-day" bourgeois state as the arena of working-class "emancipation" explicitly acknowledged the legitimacy of the existing state as a decisive realm of struggle and implicitly rejected the need for revolution. Additionally, the program contained a reference to a "free state," as though the state were ever anything but an instrument of class rule (even by the working class), whose ultimate abolition would necessarily follow from the abolition of class society. Finally, to cite its most compromising features, the program described the "solution of the social question" as "the establishment of producers' cooperatives with state aid under the democratic control of the working people," a completely Lassallean, indeed a Blanc-esque assertion of an artisanal socialism, which allowed that the state could be a source of cooperative networks under "democratic" control.

Marx's critique of the program was withering; but more important, the few pages that constitute the brilliant *Critique of the Gotha Program* form a landmark document in the theoretical underpinnings of Marxian communism.<sup>2</sup> Little did Marx know, ironically, that some of the most objectionable formulations in the Gotha Program had been written by Liebknecht to please the Lassalleans, but the Eisenachers generally sloughed off Marx's criticism with the prediction that they would not seriously affect the workings and policies of the new party.

Engels's prediction that the unified party would not last the year proved wrong. Liebknecht and Bebel assured the "old ones" that time would ultimately bring the new party over to a Marxist point of view, particularly in view of the more democratic organization that the SAPD had by comparison with the



ADAV. Whether Marx's views could have prevailed over Lassalle's is hard to judge: in the SAPD (and in the later SPD, as the party finally came to be known in 1891), the Lassallean approach reflected in the Gotha Program persisted—certainly in the party's behavior if not its program, albeit not only because of Lassalle's legacy.

In the year following the founding congress, Marx's early supporters in the SAPD never decisively confronted the reformist outlook that dominated the program, partly because the antisocialist law of 1878, initiated by Bismarck, made party unity at all costs a vital necessity. In effect, for the social democrats, the antisocialist law was a mixed blessing: although it exposed them to over a decade of repression, it also kept them from confronting the latent conflict that simmered within their party from the day of its founding.

## REFORM OR REVOLUTION

The political edifice of the new Reich was designed to prevent an independent working class or any serious democratic movement from gaining substantial power in Germany. But the last quarter of the nineteenth century in Europe was a particularly balmy era of general social and political reform, and neither the German Kaiser nor Bismarck wanted the Reich to be viewed as a tsarist-style tyranny or an archaic despotism. Hence, with the establishment of the empire in 1871, the Prussian-run government gave the newly united German Reich the superficial trappings of a constitutional monarchy.

For the Reich as a whole, Bismarck established a lower legislative house, the Reichstag, based on universal adult male suffrage. In theory, this pan-German body, with deputies from 397 electoral districts, was supposed to represent the will of all male citizens, regardless of property or status—although subject, to be sure, to the paternal oversight of the monarch. In practice, however, the Reichstag was virtually powerless, a fig leaf for autocracy, as the social democrats called it. Except for military and foreign policy questions, which fell entirely within the purview of the chancellor and the monarch, the Reichstag was free to debate all political issues. But it could not pass laws on its own initiative, and the main authority it had was confined to accepting or rejecting the national budget—which, of course, was drawn up entirely by the chancellor and his ministers. Even in this capacity, moreover, the Reichstag's wishes could simply be ignored by the Kaiser, who retained the authority to handle all military expenditures at his own discretion.

The real power in the empire was shared among the Bundesrat (Federal Council), an upper house composed entirely of ministers from the formerly independent German states; the chancellor, who was appointed by the Kaiser

and was answerable exclusively to him rather than to any legislative body; the ubiquitous and thoroughly domesticated bureaucracy; the Prussian army, the strongest and the most socially entrenched military machine in Europe; and the Kaiser himself who, when he so chose, could exercise complete personal power over the government. With such a structure and so-called constitution, the empire could hardly be mistaken for even the most limited of constitutional monarchies. Its constitution, far from emanating from the people, was in fact a dispensation of the monarchy. Using the authority of the pliant Bundesrat, the Kaiser could disband the Reichstag at his will, appoint or remove the chancellor, and ultimately dictate whatever policy he chose to make, including decisions on war and peace, whether the Reichstag approved or not.

The existence of the Bundesrat preserved the arguable image of the Bismarckian empire as a federation of states, each with its own legislative diet. The federation was not entirely mythical—these old states did retain some powers of their own, resting partly on law and partly on tradition. Some states, particularly in southern Germany, had a relatively tolerant political atmosphere and occasionally allowed socialists to gain seats in the state legislature. In the Reichstag, the now-united SAPD began to get large numbers of votes in national elections, increasing from 352,000 in 1874 to 493,000 in 1877, while its Reichstag deputies increased from nine to twelve. Moreover, local socialist newspapers proliferated with unnerving rapidity, from twenty-three in 1876 to forty-one only a year later. Shortly after the formation of the SAPD in 1875, the Lassalleans and Eisenachers combined their two newspapers to establish *Vorwärts* (Forward), which became the party's official national organ.

In 1878 the Iron Chancellor finally succeeded in making the SAPD illegal. Ever fearful of a class war in Germany, Bismarck was eager to nip the growing party in the bud; indeed, as he put it in his own words, "the Social Democrats produced, more than foreign countries, a danger for war for monarchy and state, and ... they should be viewed by the government in terms of a military and power problem, not a legal problem."<sup>3</sup> But before he could outlaw the social democrats, Bismarck needed an excuse, and in 1878 he found just such a pretext when two unsuccessful attempts were made to assassinate the Kaiser, each within a month of the other. Although the assassins were not socialists, on October 21, 1878, having generated a furious "red scare," Bismarck induced the imperial Reichstag to pass the antisocialist law, or "Law Against the Publicly Dangerous Endeavors of Social Democracy," which empowered local police authorities in German states to dissolve all organizations, meetings, periodicals, public activities, and festive events that were even slightly tinted with socialist colors. Taverns that were suspected of being frequented by socialist workers could be and were closed down. The property and assets of suppressed organizations and periodicals were freely confiscated, and ordinary participants in any of the proscribed activities were subject to fines of 500 marks or three



months' imprisonment. Leaders or initiators of these activities, in turn, could be jailed for as long as a year, obliging many of them, including ordinary workers, to take flight to Switzerland, England, and the United States.

The same prohibitions against overtly political socialist organizations were extended to all other working-class associations that could be regarded as sympathetic to the socialists, including the Free Unions, which were generally socialistic. Even nonpolitical associations were prohibited, such as cultural, calisthenic, and literary groups. The prohibition was so patently discriminatory against the working classes that it infuriated many workers who were neither members of the SAPD nor even necessarily sympathetic to it. Oddly, however, the antisocialist laws, harsh as they were for their day, did not deprive the SAPD of its voice within the chambers of the Reichstag. Socialists could run for office, provided they presented themselves to the electorate as individual candidates rather than as representatives of the banned party, and the party itself, for a time, was able to function as a vote-getting machine by reconstituting many of its national, regional, and municipal committees as mere electoral organizations. The party's national *Vorstand* or Executive Committee continued to exist, for example, by calling itself the electoral commission of the Hamburg area. Many party organizations of lesser importance followed suit—at least until Bismarck finally hounded them out of the public arena and drove them underground.

Thus, while the SAPD was forbidden to have headquarters, hold meetings, or own an official press, its candidates and spokespersons could wage individual electoral campaigns and reach a wide public through printing establishments that seemed to be privately owned but that were actually owned or controlled by party members and party sympathizers. Significantly, electoral campaigns became one of the main—if not the leading—means by which the party could maintain any kind of public existence, however surreptitiously, which greatly pushed it toward parliamentarism, despite the fact that its revolutionary rhetoric was heightened in tone and form by the overtly repressive behavior of the bourgeois state.

Although the antisocialist laws were applied with varying degrees of intensity over the twelve years of their existence, the persecution suffered by social democrats was nevertheless very real and costly. The government tried and/or imprisoned all the party's leaders it could find—more than 1,500 people were arrested in all, some of whom served lengthy sentences. By mid-1879, it had closed down 414 periodicals for their known or suspected socialist sympathies, obliging the party press to move to Switzerland, and in its efforts to build an underground network within Germany, the party faced continual losses in leaders and resources. Even more effective were the government's assaults upon the Free Unions, which necessarily had to function more openly than the party in order to reach nonsocialist as well as socialist workers, a task that made

them very vulnerable to government repression, with a resulting, even precipitous, drop in their numbers.

Yet even as Bismarck was trying to extirpate the SAPD, he was also attempting, between 1881 and 1884, to buy off the working class by establishing state-run social insurance programs, covering health, old age, and accidents. Although many Lassalleans in the party's Reichstag delegates were inclined to vote in favor of these bills, presumably in order to help the lot of the workers and gain their votes, the left within the party saw these reforms as an attempt by the Chancellor to lure the workers' sympathies away from socialism and toward the Reich. After internal disputes, the great majority of social democratic deputies, as a matter of principle, finally did vote against the Chancellor's reforms and refused to enter into complicity with a capitalist, indeed reactionary state that was trying to crush an avowedly anticapitalist workers' party.

In time, of course, the antisocialist law proved to be a boomerang. Its obvious class bias only served to increase socialist influence among a broad spectrum of workers, many of whom knew very little about socialism, and to cement the SAPD's ties with nonparty labor organizations, which were often equally uninformed about socialist ideas but in time became very influential in party affairs. Thus in the Reichstag elections of 1884, after six years of repression, the socialists won more than half a million votes, and in 1890, shortly before the antisocialist law was permitted to lapse, their electoral tally soared to a stunning 1.4 million, larger than any other Reichstag party and ten percent of the electorate. Bismarck, in effect, by trying to suppress the socialists, created a growing and angry constituency for them among the general voting public as well as in radical organizations, which in time would flood the party and mobilize constituencies for candidates who were hardly committed to the socialist principles that its leaders avowed.

Finally, in 1890, Bismarck was obliged to resign his position—not least because of temperamental differences with the new, headstrong young Kaiser, Wilhelm II, who was eager to rid himself of the arrogant and patronizing Chancellor. Nor was the new Kaiser eager to antagonize a large number of his subjects who were voting for, if not joining, a party and a union movement that the government had banned. Accordingly, in the same year that Bismarck left office, Wilhelm lifted the ban and restored the party's legal status. In the long run, the antisocialist law, far from weakening social democracy, gave it an aura of heroic glamour, and a tradition of having suffered persecution that made it an object of reverence to its members and extended its influence enormously not only in Germany but also abroad.

