

MARXISM

&

Social Democracy

**THE REVISIONIST DEBATE
1896-1898**

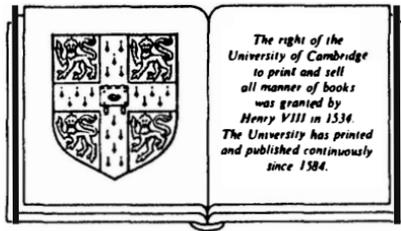
Edited and translated by H. Tudor and J. M. Tudor
with an introduction by H. Tudor

Marxism and Social Democracy

The Revisionist Debate 1896–1898

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H. TUDOR and J. M. TUDOR

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Preface

One of the most prominent features of twentieth-century politics has been the conflict between revolutionary Marxists and non-revolutionary Social Democrats. This conflict has its origins in the great debate, known as the Revisionist Debate, which divided the socialist movement at the end of the last century. Like any major political controversy, the Revisionist Debate had many ramifications and no obvious boundaries. It did, however, have a main current, namely the direct interchange between Eduard Bernstein, the main protagonist, and his critics; and it is on this that we have concentrated our attention.

Bernstein had served as editor of the *Sozialdemokrat* in the 1880s, he had played a leading role in drafting the Erfurt Programme, and he had collaborated closely with Engels until the latter's death in 1895. In short, his track record was that of an eminent and orthodox Marxist. But shortly after the death of Engels, he began to have doubts about certain aspects of German Social Democracy, and he expressed these doubts in a series of articles published mainly in *Neue Zeit*. As he developed his views, it seemed to many members of the party that he not only was making a number of policy recommendations but was supporting these recommendations by mounting a comprehensive attack on the fundamental doctrines of Marx. This provoked a long and at times acrimonious exchange between Bernstein and various representatives of the radical left. At the Stuttgart Conference in the autumn of 1898, the issues raised by Bernstein were debated, and in the end the party leadership joined the radicals in repudiating Bernstein's position.

The Stuttgart Conference was not the end of the story. In the spring of the following year, Bernstein published his *Die Voraussetzungen des Sozialismus* in which he restated his position, and this occasioned another exchange, with Karl Kautsky as Bernstein's main opponent. This second phase of the debate is both interesting and important, but if it is to be dealt with satisfactorily, it must be dealt

with separately. By the time of the Stuttgart Conference, the main battle lines had been drawn and the principal elements of the Revisionist position had been established. We therefore feel that the first phase of the debate can stand on its own.

Our purpose is to enable the reader to follow the debate and gain an idea of how Bernstein's position and that of his opponents came to be what they were. At present, there is nothing in English which does this. There are, indeed, translations of Plekhanov's articles, Rosa Luxemburg's *Sozialreform oder Revolution?*, Bernstein's *Voraussetzungen* (though this is incomplete and not very accurate), and extracts from Kautsky's *Bernstein und das sozialdemokratische Programm*. But of the articles, letters, and speeches in which Bernstein and his opponents actually developed their respective positions, almost nothing is available. The effect is to give an incomplete, ill-balanced, and misleading impression of the debate, and we hope that the present volume will help correct this impression.

We have included most of the contributions that clearly form part of the main current of the debate, but, in order to minimise repetition and irrelevance, we have made a small number of omissions. Thus, we have omitted three of the articles which Bernstein published under the heading "Problems of Socialism." One of these is simply a translation of an article by J. A. Hobson and is therefore already available in English; the other two contain no important points that are not restated in other articles. Furthermore, we have translated only the first five articles in Parvus's series, "Bernstein's Overthrow of Socialism." All in all, Parvus wrote seventeen articles against Bernstein, but the five we have translated state the substance of his case, and it was on these five that Bernstein concentrated his counter-attack.

In translating, we have tried to turn the German of the originals into readable modern English without sacrificing accuracy. This has not always been easy. Bernstein's manner of expression, for example, tends to be either awkwardly "popular" or too near to the convoluted prose often affected by German academics of the time; and preserving accuracy of translation sometimes also meant preserving the defects of Bernstein's style. We have also felt it necessary to be consistent in translating certain terms which have a special significance in Marxist theory, even where this resulted in turns of phrase which sound odd in English. Thus we have regularly translated *Widerspruch* as "contradiction," *Gegensatz* as "antagonism," *Produktionsweise* as "mode of production," etc. A few of the pieces we have included, especially in chapter 2, originally appeared in English. We

have reproduced them unchanged, and since we saw little point in trying to translate all the other pieces into late Victorian English, there is a discrepancy between these passages and the rest of the book. We have accepted this discrepancy as the lesser evil, and also out of linguistic interest, since it seemed to us that Bernstein's English was often much clearer and less forced than his German. Finally, in translating Rosa Luxemburg's articles (chapter 9), we found it very helpful to consult Dick Howard's translation of *Sozialreform oder Revolution?* However, our own translation differs substantially from his, partly because we have often preferred a different way of putting things and partly because he translates, not the articles themselves, but the revised 1899 edition, together with the further revisions introduced in the 1908 edition.

Material inserted in the text by the editors is enclosed in square brackets. Footnotes in the originals are indicated by lower-case Roman numerals and will be found at the end of each chapter. The editors' notes are indicated by Arabic numerals and are to be found at the end of the volume. The bibliography lists all the sources referred to in the text (except classics such as Horace and Goethe, references to which are identified in the notes) and those secondary works which were found to be most useful.

The staffs of several libraries have been very helpful. We would particularly like to thank the library of the Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus in Berlin, the Sächsische Landesbibliothek, the British Library, Durham University Library, and the library of the Trades Union Congress. We would also like to thank friends and colleagues who made many helpful suggestions, notably Mr R. J. Williams, Mr Guido DiMeo, Professor W. R. Ward, Dr A. W. Orde, and Dr A. R. Wightman. However, our special thanks go to Lesley Doyle, whose diligent searches located much of the material eventually included in this volume, particularly in chapters 7 and 9. Finally, we would each like to thank the husband/wife without whose support and forbearance, etc.

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Introduction

Bernstein's Early Career

Eduard Bernstein began his political career in 1872 by joining the Social Democratic Workers' Party. He was then twenty-two years old. The party, which had its origins in the South German liberal movement, had been founded at the Eisenach Conference in 1869. By the time Bernstein joined, three years later, the Franco-Prussian War had come to an end, the Paris Commune had been suppressed, and a united German empire had been proclaimed with the king of Prussia as Kaiser. The joint leaders of the party, August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht, were both professed Marxists and the party programme was based on that of the International. However, the party itself was far from being a thoroughgoing Marxist organisation. Many years later, Bernstein was to describe himself as having been, at this time, a radical democrat with socialist tendencies.¹ In this respect, he was fairly typical of the membership as a whole.

The Eisenachers' main rival for the radical vote was the General Union of German Workers founded in 1863 by Ferdinand Lassalle. The relationship between the two parties was not good. Despite a common commitment to social democracy, there were major disagreements between them on matters of both policy and principle. In general, the Lassalleans were pro-Prussian and saw socialism as being achieved by an alliance between the proletariat and the state against the liberal bourgeoisie, whereas the Eisenachers were anti-Prussian and saw socialism as being achieved by an alliance between the proletariat and the liberal bourgeoisie against the state. Nonetheless, in 1875, the two parties met at Gotha to compose their differences and form a single organisation.² The resulting programme was, of necessity, a compromise, and it was one in which the Eisenachers conceded more than Marx and Engels thought desirable. Engels, indeed, doubted whether the union would last for more than two years, and Marx flatly refused to endorse what he called "a thoroughly objectionable programme that demoralises the party."³ In the end, how-

ever, they came to accept the compromise as a *pis aller* and consented to give the new party their grudging support.

One of the considerations that led them to modify their view was the party's early and evident success. Contrary to Engels's expectations, Eisenachers and Lassalleans somehow managed to pull together, and in the Reichstag elections of 1877, the party polled 9 per cent of the vote, thus establishing itself as the fourth largest party in Germany. However, in the following year, two assassination attempts on the Kaiser provoked a surge of popular feeling against subversives, and the elections which Bismarck caused to be called in July returned a Reichstag which passed an Antisocialist Law effectively making the Social Democratic Party an illegal organisation.

By this time, Bernstein had become sufficiently conspicuous as a party activist to attract the attention of the police. He therefore fled to Switzerland, where he took a post as secretary to Karl Höchberg, a wealthy supporter of the party. It was at this stage that he read Engels's *Anti-Dühring* and became, by his own account, a convinced Marxist.⁴ His new commitment soon made his continued association with Höchberg an embarrassment. In the autumn of 1879, Höchberg published an article (anonymously) criticising the party for having brought disaster on itself by alienating the bourgeoisie and relying too heavily on the proletariat. Marx and Engels produced a robust reply. The authors of the article, they argued, had understated the significance of the class struggle in a capitalist society and had consequently failed to appreciate that the emancipation of the proletariat could be achieved only by the proletariat itself. They were, therefore, petty bourgeois theorists who had no place in a proletarian party, and they should be expelled.⁵

It was widely assumed that Bernstein had contributed to the offending article, and so indeed he had, though only in a minor capacity.⁶ In the event, he managed to convince Bebel that the article did not represent his true views, and in 1880 the two of them went to London to effect a reconciliation with Marx and Engels. The trip was a success. Armed with the approval of Marx and Engels, Bernstein returned to Zürich, where, in the following year, he became editor of the official party organ, the *Sozialdemokrat*.

It was as editor of the *Sozialdemokrat* that Bernstein established himself as a leading party theorist. He won the confidence of Marx himself, and after the latter's death in 1883, he became one of Engels's most trusted collaborators. Another of his associates at this time was Karl Kautsky, a fellow-exile and co-worker on the *Sozialdemokrat*. The two men soon found that they thought alike, and their

journalistic collaboration formed the basis of a lasting friendship. In 1883, Kautsky struck out on his own by founding *Neue Zeit*, an independent Marxist theoretical review, and from this time onward his duties as editor occupied most of his attention. However, he continued to work with Bernstein, particularly in the matter of developing a common political position in response to the dilemma in which the party now found itself.⁷ Needless to say, this position owed much to the influence of Engels.

It had become clear that the party was in no position to challenge the armed might of the state and that individual acts of terror would accomplish nothing except provoke further repressive measures. At the same time the prospects of parliamentary activity looked bleak. It was not that such activity was utterly impossible. The Antisocialist Law did indeed ban all party meetings, publications, and fund-raising activities; but it did not prevent Social Democrats from being elected, as individuals, to the Reichstag, nor did it limit freedom of speech in Reichstag debates. This meant that the party could maintain a public presence inside Germany, provided that it confined itself strictly to a limited range of parliamentary activities. But the trouble with parliamentary activity in Bismarck's Germany was that it was unlikely to accomplish anything remotely resembling fundamental change. Elections to the Reichstag were, indeed, conducted on a broad and equal franchise, but the powers of the Reichstag itself were very restricted. It could not, for instance, dismiss the government, nor could it force legislation upon it. In fact, it was possible that, by taking part in parliamentary work, Social Democrats would simply help shore up the very system they were supposed to pull down.

This, then, was the problem. The revolutionary road was suicidally dangerous, and the parliamentary road was, at best, an exercise in futility.⁸

Engels provided the solution. Capitalist society, he argued, had two dominant characteristics. Firstly, as an economic system, it suffered from structural defects which could not be eradicated and which would, indeed, grow worse until the system as a whole ceased to function and collapsed. Secondly, it was a society characterised by an irreconcilable conflict between the two major classes, proletariat and bourgeoisie, in which (as in all contests) the final goal of both parties was victory. For the bourgeoisie, this meant the preservation of the economic system which enabled them to exploit the proletariat, whereas for the proletarians it meant the destruction of the system in which they were exploited and its replacement by one in which they were not. In the nature of the case, the eventual collapse

of capitalist society, and thus the defeat of the bourgeoisie, was inevitable, but this of itself would not ensure the victory of the proletariat. A socialist society would have to be erected on the ruins of the capitalist system, and to accomplish this the Social Democratic Party would have to seize political power and use it to build the society of the future. In the meantime, it was the duty of the party to do whatever might serve as a means to this ultimate end; in the prevailing circumstances, Engels argued, this duty required the party to take an active part in the parliamentary process, for only in this way could the party increase its strength, propagate its principles, and, above all, survive. Engels, in short, advocated parliamentary activity, not as an end in itself, but as a means to an end, i.e. as a temporary tactic within a long-term revolutionary strategy. And it was, to his mind, crucial that parliamentary activity should be understood in this way, and in no other.⁹

It has been suggested that this advocacy of peaceful parliamentary means to revolutionary ends was "an attempt to put an ideological cover on the psychological and political stresses engendered by the German workers' pariah-like position in the German Empire."¹⁰ This may indeed have been the effect, though it is unlikely to have been the intention; but it should be noted that the policy had other advantages to recommend it. Not only did it actually make sense in terms of Marxist theory, it also offered something to both moderates and radicals within the party thus providing a basis on which the party could unite, and it was largely for this reason that it became in time official party policy. Of course, it could not possibly satisfy everyone. Staunch parliamentary democrats disliked the revolutionary rhetoric, revolutionary anarchists distrusted the emphasis on parliamentary activity, and Lassalleans found much in the policy which could not be reconciled with their principles. Opposition from within the party was therefore inevitable, and the task of fending it off fell chiefly to Bernstein in his capacity as editor of the *Sozialdemokrat*.

The anarchists were comparatively easy to deal with. In 1880 the secret party conference at Wyden expelled their two most prominent representatives, Johann Most and Wilhelm Hasselmann.¹¹ This, however, only provoked Most to intensify his campaign against the party leadership. Bernstein generally considered it a waste of time to rebut Most's views, but anarchist agitation could not be completely ignored.¹² With the Social Democrats pursuing a policy of strict legality, it was all too easy for the anarchists to present themselves as the only genuine revolutionary opposition to a repressive government. Bernstein responded as the occasion arose by carefully spelling out Marx's

doctrine of the proletarian revolution, and it was perhaps here that his orthodoxy as a Marxist thinker was most clearly evident.¹³

The moderates presented a more difficult problem. Social Democratic deputies in the Reichstag were, naturally enough, inclined to stress the value and importance of parliamentary activity. Engels, on the other hand, insisted on the need to combat what he called "philistine sentiment within the party" by constantly emphasising the fundamentally revolutionary objectives of the party.¹⁴ Bernstein was, on the whole, glad to oblige him in this matter. However, the embattled deputies felt that fiery revolutionary pronouncements in the party press made their position in the Reichstag even more difficult than it already was, and they accordingly made various attempts to bring the *Sozialdemokrat* more directly under their control.¹⁵ It was one of Bernstein's major achievements as editor that he managed to maintain his independence without explicitly repudiating the principle that the official party organ ought to reflect current party policy.

However, the most complicated part of Bernstein's task was to win the argument against the Lassalleans without jeopardising party unity. The issue was brought to the fore by the programme of social legislation which Bismarck inaugurated in 1881. Lassalle had been a strong advocate of state socialism, and many Lassalleans were therefore inclined to support Bismarck's programme as being a step in the right direction. For Marx and Engels, however, any such move was out of the question. It was, as we have noted, a cardinal principle of theirs that the emancipation of the proletariat had to be achieved by the proletariat itself. It could not be achieved by a bourgeois state, and to suggest that it could was to deny the class character of the existing social and political order. Besides, one of the tactical imperatives on which Engels always insisted was that, while Social Democrats might use their parliamentary position to extend the rights and improve the conditions of the working class, they should resist any reforms which might, as he put it, "strengthen the power of the government against the people."¹⁶ In his view, this included anything which might give the government a positive role in the social and economic life of the community, and this was precisely what Bismarck's social welfare policy was designed to do. Engels therefore urged that the party adopt a stance of intransigent opposition.

Bernstein agreed. However, he had no illusions as to the difficulty of putting the case across. In particular, the sheer number of Lassalleans in the party meant that direct attacks on Lassalle had to be conducted with circumspection. Bernstein's normal tactic was to

stress Lassalle's outstanding qualities as an agitator and then to suggest that it was, for this very reason, a mistake to treat his pronouncements as having the precision and rigour of scientific formulations; but where this approach plainly would not do, he had recourse to selective quotation in order to show that Lassalle had not in fact said what the Lassalleans thought he had said.¹⁷ It was not a campaign in which Bernstein's intellectual integrity appeared to its best advantage. It did, however, help erode Lassallean influence and stiffen the party's opposition to Bismarck's social legislation.

Opposition to Bismarck's programme became official party policy at the Copenhagen Conference of 1883, and a year later the party polled more than half a million votes and gained twenty-four seats. However, the elections of 1887 produced a disappointing result. The party maintained its electoral support, but the number of seats gained dropped to eleven. Then, in 1888, Bismarck inflicted another blow by persuading the Swiss authorities to close down the *Sozialdemokrat*. Bernstein, finding himself once more *persona non grata*, went to join Engels in London, taking the *Sozialdemokrat* with him. In the event, the setback suffered by the Social Democrats proved temporary. In the elections of 1890, they polled nearly one and a half million votes and won thirty-five seats. It was a remarkable victory. In terms of votes (though not of seats), it made them the largest single party in Germany. It also effectively demolished the coalition upon which Bismarck had relied for support. He and the new Kaiser, Wilhelm II, had not been able to come to terms with one another, and now they could not agree on how to respond to the changed constellation of political forces that faced them. The Kaiser favoured a policy of reconciliation with the working class. Bismarck did not and was forced to resign. Shortly afterwards, the Antisocialist Law was allowed to lapse. As the party was now able to operate openly inside Germany, there was no further need for a clandestine party paper. The *Sozialdemokrat* accordingly ceased publication.