Moreover, even as the party attracted many ordinary Germans—middle class as well as proletarian—who were more sympathetic to its plight and to its call for reforms than to its core social ideas, the antisocialist law, by revealing the



class nature of the German state, also increased the influence of the more revolutionary tendencies in the party, namely the Marxists. By 1890 many German social democratic workers not only regarded the state as an undisguised enemy but had veered further to the left because of continual government harassment of their trade unions. Thus, the antisocialist law served to give the party a revolutionary veneer that, unknown to its more radical leaders and worker militants, concealed the presence of many members and electoral supporters who were basically reformist in their ideas and behavior. This tension between reformist behavior and radical veneer, which had existed in the party since the adoption of the Gotha Program, was the source of the seemingly inexplicable ambiguities and contradictory behavior of the party up to the outbreak of the First World War.

In the meantime, at its 1891 Congress in Erfurt, in Thuringia, the party changed its name for the last time, to the Social Democratic Party of Germany (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands, or SPD), as well as its program. The passages in the Gotha Program to which Marx and Engels had so strongly objected were discarded, and an entirely new document, pithy and entirely committed to Marx's ideas, was adopted. Framed by Karl Kautsky, with whom Engels had personally collaborated in preparing Marx's posthumous *Theories of Surplus Value*, it freely borrowed its analysis and phraseology from *The Communist Manifesto* and *Capital*, often with little modification of Marx's sweeping prose style.

The opening passages of the Erfurt Program virtually repeat, in the same ringing language, Marx's lines on capitalist accumulation (see Chapter 32) that close with the demand, "The expropriators are expropriated."

Ever greater grows the number of proletarians, ever more enormous the army of surplus workers, ever sharper the opposition between exploiters and exploited, ever bitterer the class war between bourgeoisie and proletariat, which divides modern society into two hostile camps and is the common characteristic of all industrial countries.<sup>4</sup>

The language is strident and combative. There is no mention of Lassallean cooperatives or state support, still less any notion that the state can stand above society as a neutral arbiter of social differences. In its historical demands, the program is sweepingly revolutionary:

Only the transformation of capitalistic private ownership of the means of production—the soil, mines, raw materials, tools, machines, and means of transport—into social ownership and the transformation of production of goods for sale into socialistic production managed for and through society, can bring it about that the great industry and the steadily growing

productive capacity of social labor shall for the hitherto exploited classes be changed from a source of misery and oppression to a source of the highest welfare and of all-around harmonious perfection.<sup>5</sup>

This radical tone was maintained in the party's programmatic literature and in party pronouncements by Liebknecht (albeit somewhat equivocally) up to his death in 1900 and by Bebel who, at the turn of the century, became the real leader of the party's organization. Kautsky, as the party's principal theoretician (and editor of its main theoretical journal, *Die Neue Zeit*, or New Time), played the role of the guardian of Marxist orthodoxy up to the First World War. All three of these men, to be sure, repeatedly vacillated in their political views and, as we will see, engineered reformist compromises with the existing social order. Nonetheless, for several decades they advanced a stirring Marxian rhetoric, of a kind that did not vary greatly from the speech that Bebel gave before the Reichstag shortly after the fall of the Paris Commune:

You should be firmly convinced that the whole European proletariat and everyone else who has still within him a feeling for freedom and independence looks to Paris. And though Paris is suppressed at the moment, I would like to remind you that the battle in Paris is merely a small skirmish of outposts, that the decisive events are still to come, and that within a few decades the battle cry of the Paris proletariat—"War on the palaces, peace for the huts, down with misery and idleness"—will be the battle cry of the whole European proletariat.<sup>6</sup>

This kind of rhetoric had persisted throughout the "outlaw period," and even Eduard Bernstein, who later appealed for a reformist orientation within the party, initially echoed Bebel's words, opposing any tendency within the SPD to accommodate itself to the status quo.

But the party's enormous successes at the polls, even during the period of its illegality, suggested that an underlying conservatism still existed among large sectors of the party and especially the trade union membership. Bebel's words had been appropriately heroic for the 1870s and the "outlaw period." But once the party became a fully legal organization with an immense following (often poorly educated in socialist ideas) and possessed of considerable material holdings, as befit a major parliamentary organization, the behavior of the party became less confrontational and more liberal. During the 1890s in southern Germany, where Bismarck's repressive measures had been less severe, social democratic deputies to the state legislatures were already making opportunistic compromises with their liberal colleagues and trying to tone down the revolutionary rhetoric of the national party leaders.

Among the social democratic Reichstag deputies, too, an explicit right wing



began to appear, which was willing to accede to Bismarckian policies when they seemed to benefit its working-class electorate, even during conditions of illegality—as we have seen, when Bismarck was making his social insurance reforms. It surfaced even more markedly, during the mid-1880s, over the question of government subsidies for the ship-building industry. Where the Left opposed the subsidies as an attempt to further German imperialism by extending shipping routes to colonial countries, especially Africa, the new right-wing social democratic deputies viewed them as a source of jobs for German workers, arguing for their support within the parliamentary caucus. By the 1890s, the party was becoming excessively successful, by promoting cosmetic reforms entirely within the framework of the Reich—reforms that properly should have been the concerns mainly of liberals and progressives. It is fair to say that by championing the material well-being of its working-class voters without challenging the social order, the Social Democratic Party in Germany was becoming more democratic than socialist and more reformist than revolutionary.

This rightward shift—including an attempt by moderate social democratic deputies to muzzle the radical rhetoric of one of the party's newspapers, the *Sozialdemokrat*—can be expected to emerge in any ostensibly revolutionary movement whose demands for reform coincide with those of liberals on specific issues. With the SPD, this overlapping of interests was unavoidable, given the party's huge and often socially mixed constituency. But the party could also have chosen to use reformist issues to heighten the importance of its revolutionary socialist vision. As early as 1850, in their "Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League," Marx and Engels had suggested that a revolutionary working-class party like the League should advance reformist demands by continually escalating them into revolutionary ones. Accordingly, they wrote that if the bourgeois democrats wanted the state to regulate aspects of the economy, the League should demand its outright nationalization; if the bourgeois democrats called upon the state to purchase railroads, the League should demand that the state confiscate the railroads outright. The League, they argued, "must drive the proposals of the democrats, who in any case will not act in a revolutionary but reformist manner, to the extreme and transform them into direct attacks upon private property."<sup>7</sup>

This policy of escalating reformist demands into increasingly revolutionary ones was completely lost on the new officialdom that the SPD was spawning in the Reichstag and the state legislatures. A pragmatic political leadership, expressly disdainful of theory and principles, it preferred to consider the merits of reforms in their own right, often precisely as the government presented them. Instead of challenging their authenticity or revealing their limitations—let alone expanding them into more radical demands—more and more social democratic deputies tended to vote yea or nay with little critical perspective.

Eventually, the contradictions between the party's rhetorical adherence to Marxism and its growing opportunistic pragmatism came out in the open in a theoretical debate, which raged furiously from about 1898 to 1904, between Eduard Bernstein's Revisionism and the upholders of the Erfurt Program's revolutionism. Bernstein had been an orthodox Marxist until the early 1890s, and up to his death in 1932, he insisted that he remained one and had never challenged the core social insights of Marx. During the twelve years of the antisocialist law he had spent in London, exiled by a prison sentence, he had lived almost reverentially in Engels's shadow. At the same time he had quietly been imbibing the gradualist doctrines of the British Fabians, a small number of prominent intellectuals who had rejected revolution as impractical, indeed as undesirable, because capitalism seemed to open immeasurable prospects for reform and ultimately a peaceful road to socialism.

Yet it would be naive to assume that Fabian doctrines alone turned Bernstein from a Marxian revolutionary into a social democratic reformist. The last quarter of the nineteenth century as a whole was a time of considerable social improvement. Far from fulfilling Marx's predictions in *Capital* that the capitalist economy would drive the working class to destitution and produce growing economic crises, workers in the 1890s visibly enjoyed a relatively high degree of economic prosperity. The period, if anything, was marked by considerable social stability and a strong belief in the certainty of unimpeded progress. Working within the existing state structure, it seemed, might be a far better strategy for attaining a socialist society than waging a costly, precarious, and bloody armed revolt. It was precisely this evolutionary strategy that Bernstein began to advance in a letter to the SPD in October 1898: instead of trying to make a revolution to attain a socialist society, socialists should work to make incremental gains that would lead to a slow and peaceful transition to socialism.

Bernstein, to be sure, was not the first German social democrat to challenge Marx's revolutionary doctrines. As early as 1891, in opposition to the adoption of the Erfurt Program, Georg von Vollmar of Munich had voiced the belief that socialism could be attained through a slow organic evolution of society, and like many Bavarian and other south German members (who had never surrendered this view), he urged the party to adopt reformist measures that were tabooed by orthodox Marxism. His arguments had fallen on deaf ears, especially in Prussia, which harbored the most left-wing theorists and workers in the party. Owing primarily to his distinguished position in the party and his more sophisticated critique of Marxism, Bernstein had managed to turn his Revisionist doctrines (as they were called) into a vocal and growing tendency, which, in fact, often gave a theoretical patina to practices that differed little from those of the pragmatists in the party and the unions and the leading trade unionists.

What is very significant about Bernstein's Revisionism, moreover, is that it



opened up a long-standing debate over reform versus revolution not only in German social democracy but among socialist parties abroad. All the party's big guns, such as Kautsky and Bebel, and especially its brilliant theorists such as Rosa Luxemburg, denounced Bernstein, and some even tried to drive him out the party itself. Bebel clearly recognized that Bernstein's views, which were first expressed at the Stuttgart Congress of the SPD in 1898, were by no means the aberration of a single man: they spoke to a wider segment of the party than his opponents' leaders were willing to acknowledge. Accordingly, with Bebel's aid, Bernstein remained in the party and even became a Reichstag deputy, revealing that changes were occurring not only in Bebel's mind but in those of leading theorists who still publicly professed to oppose Bernstein's views. Although the Revisionists always remained a minority at the party congresses up to the outbreak of the First World War, they had a much larger following than the votes they gained at SPD congresses would seem to indicate, and they even managed to attain a very important standing in world socialism.

This silent following included an important sector within the party—the trade union leadership, who were socialists in name only. In 1889, with the founding of the Second International, the union leadership had been infuriated by the call for a worldwide general strike on May 1. In order to avoid a work stoppage, they demanded that the German party be given the leeway to call its May Day meetings during an evening or on a weekend, rather than strike on May 1. Significantly, Bebel and his supporters in the party acceded to their wishes, thereby reducing the symbolic significance of the day from an expression of social protest to a tame, celebratory festival. Indeed, in later years it was union delegates to congresses of the Second International who turned the German social democratic delegation into a conservative force that generally opposed militant responses to major problems confronting the working class, including radical antiwar resolutions. Repeatedly, the union leadership played a major role in collusion with party moderates in bridling the social democratic youth movement, which supported the radicals in the party on democratic issues and against militarism.

Otherwise, the union leaders, for the most part, remained aloof from party debates on Revisionism—not because they opposed Bernstein but because of their indifference to theoretical issues. The intraparty debates between the Revisionists and the orthodox Marxists generally provided the trade unions with intellectual justification for their cautious behavior, if and when they needed theoretical support; reformist party candidates, in turn, drew upon these debates to gain ideological justification for their policies in Germany's various legislative bodies. By degrees, despite the majority votes that the orthodox Marxists gained against Bernstein at party congresses, it became evident that a chronic malaise afflicted European socialism—one that was to turn into an illness, fatal to social democracy, in 1914.

## THE GROWING ACCOMMODATION

The most serious portent of the conservative shift—one that challenged the capacity of social democracy to act as a revolutionary movement—did not occur in the realm of theory. Rather, it was the result of a stormy and innovative revolution, of a kind that Europe had not seen since the days of the Paris Commune.

In 1905, after the tsar's misbegotten war against Japan ended in defeat for Russia, the Russian working class rose in an uprising that sent tremors around the world. Although the Russian workers engaged in considerable street fighting in the cities, particularly in St. Petersburg and Moscow, their primary weapon in destabilizing Europe's most hated autocracy was the general strike—or “mass strike,” as it was called by the Germans. In wielding this quintessentially syndicalist weapon, the workers demonstrated for all to see that they could completely paralyze the country's major industrial centers—and create a revolutionary situation unequaled by any upsurge for more than a generation.

No sooner did news of the 1905 Revolution come to light, than a furious debate opened within the German Social Democratic Party about the merits and demerits of general strikes—particularly those waged not merely for economic but above all for political ends—indeed, as a means for overthrowing capitalism. The most radical proponents of the “mass strike” were relatively young social democrats in the party and the Second International—Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht (Wilhelm's son), and Clara Zetkin, among others—as well as distinguished elders such as Franz Mehring and, more equivocally, Karl Kautsky.

The Russian Revolution of 1905 brought the SPD—indeed, the entire Second International—face to face with its revolutionary conscience and traditions. The “mass strike” dispute now replaced the Revisionism debate—or more precisely, gave it concrete meaning. Like Revisionism, the Revolution challenged the very image of the Social Democratic Party as a revolutionary force, by focusing attention on the increasing apathy of the German working class toward revolution. The issue of the “mass strike” was not simply a theoretical question among a few intellectually minded leftist leaders. Rather, it forced members of the unions and their leaders to reconsider the role that unions *as such* would play in overthrowing capitalism. Bluntly put: how would the unions respond if the party called a general strike to achieve political ends rather than merely economic goals?

Marx, as we have seen, had always regarded unions as mere schools for educating workers in socialist, especially Marxian politics. He invariably gave priority to working-class political parties as the more sophisticated and able organizations of the labor movement. Before the 1905 Revolution, Marxist



theorists in Germany could reasonably support this view without fear of contradiction, thereby focusing the party's attention on electoral contests and parliamentary acrobatics. Strikes for economic ends had been left to the unions to decide upon and finance, an emphasis that allowed bureaucrats in the Free Unions to occupy themselves with pragmatic problems of day-to-day organization and labor relations while they disdainfully let the theorists duel with each other over fine points of Marxian theory.

But in 1905 the problem of the general strike, by raising an issue that bore directly on the role of trade unions in revolutionary action, could not be ignored. It invaded the very recesses of the union bureaucracy by requiring that the role of unions in a revolutionary situation be defined. As Steenson observes, "Probably no other issue in the history of the German working-class movement prior to the outbreak of world war in 1914 had such a far-reaching impact on internal relationships [in the SPD] as did the mass-strike debate of 1905-1906."<sup>8</sup> Predictably, the union leaders categorically opposed the right of the SPD to commit them to any mass action that confronted the social order, let alone the mass strike. So touchy was the union leadership on this issue that a Free Trade Union Congress at Cologne in May 1905 not only denounced the use of the general strike but blatantly forbade the union press and locals even to discuss it.

For their part, the party radicals saw the mass strike not only as a revolutionary weapon in its own right but as a way to revive a combative, revolutionary spirit in an increasingly sedate and parliamentary party. In response to the trade unions, they published a defense of the general strike written by the Dutch socialist Henriette Roland-Holst, with a preface by Karl Kautsky, as well as their own literature, including Rosa Luxemburg's 1906 pamphlet *The Mass Strike*. Bebel, for his part, straddling the unions and the radicals, opposed the general strike as more than a purely pragmatic and reformistic tactic, but he allowed for its use under restricted circumstances—a formula that satisfied neither camp in the party.

Inasmuch as the general strike had been a weapon of choice among Bakuninist anarchists, who had resolved to use the measure as a revolutionary weapon at their Geneva Congress of 1873, and in France was the revolutionary strategy par excellence advocated by the syndicalist CGT, local SPD branches throughout Germany began to invite anarchists to their meetings, primarily to educate them on the subject. In fact, the idea of the mass strike was far more appealing to the rank-and-file members than it was to the union leaders. Thus even after the Russian Revolution of 1905 went down in defeat, the notion of mass strikes lived on vigorously at SPD meetings and conferences. "The debate thus launched was long and acrimonious," Steenson concludes, "and despite the best efforts of the party and trade-union leaders, the issue would continue to cause problems right up to 1914."<sup>9</sup>

The crude measures used by SPD and union leaders to dampen any radical, let alone revolutionary sentiments among their followers is little short of appalling. In 1906, to neutralize any support for the mass strike, Bebel, whose revolutionary ardor was dwindling as rapidly as he was aging, and Carl Legien, the social democratic chieftain of the Free Unions, conspired behind the backs of their respective memberships to draw up a secret agreement on the financial responsibility for strikes. Strikes that were called for political reasons were to be the financial responsibility of the party alone, while strikes for economic goals were to be funded by the unions. Inasmuch as general strikes were expected to be political in nature, they obviously fell within the purview of the SPD, and to add insult to injury, the agreement stipulated that political general strikes were to be firmly discouraged by the party's Central Committee.

In fact, under the guise of dividing up responsibility for general strikes, the unions by this agreement effectively annulled the ability of the party to wage general strikes of any duration longer than a week or so. Possessed of only a quarter of the dues-paying membership of the unions, the SPD had far fewer financial resources, and since the party was precluded from calling upon the well-funded unions for assistance, even a large-scale political strike of any length, still less a general strike, was now beyond its financial means. The agreement thus gave the union leaders, most of whom were bureaucratic moderates with political views far to the right of the party leaders, the means to exercise inordinate financial leverage on the party's strike activities. Understandably, the SPD radicals were concerned that the union leadership would now be more prone to negotiate with employers than to engage in strike actions of any kind, not to speak of a general strike even for economic ends.

As alarming as this agreement was to the radicals, a similar agreement, also worked out by Bebel, went even further in according power to the trade unions at the expense of the party. For years the union leadership had resented its secondary role to the party leadership in matters concerning the policies of the social democratic movement as a whole. With the aid of rising party pragmatists such as Friedrich Ebert, Bebel now negotiated an agreement with the union leaders that would give parity to the party's Executive Committee and the unions' General Commission in all matters of policy—a virtual abdication of the political leadership to institutions that were supposed to function merely as the "schools" for social democracy.

Introduced to the SPD's Mannheim Congress of 1906, the resolutions approving these agreements produced a furor in the party's Left, led by Luxemburg and Kautsky, who appropriately regarded them as outright betrayals of basic Marxist principles. In response, Bebel engaged in verbal acrobatics that outdid his most sublime feats of logical manipulation. Simultaneously damning and praising all parties to the dispute, the old man eventually relegated the general strike for use as a strictly defensive weapon,



despite its patently revolutionary role in Russia. And the fact that he managed to win the overwhelming majority of the delegates to his position (323 to 62) revealed how far the SPD as well as its most important living founder had moved to the right, clearly placing narrow organizational considerations above once-sacrosanct principles. Like it or not, the German Social Democratic Party had ceased to be a revolutionary organization and in fact was permeated by reformist, even conservative sentiments.

The Mannheim Congress was a decisive event: it provided official confirmation that the union leadership was now dominant in party affairs. As Peter Gay observes:

The labor leaders had good cause for celebration [at Mannheim]; their great victory gave them far more than equality: in effect, it meant the surrender of the party to the unions. It prepared the way for the ascendancy of party bureaucrats who were not "theorists" and who "could get along" with the union leaders. . . . In short, it set the stage for the failure of the party in 1914 and for its breakup during the war.<sup>10</sup>

Needless to say, the new agreements marked a *de facto* rupture with what remained of Marxism within the party. The General Commission of the Free Unions, expressing its satisfaction at the vanquishing of revolutionary politics within the party, commented:

It is to be hoped that the frequent ructions during the Party and the trade unions between 1905 and 1906 will have a lasting good effect in that the complete co-operation, which now exists, will never again be endangered by *theorists and writers* who attach a greater value to mere revolutionary slogans than to practical work inside the labor movement.<sup>11</sup>

Moreover, the party's preoccupation with parliamentarism was taking it ever farther away from anything Marx had envisioned. Instead of working to overthrow the bourgeois state, the SPD, with its intense focus on elections, had virtually become an engine for getting votes and increasing its Reichstag representation within the bourgeois state. Education along socialist lines was giving way to mobilization along pragmatic lines, with the result that the party devoted ever more of its attention to immediate, everyday reforms at the expense of fundamental change. The more artful the SPD became in these realms, the more its membership and electorate increased and, with the growth of new pragmatic and opportunistic adherents, the more it came to resemble a bureaucratic machine for acquiring power under capitalism rather than a revolutionary organization to eliminate it.

## THE "MASS PARTY"

By 1914, the German Social Democratic Party had around a million members, and its affairs were managed by more than 4,000 paid functionaries and 11,000 ordinary salaried employees. It supported innumerable periodicals—local, regional, and national—many of which were dailies, others weeklies, still others monthlies, with a collective circulation of a million and a half readers. The pleasures of being a social democrat are suggested by the multitude of different hobbies and vocations to which the party's periodicals appealed: cyclists could read the *Arbeiter-Radfahrer* (The Worker-Cyclist), the organ of the Worker-Cyclist Federation in Offenbach; choral groups could read the *Deutsche Arbeiter-Sängerzeitung* (The German Worker-Singers' News), the organ of the German Worker-Singers' Union. There were periodicals and organizations for gymnasts, temperance advocates, even stenographers and innkeepers. All of these papers were published in the thousands of copies, some exceeding 100,000. Social democratic societies, clubs, associations, and groups abounded everywhere to meet every personal need, taste, or proclivity. The official circulation of the party's humor magazine, the *Wahre Jakob*, soared to nearly 400,000. So frequently was it passed from hand to hand that its total readership is estimated to have been about 1.5 million devoted readers. Significantly, the party's theoretical journal, *Die Neue Zeit*, founded by Kautsky, did not exceed 11,000 readers, although it was the most intellectually sophisticated Marxist periodical in the world. The official social democratic newspaper, the *Vorwärts*, had a peak circulation of 165,000—a high figure for the organ of a national Social Democratic Party, to be sure, but trivial by comparison with *Wahre Jakob*, which addressed the tastes of the ordinary SPD member in search of lighter fare.