Bernstein's Conversion

Bernstein himself was unable to return to Germany, for, although the party was now legal, the warrant issued for his arrest was still in force. He therefore stayed in England and devoted himself to writing and research. Over the next few years, he produced a three-volume edition of Lassalle's works, he wrote an important study of radical movements during the English civil wars, he served as London correspondent for *Vorwärts*, and he published a large number of articles

in a variety of journals, most notably in *Neue Zeit*.¹⁸ The effect of all this activity was to establish his reputation as a leading party theorist. However, it was precisely during this period, 1890–5, that his views underwent a fundamental change.

Bernstein was later to say that he did not realise the extent to which his new position “touched on the very foundations of Marxism” until January 1897 but that, in retrospect, his change of ground could be detected already in the articles he wrote during the spring of 1890.¹⁹ There is something to be said for this account. The remarkable result of the Reichstag elections in 1890 certainly caused Bernstein to reconsider the tasks and prospects facing the party. His main conclusion was that, since the party had become a major power in the land, its supporters expected to see positive results on a number of specific issues. The party had an obligation to fulfil these expectations, and this could only mean an increased emphasis on parliamentary activity. At the same time, Bernstein made it clear that the party remained a proletarian party committed to the revolutionary transformation of society. Care should therefore be taken to work only for those reforms which might increase the power of the people against the state, and the danger of “parliamentary cretinism” would have to be guarded against.²⁰ In short, Bernstein’s orthodoxy was still basically intact.

At the Erfurt Conference of 1891, the party finally committed itself to the broad position advocated by Engels. A move from the moderates, led by Georg von Vollmar, to bring the party into a closer relationship with the liberals was rejected, and an attempt by the radical left (the so-called Youngsters) to reduce the party’s emphasis on parliamentary activity was quashed.²¹ The conference then proceeded to adopt a new programme based on drafts prepared by Bebel, Kautsky, and Bernstein. Engels had been determined to take this opportunity to “settle accounts between Marx and Lassalle,” and the new programme was, in this respect, almost entirely to his satisfaction.²² As a statement of principles, objectives, and immediate demands, it was unmistakably Marxist in character.

Bernstein’s main contribution had been to help formulate the short-term tactical objectives of the party while Kautsky concentrated on the long-term strategic aims. The division of labour was significant. As time passed, Bernstein was to become increasingly pre-occupied with the achievement of piecemeal reforms, and this was to be accompanied by a growing distaste for the excesses of revolutionary rhetoric. Indeed, the radical left soon became his principal target, and his polemics were not always conducted in a comradely spirit.²³

His approach to the moderate or reformist element in the party was more circumspect. He was not directly associated with the attempt by Vollmar and others to broaden the electoral support of the party by modifying the programme to attract the peasant vote. He was, however, becoming increasingly flexible on the question of compromise with other parties, and, in 1893, the Prussian state elections gave him an opportunity to clarify his views. Prussia operated a three-class franchise, which meant that the workers, who fell mainly into the third class, commanded only one-third of the voting power although they outnumbered the other two classes combined. The party's policy was to boycott elections held under so patently unfair a system. However, Bernstein argued that, despite the handicap, the Social Democrats might win a reasonable number of seats, if they were prepared to enter into electoral alliances with the liberals. It was, he argued, a simple case of finding the right means to the end, and there was nothing sacrosanct about the means. "What made sense yesterday," he said, "can be nonsense today."²⁴ It all depended on the circumstances. Intransigence made excellent sense where there was nothing to be gained from compromise, but to refuse a compromise which might give the party an advantage without reducing its independence or betraying its principles was not only foolish, it was a dereliction of duty.

All of this was perfectly acceptable. However, flexibility about the means presupposed a measure of clarity about the ends, and it was this that Bernstein's article lacked. There was, he agreed, a danger that "from being a means to an end, parliamentarianism might be turned into an end in itself."²⁵ But although this would have to be watched, it did not mean that the party should retreat into virtuous isolation and passively await the final collapse of capitalism. Such a collapse depended on so many factors that its occurrence was virtually impossible to predict; for this reason, Bernstein argued, it would be irresponsible to let the expectation of a revolutionary crisis prevent the party from "doing whatever is necessary to foster the interests of the working class."²⁶

This relegation of the revolutionary crisis to a place of secondary importance was a major departure from Bernstein's earlier position, and the fact that it passed unnoticed was probably due to the heated controversy which Bernstein provoked on the more immediate issue of participation in the Prussian state elections. Parvus came out in favour of his proposal.²⁷ But Max Schippel mounted a vigorous counter-attack. "No compromise with the most wretched of electoral systems," he thundered, "no compromise with any other party, no compromise

with the policy of compromise!"²⁸ In the event, the party conference in the autumn of 1893 decided to continue boycotting the elections.

Engels himself was beginning to have doubts about Bernstein's articles. However, he objected not so much to their content as to their timing and their tone. Bernstein, he suggested, had lost touch with the masses and was pronouncing on a number of issues with the scholar's fine disregard for time and place.²⁹ It was a perceptive comment. Bernstein was indeed becoming increasingly academic in his approach. His hostility towards doctrinaire radicalism was broadening into a general dislike for all the slogans and certainties of the party activist. He was more than ever inclined to see the element of truth on both sides of the question, and his political utterances were increasingly couched in the language of scholarly caution. Bernstein was, quite simply, developing his critical sensibilities and beginning to question his own views.

When, in 1894, Engels finally published the third volume of Marx's *Capital*, Bernstein wrote a series of articles explaining the work to the readers of *Neue Zeit*. Although he concluded the series with the confident declaration that there could now be no doubt that socialism was a science, it was clear that he had found the work disappointing.³⁰ Engels described the articles as "very confused." He told Victor Adler, leader of the Austrian Social Democrats, that Bernstein was suffering from neurasthenia, was grossly overworked, and had not given himself enough time.³¹ Whatever the truth of the matter, it was probably also the case that Bernstein had hoped for a convincing refutation of the criticisms levelled at Marx's economics by the marginalists, and had not found it. Bernstein did not tackle the problem directly until a few years later, and when he did, it was to argue that, although the marginalists had a case, there was no real contradiction between their theory and that of Marx.³²

That autumn and winter, Bernstein settled some of his doubts. He became convinced that the undoubted tendency of capitalism to tear itself apart was balanced by an equal tendency to pull itself together. The rise of cartels, the extension of the credit system, and the rapidly improving means of transport and communication all served to reduce the likelihood and the severity of economic crises. Moreover, bourgeois society was becoming increasingly complex, and this could only have the effect of diminishing class antagonisms. Industry, taken as a whole, was not becoming concentrated into fewer and larger units, the middle classes showed little sign of declining in numbers, and the workers, far from becoming reduced to a common level of misery, were prospering and becoming increasingly differentiated. In

short, there could be no question of capitalism collapsing in the foreseeable future.³³

Bernstein never denied that capitalism might, some day, suffer a terminal crisis, but he now saw this eventuality as so uncertain and remote a possibility that it could have no bearing on the formulation of party policy. This being so, the ends or objectives of party activity would have to be found closer to home, and, for Bernstein, these ends were the ones the party was, in fact, already pursuing, namely the extension of popular rights and the material advancement of the working class. In other words, the traditionally peaceful and legal tactics of the party were to continue, but they were to be removed from their context in a revolutionary strategy.

In taking this view, Bernstein was not just asking the party to stop irritating the authorities by issuing strident revolutionary declarations. He was, as he put it, "touching on the very foundations of Marxism," for his advocacy of piecemeal reform implicitly denied the class character of capitalist society. Capitalism, for Marx, rested on an irreconcilable conflict of interests between bourgeoisie and proletariat, and as there was ultimately no room for compromise, there could be no gradual or peaceful transition from capitalism to socialism. Reforms of the kind envisaged by Bernstein might change the form of capitalist exploitation, but they could never achieve the abolition of capitalist exploitation as such. To treat such reforms as ends valid in themselves (as Bernstein was coming to do) was to deny that a revolutionary seizure of power was necessary, and to deny this was to deny the class character of capitalist society. Bernstein had crossed the ideological divide separating revolutionary Marxism from democratic socialism.

Bernstein's critics were later to claim that he had been seduced by the liberal political climate in England and had, as they put it, come to view Germany "through English spectacles."³⁴ Bernstein himself denied the charge. He was not, he said, so easily influenced by his environment.³⁵ However, he did regard England as the most advanced country in the world, and he tended to see in England the image of Germany's future. He was particularly struck by the way the English establishment had accepted the socialist movement as a legitimate participant in the give-and-take of normal politics, and it seemed to him that popular pressure channelled through democratic institutions had achieved reforms which were not just window-dressing but had changed the very nature of society. In England, at least, the capitalist system was being modified, and it was being modified in the direction of socialism. The situation was, he admitted,

rather different in Germany, but even here the election of 1890 had brought about a significant shift in the balance of political power; and as the economic crisis of the 1880s receded, so did the likelihood of a revolutionary upheaval. Bernstein may not have been as impressionable as his critics suggested, but it was a constant feature of his political style that he took the prevailing economic and political circumstances as the presuppositions (*Voraussetzungen*) of any strategic theorising that he did. In the 1890s the circumstances had changed, and so, therefore, did his theoretical position.³⁶

It was also alleged that he had become a Fabian.³⁷ It is certainly true that he preferred the Fabians to H. M. Hyndman and the Social Democratic Federation (SDF), and he did not hesitate to suggest that German Socialists had a lot to learn from their work.³⁸ Indeed, on the level of policy there was little to choose between Fabianism and the position Bernstein was developing. However, Bernstein always placed a greater emphasis on the importance of democratic institutions, and his basic philosophical orientation was different. The Fabians stood (generally speaking) in the philosophical tradition of British Utilitarianism, whereas Bernstein was more at home with the philosophical Idealism of the German neo-Kantians. He was particularly impressed by the work of F. A. Lange, and during the Revisionist Debate he repeatedly associated himself with the “back to Kant” movement.³⁹ But he was no more a Kantian than he was a Fabian. The fact is that, in his wide and eclectic reading, Bernstein found much of which he approved but nothing to which he could unreservedly commit himself. His conversion did not come from a book or from any other identifiable source, nor was it a sudden event occasioned by some striking experience. It was a gradual change which passed unnoticed by everyone (including Bernstein himself) until November 1896 when Ernest Belfort Bax gave the Revisionist Debate its first impetus by announcing that Bernstein had “unconsciously ceased to be a Social Democrat.”⁴⁰

The Revisionist Position Defined

Belfort Bax was one of the earliest English converts to Marxism. In 1881 he had published an enthusiastic article on Marx as part of a series called *Leaders of Modern Thought*.⁴¹ Marx himself was delighted, especially as the article had appeared in time to bring a measure of happiness to his wife during the last few days of her life. Engels liked Bax, albeit with reservations. In a letter to Bernstein (1886), he described him as “a good fellow” and added that he was

“very learned, principally in German philosophy” but suffered from a “childish lack of experience in all political matters.”⁴² The trouble was that Bax was subject to brainstorming, the most notorious being his idea that it was men, not women, who were the oppressed and downtrodden sex. Engels was prepared to tolerate such eccentricities, but when Bax became more closely associated with Hyndman and the SDF his relationship with Engels cooled.

Despite the fact that the SDF was the only avowedly Marxist party in Britain, Engels disapproved of it and generally urged his associates not to support it. His reason was simple. The SDF had, he wrote to Kautsky, “ossified Marxism into a dogma,” and in adopting a position of intransigent opposition to all non-Marxist organisations it had rendered itself “incapable of becoming anything other than a sect.”⁴³ Hyndman and the SDF had, he thought, got their long-term objectives right, but their tactics were such as to ensure that these objectives were never attained. In fact, so far as Engels was concerned, the SDF was “Marxist in principle and anti-Marxist in practice.”⁴⁴

When Engels died, Bernstein and Kautsky continued the feud with Hyndman and his supporters. In July 1896, Bax published an ambitious article, “The Materialist Conception of History.” Kautsky thought that it misrepresented Marx’s theory, and his rebuttal started an acrimonious controversy which rumbled on in the pages of *Neue Zeit* for the best part of eight months.⁴⁵ Meanwhile, in September, Bernstein reviewed Hyndman’s book, *The Economics of Socialism*, damning it with faint praise; and, in October, he followed this with a contemptuous dismissal of Bax’s views on colonialism.⁴⁶

The question of colonialism and national liberation had, in fact, recently come to the fore. Earlier in the year, a quarrel had flared up among the Polish Socialists as to whether they should espouse the cause of Polish independence. Rosa Luxemburg weighed in with a series of articles arguing that they should not,⁴⁷ and the issue was brought to the London conference of the Second International at the end of July. The conference itself was a shambles. It spent three days discussing the mandates of various delegates, helping the French decide whether they constituted one or two delegations, and quelling the consequent disturbances on the floor of the house. That left two days for substantive business, and many resolutions were passed with little or no discussion. The resolution on the Polish question was one of these. It declared support for “the full autonomy of all nationalities,” expressed sympathy for workers “suffering under the yoke of military, national or other despotisms,” and called upon such work-

ers to "organise for the overthrow of international capitalism."⁴⁸ In short, it settled nothing, and the Polish Socialists set about one another with renewed vigour.

However, the Polish question was soon eclipsed by events in the Middle East. In August, terrorist activity by Armenian nationalists in Turkey provoked what was to be the greatest of the Armenian massacres. Nonconformist opinion in Britain was outraged, and the British government considered intervening but was not prepared to act unless Russia co-operated. As Russian co-operation was not forthcoming, nothing was done. Once again, the Socialists were unable to form a united front. Encouraged by the success of her Polish articles, Rosa Luxemburg joined the debate and immediately found herself embroiled in controversy with Liebknecht.⁴⁹ The SDF passed a resolution summoning the workers to march in several directions at once.⁵⁰ And, in *Neue Zeit*, Bernstein published his article, "German Social Democracy and the Turkish Troubles," which had the interesting effect of infuriating not only Belfort Bax (it contained the aforementioned attack upon him) but also Victor Adler.⁵¹

The significance of Bernstein's article lay not so much in his assessment of the international situation as in the principle upon which that assessment was based. The principle was that the objective of socialist policy should be the advancement of "civilisation." It followed that since the Armenians were at a higher level of civilisation than the Turks, Socialists ought to support the Armenians. It also followed that it was wrong to assist savages and barbarians in their struggles against colonisation by the great civilised nations of Europe. The advance of civilisation was not only irresistible but also, in the end, beneficial, and the task of the socialist movement was not to resist it but to ensure that it occurred with as little brutality as possible.⁵²

Bax replied that the whole point of colonialism was to give capitalism a new lease of life by expanding the world market, and that, since it was the object of socialist policy to hasten the collapse of capitalism, it was the duty of Socialists to resist colonialism in whatever shape it might take. In particular, he observed, the break-up of the Ottoman Empire would inevitably draw its constituent parts into the vortex of the world market and thus provide capitalism with some of the elbow-room it badly needed. Socialists should therefore try to prevent this from happening, and that meant that they should oppose the liberation of Armenia.⁵³

The difference between the two positions could hardly have been greater. Bax equated "modern civilisation" with "capitalism" and

declared that both were "absolutely antithetic" to socialism. Bernstein, by contrast, thought of modern civilisation as including both capitalism and socialism without being identical with either. In his critique, Bax had ironically accused Bernstein of seeking for "a mediating principle" between capitalism and socialism and of having thus "lost sight of the ultimate object of the movement." It was a comment that came very close to the mark. As Bernstein saw it, capitalism was increasingly coming into conflict with those very principles of modern civilisation on which it was itself based, and socialism was emerging not so much as the antithesis of capitalism as its transformation into a higher and more perfect form of civilisation. There was, in other words, a sense in which socialism could be seen as both the abolition and fulfilment of capitalism.

Bernstein himself did not see the matter in such Hegelian terms. But he had become convinced that the principles of socialism were identical with the moral and legal principles of modern civilisation and that the object of the socialist movement was to achieve the progressive implementation of these principles in all departments of economic, social, and political life. This was a formidable task, and it was time the party considered how it proposed to go about it. It was with this in mind that, in the autumn of 1896, Bernstein began to publish his first series of articles in *Neue Zeit* under the heading "Problems of Socialism."