Joining the SPD meant entering an all-encompassing subculture, with activities to account for almost all of one's spare time. A member could attend his or her monthly local party meeting; a union meeting; lectures; local and district conferences; and the meetings of various cultural and professional associations devoted to ancillary activities from health to sports. There were festivals to enjoy, demonstrations in which to march—especially May Day parades, which were safely held on weekends, even if May 1 fell on a weekday—and protest meetings and electoral rallies to attend. Social democratic youths could go on hikes and encampments, and hold their own conferences, meetings, and rallies.

All of this made social democracy a veritable way of life for the ordinary worker. It fostered a commitment to the party that was not easily swayed by dissident ideas nor easily troubled by breaches of political integrity. One's friends and even one's family members were often social democrats, and one's political rivals were the Catholic adherents of the Center Party—which had its



own array of popular associations. The two groups could be distinguished from each other by their insignias, modes of dress, and even modes of expression as well as by their political opinions.

On the eve of the First World War, the German Social Democratic Party polled 34 percent of the votes for the Reichstag and gained 110 out of the 396 seats, thus making it the largest party in Germany. About 220 party members sat in state legislatures, more than 2,800 in city parliaments, and some 9,000 in rural town and village councils. Although social democratic deputies at all levels of government made themselves accessible to their constituents—especially during elections, when party members might be induced to campaign in their behalf—members of the Reichstag *Fraktion* (or caucus) in particular had become more and more removed from any lived contact with the membership. Consummately moderate in outlook, these deputies detested the “wild” radicals whose theories were aired in the party press and whose confrontational notions discredited them with Germany’s “better classes.” In time, some deputies even took issue with moderates within the party leadership itself who, in their eyes, were not quite moderate enough.

Indeed, far too many SPD Reichstag deputies (over twenty percent) were not only party members but leaders of the increasingly conservative trade unions. Their long climb through the trade-union apparatus to positions of state power and their deadening pragmatism made them disdainful of theories, principles, and, above all, seemingly impractical intellectuals. Placing a strong emphasis on *realpolitik*, they despised the idealism that had cemented the party during its “outlaw period,” and they disdained—sometimes with a bad conscience—party figures who still embodied the radical beliefs of their younger days. At the same time, like most parvenus, many of them harbored a covert admiration for the very nobility, the wealthy bourgeoisie, and even the military, which their program committed them to oppose.

The Reichstag *Fraktion*, in turn, became an independent power in its own right, literally standing apart from the party and party members and demanding political autonomy from the party’s institutions. They seemed to regard themselves as representatives not of the regular SPD voters alone but of all their constituents, including transitory supporters and the less politicized and radicalized ones. With the passage of time, the results of this devolution of party leadership and parliamentary deputation alike toward accommodation with the existing system were to prove ruinous, both to social democracy and to Germany.

Despite its enormous size and following, the German Social Democratic Party was by no means amorphous. Contrary to conventional myth, it was a highly centralized party whose congresses enforced strict discipline when necessary and had full authority to expel dissidents who they felt diverged sharply from the party’s doctrine. This discipline was especially enforced within

the Reichstag *Fraktion*, where on any given issue the delegates were obliged to vote in favor of the policy adopted by the caucus’s majority, whether they personally agreed with it or not—and no matter how raucous and even bitter the debate within the caucus had been. In certain respects, this centralistic structure set a precedent for Lenin’s views of how a socialist party should be structured in the face of opponents and in times of crisis. Although the party culture nurtured broad participation by members in its many social activities, the centralism and the discipline of the party structure served to restrict members’ involvement in making important decisions, as witness the leadership’s back-room concessions to the unions and the enormous power accrued by the party bureaucracy.

Taken as a whole, the history of the German Social Democratic Party and its unions from 1905 to 1914 is a gray story of moral decomposition amid stupendous economic growth, and of the primacy of quantity—in the form of members, Reichstag deputies, and financial resources (more than 20 million marks, an enormous sum in those days, were tied up in party business investments)—over quality, in the form of talent, revolutionary resoluteness, and theoretical insight. By 1914, the party was largely a conservative organization, despite its radical rhetoric. Its rejection of the general strike, as well as its pragmatic agreements with the government on dubious legislation, which compromised the party’s principles, foreshadowed its collapse with the coming of the First World War.

Nonetheless, it is possible, indeed customary, to speak of a discernable Left, Right, and Center in the German Social Democratic Party during the years before the First World War. David W. Morgan, in his fascinating account, describes these three basic divisions. The Left, by remaining within the party instead of forming a new one, inadvertently perpetuated the illusion that the SPD was in some way the inheritor of the Marxian legacy. It was led primarily by Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht, and Clara Zetkin, as well as the aging and feeble Franz Mehring and a younger generation led by the little-known Paul Levi, Wilhelm Pieck, and other future founders of the German Communist Party.<sup>12</sup> These leftists consistently opposed the Revisionists’ attempts to ease social democrats into positions of power or even to use the existing state to create a socialist society. To be sure, they themselves did not reject parliamentarism as such; rather, they regarded election campaigns as educational endeavors and Reichstag deputies primarily as public educators, not as mere legislators. Nor did the leftists, unlike the Revisionists, accept any agreements with bourgeois parties in the Reichstag. They adamantly adhered to the party’s traditional precept of refusing to occupy ministerial positions in the government. Again, following a traditional party precept, the Left opposed any vote in support of the government’s budgets, as an indication of its noncooperation with the bourgeois state. In 1914 it would firmly oppose the



war as imperialist, calling for international proletarian solidarity against all the contending governments and the ultimate overthrow of the capitalist system.

As for the political temperature of the party membership—the ordinary rank-and-file members—by far the majority could be found in the broad Center, very often content with the social insurance and other benefits in the existing society that the party defended on their behalf. Most of the party executive, editors, and leading bureaucrats were also part of the Center, as were Friedrich Ebert, the most colorless, supremely bureaucratic embodiment of the party's pragmatic malaise, and Carl Legien, the chieftain of the Free Unions, who in fact belonged to its right wing.

The most important leaders of the SPD's Center, ironically, were some of the very men who presented themselves rhetorically as guardians of Marxist orthodoxy, namely Bebel up to his death in 1913, Hugo Haase who replaced him as party chairman, and Karl Kautsky. While the Center, in theory, accepted the basic party precepts upheld by the Left, in practice it dealt with them as naive and idealistic encumbrances. Like a congregation reciting the Decalogue, the Center mouthed the party's basic precepts all the more to ignore them in daily life. As the SPD aged into growing respectability, it thus reinforced an ugly reification of language: even the most stolid of its bureaucrats and many of its members could rhetorically hail the struggle against war, invoke proletarian solidarity, and pay lip service to class conflict—only to follow an opportunistic direction in the face of a crisis, with lowered banners and sullied placards.

There is little doubt that this Center, giving due allowance to all its gradations, never accepted insurrection as a means to achieve a socialist society. Even in the 1890s, Wilhelm Liebknecht (he died in 1900 at the age of seventy-four) had mouthed phrases about the need to use force in dislodging capitalism, only to waver and make compromises with reformists to preserve party stability. Kautsky, ostensibly a bastion of Marxist orthodoxy, abhorred violence and civil war; his own ideas of a revolutionary strategy did not go beyond the need to gain an electoral majority in the Reichstag and confront the government with his highly centralistic version of socialism. Bebel, as we have seen, was the architect of the most significant compromise that the party made with its Marxian heritage. His popularity as a leader of the Center, however, remained undiminished. Perhaps most accurate is the comment that George Ledebour, a left-centrist Reichstag deputy, once made to the young Leon Trotsky; the SPD, he declared, consists of "twenty per cent radicals, thirty per cent opportunists—and the rest follow Bebel," honoring radical rhetoric in the breach.<sup>13</sup>

Reformism sank such deep roots into the SPD that when a successful takeover of Germany by an armed proletariat actually became feasible, the party completely failed the revolutionary workers in its most basic commitments. The party leadership showed itself to be, at best, liberal democratic in orientation,

seeking to change an empire into a republic by making a number of social reforms, and at worst, overtly counterrevolutionary, a prop for reaction cynically draped in a red flag, mouthing empty radical verbiage to confuse its followers.

The party's ideological right wing, notably Bernstein's Revisionists, needless to say, made no attempt to espouse revolutionary Marxian principles. It expressly viewed capitalism as a long-lived, stable social order that could not be overthrown by revolution and sought to jettison Marxist theories of growing economic immiseration (*Verelendung*) and impending class war. So numerous were the votes cast against Revisionist proposals at party and International congresses that the followers of Bernstein sometimes seemed to exist merely as a foil for the Left and the Center to attack. But despite their numerous defeats, Revisionists shared more common ground with the party membership than the party's Marxian rhetoric allowed most observers of the SPD to perceive.

More disturbing—and dangerous—than the Revisionists themselves were outright, run-of-mill reformists such as the trade unionists and the members from the southern German states, who sat in the state legislatures, made shady deals with bourgeois parties, and voted for legislative reforms in virtual disregard of party precepts and Marxian theory. Indeed, more accurately than the Left and the Center, this Right reflected by its behavior the growing drift within the party away from appeals for social revolution and toward appeals for democratic reform.

The consistently poor showing of the extreme Left can be partly explained by the enormous economic and social benefits the German working class had gained by the turn of the century. Bismarck had shrewdly courted the proletariat with the most advanced social legislation in the world, and the SPD, by virtue of the additional reforms it gained, provided the German working class with a vested interest in the preservation of capitalism. Approximately eleven million German workers acquired retirement benefits and medical insurance; and eighteen million were insured against accidents—benefits that were virtually unknown to workers elsewhere in Europe. Almost every detail of workplace life, from maximum hours to the number of latrines in a shop, were regulated by governmental legislation. Bebel, who had a canny ability to understand the German proletariat and seemingly read its mind, acidly noted as he watched a parade of Prussian Guards in 1892, "Look at those fellows; eighty per cent of them are Berliners and Social Democrats but if there was trouble they would shoot me down at a word of command from above."<sup>14</sup> In any case, as long as no major crisis compelled the German Social Democratic Party to finally cast off its radical rhetoric and show itself fully as a reformist party, nearly all its leading members could smugly pay tribute to Marxian ideas and radical party precepts. Although the SPD's annual congresses had become



an ongoing battleground for debates over everything from Revisionism to the role of the general strike, the party managed to maintain a facade of ideological unity up to 1913, when Bebel died after years of balancing the Left and Right without any major defections.