The first series consisted of five articles, beginning with one entitled "General Observations on Utopianism and Eclecticism." The utopianism referred to was the view that anything achieved prior to the revolutionary holocaust was bound to be tainted with capitalism and was therefore worthless; by eclecticism Bernstein understood the visionless pragmatism devoid of theoretical underpinnings, which he associated (a bit unjustly) with the Fabians. Although eclecticism was, in Bernstein's view, better than utopianism, both were to be rejected in favour of scientific socialism, the rational and systematic, yet open-ended, approach pioneered by Marx and Engels. This approach was, he said, not much in evidence in recent socialist literature, but a new journal, the *Progressive Review*, looked as if it might fill the gap.⁵⁴

Bernstein's second article was, in fact, a translation of J. A. Hobson's "Collectivism in Industry" taken from the *Progressive Review*. In it, Hobson argued that industries which satisfied common needs and whose operations could be reduced to "routine" tended to develop into monopolies, the only remedy for which was public control and management. On the other hand, the provision of goods and

services for the satisfaction of strictly individual needs was not subject to this tendency, and this meant that there would always be a limit to the spread of collectivism and room for private enterprise to flourish. Indeed, it was to be expected that as the collective organisation of industry raised the general standard of living, the demand for individual goods and services would increase, thus opening up new fields for private enterprise. In short, private and public enterprise stood in a symbiotic relationship with one another.⁵⁵

It was a thesis with which Bernstein had come to sympathise, and his next two articles were meant, in large part, to provide it with statistical corroboration. The first, "The Present State of Industrial Development in Germany," documented the rapid concentration of industry that had taken place in recent years, with the largest companies accounting for an ever-increasing share of the gross national product. The main economic trend was obvious, and Bernstein did not attempt to deny it; but he drew attention to a few countervailing tendencies and cautioned his readers against concluding that German industry as a whole was ripe for public ownership. The material in his next article, "The Latest Development of the Agricultural Situation in England," served his purpose somewhat better. Here he was able to claim that although the agricultural population had declined dramatically, most of the decrease was due to agricultural labourers leaving the land with the result that the number of proprietors relative to labourers was growing. Indeed, he argued, the ownership of agricultural land was becoming more widely distributed, and it was, therefore, a mistake to suppose that "economic development promotes 'with giant strides' the contraction of the landed interest."⁵⁶

Writing these articles evidently helped Bernstein pull his thoughts together. On 29 January 1897, he gave a lecture to the Fabian Society, "What Marx Really Taught."⁵⁷ It was an attempt to vindicate Marx, and in the course of delivering it Bernstein realised that he was not persuading even himself. As he was later to tell Bebel: "I told myself secretly that this could not go on. It is idle to attempt to reconcile the irreconcilable. The vital thing is rather to clarify for oneself the points on which Marx is still right and the points on which he is not. If we jettison the latter, we serve Marx's memory better than when (as I did and many still do) we stretch his theory until it will prove anything. Because then it proves nothing."⁵⁸ In short, by the time he came to write the last article in his series, Bernstein knew that he was in the business of revising Marx. This last article, "The Social and Political Significance of Space and Number," was also the longest and the most important.⁵⁹ In it, Bernstein tack-

led the question of the relationship between the individual and the state.

Socialist opposition to the state was, he argued, justified insofar as the state served as the instrument of class rule. But, with the spread of democracy, the state was becoming more responsive to the needs of the common people and was, to that extent, ceasing to represent a narrow class interest. The result was that socialist practices and institutions were becoming established, socialist principles were finding expression in the law, and the area of capitalist activity was being reduced by government intervention. Democracy, in short, was paving the way to socialism. This, however, did not mean that the state would "wither away." Vast territories with teeming populations and complicated industrial economies required centralised planning and the rule of law. Oppression and exploitation might cease with the triumph of socialism, but the need for administration would persist.

This last point simply restated a view that Engels himself had propounded on several occasions.⁶⁰ However, this familiar thesis rested on unfamiliar assumptions. Engels had, as we have already remarked, assumed that politics was ultimately governed by irreconcilable conflicts of class interest. In Bernstein's article, this assumption had been quietly dropped and replaced by a notion of democratic politics as providing a framework within which capitalist and labourer could recognise each other as equals and arrive at a *modus vivendi*. Politics was no longer a matter of calculating the tactics of class warfare. It was a matter of securing the rights of individuals and promoting their material welfare without undermining their independence. For Bernstein, the overriding problem of socialism was to prevent the sheer size of the modern state from submerging the individual and nullifying democratic control. Direct participatory democracy was out of the question, but, he suggested, a judicious decentralisation of political power might provide a solution.

Apart from a cautiously favourable review by Konrad Schmidt,⁶¹ Bernstein's "Problems of Socialism" attracted little notice. During that winter (1896-7) Bernstein did indeed find himself engaged in controversy, but not on any matter arising from his series.⁶² The silence was remarkable. Bernstein had questioned the very assumptions on which party policy was supposed to be based, but no-one raised the alarm. It is true that the Social Democratic Party was still a broad church, that most members had little or no interest in theoretical questions, and that even professed Marxists tended to engage in creative interpretations of the master's doctrine.⁶³ In other words, Bernstein's "heresy" was, perhaps, not easy to detect because there was no estab-

lished orthodoxy by which it could be measured. Nonetheless, Engels had been labouring for years to commit the party, not only to a specific policy, but also to the general theory which gave that policy its particular significance, and Bernstein was widely accepted as Engels's intellectual and political successor. Kautsky, at least, should have noticed that something had happened. But he did not.

When uneasiness did begin to mount, it was in connection with a number of articles on various aspects of the working-class movement which Bernstein began to publish in the autumn of 1897. The first was an article on child labour with which Bernstein inaugurated a second series of articles under the heading "Problems of Socialism." At the end of August, an international conference on workers' protection had been held in Zürich, and one of its resolutions demanded compulsory schooling for all children under fifteen. Bernstein thought that the recommendation was "neither good pedagogy nor good social policy," and he mustered an array of arguments and authorities (including Marx) to support his case. The article drew a short but pointed riposte from the editors of *Justice*.⁶⁴

Two months later, Bernstein played the devil's advocate again with a review article on Scipio Sighele's *Crowd Psychology and Mass Crime*.⁶⁵ Once more, Bernstein was concerned with the problem of individuals losing their moral autonomy in the vast, impersonal collectivities of modern industrial society, but here he was particularly interested in the phenomenon of riots and mass demonstrations. Bebel regarded the article as "very dubious," and Kautsky later wrote that it was in this article that he first noticed Bernstein's "animosity towards any revolutionary movement whatsoever."⁶⁶ Bernstein seemed, indeed, to be bending over backwards to accommodate bourgeois opinion, and, for many, the suspicion was to be confirmed by Bernstein's remarks on the great engineering strike in Britain.

In the summer of 1897, the Federation of Engineering Employers had declared a lock-out following strikes for an eight-hour day in five London plants. When the Amalgamated Society of Engineers called a national strike, the employers settled down to a trial of strength. They won. After thirty weeks, the men returned to work on very unfavourable terms. The contest aroused considerable interest among German Socialists, and Bernstein, as London correspondent of *Vorwärts*, kept them informed. Towards the end of the strike, he put together his conclusions in a long, two-part article entitled "The Conflict in the English Engineering Industry."⁶⁷ The point at issue, he argued, was not the survival of the union but rather how much of a voice it should have in determining the affairs of the industry; at

the heart of the issue lay the familiar problem that while mechanisation improved productivity and thus reduced prices, it generally did so at the cost of men's jobs. This, he observed, created a dilemma, for to defend jobs by resisting mechanisation placed the union in the invidious position of seeming to stand in the way of progress and the public good. Bernstein did not pretend that there were any easy answers, but the drift of his remarks was clear. Progress should not be impeded for the sake of a short-term advantage, and the public good had priority over merely sectional interests.

There was nothing particularly shocking about most of Bernstein's remarks. Marx and Engels had never been happy about trade union policies which tended to reduce the pace and human cost of capitalist development,⁶⁸ and Bernstein's strictures would have been perfectly consistent with Marxist doctrine had he placed them in the context of an overall revolutionary strategy. This, however, he did not do. In fact, it was clear that he was criticising the union, not for being counter-revolutionary, but for offending against such traditional values as progress and the public good. And the fact that he associated these values with the position of the employers (together with his warning against "oversimplified notions of the class struggle")⁶⁹ could only raise doubts as to whether he was truly speaking as a class-conscious representative of the revolutionary proletariat.

Bebel, for one, was furious.⁷⁰ However, the irritation caused by Bernstein's engineering strike articles was soon to be erased by the furore that followed another article he published in January. Late in December, Belfort Bax had revived his quarrel with Bernstein on the subject of colonialism. In an article published in *Neue Zeit*, he elaborated some of the points he had made previously, repeated his accusation that Bernstein had abandoned "the final goal of the socialist movement," and finished with a characteristically eccentric appeal to racist sentiment.⁷¹ Bernstein replied with two substantial articles under the heading "The Struggle of Social Democracy and the Social Revolution."⁷² The first was, in the main, an explicitly polemical demolition of Bax's position. In the second, however, Bernstein drew together and justified his views on the nature and purpose of the socialist movement. It was, in effect, the first manifesto of Revisionism.

Recently published statistics, he argued, showed that the concentration of industry was not proceeding at the pace revolutionary enthusiasts claimed; and Engels himself had drawn attention to the stabilising effects of modern communications, growing investments overseas, cartels and trusts, etc. It was true that Engels had also said

that each of these elements concealed "within it the nucleus of far more violent future crises," but Bernstein could see "no compelling reason to regard this as the only probable development."⁷³ Indeed, so far as he was concerned, there was now no prospect whatsoever of a general economic collapse. And this, Bernstein added, was just as well, for, in such a crisis, a Social Democratic government would be unable either to introduce socialism or to preserve capitalism. Caught on the horns of this dilemma, Social Democracy would infallibly be destroyed. On the other hand, if Social Democrats would only abandon their revolutionary dreams and bend their minds to the tasks immediately ahead, they would see that there were excellent prospects for the piecemeal realisation of socialism by normal political means. Bernstein summed up his position in two fateful sentences: "I frankly admit that I have extraordinarily little feeling for, or interest in, what is usually termed 'the final goal of socialism.' This goal, whatever it may be, is nothing to me; but the movement is everything."⁷⁴ This declaration struck a chord. It crystallised Bernstein's position in a way that finally alerted the radical left to what was going on.

The Assault from the Left

If Kautsky had ever wondered whether anyone read his staid and learned journal, the response to Bernstein's declaration must have reassured him. The German radical press was in an uproar. The *Frankfurter Volksstimme* queried Bernstein's statistics, the Berlin *Volkszeitung* doubted whether he had ever been a genuine radical, the *Schwäbische Tagwacht* declared that he had completely missed the point, and, in two articles in the *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, Franz Mehring deplored the timing of Bernstein's declaration, wondered whether he had abandoned scientific socialism and accused him of utopianism.⁷⁵ *Vorwärts* reacted more cautiously. It reported what Bernstein had said and then regretted that he had used "expressions which can only give rise to misunderstanding."⁷⁶ Meanwhile, refutations of Bernstein piled up on Kautsky's desk. Taking his cue from *Vorwärts*, he announced that since they were all based on a "misunderstanding," he would publish none of them. He would, however, give Belfort Bax the right of reply. Bax availed himself of this right with his usual facile competence,⁷⁷ but by the time his article appeared, any significance it might have had was overshadowed by an important series of articles appearing in the *Sächsische Arbeiter-Zeitung*.

The editorship of the *Sächsische Arbeiter-Zeitung* had just been taken over by Parvus (= Alexander Helphand), and he was anxious to increase the influence of his paper. Bernstein's pronouncement gave him the opportunity. Late in January, he published an article, "Social Revolution and Colonial Policy," in which he identified the issue as being whether socialism was to be achieved by reform or by revolution.⁷⁸ This was immediately followed by the first in a series of eleven articles under the general heading "Bernstein's Overthrow of Socialism."⁷⁹ Parvus's main objective was to refute Bernstein's contention that, even if a major crisis occurred, Germany was not ripe for socialism. This claim was, Parvus argued, based on a complete misreading of the facts. In particular, Bernstein had underestimated both the concentration of capital and the proletarianisation of the masses in Germany. So far from being unripe for socialism, the economic and social condition of Germany was now such that the introduction of socialism would be comparatively easy and would have the support, or at least the acquiescence, of the vast majority of Germans.

Parvus supported his case with a massive display of statistical information. However, the significance of his argument lay not so much in the points he scored on matters of detail as in the general allegation which these points were meant to illustrate. Bernstein, he wanted to say, had forgotten that the relationships revealed in the official statistics were purely formal and abstract and that, as such, they gave at best an incomplete picture of the relationships that actually obtained in bourgeois society. Statistics might provide useful material for social and economic analysis, but only if they were interpreted from the standpoint of social and economic reality. Bernstein, in short, had fallen into the trap of "formalism." He had mistaken the appearance for the reality, the form for the content.

So far as Parvus was concerned, the charge of formalism was vindicated by the apology which Bernstein published in *Vorwärts* early in February. Here Bernstein sought to explain what he had really meant by his statement on the movement and the final goal. He had, he said, not intended to deny that the movement had a final goal. He had merely wanted to assert that the final goal was "not the realisation of a social plan but the implementation of a social *principle*." And the principle in question was "the principle of co-operation [*Genossenschaftlichkeit*]." This principle, Bernstein continued, could not be implemented all at once. It was inevitably a matter of making gradual progress. For this reason, the final goal of the movement should be understood not as a specific future event or state of affairs but as a principle that guided and informed the daily activities of the

movement. Bernstein therefore offered to reformulate his statement as follows: "The movement is everything to me because it bears its goal within itself."⁸⁰

By thus depicting political action as the day-to-day implementation of a general principle rather than the pursuit of a particular future objective, Bernstein was, in effect, committing what Engels had always denounced as an error, namely that of regarding political action as determined by its form rather than by its content. From a Marxist point of view, this was tantamount to inverting the relationship between thought and reality. Parvus was quick to grasp the point. In a short reply, he described Bernstein's apology as a flight "into the misty realm of ideology," reminded his readers that their business lay in the real world, and finished by urging Bernstein to stand his ground and fight like a man.⁸¹ He then returned to the task of knocking pieces off Bernstein's position by throwing leading articles at it.

On 20 February, Konrad Schmidt intervened with a substantial article in *Vorwärts*.⁸² Once again, he endorsed Bernstein's position, and, in particular, he developed the notion that socialism can be achieved by piecemeal reform. The immediate consequence of this was to broaden the debate by enlarging Parvus's target. Schmidt had, for some time, been interested in the work of the neo-Kantians, and he believed that Kant's doctrine was broadly compatible with the standpoint of Social Democracy.⁸³ Parvus saw that there was a connection between Schmidt's flirtation with philosophical Idealism and Bernstein's reformist politics, and in the last three articles of his series, he made the two men the common object of his attack.⁸⁴

At the beginning of March, Bernstein replied by publishing a major article, "Critical Interlude," in *Neue Zeit*.⁸⁵ It was aimed at all his critics, but most of it was devoted to a rebuttal of Parvus's arguments. Bernstein did not spend much time on the detail of Parvus's analysis. Rather, he addressed himself to the charge that his position was basically formalist in character. He was, he insisted, "not a formalist." Nevertheless, he did reaffirm and, indeed, elaborate his view that the final goal of socialism must be understood as a principle progressively implemented in the day-to-day activity of the movement. Parvus replied with a short piece entitled "Bernstein's Overthrow," and then rounded off his campaign with a further three articles under the heading "Bernstein as Poor Tom," in which he commented on Bernstein's evident difficulties in explaining his views, reiterated many of his earlier points, and concluded by urging Kautsky to break his silence and make his position clear.⁸⁶

All told, Parvus had written seventeen articles against Bernstein in

the space of two months. This alone was enough to give the question a high profile, despite the caution displayed by *Vorwärts* and *Neue Zeit*. Many Social Democrats were dismayed. Not only had one of the movement's most eminent theorists apparently rejected the doctrines of Marx, but he had chosen to do so during an important Reichstag election campaign. Party unity had already been strained by the activities of Wolfgang Heine, a prominent Social Democratic lawyer and Reichstag deputy. Heine had recently published a pamphlet advocating dialogue with the National Liberals, and he had also suggested that the party agree to vote for military expenditure in return for concessions on civil rights – the so-called compensation policy.⁸⁷ These two propositions had caused quite enough strife within the party without the addition of the clash between Bernstein and his critics.

Matters were not helped by the fact that many leading Social Democrats were suffering from their own version of *fin de siècle* depression. The capacity of bourgeois society to emerge unscathed from crisis after crisis led them to suspect that the revolution would never occur and that capitalism would remain the order of the day for generations to come. They had, in short, lost their confidence in the future, and Bernstein's articles helped deepen their sense of hopelessness in the face of triumphant Philistinism.⁸⁸ Bernstein himself was not happy. In mid-March, Eleanor Marx reported that he had become "terribly irritable" and urged that something be done to counteract his "unhappy pessimism."⁸⁹ About a fortnight later, Eleanor Marx herself committed suicide upon learning that her common-law husband, Edward Aveling, had secretly married a young actress.⁹⁰

It was in these strained circumstances that Bernstein set about reconsidering his position. His exchange with Parvus had brought to the fore certain questions of principle, and he had come to the conclusion that the differences between himself and his critics could best be overcome by the elucidation of certain basic philosophical points. He accordingly wrote a carefully studied essay, "The Realistic and the Ideological Moments in Socialism," which was published in two parts by *Neue Zeit* early that summer.⁹¹ It continued the second series of "Problems of Socialism," and its general theme was the relationship between ideas and reality and, more particularly, the relationship between ideas and political action.