His death marked the end of an era and the overt collapse of the SPD's revolutionary facade. Only a year later, in August 1914, the long-dreaded challenge came, when the Kaiser demanded that the Reichstag vote for war credits to support the army in the First World War. How would the SPD deputies vote? Would they remain true to their Marxian internationalism and reject the war as imperialist? Or would they succumb to nationalism and vote to support the war effort? The party was too heavily invested in its presses, offices, and properties, and too committed to reforming and thereby preserving the very society it was sworn to undo, to respond to the crisis of 1914 in a revolutionary manner. Its parliamentary *Fraktion*, despite bitter disagreements by a minority of deputies, voted as a bloc in favor of credits to finance the war.

The only surprising aspect of this vote was the incredulity expressed by many radicals both within and without the party when they heard of the SPD's vote in the Reichstag in August 1914. Its capitulation could have been foreseen years earlier, especially after it gave in to the trade unions at Mannheim, and its own tepid behavior at the 1907 Stuttgart Congress of the International, where a sizable part of the SPD delegation hesitated to take an adamant stand against the Reich in the event of a war. The astonishment of the socialist Left is perhaps understandable only because the German Social Democratic Party was internationally regarded as the foundation, indeed the model party, of a Marxist International—indeed, “the party of Marx”—whose congresses brought together the most advanced revolutionaries of the period.

## THE SPD AND THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL

The German Social Democratic Party enjoyed enormous eminence among the delegates to the Second International and shaped the organization, structurally and politically, in its own image. As a result, the International became heir to many of the same conservative tendencies that beleaguered the German party.

The first indication that the SPD's influence on the International would mark a drift to the right appeared as early as the founding congress on the Rue Pétrelle in 1889. The issue, as we have seen, was May Day, the proletarian “holiday” intended to express international working-class solidarity and militancy. The militants at the congress wanted to pass a resolution supporting full participation in the protests, calling on workers' organizations to join in strikes and demonstrations on May 1. By contrast, the Germans, as we have seen, were

adamantly opposed to any work stoppage that might be suggestive of a general strike, even if only for a single day. May Day, according to the SPD, was to be a “holiday” or at most a weekend or evening display of working-class strength.

Accordingly, when the Rue Pétrelle congress passed a resolution supporting May Day, the SPD delegates added a rider that left it to the discretion of the individual national parties to determine what kind of specific action would take place. The SPD's anemic rider was adopted, although it produced considerable resentment among the more militant organizations in the new International. That the German position could have been adopted at all demonstrated how shaky, as early as 1889, were the revolutionary commitments of the professed revolutionary movements of Europe—even in the matter of a symbolic one-day work stoppage. The resentment of the militants resurfaced during the International's Congress at Zurich in 1893, when Victor Adler, challenging the SPD's cautious behavior, carried a vote in favor of demonstrations on May 1, irrespective of whether it was a workday. The German delegation furiously opposed Adler's resolution. Shortly afterward, in Germany itself, the SPD turned the Adler resolution into a dead letter at its annual party congress at Cologne, where it openly rejected the use of the general strike except for very restricted goals. As it turned out, the inability of the Second International to commit itself to participation in an international day of proletarian solidarity augured the conservative drift that was soon to come.

Once the International adopted Marxism as its official ideology in 1893 and expelled the anarchists in 1896, its meetings became highly stylized, with well-ordered speeches, committees, and resolutions, and of course, the prescribed and highly decorative red banners of socialism. Form increasingly dominated substance, and loyalties were often based as much on the delegates' feelings of awe for particular socialist leaders as on the content of their orations. After 1900 an International Socialist Bureau in Brussels functioned as a clearing-house for reports and data on the labor movement, chaired by Émile Vandervelde, the stormy petrel of the Belgian Workers' Party. It was as close to a permanent coordinating body as the Second International would ever create in its nearly three decades of active existence, and its powers were minimal, even meager, leaving all the associated parties to follow their own whims and desires, with little or no regard for one another's behavior.

In all, the Second International held nine congresses between 1889 and 1912. Its resolutions at these congresses, to be sure, established certain standards of revolutionary political behavior—an emphasis on revolution over reform, the rejection in principle of entry into bourgeois governments, opposition to a European war and to militarism generally, and even support for the general arming of the people. But like the resolutions of the SPD, these standards defined revolutionary Marxian socialism only on paper and were often honored in the breach.



Not only did the International become a replica of the German Social Democratic Party in its rhetorical commitment to revolution and internationalism, but to a great extent it too was bedeviled by Revisionist tendencies, especially over the issue of the general strike. When the strike issue came up, the International essentially threw it back into the laps of the individual parties, which fatally removed it from the arena of worldwide proletarian action. But the general strike issue refused to disappear from the International's agenda, any more than it could elude the agenda of the German party, especially after the 1905 Revolution in Russia. As in Germany, Rosa Luxemburg and her comrades continually pushed, in the International, for the right to use the general strike as a revolutionary weapon rather than as a means to gain limited ends such as the eight-hour day or suffrage. Her efforts were entirely without avail—but the issue hovered over the International like a ghost, especially as a worldwide war approached.

In fact, the all-important question of how the International would respond to a world war produced a major division between Left and Right at several congresses. The Left should, in fact, have produced an open split, but it failed to do so because of a misplaced commitment to the fetish of organizational "unity." At the 1907 Stuttgart Congress, following the passage of a tepid antiwar resolution introduced by Bebel, Rosa Luxemburg and the principal Russian delegates at the Congress, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin and Julius Martov, introduced a more militant amendment, which the delegates dutifully adopted. The International thus declared:

If a war threatens to break out, it is a duty of the working class in the countries affected . . . to make every effort to prevent the war by all means which seem to them appropriate. . . . Should a war none the less break out, it is their duty to . . . make use of the economic and political crisis created by the war to stir up the deepest strata of the people and precipitate the fall of capitalist domination.<sup>15</sup>

This resolution was of crucial importance. It went beyond purely defensive action to prevent or oppose a war, such as a refusal to vote for war credits and engage in demonstrations. Indeed, it essentially called upon social democrats to use the conflict and its socially destabilizing effects to promote an outright proletarian insurrection against capitalism itself. But even this leftist resolution was diluted, as G.D.H. Cole points out:

Nothing was said about the general strike, or about insurrection—the Germans saw to that; but thanks to the Russian addition the prescription for action went a long way beyond the mere parliamentary protests which alone had been explicitly set forth in Bebel's draft. The general strike was not ruled

out—it was passed over in silence; and the same can be said of insurrection, which can indeed be regarded as implicit in the final resolution.<sup>16</sup>

Hence, on the war issue, the International committed itself to nothing—and as time was to show, it would do nothing when hostilities broke out, to its lasting disgrace.

No less haunting than the general strike issue was the failure of the International to decisively reject the entry of social democrats into bourgeois cabinets, a crisis that was precipitated by Alexandre Millerand, a socialist member of the French Chamber of Deputies, who agreed to become a minister in René Waldeck-Rousseau's government in 1899. Although Millerand was eventually expelled from the French Socialist Party, the International at its Fifth Congress in Paris in 1900 passed a resolution (prepared by Kautsky) against "entrism," as it was called—but very noticeably, without condemning it entirely. The resolution, shepherded through the Congress by Jean Jaurès (who later became the indubitable leader of the French Socialists), was symptomatic of the inability of the Left revolutionaries to shake off the influence of governmental opportunists within the International. The equivocal resolution satisfied neither the Right nor the Left at the Congress: while the Left was appalled by any participation in the bourgeois state, French and south German reformists were piqued that any restriction at all was placed on their freedom to form governing coalitions with bourgeois parties.

To be sure, the International repeatedly and ritualistically condemned Bernstein's Revisionism and thereby declared its nominal adherence to revolutionary socialism. But as in the case of the German SPD, such routine declarations carried less and less weight in practice. In nearly every European social democratic party, revolutionaries of the word were making parliamentary and political compromises that amounted to a *de facto* acceptance of Bernstein's approach. Millerand's entry into the French government was followed by that of Aristide Briand, who became minister of education in 1906; then by John Burns, the British labor leader, who simply abandoned socialism altogether and entered the Liberal ministry (ironically, resigning from it because of his opposition to the war in 1914). These were only the more notable and explicit defections to "Millerandism," as the disease was called. Bernstein's Revisionism reflected practices that were already adopted in nearly all the parties of the International well in advance of the outbreak of war in 1914. Indeed, many of the parties affiliated with the Second International eventually provided Europe, during and after the war years, with prominent bourgeois statesmen, some of whom became outright patriotic chauvinists.

As the first decade of the new century drew to its close, the International was faced with the grimmest practical test of all. The likelihood of war challenged it to take an antiwar position less tepid than the one it had adopted at Stuttgart. At



its Copenhagen Congress in 1910, Keir Hardie, the British socialist, together with the French socialists and delegates of the British Labour Party, introduced an amendment to the antiwar resolution that recommended the use of a general strike in case of war. Although Hardie tried to limit the applicability of the general strike to workers engaged only in war industries and only in belligerent countries rather than the international working class as a whole, his resolution foundered on the objections of the right-wing tendencies within the International, which regarded the general strike as too provocative. Nor did the resolution proposed by Hardie (who was more of a pacifist than a revolutionist) satisfy the Left, which supported the general strike but also thought the resolution should state, as Luxemburg and Lenin's did, that a war would almost certainly weaken capitalism and provide the opportunity for a proletarian insurrection. After much stormy debate, all mention of a general strike was eventually written out of the antiwar resolution, and the International went on with business as usual.

In the end, the Copenhagen Congress did what it all too often did: it left the question of antiwar activities to the discretion of its individual member parties. This repeated avoidance of the most pressing issue facing the world proletariat—by shifting its responsibility for opposing war to its constituent organizations—clearly revealed the International's refusal to deal with a war crisis that concerned all of Europe: indeed, it abdicated its duty to act in the interests of the proletariat as a whole, crassly subverting the very internationalism on which its existence was predicated. In this respect, the Second International had committed suicide long before Europe's armies were sent into a horrifying four-year bloodbath in August 1914. An emergency congress held at Basel in November 1912 to take up the war issue again produced nothing more than ruminations about the importance of preventing a then-raging Balkan conflict from turning into a continental war. Apart from pious platitudes about international working-class solidarity, the International still had no firm strategy in place should a general European war erupt.

The spirit of internationalism, however, was not entirely dead in European social democracy. Shortly before the outbreak of the war, Léon Jouhaux, the chief of the French syndicalist CGT, appealed to Carl Legien, the chief of the social democratic German Free Unions, to join him in calling for a general strike against the oncoming conflict. So deeply was German social democracy afflicted with the pathologies of nationalism and expediency that Legien responded only with an icy silence. Indeed, Legien's silence in the face of Jouhaux's plea was brutally eloquent: so corrupt was the German party that it indirectly promoted the outbreak of war by freeing the Kaiser's hands to send his armies plunging into Belgium.

In August 1914 the internationalist effusions of European social democracy became chaff in the wind, as social democrats in most countries voted in their

legislatures or resolved in their parties to support the war effort of their respective countries. Shaped largely by the German social democrats, the Second International ignominiously dissolved; indeed, many of its leaders, with a rudeness born of chauvinism, refused even to speak to their erstwhile colleagues in belligerent countries, who had suddenly been transformed by the war from comrades into enemies. "Western Marxism," as its academic acolytes were to call it some seventy years later, proved completely bankrupt in the face of the first great crisis of the twentieth century. When the SPD decided to vote for war credits in August 1914, uniformed German socialists, with the blessing of their party, marched off to slaughter their Belgian and French comrades in the trenches of the Western Front. Even many leading anarchists, men of the stature of Peter Kropotkin, supported the Allied cause, to the consternation of their antistatist comrades. The International disappeared without a whimper, leaving its carefully forged proclamations of class solidarity to the gnawing teeth of mice.

The forty-three-year period between the crushing of the Paris Commune of 1871 and the outbreak of the First World War proved to be a tragic interregnum in the history of revolutionary movements. Yet despite the basic conservatism of the Second International, the spirit of revolt did not disappear completely. It resurfaced with furious intensity in Russia, where capitalism had only begun to intrude, ending the paralysis that had been produced by European social democracy for nearly three decades.

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## NOTES

1. Gary P. Steenson, *"Not One Man! Not One Penny!": German Social Democracy, 1863-1914* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1981), pp. 31-2.
2. Karl Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Programme," in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 24: *Marx-Engels 1874-1883* (New York: International Publishers, 1989), pp. 77-99. A full English translation of the Gotha Program appears as an appendix in Steenson's book. I have taken the liberty of using the quotations from Marx's *Critique* for my account of the program here.
3. Quoted by Guenther Roth, *The Social Democrats in Imperial Germany: A Study in Working-Class Isolation and National Integration* (Totowa, N.J.: Bedminster Press, 1963), p. 79.
4. Erfurt Program (1891), in Steenson, *"Not One Man!"* p. 247.
5. Steenson, *"Not One Man!"* p. 248.
6. Quoted in Roth, *Social Democrats in Imperial Germany*, p. 87.
7. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, "Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League" (or "Address of the Central Authority to the League") in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 10: *Marx-Engels 1849-1851* (New York: International Publishers, 1978), pp. 286.
8. Steenson, *"Not One Man!"* p. 103-4.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 104.



10. Peter Gay, *The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), p. 127.
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12. David W. Morgan, *The Socialist Left and the German Revolution: A History of the German Independent Social Democratic Party, 1917-1922* (Ithaca, N.Y., and London: Cornell University Press, 1975).
13. Leon Trotsky, *My Life* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), p. 215.
14. Quoted by Sir Valentine Chirol, *Fifty Years in a Changing World* (New York: Harcourt, 1928), p. 274.
15. Quoted by G.D.H. Cole, *A History of Socialism*, vol. 3, part 1: *The Second International, 1889-1914* (London: Macmillan, 1956), pp. 67-8.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 69.

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## Bibliographical Essay

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### GENERAL WORKS

It would be difficult to gain an understanding of the revolutions discussed in this book without placing them in the general context of nineteenth-century European history. The range of historical works covering this immensely important period, of course, is enormous, but several general histories are exceptional. The latter half of R. R. Palmer and Joel Colton's *A History of the Modern World* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965) and particularly David Thomson's *Europe Since Napoleon*, 2nd edn revised (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1982), are invaluable sources for the social environment in which the classical nineteenth-century revolutions occurred. An excellent overall history of the first half of the century is William L. Langer's *Political and Social Upheaval, 1832-1852* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), in the Rise of Modern Europe series.

Among the economic histories, few equaled Ernest L. Bogart's *Economic History of Europe, 1760-1939* (London and New York: Longmans, Green, 1942), with its wealth of information about the nineteenth century. Fernand Braudel's *Capitalism and Material Life, 1400-1800* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973) provides a valuable historical background to the conditions that led to the Industrial Revolution. The classic work on the development of the industrial economy is Arnold Toynbee's *The Industrial Revolution* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1956, originally published in 1914), which was actually based on the notes of students and friends who attended his lectures between 1880 and 1881. This small book managed to raise most of the important issues that stemmed from the Industrial Revolution and, more than a century after the original lectures, is still rewarding reading. Alan S. Milward and S. B. Saul's *The Economic Development of Continental Europe, 1780-1870* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1973) is to be recommended, as are J. L. Hammond and Barbara



Hammond's somewhat dated but still eminently informative and readable *The Rise of Modern Industry* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969, originally published in 1925) and their *The Town Labourer* (New York: Anchor Books, 1968). Eminently readable and useful as a corrective for accounts that overemphasize the extent of the Industrial Revolution in the nineteenth century, focusing instead on the persistence of precapitalist agrarian lifeways and feudal and aristocratic institutions during the century prior to the First World War, is Arno J. Mayer's *The Persistence of the Old Regime* (New York: Pantheon, 1981).

Many original documents that I have cited were drawn from document collections, of which the most notable are *Revolution from 1789 to 1906*, well selected and edited by Raymond Postgate (New York: Harper & Row, 1962); *Socialist Thought: A Documentary History*, edited by Albert Fried and Ronald Sanders (New York: Doubleday, 1964); and the Documents of Revolution series, published by Thames and Hudson in Great Britain and Cornell University Press in the United States.

Nothing in English equals G.D.H. Cole's superb six-volume *A History of Socialist Thought* (London: Macmillan; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1953-1960), a truly outstanding treatment of socialistic thinkers. Max Beer's two-volume work of *The General History of Socialism and Social Struggles* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1957) is a highly readable contribution to the history of socialism and revolutionary uprisings from earliest times in the West to the early twentieth century. As a one-volume history of various socialisms, Harry W. Laidler's *History of Socialism* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1968) is a very readable, highly accurate, and a generally outstanding achievement. One of the most elegant and insightful studies of socialism and anarchism is George Lichtheim's *The Origins of Socialism* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969); although it is essentially an interpretation of Cole's six-volume work, Lichtheim's perspective is provocative. Wolfgang Abendroth's *A Short History of the European Working Class* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1972) is a synoptic overview of the workers' movement from 1848 to the Second World War, while James H. Billington's *Fire in the Minds of Men* (New York: Basic Books, 1980) is a rather frantic and scattered compilation of important data as well as gossip about revolutionaries and revolutionary movements, from which the reader will learn such esoterica as the origins of the "Marseillaise" and the "Internationale" as well as key movements such as the Society of the Seasons. Although some of its facts are arguable, it is still a mine of information as well as rapid-fire accounts of events and ideas. Although Alexander Gray's *The Socialist Tradition: Moses to Lenin* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968) is informative, the author so patently hates his subject that he tends to alienate the reader and render his account inaccessible to all but outright antisocialists.

So much does the span of Louis-Auguste Blanqui's life cover the nineteenth

century that his biographies—alas, still too few in number—can be cited under the heading of "general reading." His most devoted and informed biographer was Maurice Dommanget, whose several books on Blanqui are available in French. I have found most useful for my purposes his *Auguste Blanqui: Des Origines à la révolution de 1848: Premiers combats et premières prisons* (Paris and Le Haye: Mouton, 1969). The earliest English-language biography of Blanqui seems to be Neil Stewart's *Blanqui* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1939), a highly dramatized account with a number of doubtful facts, but an entertaining Marxist interpretation of the great revolutionary. Less tendentious and more accurate is Samuel Bernstein's *Auguste Blanqui and the Art of Insurrection* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971). Finally, Max Nomad gave a highly readable account of Blanqui's life in *Apostles of Revolution* (New York: Collier Books, 1961). A very good exposition of Blanqui's social ideas is Alan B. Spitzer's *The Revolutionary Theories of Louis Auguste Blanqui* (New York: AMS Press, 1970), which also provides a limited amount of biographical material.

Biographies of other major thinkers and revolutionary leaders of the nineteenth century are invaluable as accounts of nineteenth-century social conditions and socialist ideas. To this day, I still regard Franz Mehring's *Karl Marx: The Story of His Life*, translated by Edward Fitzgerald (New York: Covici, Friede, 1935), as the best account of Marx's life and thought. It is based, in part, on personal interviews with some of Marx's closest collaborators, and a portion of the book was written by Rosa Luxemburg. David McClellan's *Karl Marx: His Life and Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973) is more up to date but lacks the vividness and warmth that Mehring brought to his own endeavor.

Histories of anarchism are rather plentiful, but the most recent and comprehensive is Peter Marshall's *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (London: HarperCollins, 1992). G.D.H. Cole has written extensively and sympathetically on nineteenth-century anarchism in *Marxism and Anarchism, 1850-1890*, the second volume of his *History of Socialist Thought* (London: Macmillan; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1961). The original edition of George Woodcock's *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* (New York: World Publishing Co., 1962) treated anarchism as a ghost that offered social democrats useful notions and little more; its revision (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1986) was much needed. Daniel Guérin's *Anarchism* (New York and London: Monthly Review, 1970) is a remarkably informative summary of anarchist history and ideas. Out of print at this writing, it is soon to be republished by A.K. Press of San Francisco and Edinburgh.

A comprehensive English-language biography of Mikhail Bakunin has yet to be written. Although E. H. Carr's *Michael Bakunin* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1938) has been often cited as the "authoritative" account of Bakunin's life, it is so hostile and even intemperate that it deserves the neglect it is currently



receiving. More useful and sympathetic biographies include Brian Morris's *Bakunin: The Philosophy of Freedom* (Montreal and New York: Black Rose Books, 1993) and Richard B. Saltman's *The Social and Political Thought of Michael Bakunin* (London and Westport: Greenwood, 1983). The best selection of Bakunin's writings is *Michael Bakunin: Selected Writings*, translated by Steven Cox and Olive Stevens and edited and introduced by Arthur Lehning (New York: Grove Press, 1973). Lehning was the editor of the Bakunin Archives at the International Institute for Social History in Amsterdam. The most comprehensive collection of Bakunin's writings in English is G. P. Maximoff's *The Political Philosophy of Bakunin* (New York: Free Press, 1953), a tour de force of careful selection of excerpts from Bakunin's writings, organized by subject matter. *Bakunin on Anarchy*, edited and translated by Sam Dolgoff (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), contains many of Bakunin's most important writings, but the editor, a committed anarchosyndicalist, tended to overemphasize this aspect of Bakunin's thinking.