There was, Bernstein argued, no hard and fast distinction to be drawn between Materialism and Idealism, for even our knowledge of physical reality was unavoidably hypothetical and, in that sense, ideal. Science, therefore, could never be a closed system of estab-

lished truths but must always be an open-ended and ever-changing enquiry; socialism, insofar as it was scientific, must share this characteristic. It should also be remembered (Bernstein continued) that theory is necessarily an abstraction from and therefore a simplification of reality. For this reason, political practice, which takes place in the unsimplified real world, could not be a straightforward implementation of theory. It was, therefore, the tragic destiny of theory to be forever betrayed by practice. Finally, Bernstein maintained, however scientific socialism might be, it also had an ideological aspect, if only because it served as a guide to action and must therefore be informed by a moral vision. Engels himself had pointed out that economic factors were the determinants of history only "in the last instance" and that "ideas" could also have an effect.⁹² The importance of a moral vision should therefore not be underrated, nor should it be forgotten that "the morality of developed civil society [*bürgerliche Gesellschaft*] is by no means identical with the morality of the bourgeoisie."⁹³

Later on, Rosa Luxemburg was to cite Bernstein's distinction between *bürgerlich* and *bourgeois* as evidence for her claim that he had "exchanged the historical language of the proletariat . . . for that of the bourgeoisie."⁹⁴ It was an interesting point. For a Marxist, it could make no sense to talk of civil (*bürgerlich*) society in abstraction from its class character as *bourgeois* society. It was a distinction with no difference. The fact that the distinction did make sense for Bernstein suggests that he was indeed speaking a language different from that of his Marxist critics. His use of the term "ideology" was another case in point. Most Marxists followed Engels in identifying ideology with philosophical Idealism and in regarding it as a covert justification of bourgeois economic and political relations. But, as we have already noted, Bernstein was quite open in his sympathy for the philosophical Idealism of the neo-Kantians, and he accordingly used the term "ideology" in a different and looser sense. For him, it meant either ideas which are partial or inaccurate descriptions of reality (e.g. the idea of a fully class-conscious proletariat) or those which do not pretend to describe reality at all (e.g. moral principles). In neither of Bernstein's usages was there any suggestion that ideology had a distinctive class character. He did share with his opponents a tendency to contrast ideology with science (*Wissenschaft*), but here again there was a difference in usage. It is clear that when Bernstein spoke of science, he was thinking principally of the natural sciences, and what he wanted to stress was their hypothetical and open-ended character as methods of investigation. Marx and his followers, however, thought

of science more broadly as any systematic body of knowledge in which "objectively necessary" relationships are established.

In short, although Bernstein was using the same words as his opponents, he was often using them in a different sense. Hence the confused and often confusing nature of the debate. However, it was some time before this interesting fact was noticed. It certainly escaped the attention of Georgi Plekhanov.

Like many other Socialists, Plekhanov was dismayed by Bernstein's pronouncements. He had not initially contributed to the counter-attack, partly because he did not like to interfere in the affairs of another party and partly because he felt that Bernstein was right in thinking that capitalist society was not on the verge of a catastrophic collapse.⁹⁵ However, Bernstein's excursion into philosophy struck him as being a direct attack on the philosophical position of Engels, and he leapt to the defence. The resulting article, published in *Neue Zeit* at the end of July, was not one of his more successful pieces.⁹⁶ Most of it was devoted to showing that Bernstein's notion of materialism showed a deplorable ignorance of the history of philosophy — which, whether true or not, missed the point that Bernstein was trying to make. Rosa Luxemburg, certainly, was not impressed.⁹⁷

By this time, Kautsky's own doubts about Bernstein had come to the surface. So long as Bernstein's only critic was Belfort Bax, it had been easy for Kautsky to see his old friend as being still the pillar of orthodoxy. Besides, Bernstein was not suggesting that the party deviate in the slightest particular from the course charted for it by Engels. His "revision" was on the level of principle, not of policy; and in his discussion of principles, his language was, as we have seen, often such as to leave room for interpretation. However, the distinctly anti-proletarian tone of the articles Bernstein had written during the winter coupled with the sheer magnitude of the uproar provoked by his declaration on "the final goal" had shaken Kautsky's confidence. His initial reaction was to blame Bernstein's state of mind. Bernstein, he suggested, had become "sceptical" and uncertain of himself, and, having lost touch with the daily work of the party, he had unwittingly allowed his opposition to the SDF to develop into an attack on the party as a whole. The solution Kautsky proposed was that Bernstein be persuaded to move to Zürich, or possibly Vienna, where he could take over the editorship of *Neue Zeit*.⁹⁸ Nothing came of the scheme, partly for practical reasons and partly because of Kautsky's growing doubts as to Bernstein's fundamental soundness. In August, Bernstein did actually come to Switzerland where he had conversations with Bebel and Victor Adler. These conversations served only

to convince Bebel that Bernstein's conversion was irrevocable, and by this time Kautsky had reached the same conclusion.⁹⁹

Rosa Luxemburg had spent the summer in Berlin, where she had been working on her own refutation of Bernstein. The result appeared in September as a series of five articles in the *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, then edited by Bruno Schoenlank.¹⁰⁰ The series was entitled "Social Reform or Revolution?"

The first article stated the general point Rosa Luxemburg wanted to make. Socialism, she argued, was "scientific" rather than utopian because the material development of capitalist society inevitably led to its collapse and replacement by a socialist society. In this sense, socialism was an "objective" or "historical" necessity. If, however, Bernstein were correct in saying that the collapse of capitalism was not inevitable, then socialism would cease to be the necessary outcome of an objective, historical development and become instead "a mere ideal." In short, by denying the inevitability of the collapse of capitalism, Bernstein had committed himself to an Idealist or utopian conception of socialism.¹⁰¹

The effect of this argument was to highlight the doctrinal and political significance of Bernstein's economic analysis, and it was to this analysis that Rosa Luxemburg now turned. Bernstein's confidence in the ability of capitalism to fend off crises was, she argued, misplaced. Indeed, the extension of the credit system, the improved means of communication, and the growth of cartels did not diminish but, on the contrary, tended to increase the anarchy of capitalist production and exchange. When the world market could expand no further, then the internal contradictions of capitalism would make themselves increasingly felt. Bernstein's suggestion (championed by Konrad Schmidt) that socialism could be introduced piecemeal was based on a misconception as to the direction of capitalist development. Legislation aimed at controlling capitalist activity had the effect of protecting rather than modifying capitalist property relations. Finally, it was idle to attach any real importance to the spread of democratic institutions. Democracy was certainly the form of state best suited to giving political expression to the interests of society as a whole, but so long as the society in question was one in which capitalist interests were dominant, it would inevitably be capitalist interests that found expression.¹⁰²

In the last article of the series, Rosa Luxemburg suggested that by treating social reforms as ends in themselves, Bernstein and Schmidt were endangering the class standpoint of the party, and she added that Bernstein's tendency to treat economic phenomena as isolated

facts rather than as parts of an organic whole was the characteristic viewpoint of the individual capitalist "who reflects in his mind the economic facts around him just as they appear when deformed by the laws of competition."¹⁰³ She did not, however, go so far as to claim that Bernstein had defected to the bourgeoisie, nor did she demand that he be expelled from the party.

In September, Parvus was expelled from Saxony and therefore ceased to be editor of the *Sächsische Arbeiter-Zeitung*. Rosa Luxemburg took his place just a few days before the party conference at Stuttgart. She was to attend the conference as delegate for Neustadt and Beuthen-Tarnowitz, but, as she wrote to Leo Jogiches, her best mandate would be her articles against Bernstein.¹⁰⁴ The articles had, indeed, created a sensation, and it was clear that, whether or not Parvus succeeded in getting the question put on the conference agenda, the Revisionist controversy would dominate the proceedings. Bernstein himself had returned to London, where he composed a brief summary and defence of his position to be produced at the conference should the occasion arise.

The Stuttgart Conference and After

The party conference opened in Stuttgart on 31 October. Its first substantive business was to debate the report of the executive committee. Two sections of the report received extended treatment: the section dealing with the party's performance at the recent Reichstag elections, and the section concerned with the party's press. The delegates did not directly address "the Bernstein question" until they came to the second topic, but the discussion of the first topic prepared the ground. In the elections, the party had increased its support by some 300,000 votes and had won fifty-six seats. It was a good result, and in a light-hearted opening speech, Ignaz Auer said so.¹⁰⁵ But many of the delegates felt that the party could have done better.

Some, for instance, thought that the party should have modified its programme to attract more support from the peasantry. It was a suggestion that had been made several times before, and the trouble with it was that it called into question the fundamental nature of the party.¹⁰⁶ Was the party a party of the industrial proletariat alone? Or did it represent all those (including peasants, small shopkeepers, etc.) who suffered oppression under the capitalist system? The general feeling was that the party should maintain its strictly proletarian stance, and this was the position which Bebel himself endorsed.¹⁰⁷

Another issue was Heine's controversial "compensation policy."

The party was officially committed to the abolition of the standing army and its replacement by a people's militia. This policy was a crucial element in the strategy devised by Engels, and one of its implications was that Social Democrats in the Reichstag should oppose any provision of funds for the armed services.¹⁰⁸ So when Heine suggested that the party offer to drop its opposition to military expenditure in return for concessions on civil rights, he was implicitly denying the inevitability of a general collapse accompanied by an armed confrontation between the revolutionary proletariat and the government. Clara Zetkin accordingly denounced his "quite fantastic conception . . . of contemporary capitalist society," ridiculed his "possibilist" policy of socialism "by small doses," and called upon the conference to affirm that the party stood solidly "on the ground of the class struggle of the revolutionary proletariat." And Schoenlank reinforced her point by urging the conference not to relinquish "the class struggle . . . without which we would be nothing but a petty-bourgeois opposition party."¹⁰⁹

In other words, Heine, like Bernstein, seemed to have rejected the final goal of the movement, and he was not alone among the delegates. Heinrich Peus quite explicitly declared that the party would do better to concentrate on "the present needs of the masses" rather than harp on "the final goal." "In fact," he said, "I find the whole concept of a final goal repugnant, for there are no final goals." Heine himself conceded that the activity of the party should be aimed at creating "a more advanced society" and that, in this sense, talk about a final goal might be appropriate. But, he added, the more of such talk there was, the less effective it became. If the party wanted to increase its strength, it should attend to "the present, concrete demands of the day."¹¹⁰

Despite the resemblance between their standpoint and that of Bernstein, Heine and Peus were not trying to replace an old theory with a new one. They were trying to keep theory out of politics altogether. In an exasperated speech, Peus insisted that he did not object to theory as such and was quite happy to let "our theorists" argue to their hearts' content. He just wanted theory removed from the party programme, which, he said, ought to be an easily comprehensible programme for action.¹¹¹ He and Heine, in short, were pragmatists, and as such they missed an important point. It was not (as they seemed to think) a question of theory versus practice, of final goal versus immediate demands. It was a question of two quite different conceptions of political activity.

For them, the proper ends of political activity were the short-term

objectives which emerged from time to time as changing circumstances opened up new opportunities. However, since any particular set of circumstances might present a variety of different and possibly conflicting opportunities, the political activist needed a criterion by which he could choose between them. For Peus as for Heine, this criterion was the needs of the masses, and they both made it plain that they meant the *present* needs of the masses. These present needs might, of course, change as the circumstances changed, but at any time it would be evident enough what they were, and it was the duty of the Social Democrat politician to see that they were satisfied – whatever they might be. This is what Peus meant by his uncompromising declaration, “There are no final goals.”

His opponents operated with a completely different view of political activity. For them, a Social Democrat was one who chose his short-term objectives, not according to whether they met the present needs of the masses, but according to whether they contributed to the eventual seizure of political power by the revolutionary proletariat. As Bebel put it, “A fighting party, a party that intends to attain certain goals, must also have a final goal.” If all reference to the final goal were deleted from the party programme and avoided in the party press, then, Bebel declared, “I say that we would cease to be Social Democrats.”¹¹²

Shortly afterwards, Rosa Luxemburg spelled out the point. Taken by themselves, she argued, there was nothing specifically socialist about the immediate practical objectives of the party. They were objectives which the party shared with a variety of other groups and parties. What gave them their specifically socialist character was the fact that the party related them to its final goal, “the conquest of political power.” This conception of political activity was, she continued, dependent on the conception of capitalist society as “caught in insoluble contradictions which will ultimately necessitate an explosion, a collapse, at which point we will play the role of the syndic who liquidates a bankrupt company.”¹¹³

When the conference reconvened on the morning of the second day, the debate was dominated by Vollmar’s counterblast. He began by remarking wearily on the tendency of younger members to bore party conferences with predictions of the party’s imminent demise. Some people, he said, would always find ranting sectarianism more congenial than practical political work, but that did not justify the pretentious manner in which party veterans had been lectured at, as if they were school-children. He then turned to Rosa Luxemburg’s speech. His attempt to demolish her account of the relationship be-

tween the party's immediate objectives and its final goal was not particularly convincing. However, in ridiculing Bernstein's warning against premature seizures of power, she had given the impression that she was calling for an immediate armed uprising. Vollmar accordingly accused her of Blanquism. There was, he insisted, nothing socialist about advocating violent seizures of power regardless of the economic and social circumstances. Bernstein was right. It would be a disaster for the party to come to power before the time was ripe. The true road to power was the ceaseless struggle to improve the lot of the working class. So far as he was concerned, Heine, Schmidt, and Bernstein had served the party better than their critics.¹¹⁴

This effectively ended the debate on the Reichstag elections. It only remained for Heine to be given the last word and for Auer to end the proceedings with a speech aimed at creating an atmosphere of warm togetherness and sunny optimism. His efforts went unrewarded, for the debate on the press, which followed immediately, was opened by Clara Zetkin, who was in no mood to let matters rest. She complained that there was not enough discussion of basic issues in the party press. She noted in particular the unfortunate impression created by Kautsky's silence on the subject of Bernstein and the fact that *Vorwärts*, "in its timid embarrassment, avoided discussing a whole range of important party issues." It was clear that she was worried about what she saw as the rising tide of opportunism within the party and felt that the cautious attitude of the party press had only served to give it encouragement. When she had finished, Arthur Stadthagen reiterated his own view that the business of the party press was to make converts and that the way to do this was to be quite explicit in relating current issues to the final goal of the movement. And, just before lunch, Parvus made a similar point, stressing the need for a more vigorous discussion of basic issues.¹¹⁵

After lunch, the debate moved swiftly in two separate directions. Some speakers, such as Thiele and Georg Gradnauer, stuck doggedly to the agenda and discussed the difficulties and shortcomings of the party press. Others, however, wanted to tackle directly the more general issue which had been haunting the debate so far. Rosa Luxemburg, in particular, wished to reply to the criticisms which Vollmar had levelled at her. She had been especially nettled by his suggestion that Heine, Schmidt, and Bernstein had served the party better than their critics, and she responded by reasserting her point that the distinguishing mark of a Social Democrat was that he related his present tactics to the final goal, the seizure of political power. This being so, she argued, no Social Democrat could possibly consent to any in-

crease in the military power of the state, or suggest that the anarchy of capitalist society could be overcome under capitalist rule, or declare that the final goal was nothing and the movement everything.¹¹⁶

It was shortly after this that Bebel found an opportunity to put the Bernstein question squarely before the delegates. It is worth noting that Bebel need not have forced the issue. He had brought a copy of Bernstein's statement with him, but Bernstein had written it on the assumption that Parvus would succeed in getting the Bernstein question put on the formal agenda. As it happened, Parvus had not succeeded, and Bebel could therefore have kept the statement in his pocket and let the debate continue with the Bernstein question cropping up as one of several side-issues. Instead, he rose to his feet and read out Bernstein's statement.¹¹⁷

It proved a concise but comprehensive reaffirmation of the main points Bernstein had propounded in his various articles. Bebel himself made no comment except to say that he disagreed with Bernstein's position. Kautsky also disagreed and was, at last, prepared to say so. Most of his speech was concerned with the central issue, the possibility of a non-revolutionary road to socialism. He accepted that a peaceful transition from capitalism to socialism might be possible in England. Marx himself had conceded as much.¹¹⁸ But he stressed that it was only a possibility and that it applied only to England. England, he said, was in many important respects unique, and its course of development could not be taken as prefiguring that of any other country. Germany, for one, was following a course that would inevitably lead to a revolutionary catastrophe. The crisis, he said, would be provoked not by the party but by its enemies; however, the party should have no illusions as to the inevitability of its occurrence. In his view, Bernstein had lost touch with the movement in Germany and was generalising from conditions in England. However, his errors had provoked a useful discussion, and for this he was to be thanked.¹¹⁹

Kautsky's speech was received with such enthusiasm that Liebknecht, in summing up the debate, was able to claim that the conference had, in effect, rejected Bernstein's position. Everywhere in continental Europe, Liebknecht said, the contradictions of capitalism were becoming sharper, and in these circumstances, it was all the more necessary that the party maintain its stand on "the ground of the proletarian class struggle." There could, he concluded, be no movement without a final goal and no final goal without a movement. "Movement *and* final goal – movement *to* the final goal, that is the correct solution, and the final goal is *the overthrow of capitalist society*."¹²⁰

After the conference, most commentators agreed that the Bernstein debate had been the most important part of the proceedings. However, it was clear that nothing had been settled. Within a matter of days, Kautsky and Bernstein crossed swords in the columns of *Vorwärts*.¹²¹ Kautsky, however, felt that a more considered and systematic exposition of Bernstein's position was required and that further polemical exchanges could only serve to spread confusion. He therefore persuaded Bernstein to concentrate his efforts on writing a book. During the autumn and winter, the controversy surfaced from time to time in the press, but Bernstein himself maintained his silence until the middle of March 1899, when he published his *Die Voraussetzungen des Sozialismus*.¹²² It provoked what we may call the second stage of the Revisionist Debate.

The second stage differed from the first in at least three respects. Firstly, Bernstein now found himself in conflict not just with the radical left but also with the centre and with the party leadership. Secondly, although the debate was as wide-ranging as before, more attention was given to certain theoretical aspects of Marx's doctrine, especially his labour theory of value and his materialist conception of history. Finally, the second stage was much shorter and more concentrated than the first. It began in March with the publication of Bernstein's book, and it ended in October with the party conference at Hanover. The quantity of polemic published in these six months was tremendous. Rosa Luxemburg, Franz Mehring, Victor Adler, and many others took the field, but it was Kautsky who led the attack on Bernstein and who made the most substantial contribution. Bernstein, at least, seemed to think so, for in his numerous rejoinders he paid scarcely any attention to his other critics.¹²³

At the Hanover Conference, "the Bernstein question" was the main item on the agenda. In fact, it was very nearly the only item. The conference lasted five days, of which three were devoted entirely to the Bernstein debate. Once again, the German authorities prevented Bernstein from attending, but he had gained considerable support within the party and his position was vigorously defended. However, the combined opposition of the centre and the left ensured that his views were rejected even more decisively than at Stuttgart.

After Hanover, there was little more to be said. Bernstein did round off his criticism of Marx in a lecture with the Kantian title "How is Scientific Socialism Possible?" He concluded that scientific socialism was not possible, thus drawing yet another angry riposte from Kautsky.¹²⁴ But otherwise neither he nor his opponents had anything significant to add. In that sense, the debate was over. But the political struggle within the movement continued until, some

twenty years later, the party finally split, with some of the Marxists hiving off to form the Communist Party.¹²⁵

Bernstein himself never left the party, although he was at times under severe pressure to do so. Early in 1901 he was allowed to return to Germany and, not long afterwards, he was elected as a Social Democrat deputy to the Reichstag. However, while he maintained and even increased his reputation as a theorist, he was never in a position to wield real power within the party. Most of those who welcomed Bernstein's views did so not because they were convinced Revisionists but because they saw Revisionism as lending support to positions they had already adopted independently. Some were simply pragmatists who regarded theory, and particularly Marxist theory, as an electoral liability; others wanted to broaden the class base of the party by bringing in the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie; yet others were patriotic Germans as well as Socialists and were therefore uneasy about the party's opposition to militarism and colonialism. Bernstein had something for all of them, but their intellectual roots and political commitments lay elsewhere. True Revisionists were few and far between, and "the father of Revisionism" was a leader without a movement or even a clearly defined constituency.¹²⁶

The Nature of the Debate

Although the term "Revisionist" was not coined by Bernstein himself, he was prepared to accept it once it had become current.¹²⁷ He acknowledged that it was a loose term that had come to stand for a wide range of different tendencies within the party; but he felt that it did convey what he was trying to achieve, and this was a considerable advantage in a debate in which he and his opponents disagreed, not only on a number of substantive issues, but also on the very nature of the debate itself. Where many of his opponents saw the debate as involving matters of fundamental principle, as being a clash between two hostile and incompatible ideologies, Bernstein did not. So far as he was concerned, the debate was a difference of opinion among Social Democrats on certain questions of a basically practical nature, and although his recommendations might be far-reaching, they did not, in his view, require the abandonment of any fundamental principle. He was not rejecting the standpoint of Marx. He was merely "revising" it. But what, exactly, did he mean by this?

In his statement to the Stuttgart Conference, he recalled that, in *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels had predicted the total collapse of capitalist society, and he agreed that their analysis had

been correct as far as it characterised “the general tendencies” of capitalist development. However, he continued, they had underestimated the time which that development would take, and this had allowed a number of unforeseen countervailing tendencies to emerge, with the result that the general tendency of capitalism to destroy itself had been neutralised. It was, therefore, no longer correct to expect a catastrophic collapse, and the tactics which had been adopted with such a prognosis in mind would have to be revised. Engels himself had argued precisely this point in his introduction to Marx’s *The Class Struggles in France*. In fact, Bernstein concluded, “Engels is so thoroughly convinced that the tactics based on the presumption of a catastrophe have had their day that he even considers a revision of them necessary in the Latin countries where tradition is much more favourable to them than in Germany.”¹²⁸

So, for Bernstein, “revision” applied to “tactics,” and it consisted in bringing them up to date. Just as a map or a timetable requires revision when changes in the real world render it inaccurate, so, according to Bernstein, it is with tactics. Our tactics depend on our prognosis of the future, and this, in turn, depends on our assessment of present circumstances. When the circumstances change to any significant degree, so must our prognosis and therefore also our tactics. This, we notice, does not mean that the original tactics were wrong. All it means is that, thanks to changed circumstances, what was once correct has now become incorrect. For Bernstein, then, revising the doctrines of Marx and Engels did not, in itself, imply any criticism of their work, and it certainly did not betoken a rejection of scientific socialism. Indeed, he frequently pointed to the fact that Marx and Engels themselves had occasionally revised their tactics as evidence for the scientific character of their theory, and he claimed that his own revisions should be seen as a continuation of the same scientific enterprise.¹²⁹ Nothing, in his view, could be more un-Marxist than to insist dogmatically on the continuing applicability of every word that Marx and Engels had uttered.

However, as his critics were quick to point out, Bernstein’s attempt to enlist Marx and Engels as “Revisionists” rested on a curious misapprehension. It was true that Engels, like Bernstein himself, had reconsidered his views after the elections of 1890, but he had reached a rather different conclusion. To begin with, his confidence that capitalism was heading for destruction remained unshaken. He had, however, become convinced that the otherwise inevitable economic catastrophe would be forestalled by a major political crisis. His worry was that this crisis would occur before the party was ready to

face the forces of reaction in a decisive trial of strength. The problem was, he thought, largely a military one. The growth of standing armies and the sophisticated weapons at their disposal meant that the party could not hope to seize political power if the military intervened on the side of the bourgeoisie. The trick, therefore, was to ensure that the military did not intervene.¹³⁰ The tactics Engels recommended consequently consisted in playing for time and avoiding provocations. The party should, he argued, use the electoral system to put its case and extend its support, particularly in regions of heavy military recruitment. Above all, it should do nothing which might provide the authorities with an excuse for mounting a preemptive strike. The party should, in other words, concentrate its efforts on the ballot box. As he put it to Paul Lafargue: "It is slower and more boring than the call to revolution, but it is ten times more sure, and what is even better, it indicates with the most perfect accuracy the day when a call to armed revolution has to be made; it is even ten to one that universal suffrage, intelligently used by the workers, will drive the rulers to overthrow legality, that is, to put us in the most favourable position to make the revolution."¹³¹ Engels, in short, was in no doubt as to the violent nature of the transition from capitalism to socialism, and he made it clear that his advocacy of parliamentary activity was to be understood as "revolutionary tactics" pursued in furtherance of revolutionary ends. So when Bernstein declared that, for Engels, "tactics based on the presumption of a catastrophe have had their day," he was, quite simply, wrong.

It is not easy to see how Bernstein could have arrived at so remarkable a misapprehension, but part of the explanation must lie in the way he understood the relationship between ends and means. In his reply to Parvus, he had said that he regarded the final goal or end of the movement as being, not a future event or state of affairs, but the set of principles by which the daily activities of the movement were governed. This meant that the ends of the movement were directly implicated in its activities, so that ends and means could not be separated. The one implied the other. Thus, for Bernstein, violent or illegal acts implied a commitment to revolutionary ends, and, vice versa, peaceful parliamentary activity implied a commitment to reform within the framework of the law. Given this view, it made excellent sense to argue that since Engels had advocated the tactics of strict legality, he must have abandoned his revolutionary aspirations. And it also made sense to argue that since the party had in fact adopted the tactics of legality, it ought to "find the courage to emancipate

itself from an outworn phraseology" and "make up its mind to appear what it is today, a democratic socialist party of reform."¹³²

However, Engels took a rather different view of the relationship between means and ends, and this difference was rooted in the fact that he started from different assumptions about the world in which he lived. Where Bernstein assumed a fundamentally stable world in which political activity could be understood in terms of following rules or implementing principles, Engels assumed a world riven by class conflict and moving inexorably towards a revolutionary upheaval. In such a world, political activity could not be understood as rule-governed behaviour, for in war all rules are suspended. *Inter arma silent leges*. Each new stage in the conflict would bring new tasks and changed circumstances, and the tactics which were correct one day might become incorrect the next. The one fixed point for Engels was the final goal, the revolutionary seizure of power, and it was with a view to this, rather than to any set of rules or principles, that tactics were to be devised.

For Engels, then, the relationship between means and ends was necessarily a loose one. The end could not be inferred from the means (as Bernstein seemed to think), and a change in tactics therefore did not imply any change in strategy. In fact, as Rosa Luxemburg argued, tactics considered in themselves had no particular character or significance; they were inherently neither reformist nor revolutionary. They derived their character as reformist or revolutionary from their place in the context of a general strategy. For her, as for Engels, the formal character of any political act was irrelevant. It was its content, i.e. its class orientation, that mattered, and its class orientation was determined by its relation to the final goal.¹³³

The differences between Bernstein and his opponents on such matters as the relationship between means and ends and the weight to be attached to form as against content derived from the fact that he did not see politics as being fundamentally a matter of class conflict. It is true that he never denied that there were classes in society, or that their interests clashed. But, for him, class differences were significant only insofar as they provided a basis for political discrimination. If all classes enjoyed the same civil and political rights, then there were no conflicts of interest that could not, in the end, be resolved. Furthermore, Bernstein's doubts concerning the labour theory of value had led him to suspect that exploitation might be nothing more than an incidental feature of capitalism; and the growing differentiation within both the proletariat and the bourgeoisie made it, in his view, impossible to say that either class had a single, identifiable interest.

On top of this, he felt that all classes did have a common interest in the maintenance and furtherance of a civilised way of life. In short, class conflict might be a fact of life, but it did not, for Bernstein, occupy the central place assigned to it by Marx.¹³⁴

The fact is that, in Bernstein's view of the world, the concept of class had been replaced by that of civil society, and a civil society was, for him, an association of individuals based on a common acceptance of certain principles. He never gave a comprehensive list of these principles, but it is clear that they included the principles of toleration, co-operation, individual responsibility, and the sanctity of human life. These principles, he felt, could not be identified with any particular standpoint within civil society. In fact, they served as a standard by which all such particular standpoints could be judged and, also, as a yardstick by which the degree of civilisation achieved by a civil society could be measured. Progress, for Bernstein, meant the gradual embodiment of these principles in public life, and the torch-bearer of progress was Social Democracy because, unlike the Liberals, Social Democrats were prepared to push these principles beyond the narrow bounds of capitalism to their logical conclusion in a socialist order of society.¹³⁵

Bernstein agreed that even in an advanced civil society such as Great Britain, many individuals suffered varying degrees of injustice and deprivation. But the important consideration was not the social class to which they belonged but their membership of a civil society and the level of progress which that civil society had attained, for on these two considerations depended the degree of freedom and prosperity it was possible for them to enjoy. As Bernstein saw it, the first task of Social Democracy was to win the fight for democracy, and this meant the incorporation of all workers into civil society as full and equal citizens. This, he felt, had almost been achieved in most of the industrialised world, and it set the stage for the second task of the party, which was to use the political power which the growth of democracy had placed in its hands to ensure that all workers got a share in the material and spiritual benefits of an advanced industrial civilisation. In this way, the triumph of democracy would lead to the triumph of socialism.¹³⁶

It should be clear by now that Bernstein's standpoint was not fundamentally Marxist. It was, rather, a form of socialism which drew its inspiration from the broader tradition of nineteenth-century radicalism to which (in Bernstein's view) Marx along with many other distinguished Socialists belonged. It should also be clear how Bernstein came to misconceive the nature of the debate in which he was

engaged. He never seriously doubted that his opponents were Socialists, and, for him, this could only mean that they shared his commitment to certain basic principles and were working for the same ultimate objective, namely, the establishment of a socialist society. The quarrel between them therefore had to be concerned with tactics, and here the problem, as Bernstein saw it, was that his opponents insisted on maintaining a policy that had been overtaken by events. They were arguing that the conditions for the creation of a socialist society did not exist under capitalism and would not emerge until after the proletarian revolution. Bernstein accepted that this view had been correct in the 1840s when certain tendencies of capitalism were not yet in evidence and when workers were systematically excluded from any active participation in civil society. However, his point was that, since then, important developments had taken place – not least the democratisation of bourgeois society – and this meant that the revolutionary tactics of earlier times were no longer appropriate. So far as Bernstein could see, the only reason his opponents refused to take his point was that they were dogmatists. They simply would not tackle awkward facts in a genuinely scientific spirit because they preferred the comfortable certainties of an outmoded doctrine. The possibility that they might be arguing from assumptions that were radically different from his own seems never to have occurred to him.

So we may conclude that Bernstein was not revising Marx; he was advocating a completely different point of view. And the Revisionist Debate was not a dispute between basically like-minded people; it was a confrontation between the representatives of two incommensurate ideologies.

Bernstein as Orthodox Marxist

LEO¹**Show Your Colours!***Sozialdemokrat*, 13 April 1882

For a party such as Social Democracy, nothing can be more damaging than the arts of diplomatic concealment. Now more than ever before, and here more than anywhere else, those who fight for the workers' cause need to remember the watchword: *Show your colours!*

Now more than ever before! For now the supporters of established exploitative society are trying to divert the workers with all kinds of blandishments from the one and only way to pursue their interests. They are trying to browbeat them with all kinds of promises. They are trying to divide them with all kinds of intrigues. There is only one way to frustrate their efforts, and that is: *Show your colours!*

Here more than anywhere else! For a long time now, Germany has enjoyed all too justified a reputation as the cradle of Philistinism. No other nation has a stronger tendency to avoid by miles any serious conflict, or a greater compulsion to avoid facing reality with open eyes and immerse itself instead in some wondrous vision and expect the whole world and more besides to adjust itself accordingly. If the world does not adjust, and if the true Philistine then finds himself uncomfortably at odds with reality, he may become quite cross for a while, but he will not relinquish his dream world. Instead, he seeks to fill the gap with a new illusion, and settles down again to his agreeable habit of day-dreaming.

In recent times, we have a classic example in the liberal Philistine with his Bismarckian two-souls theory, his cult of the Hohenzollerns, and, particularly, his myth of the "liberal Crown Prince."²

Thanks to socialist agitation, Philistinism has hitherto been confined to the bourgeoisie, and all attempts to introduce these artful self-deceptions into the ranks of the class-conscious proletariat failed

completely. The disease has always been nipped in the bud. We need only recall the energy with which delegates Bebel, Eckert (Kalk), Most, and Otto (Ottensen), at the last official socialist congress (Gotha 1877), opposed attempts to water down our election programme to please the Philistines.³

Today, when socialist agitation is so extraordinarily hampered and when, thanks to the Emergency Law, our comrades inside Germany are often forced to use language for the purpose of concealing their thoughts, the danger is very much greater. Thanks to the national weakness mentioned above, many people have already grown so accustomed to expressing their thoughts covertly that they have apparently become incapable of stating plainly what they think and what they feel to be right. We drew attention to this cancerous malady early this year, on the occasion of the Reichstag debate on the state of siege.⁴ But even today – and in so-called leaders of our party at that – we still find the compulsion we denounced then, the compulsion to deny, for the benefit of the police and the Philistines, things which are in fact the essence of our movement.

This is, to put it bluntly, an offence which borders on treachery. It is not the police that we deceive by denials of this kind; it is the mass of the people. We do not convert the Philistines; we teach our own supporters to be Philistines. As a result, their characters are not hardened in battle but riddled with corruption.

What we ask is, after all, not unreasonable. Anyone who will not, or cannot, speak out in a manner befitting the dignity of our party is welcome to keep his mouth shut. But anyone who speaks or writes as a member of our party is expected to say what he has to say *unambiguously*, so that friend and foe alike can understand him. We expect him to make no bones whatever about the nature of our party. In short, *to show his colours!*

This applies not only to speeches in the Reichstag and to declarations before a court of law. It applies in equal measure to any public pronouncement, and most notably to our election leaflets.

As regards public pronouncements, a few days ago the newspapers carried a statement of this kind by Comrade *Geiser*,⁵ which unpleasantly surprised us.