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's life and ideas have received reverential treatment from his admirers, especially Edward Hyams's *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon: His Revolutionary Life, Mind, and Works* (London: John Murray, 1979) and George Woodcock's *Proudhon* (New York: Black Rose Books, 1987). The best selection of his writings in English translation is *Selected Writings of P.-J. Proudhon*, translated by Elizabeth Fraser and edited by Stewart Edwards (New York: Doubleday, 1969). Only a few of Proudhon's books are available in English; the most important ones are *What is Property?* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1966), *General Idea of Revolution in the Nineteenth Century*, translated by John Beverly Robinson (London: Pluto Press, 1989)—in my view, Proudhon's most coherent expression of his ideas—and *The Principle of Federation*, translated and introduced by Richard Vernon (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979). Robert Graham's introduction to *General Idea of Revolution* generally gives a fair summary of Proudhon's ideas.

## PART V: ARTISANAL SOCIALISM

The best single account of the ideological transition from Jacobinism to socialism is G.D.H. Cole's *Socialist Thought: The Forerunners 1789-1850*, the first volume of his *History of Socialist Thought*. The squalor and hardship that the Industrial Revolution inflicted on the British working class is superbly presented in Frederick Engels's *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 4: *Marx and Engels 1844-1845* (New York: International Publishers, 1975), pp. 295-596. This very important book, originally published in 1845, is ably revisited by Steven

Marcus in *Engels, Manchester, and the Working Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974). Eric Hobsbawm's *The Age of Revolution, 1789-1848* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1962) provides a very valuable comparative picture of the rise of capitalism and the working classes in Britain and France, as well as significant cultural changes in both countries. Hobsbawm's *Workers: Worlds of Labor* (New York: Pantheon, 1984) is useful on the changing economic and social conditions that fostered artisanal socialism in Britain and France. E. P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963) is a masterpiece. One of the most responsible studies of the Luddites is Malcolm I. Thomas, *The Luddites: Machine-Breaking in Regency England* (New York: Schocken Books, 1972). A dramatic account of the Luddite movement appears in the first half of Kirkpatrick Sale's *Rebels Against the Future* (New York: Addison Wesley, 1995), but the second half deteriorates into technophobia and appeals for deindustrialization. Dorothy Thompson's *The Chartists: Popular Politics in the Industrial Revolution* (New York: Pantheon, 1984) is a masterful overview of the subject, and her collection of studies on Chartism, coedited with James Epstein, *The Chartist Experience: Studies in Working-Class Radicalism and Culture 1830-60* (London: Macmillan, 1982) is a feast of literature on almost every aspect of Chartism. A city-by-city account will be found in *Chartist Studies*, edited by Asa Briggs (New York and London: Macmillan, 1959).

For economic development and working-class movements in France, William H. Sewell, Jr., *Work and Revolution in France: The Language of Labor from the Old Regime to 1848* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980) and Bernard H. Moss, *The Origins of the French Labor Movement, 1830-1914: The Socialism of Skilled Workers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976) are both of immense value. They are filled with invaluable information and challenging analyses, although each goes too far in reading contemporary notions of collectivism into the largely artisanal world of the nineteenth century.

Excellent essays on the formation of the French working class appear in *Working-Class Formations: Nineteenth-Century Patterns in Western Europe and the United States*, edited by Ira Katznelson and Aristide R. Zolberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986). Tom Kemp's *Economic Forces in French History* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1971) is a fine survey of the unique development of the French economy in the strategic period between the Great Revolution and the rise of Louis Napoleon. A valuable account of the interaction between French factory owners and proletarians is Peter N. Stearns, *Paths to Authority: The Middle Class and the Industrial Labor Force in France, 1820-48* (Chicago and London: University of Illinois Press, 1978). John Plamenatz's *The Revolutionary Movement in France* (London: Longmans, Green, 1952) is a brief but insightful study of three great revolutions (1830, 1848, and



the Commune of 1871), with good accounts of the events that led up to them. But perhaps the most remarkable comparison of French and British artisans, and their respective courses of development, is in Gwyn A. Williams's superbly written *Artisans and Sans-Culottes* (London: Edward A. Arnold, 1986). George Rudé's *The Crowd in History: A Study of Popular Disturbances in France and England 1730-1848* (New York and London: John Wiley and Sons, 1964) is a classic account of insurrectionary crowds.

A good English-language account of the Babeuf conspiracy is David Thomson's *The Babeuf Plot: The Making of a Republican Legend* (London: Kegan Paul, 1947), while Babeuf's own voice can be heard in *The Defense of Gracchus Babeuf*, edited and translated by John Anthony Scott (New York: Schocken Books, 1975). Selections from the writings of early French socialists appear in Fried and Sanders's *Socialist Thought*, and Frank E. Manuel's excellent essays on Saint-Simon and Fourier have been collected in *The Prophets of Paris* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965). Cabet and his Icarian movement are explored in great detail by Christopher H. Johnson in *Utopian Communism in France* (London and Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974). Louis Blanc's ideas on artisanal socialism are expounded in his *1848: Historical Revelations* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1858).

The two most outstanding accounts in English of the French Revolution of 1830 are Pamela Pilbeam's *The 1830 Revolution in France* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991) and David H. Pinkney's *The French Revolution of 1830* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1972). These works may be supplemented by the invaluable collection of studies, *1830 in France*, edited and introduced by John M. Merriman (New York and London: Franklin Watts, 1975). The two major insurrections that exploded in the silk-weaving center of Lyon, in 1831 and 1834, are well detailed in Robert Bezucha's *The Lyon Uprising of 1834: Social and Political Conflict in the Early July Monarchy* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1974). Bezucha's is one of the best accounts of artisanal socialism or associationism in the literature. The great and tragic insurrectionary history of the Lyon working class is completed by Mary Lynn Steward-McDougall's *The Artisan Republic: Revolution, Reaction, and Resistance in Lyon, 1848-1851* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1984).

## PART VI: THE BARRICADES OF PARIS

A major source for the first decade of the July Monarchy is Louis Blanc's two-volume *The History of Ten Years: 1830 to 1840* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1845), which deals with all aspects of French life under Louis-Philippe,

including many important events to which Blanc was a witness. Some of the realistic novels of the period provide excellent contemporary glimpses of Parisian working-class life, especially Eugene Sue's *The Mysteries of Paris* (New York: Hippocrene Books, n.d), and Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, available in many editions. The social conditions of working-class Paris during this period are explored in considerable detail in Louis Chevalier's *Laboring Classes and Dangerous Class in Paris During the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*, translated by Frank Jellinek (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981).

The literature on the 1848 Revolution in France is considerable, but of immense importance are the reminiscences and historical accounts set down by participants and eyewitnesses. Writing under the pseudonym Daniel Stern, the Countess d'Agoult's fine *Histoire de la révolution de 1848* provides a wealth of description and dramatic detail by a perceptive and astute observer. This work, originally published in three volumes between 1850 and 1853 (Paris: Gustave Sandre) and subsequently republished by other French houses, has been an invaluable source for nearly all later histories of the Revolution in Paris; lamentably, it has not been translated into English. Alexis de Tocqueville, another eyewitness to the Revolution, narrates the events in *The Recollections of Alexis de Tocqueville*, translated by Alexander Teixeira de Mattos (New York: Macmillan, 1896), providing rich personal characterizations as well as insightful analyses that reach many of the same conclusions as Marx, but from the other side of the barricades. Alphonse de Lamartine's *History of the French Revolution of 1848* (London: Bell & Daldy, 1871) is more a self-serving memoir, in which all events seem to center around himself and his cronies. Although it is sometimes factually unreliable, as revealed by cross-references with other sources, it vividly conveys the heated atmosphere of the time and recounts the desperate attempt by the Provisional Government to keep the workers out of power. By contrast, Louis Blanc's *1848: Historical Revelations* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1858), an indispensable account by a leading participant, appears to be marked by considerable honesty, as well as by hostility to radicals such as Blanqui.

Valuable documentary material on the 1848 Revolution is collected in *1848 in France*, edited by Roger Price as part of the Documents in Revolution series (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975) and Postgate's *Revolution from 1789 to 1906*. A superb collection of monographic papers is Roger Price's *Revolution and Reaction: 1848 and the Second French Republic* (London: Croom Helm, 1975), which includes studies on artisan unrest, the club movement, and the crushing of the *démoc-socs*, as well Charles Tilly and Lynn H. Lees's fascinating research into the occupations and background of the June insurgents.

One of the most thoughtful overviews of the 1848 Revolution is in Priscilla Robertson's *Revolutions of 1848: A Social History* (New York: Harper & Row, 1952)—the section on the French events manages to say more in 100 pages



and provide a better interpretation of the French events than other books of a much larger size. Georges Duveau's *1848: The Making of a Revolution*, translated by Anne Carter (New York: Random House, 1967), dramatically presents the Revolution from the standpoint of three socially different members of French society. Finally, Arnold Whitridge's *Men in Crisis: The Revolutions of 1848* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1949) fleshes out the Revolution with biographical characterizations that are rich in political meaning.

The specialized accounts of aspects of the 1848 Revolution by recent scholars are fascinating in their political and social implications. Peter H. Amann's *Revolution and Mass Democracy: The Paris Club Movement in 1848* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975) is unmatched as a study of the popular working-class democracy that was created through the clubs, showing how the working and lower middle classes sustained remarkable networks of mass organizations that acted as a powerful impetus to the Revolution. Donald Cope McKay's *The National Workshops: A Study in the French Revolution of 1848* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1965) is an excellent study of the workshops and their employees in that strategic year. Mark Traugott's *Armies of the Poor: Determinants of Working-Class Participation in the Parisian Insurrection of June 1848* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985) focuses in detail on the June insurrection, with particular emphasis on the methods that the privileged classes used to recruit from within the working class itself the Mobile Guards and, to an extent, the National Workshops, counterrevolutionary forces that would be deployed against the June insurrection.