Some sort of rascally fool had sent Geiser the following letter from New York via Leipzig. It was clearly intended for police spies.

“New York, 15 March. Dear *Geiser*! Glad to hear that everything is going well and that the day for striking the blow has been fixed. The newspapers are being distributed as before and, I hope, imported in the same way. (Here follows a sentence which we omit.) The best of luck. Yours J. S.”

As we said, some sort of fool, for the letter is so clumsy that nobody nowadays would be taken in by such a trick.

Geiser immediately sent this letter to the police for enquiries to be made into its origins, obviously with the sole intention of tripping up these dignitaries. That is his affair, and no business of ours. But his accompanying letter is very much our business. It includes the following passage:

"This letter was sent to me from New York by the indirect route typical of communications for this purpose, via Leipzig in its current minor state of siege. Its sender can only be one of those *contemptible* subjects who occupy themselves partly as *voluntary agents provocateurs* by fabricating otherwise unobtainable proofs of *the ridiculous untruth that a revolution is brewing in Germany, and that German Social Democracy is seeking to bring about such a catastrophe.*"

We freely admit that we would not have expected such language from a comrade of such long standing. A man such as Geiser, who after all has full command of the German language, should never under any circumstances broadcast pronouncements which are so obviously open to misinterpretation. We cannot suppose that Geiser would stand by the phrase "ridiculous untruth that a revolution is brewing in Germany," if he thought about it carefully. For we firmly believe that a revolution is brewing in Germany, and virtually every issue of the *Sozialdemokrat* contains evidence supporting such a view. Our entire party programme is based upon it. It is openly expressed in numerous pamphlets and speeches by our most eminent comrades. The fulfilment of nearly all the basic demands of our party presupposes revolutionary changes in existing conditions; and, unless we have put out these demands merely as window-dressing, we must indeed start with the assumption that a revolution is in fact brewing in Germany.

Perhaps Geiser intended the "ridiculous untruth" to apply rather more, or wholly, to the words "that German Social Democracy is seeking to bring about such a catastrophe." But we cannot approve his phrase in that case either. We simply do not see the point of such affirmations of right thinking. On the contrary, we think that they are counter-productive. As a party persecuted and harassed and, furthermore, as the party of the oppressed and exploited, we have in all conscience no grounds whatever for *not* bringing about a revolutionary catastrophe, if it were at all in our power to do so. And insofar as this lies in our power, insofar as we can hasten the revolution in its political and social aspects, it is in our opinion the duty and function of our party to do so. And we see absolutely no reason to deny this.

In point of fact, the letter from New York quoted above mentions neither of these aspects but instead presupposes an untruth which is indeed ridiculous: that our party actually wants to *create* the revolution, or imagines that it can determine the precise day of its occurrence. In our opinion, it was *this* suggestion which should have been refuted, not only for the benefit of the police, but also for the benefit of our own comrades. Such a statement would have clarified matters within our party, but Geiser's statement can only sow confusion in our ranks. And why? Because he has not adhered to the principle: *Show your colours!*

We mentioned election leaflets. In today's correspondence from *Verden*, comrades will find proof of the harm that fudging can do in this area. Despite a popular candidate and a markedly favourable mood among the population, our comrades in *Bremen* have suffered a considerable setback, despite – no, *because* of the fact that they kept the tone of their leaflet so tame.⁶ And rightly so! If today's voter is going to risk voting for a Socialist, he will want to know why!

And he should and must know why. Otherwise the elections have no value for us whatever. Fortunately, we can confirm that this view is heartily endorsed by the overwhelming majority of our comrades, and especially by the men after whom our movement is often called, *Bebel* and *Lieb knecht*. These men are, of course, being prosecuted at the moment, precisely because of the bold language of their election leaflets; and they will have to go to prison for it. But they have maintained the honour of our party. They have, as befits party leaders, set a good example to the masses.

We have before us the leaflet for which *Lieb knecht* was sentenced last week to two months' imprisonment. We can think of no better way to conclude our article than to bring certain passages from this leaflet to the attention of our comrades.

It begins as follows:

"To the voters of Neustadt-Dresden and district

"My party comrades in your constituency have adopted me as candidate for the coming Reichstag elections, and I have felt it my duty to accept their choice.

"The Antisocialist Law prevents me from explaining my programme in an open public meeting, so I am speaking to you through this leaflet. I need not say a great deal since my principles and aims are well known. I am a Social Democrat, and if you elect me I shall to the best of my knowledge and ability fight in the Reichstag for your interests and for the interests of the people as a whole!

"As a Social Democrat, I deplore the present order of things in state and society and I seek to bring about an *extensive social and political reorganisation*. Nothing is achieved by reforms which are restricted to *secondary issues*. The root of the evil which ails us must be *eradicated*. Supporters of the present order, who are united against us, seek to *preserve* these evils. That is the difference between us and our opponents, of whatever party stripe.

"Of course, they too have various miracle cures which they recommend to you, but on closer inspection all of these prove worthless. 'Little men' and 'poor men' *can only be helped by 'little men' and 'poor men,'* i.e. by the *people*. Princes, lords, estate and factory-owners, in short, the privileged and their supporters who are currently wooing the 'little men' show by their social position alone that their cause is not that of the 'little' and 'poor' men. This is also apparent in the remedies they suggest, which reveal their *complete inability* to improve the lot of the 'poor man' or to comprehend his plight and its causes.

"Only rational control of *production and the totality of working conditions on a co-operative basis, only systematic maintenance and furtherance of industry and agriculture by the state can liberate the worker, save the artisan, and prevent the impoverishment of the masses.*"

There follows a brilliant critique of Bismarck's economic policy, whereupon he continues:

"I need not warn you against Prince Bismarck's 'state socialism.' The German workers for whose votes he is angling know full well what to think of such a bait. *The single fact that Prince Bismarck is the architect of the Antisocialist Law is enough to condemn Prince Bismarck's state socialism* and lay bare his underlying motive: *to force the workers under the double yoke of economic and political servitude*. No German worker will allow himself to be deceived by such a Greek gift.⁷ If real benefits are offered, he will, of course, not reject them; but he will bear in mind the *motives and aims* behind them."

As election programme, there then follow the most familiar points of our party programme, in *intensified* form. For example:

"*The abolition of militarism and the introduction of a people's militia!* No special defence force, the existence of which is incompatible with peace and liberty, but every citizen a soldier and every soldier a citizen! . . .

"That is my programme.

“My past record guarantees that I will fight for this programme with all the seriousness and strength I possess.”

“Anyone who approves it, *anyone who has grasped the necessity of a break with the ruling system*, should give me his vote on 27 October of this year!”

Thus Liebknecht.

Surely, the 6,321 votes he received for this programme are in every respect worth more than any number of votes achieved by obfuscation of whatever kind. So once again, comrades: Whenever you raise your voices in the name of our party, *show your colours!*

The existence of our party depends on it!

LEO

Socialism and the State

Sozialdemokrat, 20 December 1883

In his book, *Woman in the Past, the Present and the Future*, Comrade Bebel endorsed the view developed by Engels that the state will become redundant when class rule and the anarchy of production come to an end. Anarchists have hailed this with the inevitable clamour as a concession to their own superior wisdom. However, certain Socialists have been much displeased and have pronounced it liable to cause confusion. “We must confess that Engels could cause no greater confusion among the weak-minded than he does with these definitions,” says a contributor to the Sunday supplement of the New York *Volkszeitung* of 2 December.

We will leave aside the question of whether it is the function of our literature to manufacture dogmas for the weak-minded to repeat parrot-fashion or whether it is not rather to stimulate independent thought, to teach people how to think. As far as the matter at issue is concerned, the case is in our view perfectly clear. Both Engels and Bebel have expressed themselves so unambiguously on the relation between socialism and the state that even the weak-minded *cannot* misunderstand, if only they will take the trouble to read correctly.

Let us hear first what Engels has to say.

In his pamphlet *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, intended for workers, he says on page 42:

“Whilst the capitalist mode of production more and more completely transforms the great majority of the population into proletarians, it creates the power which, under penalty of its own destruction, is forced to accomplish this revolution. Whilst it forces on more and

more the transformation of the vast means of production, already socialised, into state property, it shows itself the way to accomplishing this revolution. *The proletariat seizes political power and turns the means of production into state property.* But in doing this, it abolishes itself as proletariat, abolishes all class distinctions and class antagonisms, abolishes also the state as state. Society thus far, based upon class antagonisms, had need of the state. That is, of an organisation of the particular class which was *pro tempore* the exploiting class, an organisation for the purpose of preventing any interference from without with the existing conditions of production, and, therefore, especially, for the purpose of forcibly keeping the exploited classes in the condition of oppression corresponding to the given mode of production (slavery, serfdom, wage-labour). The state was the official representative of society as a whole, the gathering of it together into a visible embodiment. But it was this only in so far as it was the state of that class which itself represented, for the time being, society as a whole: in ancient times, the state of slave-owning citizens; in the Middle Ages, the feudal lords; in our own time, the bourgeoisie. When at last it becomes the real representative of the whole of society, it renders itself unnecessary. As soon as there is no longer any social class to be held in subjection; as soon as class rule, and the individual struggle for existence based upon our present anarchy in production, with the collisions and excesses arising from these, are removed, nothing more remains to be repressed, and a special repressive force, a state, is no longer necessary. The first act by virtue of which the state really constitutes itself the representative of the whole of society – the taking possession of the means of production in the name of society – this is, at the same time, its last independent act as a state. State interference in social relations becomes, in one domain after another, superfluous, and then dies out of itself; the government of persons is replaced by the administration of things, and by the conduct of processes of production. The state is not ‘abolished.’ *It dies out.* This gives the measure of the value of the phrase ‘a free state,’ both as to its justifiable use at times by agitators, and as to its ultimate scientific insufficiency; and also of the demands of the so-called anarchists for the abolition of the state out of hand.”⁸

Could anything be clearer than that? Is there any room for misunderstanding by anyone who *wants* to understand? Only ill-will and inability to think – both, incidentally, evident in ample measure among anarchists – could read these sentences as a concession to anarchy.

There are, however, some Socialists who regard the state as some-

thing eternal, who, like the contributor mentioned above, say that the state is not concrete (tangible) but something abstract (a concept), who see in it only the representation of a union of individuals, of the "association of all." But, in fact, we are fighting, not *words*, but all too actual *things*. We are struggling, not with the state as an image which haunts the minds of certain Idealists, but with the state as it has come into being historically and as it confronts us *in reality*. We do not know why Mr. Ludwig von der Mark, as the contributor calls himself, lives in New York and not in the Mark,⁹ but we may assume that it was an all too concrete state and not an abstract one which made his sojourn in its territory uncomfortable. In any case, he can find many people in New York who have had such an experience; and even over there, in the great free republic of the United States, he can observe that efforts to strengthen the sovereign power go hand in hand with attempts at repression – in the interests of a clique of exploiters (as with Grant's party),¹⁰ in the interests of the workers (as with the Socialists), or in the interest of imbecility (as with supporters of the temperance movement and other idiots of that ilk).

If there are no more class interests to protect because there are no more classes, if there is nothing more to suppress because the equality of all has been declared the basis of social life, then why have a state? Why have a state acting and issuing decrees in the name of society if the social character of economic relations is universally acknowledged? Why have a state when statecraft and government of any kind have become unviable?

When Engels draws attention to the *scientific* inadequacy of the phrase, "a free people's state" (he acknowledges that its use is occasionally justified for *agitational* purposes), we can only agree with him. What does a "people's state" mean? A state in which the people rule. But who are the people? The totality of all citizens. "I am one of the people too," said Bismarck in his well-known reply when Mr Lasker¹¹ spoke in the Reichstag on popular rights. And everyone else will likewise answer the question according to the social class to which he belongs. The bourgeois will infallibly include Bleichröder and Krupp¹² among the people; the petty bourgeois thinks mainly of his friends, the tailor and the glover, as the people; and the worker thinks of the vast, unpropertied masses. Because the concept, "people," is so complex, the word is misused for all kinds of humbug, political, literary, etc. It is an excellent device for mystification because all distinctions are elided in it.

Our party, however, must persist in bringing out these distinctions

with the greatest clarity. It must emphasise class distinctions, not disguise them. We cannot completely avoid using the word "people" if only because it expresses the antithesis of government; but wherever possible we will always prefer to choose more precise expressions. So, for the purposes of agitation, the phrase, "a free people's state" (*freier Volksstaat*), may serve as a political antithesis to the contemporary state based on force (*Gewaltsstaat*). But it cannot serve to describe our final goal, if only because the free people's state does not merely misrepresent Socialist thinking; it does not represent it *at all*. Our goal is a *free socialist society*.

But we have a long way to go yet before we reach that stage. For the time being, we still live in capitalist society, in the class state. In order to overthrow the former, we have to *seize control* of the latter, not abolish it, as the anarchists say they want to do. We must strive to make the proletariat, the working class, the ruling power in the state and to make the state machinery serve *their* ends. We have not as yet reached this stage either, but we have embarked on the road to it. Enlightenment, unceasing agitation, and organisation, the struggle for the extension of political rights and for material advancement – these are the means we employ for the purpose. Once we have reached this first objective (and the events which expedite our struggle will not fail to materialise), the expropriation of the expropriators will initiate that act of which Engels says, "the state abolishes itself."¹³ But do not worry, ye of little faith! This too will not be accomplished in a day. It too will take time. Decrees need to be implemented as well as proclaimed, and their implementation has to be supervised. And you anarchists need not rejoice too soon! For the state can vanish from the scene only when it has completely abolished anarchy. Nothing will come of "The Free."¹⁴ The state will be replaced by *communistic society*. It will unite, not dissolve; it will bind together, not break apart. But it will bind together, not by force, but through community of production. No suppression, because nobody is willing to be suppressed; no government, because there will be no subjects; no state, because there will be no classes. Hence also no parliament, no ministries, no standing army – the entire apparatus which now confronts us as the machinery of state will have vanished.

Historically speaking, we first encounter the *state* as the organised dominance of one tribe, of one race over another. In time, racial conflicts developed into class conflicts, and the state continued as the representative of the ruling classes. All attempts to give it a different character, to construe it as the "constitutional state," the "civilised

state," etc. have foundered, as they had to, on its class character. So why retain the name for a state of affairs so fundamentally in contradiction with its previous nature?

So no delusion about our final goal; but no mistake either about the road to this goal!

It is: *to seize power in the state.*¹⁵

LEO

Producers' Co-operatives with State Credit

Sozialdemokrat, 26 June 1884

England, the paradigm (*Musterland*) of the modern capitalist mode of production, is at the same time the motherland (*Mutterland*), and one could just as well say the paradigm, of modern economic associations. Supported by the innate toughness of the English people and by England's unique industrial development, co-operatives – especially producers' co-operatives – acquired a greater significance there than in any other country. Nonetheless, they have failed to fulfill the expectations and hopes of their great founder, the Communist and philanthropist *Robert Owen*. Their introduction was to have been one of the transitional measures to a completely communistic organisation of society, but the individual co-operative (taking the word "individual" as the antithesis of "social" or "concerning the totality") proved unequal to the task.

Schulze-Delitzsch¹⁶ imported the various kinds of co-operative, including producers' co-operatives, from England to Germany. For him, however, they were no longer intended merely as a transition to a higher form of production. For him, the individual association was already an end in itself, and a means by which the workers were to work their way up to become virtual small-scale entrepreneurs.

When Ferdinand Lassalle placed himself at the head of the newly awakening German workers' movement in 1863 and wanted to give its political programme an economic content, he too seized upon producers' co-operatives, which he declared the most suitable method of improving the workers' condition – provided they were established on a wide scale and were given the necessary resources. To this end, the workers should put forward their claim for *state aid* and demand that the state provide the *credit* necessary for their "free individual associations" – the famous 100 millions.¹⁷

Lassalle did not regard producers' co-operatives with state credit as "the solution to the social question," as he himself made abundantly clear in his public speeches. Indeed, he did not even believe

them to be a necessary means of transition to “the abolition of property in land and capital” – a demand which, as he wrote to Rodbertus on 28 April 1863, formed “*the central core*” of his views. “I have suggested the association for the time being, simply because at the moment I really cannot see any method which would be as relatively easy and as effective; and because the workers must have a suggestion which is quite *definite* and *concrete* (not some sort of legislation) if they are to interest themselves in it. However, if you can show me something else that is equally easy and equally effective, I shall be perfectly willing to fall in with it.” This is quoted *verbatim* from a letter of 24 April 1863 to the said Rodbertus.¹⁸

As we can see, Lassalle regarded producers’ co-operatives as being basically of secondary importance, as being merely a means to the end, viz. *to organise the workers as an independent class*. The time, in his view, had not yet come to bring forward his real aim.

It is not part of our present topic to discuss whether or not he thought it likely that the Prussian state would ever grant the sum he demanded.

Our concern is, rather, to establish that Lassalle

(1) did not adhere unconditionally to the device of producers’ co-operatives with state credit, and

(2) wanted under all circumstances to prevent these producers’ co-operatives from diverting activity into petty-bourgeois channels.

He repeatedly expressed himself very strongly indeed on this matter. “That appalling travesty – workers with the resources of workers and the attitudes of entrepreneurs,” as he put it in his *Open Reply*.¹⁹

“You take a philosophical attitude to Schulze-Delitzsch’s influence, and you are *partly* right. But only partly. The other part lies in the vast damage he has done in *emasculating* the workers, and I am afraid that it is this which will prevail!” he writes in the aforementioned letter to Rodbertus.

More than twenty years have passed since Lassalle appeared on the scene – a relatively short time. But how fundamental the changes are that have occurred since then!

Since his time, Germany has been transformed, economically, from a predominantly agricultural country into an industrial country of the first rank. Large-scale industry has developed in Germany with greater rapidity than in any other European country.

And there have been corresponding political changes. The bourgeoisie plays a quite different role in Germany today – and, of course, what is said of Germany applies also to Prussia in particular. The same individual who headed the government then is still the

leading personality in the state today, and he still retains his Junkerish feudal enthusiasms.²⁰ However, he knows that he cannot fight the entire bourgeoisie, and so he has made his peace with the best-organised and more influential section of it, i.e. with the big industrialists, the iron and coal barons, the cotton magnates, etc. It is *their* interests, *their* wishes, which prevail in the state.

Hence the state's change of attitude towards the working class. Twenty years ago, the policy was to lead the workers into battle against the entire bourgeoisie – the big industrialists as well as the middle classes – in the interests of the land-owning Junkers. Today it is to *keep the workers on a tight rein* in the interests of the land-owning Junkers and the big industrialists. Bismarck's social demagoguery was as reactionary then as it is now, but then it was directed against the bourgeoisie whereas *today it is directed against the workers themselves!*

However, the working class has also developed during these twenty years. What Lassalle did not dare proclaim at the time has now been absorbed into the bloodstream of the great mass of German workers: the necessity of the expropriation of the capitalist class, *the necessity of public appropriation of the means of production, of public control of production.*

A resolute workers' party is now in open combat with the whole of the old world of exploitation, which knows full well how significant this struggle is and whose one desire is therefore to conceal it as far as possible, to blunt its impact, to *emasculate* its fighters, or some of them at least.

Schulzian producers' co-operatives have virtually disappeared in the face of the colossal development of capitalist production. They have been unable to withstand the competition with big industry. Social self-help on Schulze-Delitzsch's lines is dead.

What the worker may expect from state aid, unless he dictates it himself, is clear from the evidence cited above, and the history of the accident insurance legislation²¹ has provided fresh proof of it. It amounts to an attempt to *reduce him to servitude* by any and every possible means.

Under these circumstances, what conceivable sense can it still make today for Socialists to demand producers' co-operatives with state credit?

In terms of theory, first of all, it means a big step backwards. The demand is based on illusions which are no longer permissible, given the lessons of the great *economic crisis* of the seventies and the chronic *over-production* which has dogged the heels of modern capitalist industry ever since. It is utopian to think that capitalist produc-

tion can be unseated by establishing producers' co-operatives on the basis of today's competitive society.

On the contrary, these co-operatives would have to adapt to *this society's* conditions and would be affected by the reverses to which it is liable at least as badly and probably (indeed, the examples before us would justify saying "without a doubt") even more than any enterprise based on private capital.

If producers' co-operatives were not established on a scale sufficient to *monopolise* the branch of industry concerned, which means on a scale which exceeds the scope of producers' co-operatives, then they would *increase over-production* rather than diminish it.

In practice, however, the demand for producers' co-operatives with state credit nowadays means something much worse. If it is not limited (as it was in our party's programme) in such a way as to render the contemporary state *incapable* of misusing it for reactionary experiments – "The producers' co-operatives are to be created for industry and agriculture *on such a scale that the socialist organisation of the whole work process will arise from them*"²² – then it will positively invite such experiments. Established on any smaller scale, producers' co-operatives with state credit could, at present, produce the result feared by Lassalle even more than the Schulzian associations would. They would *emasculate* the workers. They would be a means of *corrupting* the workers' movement. Harmless to the capitalist class, and at best useless for the working class, they might perhaps assist a few individual workers – but only if they relinquished their convictions and sacrificed the interests of their fellow-workers.

Today, when the state has become, more than ever before, the agent of the great *exploitative interests*, there can be no further doubt as to the conditions under which it would offer its "aid" *or how* it would exercise its control.

Today no less than in the past, Social Democracy, as the representative of workers' interests, puts demands to the state. It still demands state intervention on behalf of the proletarians as the defenceless victims of the competitive struggle. But Social Democracy makes its demands in such a way that their implementation would necessarily benefit the whole *class*, and not just a few, perhaps select, elements of this class. Pursued in this spirit, active support for social reform is not only no danger but a *positive necessity* in the struggle to liberate the working class.

But unless *this principle* is adhered to, those who advocate "social reform" will merely set themselves on the slippery slope of *project-mongering* where there is nothing to prevent their sliding into *fraud!*²³

Colonialism and Socialism

Bernstein's First Exchange with Belfort Bax

EDUARD BERNSTEIN
 German Social Democracy and the
 Turkish Troubles⁽ⁱ⁾
Neue Zeit, 14 October 1896

No attentive observer will have failed to note that the Social Democratic press has been less than united in its approach to the struggles of the Armenians against the Sultan's regime and its allies. Pro-Armenian articles alternate with others which side more or less directly with the Ottoman government and attribute the Armenian movement to the machinations of Russian government agents. On only one point is there a measure of agreement. Everyone is careful to avoid stating clearly and unambiguously which positive solution for these troubles Social Democracy should adhere to and support. The uncertainty felt in this regard is reflected in distinctly agitated endeavours to keep discussion of these events as vague as possible.

For a party as strong as German Social Democracy, this is a positively disgraceful state of affairs, and one that cannot in the long run be maintained. If we represent a quarter of the voters of the German Reich, we have a certain *responsibility* for the policy of that Reich. As co-signator to the Berlin Treaty of 1878, the Reich is co-guarantor of the reforms in Turkish Armenia stipulated in that treaty. It has a seat and a vote in the concert of great powers, and the use it makes of that vote, the spirit in which it reacts to suggestions for settling the troubles in Turkey, are subject to criticism – though unfortunately not as yet to judgment – in the German Reichstag. It is therefore the duty of Social Democratic representatives in the Reichstag to call the government of the Reich to account for its handling of the question, although, in certain circumstances, this might amount to no more than criticism of a *fait accompli*. The party has a further obligation. As far as its influence on public opinion will allow, it must try to influence the policy of the government of the Reich from

the start. It must try to give it a definite directive. It must urge German diplomacy to support certain recommendations and to reject others. Whether or not these demands are met, the obligation remains. The party's protest against the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine was made under much less favourable circumstances and had absolutely no hope of success, but it was nonetheless an act of historic significance.

There is only one instance in which the reticence of German Social Democracy, however unworthy, would at least be no violation of its political duty. If it were known that the German government was adopting a position on the Turkish-Armenian question which Social Democrats themselves regarded as being correct in the prevailing circumstances, then there would be no compelling reason for them to raise their voices. The coverage given to these events in the Social Democratic press would then be a question not of party policy but merely of the duty of the press to provide information.

Well, is the Oriental policy of the government such that Social Democrats are relieved of the duty to oppose it with recommendations of their own? Let us first be clear about the standpoint from which Social Democrats should view the liberation struggles of the peoples subject to Turkish rule.

The first and obvious course would, apparently, be to give our sympathy to any liberation movement. And generally we do well to take this tendency, so natural for a democratic party, as the starting-point for our enquiry. Let us first give feeling its due, and then ask whether reason and justified interest lead to the same conclusion, or how far they modify it.

Not all struggles of subject races against their masters are struggles for emancipation in equal degree. Africa harbours tribes who claim the right to trade in slaves and who can be prevented from doing so only by the civilised nations of Europe. Their revolts against the latter do not engage our sympathy and will in certain circumstances evoke our active opposition. The same applies to those barbaric and semi-barbaric races who make a regular living by invading neighbouring agricultural peoples, by stealing cattle, etc. Races who are hostile to or incapable of civilisation cannot claim our sympathy when they revolt against civilisation. We recognise no right of robbery, no right of hunters against cultivators. In short, however critical our view of contemporary civilisation may be, we none the less acknowledge its relative achievements and take them as the criterion for our sympathy. We will condemn and oppose certain methods of subjugating savages. But we will not condemn the idea that savages

be subjugated and made to conform to the rules of a higher civilisation.

Any struggle for emancipation which is to command our enthusiasm, possibly even our active support, must have an element of cultural interest in it – whether it involves peoples or nationalities, who have developed a cultural life of their own, rising against a foreign domination which hinders their development, or classes who are striving to advance, rebelling against their suppression by backward classes. We acknowledge that any people which has shown itself capable of developing and maintaining a national civilisation has the right of nationality.

Our remarks so far are unlikely to meet with serious opposition. Some time ago, it was indeed suggested in the socialist camp that savages and barbarians be assisted in their struggles against advancing capitalist civilisation, but that was an outcome of romanticism which needed only to be followed to its logical conclusion to be proved untenable.¹

But even among peoples capable of civilisation we cannot treat every revolt with equal sympathy. The freedom of an insignificant people in a non-European or semi-European region does not carry the same weight as the free development of the great and highly civilised nations of Europe. If, then, the struggle of such a people poses a serious threat to the interests of this development, it is entirely appropriate that we should adopt a negative attitude towards it.

Nota bene, a serious threat. For if every little inconvenience, every ghost of a danger which might materialise, were taken as a pretext for opposing the efforts of small oppressed nationalities to shake off a burdensome yoke, we would be inflating our justifiable impulse to national self-preservation into an intolerable egoism which would itself be reactionary, even though our opposition was mounted with an eye to the great day of “the final victory of socialism,” which will bring liberation to all the oppressed.

As we know, the recent socialist congress in London got itself off the hook by pointing to this pleasing prospect when asked to pronounce upon the quarrel among the Polish Socialists over their position on the restoration of Poland.² Since lack of time precluded any real debate on the question, the congress must be forgiven for taking refuge in a commonplace. It thus gained the merit of enabling our Polish friends to quarrel about which of their respective lines its resolution endorsed more strongly. In our opinion, it was the line taken by Miss Luxemburg in this journal, but we must immediately add that we can in no way approve the reference to “the final victory of

socialism." If the Italians and other peoples have achieved their national liberation without this final victory, then it is impossible to see why the Poles, or other nationalities as yet unliberated, should be referred to an event that will assuredly not occur in the form of a "final victory of socialism." Miss Luxemburg has fielded much more cogent arguments for the tactics of the group to which she belongs than this utopian reference to the Last Judgment.

Reference to a future society in which the wage system is abolished has never for long deterred workers from fighting for an immediate improvement in their wages. Similarly, no people, no nation, will let itself be put off until the day of universal liberation but will seize every favourable opportunity to win its freedom before then. That is its right, which we cannot dispute even when it clashes with our current interests and circumstances force us to oppose it for the sake of higher interests, as happened in the middle of this century when the European revolutionary parties opposed the Christian subjects of Turkey.

It is futile to indulge in retrospective investigation as to whether this was always right and whether more was sometimes done in this regard than was necessary. Whatever the case, it is indisputable that the European revolution was for a long time correct in seeing Russia as its sworn enemy and consequently in seeing Russia's adversary, Turkey, as its temporary confederate and in resisting any weakening of this ally. In the particular case of Germany, we need only recall Olmütz.³ Even in its present form, the national unity of Germany was rendered possible only by overriding Russia, and it is chiefly Russia's doing that this unity was possible only when Germany was torn apart.⁴ Furthermore, in 1875 Russia was impelled to oppose the renewed persecution of France, deemed necessary by Bismarck and Moltke, not out of humanitarian considerations, but out of a desire to prevent Germany from growing too strong.⁵ Since then, despite the labours of love which Bismarck has performed for Russia time and again, it has increasingly come to pose as the protector of France; and it has done so for a long time in the secret hope of eventually inducing another Orleanist reaction, which would permit it to present itself openly before the world as France's ally. In the end, Czar Nicholas deemed it appropriate to take the further step of paying the Republic a visit, during which, however, he neglected no opportunity to favour his beloved Orleans with all possible marks of esteem.⁶

Incidentally, the fact that the French welcomed the Russian autocrat with acclaim is much too natural to warrant lengthy comment or

concealment in elaborate phraseology. It is ridiculous to suggest that the French gain no advantage from the Franco-Russian alliance. Although this alliance has helped Russia to achieve an unprecedented position of power in Europe, we must also note that it is due to Russia's friendship that France has so quickly recovered its position as a top-ranking great power whose voice carries considerable weight in Europe, Asia, and Africa. Without Russia behind it, France would probably not now be in possession of most of Indo-China, the whole of Madagascar, and a huge part of Africa. The French are an astute nation who, for all their spontaneous gaiety, know how to work things out. In particular, they understand the rule of operations which says that if you want something you must complain vociferously. Besides, we cannot blame them if, despite all German denials of any intention of encroaching upon France, they prefer to protect themselves by means of friendship with Russia.

Nor should we blind ourselves to the fact that the Franco-Russian alliance is popular – or at least allowed as justifiable – with a large number of French workers, even among Socialists. For those who consider things soberly, there was nothing surprising, and so nothing to cause indignation, in the fact that various socialist councillors felt unable to vote against the approval of funds for festivities in honour of the Czar. The saying that the proletariat has no nation is modified wherever, whenever, and to the extent that he has a voice in the government and legislation of his country as a fully accredited citizen and is able to shape its arrangements according to his wishes. The history and institutions of France combine to develop national feeling in the French worker, and this will continue to be the case for a considerable time, indeed, for as long as there are nations at all. Moreover, national consciousness does not exclude internationalism in thought and deed, any more than internationalism prohibits the defence of national interests. However, while we recognise the right of French Socialists to let national considerations prevail within certain limits, this does not mean that we also accept uncritically every slogan resounding from the Seine.

Although Russia can exert only a slight influence on the internal political development of France, it is a constant and direct obstacle to Germany's political development. With Czarist Russia at its back, Germany will never achieve real political freedom. As a great power, it is not even free in its external relations. Its entire foreign policy is distorted by the regard it must have nowadays for the Franco-Russian alliance. And to increase the dependence still further, that part of the German press which likes to pose as the particularly na-

tional part preaches a foolish Anglophobia, thanks to which we stand on the threshold of a Russo-Anglo-French alliance which will make Germany's position even more difficult than it already is. The socialist *Labour Leader* recently published a cartoon which graphically illustrates the wisdom of this Anglophobia. The Russian bear and the Gallic cock – the latter already wearing a bear's skin – hold each other in an embrace which threatens to stifle the representative of the German Reich standing between them, as he cries in strangled tones: "My dear friends, let us, oh! let us go forth against England." But bear and cock show no sign of doing him any such favour.⁷

What, then, is the present position in the Orient? Is Turkey still a bulwark against Russia? No-one in his right mind would try to maintain this. Disintegrating internally and incapable of developing itself into a modern state, it has become the plaything of Russian diplomacy. The Sultan regards Russia as his most distinguished guardian angel. Russia calls the tune, and he dances. As now constituted, Turkey is not merely a harmless neighbour, but the most convenient that Russia could wish for. It is no exaggeration to say that the Turk is Russia's sentinel on the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles.⁸

We need not discuss how this came about. Suffice to say that it is so. Thirty or forty years ago it was possible to believe that Turkey might regenerate itself from within. Nowadays this is merely a dream of those who wilfully blind themselves to the facts. The cause of this inability to reform need not be sought in the peculiar characteristics of the Turks themselves and of their religion, although these do undoubtedly help maintain the backwardness of the country's institutions. This holds true despite the fact that Mohammedans (though not the Turks) were once genuine vehicles of culture, by comparison with a southern Europe that had regressed under the impact of barbarian invasions. They played this role as heirs of Graeco-Alexandrian scientific culture, which they did not immediately destroy; but once thrown back on their own resources, they were unable to develop it further, or even to maintain it. Their religion, Islam, did not prevent their reversion to complete barbarism but rather, under the influence of Oriental conditions of life, promoted it, since Islam with its determinist doctrine and its fixed rules is the religion of barbarians – nomads, old-style merchants, and peasants living in village communities.