John M. Merriman's *The Agony of the Republic: The Repression of the Left in Revolutionary France, 1848-1851* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1978) takes up the crushing of the *démoc-socs* both within and outside of Paris in the aftermath of the June insurrection, while Ted W. Margadant's *French Peasants in Revolt: The Insurrection of 1851* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1979) examines in detail the rural uprising that followed Bonaparte's coup in the aftermath of 1848. David H. Pinkney's account of Haussmann's rebuilding of Paris during the Second Empire is outstanding; along with providing statistical material, *Napoleon III and the Rebuilding of Paris* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1958) vividly depicts important features of Parisian city life during the first half of the century.

No understanding of the 1848 period is possible without consulting Karl Marx's unequalled *The Class Struggles in France, 1848 to 1850* and *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, both of which are available in the Marx-Engels *Selected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969) and in the multivolumed *Collected Works* (New York: International Publishers, 1978 and 1979), volumes 10 and 11 respectively. The best critical exploration of Marx's own ideas and activities during the German Revolution of 1848-49 is P. H. Noyes,

*Organization and Revolution: Working-Class Associations in the German Revolution of 1848-1849* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1966), which shows how Marx subordinated the workers' movement in Cologne to that of the liberal bourgeoisie. The book also provides an indispensable background on the shift Marx and Engels made in their "Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League," which is available in the first volume of the three-volume *Selected Works* and volume 10 of the *Collected Works*. Oscar J. Hammen has also written a highly readable account of the background to and activities of Marx and Engels in the German Revolution in *The Red '48ers* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969).

English-language accounts of the International Workingmen's Association (the First International) are more limited than those in French and German, but several of them give a good picture of its formation, congresses, and activities. The most comprehensive is G. M. Stekloff's *History of the First International*, translated from the Russian by Eden and Cedar Paul (London: Martin Lawrence, 1928). Unfortunately, Stekloff permitted his Marxist bias to interfere with his presentation, which seldom strays from the Communist, albeit pre-Stalinist "line" on the subject. A fine nonpartisan history is Henryk Katz's *The Emancipation of Labor: A History of the First International* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992), which is concise and highly informative.

The first part of *The Revolutionary Internationals, 1864-1943*, edited by Milorad M. Drachkovitch (Palo Alto, CA.: Stanford University Press, 1966), is sketchy so far as the International as a whole is concerned, but it does contain the best account, albeit tongue in cheek, of the anarchist IWMA, namely Max Nomad's "The Anarchist Tradition." The most definitive Bakuninist history of the First International is available only in French, despite the fact it has been published in the United States: James Guillaume's *L'International: Documents et souvenirs (1864-1878)* (New York: B. Franklin, 1969) is a huge four-volume work that is labored in both style and form. Credit must be given to Franz Mehring, a German Marxist, for treating Bakunin very fairly and Marx rather critically, in his biography of Marx.

The literature—social, historical, and political—on the Paris Commune of 1871 is massive. A good place to start, for the nonspecialist reader, is Alistair Horne's *The Fall of Paris: The Siege and the Commune of 1871* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), a lively, dramatic account of the events leading up to the Commune and the Commune itself. Roger L. Williams's *The French Revolution of 1870-1871* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1969) is another summary history. For those who wish more detail, the most authoritative account of the Commune in English is Stewart Edwards's *The Paris Commune 1871* (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1971). Edwards's mastery and presentation are unsurpassed, and his fine book deserves the closest reading by students of revolutionary movements. We are also fortunate that it was Edwards who edited *The Communards of Paris*,



1871 in the Documents of Revolution series (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press; London: Thames and Hudson, 1973). Frank Jellinek's *The Paris Commune of 1871* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1937), an old standby, is guided by a Marxist viewpoint but is valuable as a supplement to Edwards's more authoritative work.

Lissagaray's *History of the Commune of 1871*, translated from the French by Eleanor Marx Aveling (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1967), is an excellent account written by a supporter of and participant in the Commune. Originally published in 1876, it is as much memoir as history and provides invaluable lived insights into the events; in the later decades of the nineteenth century, the Left considered it the official history of Commune. Lissagaray, it should be noted, was neither a Marxist nor an anarchist but a militant social revolutionary. Unfortunately, the English translation is overly literal, sacrificing much of the flavor of the original, but it also contains material by Lissagaray that does not appear in the French original, which was published most recently as *Histoire de la Commune de 1871* (Paris: François Maspero, 1970).

Eugene Schulkind's *The Paris Commune of 1871: The View From the Left* (New York: Grove Press, 1974) contains a wealth of contemporary documents and articles on the Commune and analyses by all major socialist and anarchist thinkers, from Bakunin and Kropotkin to Marx and Engels. The Marxist viewpoint is presented in Karl Marx's *The Civil War in France*, in volume 2 of the Marx-Engels *Selected Works* and in volume 22 of the *Collected Works*. All the extant Marx-Engels letters and works on the Commune were compiled in the former Soviet Union and published under the title *Marx and Engels on the Paris Commune* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1971). An invaluable comparative study of the participants and goals of the June 1848 uprising and the Commune is Roger V. Gould's *Insurgent Identities: Class, Community, and Protest in Paris from 1848 to the Commune* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995). Gould persuasively argues that the June insurrection was more class-oriented than the Commune, using considerable archival material to make his point.

Among the specialized studies on the Commune, Edith Thomas's *The Women Incendiaries*, translated from the French by James and Starr Atkinson (London: Martin Secker & Warburg, 1967), addresses the often neglected role that women played in the Commune. Thomas has also written a sympathetic biography of the anarchist *Louise Michel*, translated by Penelope Williams (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1980), which provides a libertarian perspective on the events of 1871 and an account of the life of an extraordinary woman of unforgettable heroism. The Commune is discussed, to some degree, in biographies of all revolutionary activists and thinkers who were involved with left-wing politics in 1871.

## PART VII: PROLETARIAN SOCIALISM

On the emergence of the industrial proletariat, the reader would do well to examine the historical accounts of the Industrial Revolution cited above. In addition, *Consciousness and Class Experience in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, edited by John M. Merriman (New York and London: Holmes & Meier, 1979), is a collection of useful essays on proletarianization in Britain and France; Charles Tilly, Louise Tilly, and Richard Tilly, *The Rebellious Century, 1830-1930* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1975) is also to be recommended. A richly illustrated and valuable account of the proletarianization as well as acculturation of Europeans for more than a century before the First World War is W. O. Henderson's *The Industrialization of Europe 1780-1914* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1969). Also of interest is Richard J. Evans's *Proletarians and Politics: Socialism, Protest and the Working Class in Germany before the First World War* (New York: St. Martin's, 1990). Selig Perlman's *A Theory of the Labor Movement* (New York: Macmillan, 1928) is still a provocative exploration of the modern labor movement in Britain, Germany, Russia, and the United States.

French syndicalism, especially its ideological roots, is examined in considerable detail by Jeremy Jennings in *Syndicalism in France: A Study of Ideas* (New York: St. Martin's, 1990), while its trajectory as a labor movement is the subject of Peter Stearns's *Revolutionary Syndicalism and French Labor* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1971). Both G.D.H. Cole and Harry Laidler provide excellent summaries of syndicalism in their respective histories of socialism. The best account of anarchosyndicalism is Rudolf Rocker's *Anarcho-Syndicalism: Theory and Practice* (Indore, India: Modern Publishers, n.d.). Other summaries of anarchosyndicalism will be found in histories of anarchism cited above.

The finest single history of the Second International is G.D.H. Cole's *The Second International 1889-1914*, which makes up volume 3, part 1 of *A History of Socialist Thought*. James Joll's *The Second International (1889-1914)* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966) is often unclear and tangled in its presentation but is still a useful summary. Another brief account of the International is Gerhart Niemeyer's "The Second International: 1889-1914," in Drachkovitch's *Revolutionary Internationals*.

The history of the Second International is so integrally tied to the emergence and development of German Social Democracy that excellent accounts of it appear in most serious discussions of the German socialist movement. General histories of Germany, in turn, are indispensable to an understanding of her socialist movements, as well as the central problems of nationalism and militarism. Geoffrey Barraclough's *The Origins of Modern Germany* (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1984) provides an excellent overview of how these



problems took form from medieval to modern times. Arthur Rosenberg's *Imperial Germany: The Birth of the German Republic 1871-1918* (Boston: Beacon, 1964) is indispensable for an understanding of German unification and its consequences. The role of the Junkers in the consolidation and militarization of nineteenth-century Germany is explored in Edward Crankshaw's excellent biography, *Bismarck* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1983). Nicholas Stargardt's *The German Ideal of Militarism: Radical and Socialist Critics 1866-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) is a searing account of German militarism and the criticisms voiced by Karl Kautsky, Karl Liebknecht, and other leading figures in the SPD.

A concise overall history of the German labor movement from its beginnings to the post-World War II period is in Helga Grebing's *The History of the German Labor Movement: A Survey*, abridged by Mary Saran and translated by Edith Koerner (Dover, N.H.: Berg Publishers, 1985). Several valuable histories of the German Social Democratic Party are available in English. The most comprehensive is Guenther Roth's *The Social Democrats in Imperial Germany: A Study in Working-Class Isolation and National Integration* (Totowa, N.J.: Bedminster Press, 1963). Gary P. Steenson's "Not One Man! Not One Penny!": *German Social Democracy, 1863-1914* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1981) is a straightforward and vivid account of the SPD up to the outbreak of the First World War. Carl E. Schorske's *German Social Democracy, 1905-1917: The Development of the Great Schism* (Cambridge, MA. and London: Harvard University Press, 1955) is deservedly a classic, tracing the descent of the prewar SPD from a seemingly revolutionary party to a crassly opportunistic one. Peter Gay's *The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism: Eduard Bernstein's Challenge to Marx* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952) is an excellent account of Bernstein and Revisionism.

William A. Pelz has compiled and edited a very interesting anthology of writings by and about Karl Liebknecht's father, *Wilhelm Liebknecht and German Social Democracy*, translated by Erich Hahn (Westport, CN., and London: Greenwood Press, 1994), which casts light on the SPD and the major disputes that arose within the SPD prior to 1900, when the elder Liebknecht died. These and later disputes are also admirably explored by J. P. Nettl in his two-volume biography, *Rosa Luxemburg* (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1966). The best overall anthology of Luxemburg's works in English, reflecting the Left opposition within the SPD and the Second International, is Mary-Alice Waters's collection, *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), which contains a stirring essay by Trotsky, "Hands Off Rosa Luxemburg!" Helmut Trotnow's *Karl Liebknecht: A Political Biography* (Hamden, CN.: Archon, 1984) is a short account of the young German revolutionary whose life was entwined with Luxemburg's during the war years. No bibliography on German social democracy would be

satisfactory without Marx's "Critique of the Gotha Programme" and related materials from his pen, in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 24 (New York: International Publishers, 1989).

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