But religion alone cannot for long delay a people in its development, unless other factors are present. The Turks have failed to achieve a modern state because they have remained conquerors in their empire and have administered it as conquerors. They have not

known how to assimilate subject populations; they have known only how to plunder them. They did not, in the process, actually kill the goose that laid the golden egg, but that is a very modest achievement. Nonetheless, we may grant that they cannot have been the dreadful, bloodthirsty mob depicted by pulpit demagogues. They were simply barbarians, alternately violent and indolent. The tribute in kind which they wrung from the subject peoples oppressed them but did not crush them. Live and let live is the principle of a barter economy. Equally, taxation in kind accords with local self-government because it facilitates tax-collecting. The much-discussed Turkish freedom is the freedom of the *premodern* state, the state that has *not yet* achieved a strong central government to enforce its law on all its constituent parts. The sultan is a despot in a quite different sense from the czar. Nominally, he possesses even greater sovereign authority than the latter, but in fact he is much weaker. He does not rule through a centralised and homogeneously established bureaucracy, but through vassals who are, in turn and in their own way, small independent rulers with their own subordinate vassals. Though the Russian bureaucracy is certainly corrupt and inclined to over-reach itself, it does guarantee increasing security for profits and is therefore no obstacle to the economic development of the country. The pasha administration in Turkey is, on the contrary, directly and by its very nature hostile to development.⁽ⁱⁱ⁾

This explains the otherwise incomprehensible paradox that all the potentially civilised peoples subject to Turkey prefer Russian absolutism to Turkish "freedom." This freedom corresponds to the freedom of medieval feudalism, which was also in many respects greater than that of princely despotism. But just as this insight cannot make us yearn for a return to feudalism, so also it cannot make us see Turkish freedom as a reason for keeping the Armenians under Turkish rule. This freedom will be their ruin, for it is freedom for a host of leeches to suck them dry, freedom for Kurds and Circassians to plunder and kill them. Consular reports from the representatives of all nations have confirmed the outrages which these barbarians have perpetrated on defenceless Armenians. Can Social Democracy be deaf to the cries of a people so terribly oppressed?

La Barbe's report on conditions in Turkish Armenia in no. 2 of *Neue Zeit* may be somewhat exaggerated in certain particulars, but on the whole it agrees with the consular reports and bears the stamp of inherent plausibility.⁹ And he brings out the root cause of the Armenians' present desperate struggle: the cessation of the tax in kind which Marx characterised as "one of the secrets of the self-

preservation of the Ottoman Empire.”¹⁰ Though barbarians are crude but humane as long as they find themselves within the exchange relationships of barter economy, they become devils when they are drawn into a money economy and are infected by the desire for money. This has been the case throughout history, and it would be a miracle if experience were to prove Turkey an exception. The facts, however, tell us all too clearly that miracles do not happen.

The enormous expansion of modern transport and communications brings even the remotest parts of Turkey within reach of capitalist civilisation. At the time of Urquhart, the famous Turcophile, there were no Oriental railways.¹¹ The overland route to Asia Minor was exceedingly troublesome and time-consuming, even dangerous; and the journey by sea was also awkward and time-consuming. Today the journey by either method is a pleasure trip which thousands take annually, and correspondingly sweeping changes have taken place in the market conditions for the products of the Orient. The Europeanisation of Turkey is more urgent than ever before, and the discrepancy between Asiatic methods of government and European requirements is more crassly evident than ever. How is this discrepancy to be surmounted? The wheel of history cannot be turned back; the motto must be “forwards.” But a major obstacle stands in the way. It is the impotence of the Sultan, not his ill-will, which renders impossible the implementation of the reforms promised on countless occasions. The thorough reform of Turkey requires a *strong* executive power, which need not for that reason be autocratic. But so far, reforms have invariably been implemented only to the point where they helped to *weaken* the executive power. If Turkey is ruined, it will be ruined, not by the amputations it has suffered, but by the patching-up done on it. The amputations have gradually removed the anomaly of potentially civilised peoples being ruled by one that is less civilised. But the patching-up has in some instances kept potentially civilised peoples under Turkish rule and has merely made them feel more keenly the contradiction between this rule and modern development. It has made Turkey into an inferior version of Austria which can only maintain itself internally by playing off one race against another; and, in keeping with local custom, this always involves bloodshed.

No state in the world has an interest in the continuation of this state of affairs – except *Russia*. The weaker and more internally divided Turkey becomes, the more compliant a tool it is in the hands of Russia. Russia knows that an occupation of the Bosphorus would bring a world war down on its head – which it has reason not to

risk, or rather, which it has no reason to risk. It is much more convenient to play the role of protector and good friend to the Sultan. In this way, Russia does in fact have what it needs, and more. The opening of the Dardanelles to warships is a double-edged sword, since it would eventually invite the bombardment of Russian harbours in the Black Sea by English and other warships. It is much better that the Sultan should continue to guard the Dardanelles for his good friend, the Czar.

England cannot be reconciled with the Sultan so long as the latter's Christian subjects are oppressed. The "Nonconformist conscience" would not permit it. Hence Russia's refusal to support England's efforts on behalf of the Armenians. Russia has no desire to create an "Armenian Bulgaria," and what is more, it is not even in a hurry to bring the Turkish Armenians under its own protective rule. It knows that sooner or later this plum will fall into its lap. If, in the meantime, thousands upon thousands of Armenians are massacred, Armenian women, girls, and children brutally ravished, what does it matter? All the better the situation for Russia. Each massacre sharpens the opposition between England and Turkey and cements more firmly the bond between Czar and Sultan. This truly unspeakable policy is understandable from the Czar's point of view, but is it from the German point of view?

We have already explained that even the German establishment has *no* interest in making Russia stronger in the East and that, on the contrary, all its interests speak *against* making Russia master in the region. If, nevertheless, German diplomacy supports Russia's policy in the Orient, then it does so out of necessity rather than inclination – or so, for the sake of its honour, we shall assume. We cannot believe that, in this day and age, German statesmen could willingly be party to so suicidal a policy. But German policy has run itself into such a dead-end that we must be prepared to find the worst and most nonsensical items in it. If there is anything that must make a patriotic German blush, it is the role Germany has played in the Cretan question.¹² We stress our Christianity, build one Christian church after another, talk of the need to preserve Christian culture, and then, when a Christian people in the Orient finally rises up to demand from a half-barbaric despot the implementation of reforms promised on countless occasions, all we can think of to do is to instigate a blockade against the "rebels" in alliance with Russia and with the cynical approval of the *Sachsenwaldler*.¹³ Fortunately, the arch-Tory, Salisbury, was sufficiently liberal to refuse to take part in this game, and the blockade collapsed. But the extent to which this trick en-

hanced the popularity of Germany in the civilised world can be reckoned on the fingers of one hand.

As we said, we assume that the German establishment acts as it does towards Crete and Armenia because it has to, if it is to deflect yet greater evils from itself. But it does not follow from this that Social Democracy must remain silent about these matters. On the contrary. Since it is not privy to the intimate reasons which drive German diplomacy to so unworthy a policy, and since it is not bound by the considerations incumbent upon this diplomacy, German Social Democracy must raise its voice in protest. It must support the movement in the country which demands that Germany support the Armenians energetically. It must promote an Oriental policy which deliberately and resolutely labours to change Turkey – by amputating the rest of its satellite parts and by a European style of administration – into a unified, viable state capable of standing on its own feet – today, the only way to liberate Turkey from Russia.

It may be doubted whether this aim can be achieved under present conditions, but that is no reason why Social Democracy should not work towards it. As an opposition party, its duty is to support whatever policy it deems the best. It can do little damage thereby and it may do a great deal of good. No government can remain completely deaf when there is a strong movement in the country. In one way or another, it has to take account of it. So we can, after all, help to ensure that some kind of assistance is forthcoming for the Armenians.

Let us remember one thing. No major modern state has done as little as Germany to win the affection of other nations. Study the map and ask the question: which nation has Germany helped to liberate? Almost everywhere Germany is found on the side of the oppressors and in opposition to national liberation struggles. Even when it did once help, as with Hungary and Italy in 1866, it gave aid under circumstances which were not exactly praiseworthy.¹⁴ And these are the bright spots. Elsewhere it is all dark, dark, dark. Even the democratic parties of Germany have often enough been compelled to distance themselves from liberation movements, thanks to the unhappy condition of Germany and its unhappy history. In the Orient particularly, Germany's record is black from beginning to end. Even when an attempt was made at something better, as with Bulgaria, it ended with a betrayal which was thus all the more disgraceful.¹⁵

With Armenia, we have at long last an opportunity to raise our voice for the cause of freedom and humanity in the Orient without

fear of playing into the hands of czarism. Our natural sympathy for all the oppressed who rise against their oppressors; our general interest in progress, even in those backward countries; our particular interest, as Germans, in the creation of ordered conditions and in bringing the unworthy game of intrigue in the East to an end; all these considerations equally require us not to let this opportunity slip. The English Socialists and workers, in various ways but unanimous in the cause, have made a stand for this shamefully violated people and for an end to pasha rule in Turkey. German Socialists and workers should not be left behind.

ERNEST BELFORT BAX
Our German Fabian Convert;
or, Socialism According to Bernstein
Justice, 7 November 1896

Our friend Edward Bernstein occupies a peculiar position in this country, both as regards our own and the German movement. As the principal coadjutor in the leading party-review and the London correspondent of various Socialist papers, he has a quasi-official character as representing the views of German Social-Democracy. I very much doubt, however, whether the sentiments expressed in certain recent numbers of the *Neue Zeit* (and, I believe, elsewhere), can be accepted as expressing the view of the majority even of the leaders of the German party, let alone the rank and file. In no. 4 of the new volume of the *Neue Zeit*, Bernstein favours us with some eight pages of the purest extract of Philistinism we have yet read from his pen anent the situation in Turkey, and the attitude of Socialists towards national risings. The statements contained in the aforesaid article resolve themselves into an allegation that only those risings deserve the sympathy of the Socialists which are likely to result in the expansion of capitalist civilisation! On the other hand, such peoples as show no disposition to be drawn within the vortex of the modern world-market, who resist being smothered with duck-trousers, Lancashire "shoddy," adulterated spirits, and other exhilarating products of the *höhere Kultur* with the aid of the maxim gun – we are given to understand – are *kulturfeindlich*, *oder kulturunfähig* and as such have no claim whatever to our sympathies. Against such, modern capitalistic civilisation, the *höhere Kultur* which finds such a zealous votary nowadays in the ex-editor of the *Sozial-Demokrat*, has the right to make its power felt with effect.

Bernstein must know quite well that the above is the only practical

meaning that his words can have (p. 109, last para.). He goes on to say that these astounding propositions will hardly meet with serious opposition!!

Referring apparently to a proposal made by myself as to supporting barbaric and savage communities against the inroads of aggressive capitalism, Bernstein is content to brush this aside as an "outcome of Romanticism." He thereby forgets the obvious retort that his own position is the "outcome of Philistinism." Why should the champion of the shunting-yard, the factory chimney, and the *höhere Kultur* which the off-scouring of the British populations are now introducing into Matabeleland, arrogate to himself the exclusive possession of common sense?¹⁶ Granted that I have a too foolishly fond sympathy for outworn forms of social life, Bernstein's affection for modern civilisation and its *Errungenschaften* is also not established beyond the possibility of dispute as the correct Socialist emotion.

It may be true that the future does not belong to the past, but neither does it belong to the present. Bernstein prefers the squalor of modern civilisation to the rudeness of primitive barbarism. I prefer the rudeness of primitive barbarism to the squalor of modern civilisation. This is, of course, a matter of taste. But why the "outcome of Philistinism" should be so unquestionably assumed to be superior to the outcome of the other thing I really can't quite see. Besides I deny altogether that my view of the undesirability of the forcing of capitalism on barbaric and savage peoples is especially the product of Romanticism. At all events, that extremely romantic, unmodern and unpractical person the late Friedrich Engels held substantially the same view.

The reasons for myself and other Socialists who agree with me in wishing to limit, as far as possible, the area of capitalistic exploitation, in other words, of modern civilisation (the *höhere Kultur* of Bernstein's admiration) are the following: — 1. Unlike Bernstein we regard modern civilisation as, *per se*, a curse and an evil. (This, I suppose, is what Bernstein calls Romanticism.) 2. To the obvious retort that modern capitalism is, at all events, a necessary stage to Socialism, that without present civilisation future Socialism would be impossible, we reply (while, of course, granting the main proposition) that to the revolution or evolution from Capitalism to Socialism it is not by any means essential that *all barbarian and savage peoples* and out-of-the-way corners of the earth should come under the dominion of capitalism, with the human misery involved in it. The existing European races and their offshoots without spreading themselves beyond their present seats, are quite adequate to effect the

Social Revolution, meanwhile leaving savage and barbaric communities to work out their own social salvation in their own way. The absorption of such communities into the Socialistic world-order would then only be a question of time. 3. But more than this, we see that the present system of production and distribution is breaking down throughout the civilised world by its own weight, and that its only chance lies in annexing industrially and commercially, and wherever possible, politically, the outlying territories of the earth's surface.

Hence the feverish rush for the opening up of fresh markets and the colonisation of new lands. If this can be effected on a large scale within the next few years capitalism is probably saved for the moment. It may even secure itself a new lease of life of some decades' duration. Now this being so, apart from all other considerations, we can have no hesitation in deciding that our duty as Socialists is to fight tooth and nail against all advances of civilisation in barbarous and savage countries. We may be unsuccessful, but our policy is clear. Hence the hypocritical indignation of the capitalist at slavery and slave-raiding in Africa leaves us cold. "Better Turk than Pope" was the device of the Flemish insurgents of the sixteenth century. "Better slavery than capitalism; better the Arab raider than the Chartered Company," must be our device in these questions. For this reason also, while naturally desirous of removing any abuses incident to Turkish rule, we heartily support the maintenance of the Turkish Empire, as preserving, partially at least, a considerable chunk of humanity from the blessings of the world-market, the factory, Christianity, and the *höhere Kultur* generally. The same applies to the barbaric and savage communities of Africa upon whom the curse of civilisation has not yet fallen. Their fight against the white man, against missions, traders, and settlers is our fight. We recognise no rights, under any circumstances whatever, for a civilised power to subjugate races living in a lower stage of social development and to force civilisation upon them. The specious humanitarian twaddle talked in press and upon platform to throw dust in our eyes and cover wanton aggression does not impose upon us.

Now, what are the national risings which a Socialist ought to favour, according to Bernstein? Those European national movements which make for the capitalistic development of a nation – in short, the bourgeois aspirations of the '48 movement and its belated survivals. In consonance with his general attitude, Bernstein finds occasion to sneer at any reference to "the final triumph of Socialism." The recent London Congress passed a resolution embodying such a refer-

ence anent divergence between the national and international Polish sections. The belated absurdity of the patriotic Polish balderdash was sufficiently exposed in an excellent article in the *Neue Zeit* last summer by Fräulein Luxembourg [*sic*]. Bernstein goes on to say that without Socialism the Italians (!) and other peoples have achieved their national deliverance (!). A nice national deliverance, truly, Italy has achieved on the lines of *höhere Kultur* and of Bernstein! Similarly, Germany, through her precious unity, has acquired the inestimable blessings of the military code and of *Majestätsbeleidigung* prosecutions.¹⁷ Armenia, being a nation of usurers, and therefore *kulturfähig*, must, of course, be backed in its national agitation. No, no, friend Bernstein, it is a little too late in the day to serve up the '48 swindles of national "freedom," "independence," and "unity" as an acceptable cold collation to the proletariat of modern Europe. Try something else! Happily, the feeling is growing among the working classes that all national aspirations are a fraud and a red herring designed to trick them out of following the true goal of international Socialism. But to pass on.

Capitalism, or modern civilisation, and Socialism are absolutely antithetic. There can be no doubt whatever about that. Bernstein doubtless felt this when he started on his Fabianesque descent. He had the consciousness that the passage from one horn of an absolute antithesis to the other cannot be effected straight off, but presupposes a mediating principle, a *Vermittlung*. This is all well and good in itself. But, unfortunately, the great aim became with him henceforth the search for the *Vermittlung*, in the course of which he, like a good many others in like case, lost sight of the ultimate object of the movement.

This is the real explanation of Bernstein's attitude. *He has unconsciously ceased to be a Social Democrat.* The form, the empty party-hull, remains on him, but filled out with a reactionary content. The process has been helped by his sojourn in this country.

He has got British "practicality" and "common-sense" on the brain. It is strange that a foreigner is as infallibly lost when he once contracts English "common-sense" as a South Sea islander when he catches European measles. Just as the negro who takes to British whiskey is ruined, so is your Continental Socialist who takes to English ways of looking at things. Both are alike unaccustomed to their new stimulant, and furthermore don't know the good from the bad brands, and so swallow it all "promiscuous." Thus Bernstein laps up with gusto any stuff offered him bearing the label "practical English politics" and commends it forthwith as gospel to his German readers.

For example, some months ago he translated verbatim for the *Neue Zeit*, as the last word of wisdom, a long lecture by Mr J. R. Macdonald (who opposed our candidate Gibson at Southampton), consisting of a strictly commonplace criticism of English Parliamentary institutions, only distinguished for its severe "moderation."¹⁸ Mr Macdonald among other evidences of his practical intelligence as a democrat (?), defends the bureaucracy (permanent officials) in the public services on the ground that the placing of these services directly under popular control would be undesirable as causing them too faithfully to reflect the fluctuations of public opinion! Out of dread of allowing the democracy to fulfil a political function Mr Macdonald would perpetuate an official body whose sole purpose is to serve as a bulwark of hide-bound red-tape reaction, and who have already emasculated, and in some cases rendered completely inoperative, every legislative and administrative reform which has passed through their hands. A nice democrat, truly! Yet this political old-womanism delights Bernstein's heart; it savours of the true blend of moderation and practicality. For our own part, under such circumstances, we would prefer, without more ado, to join one of the true-blue Conservative parties (Whig or Tory), believing, as we do, in the political application of Valentine's advice –

Du bist doch nun einmal eine Hur,
So sei's auch eben recht.¹⁹

EDUARD BERNSTEIN
Amongst the Philistines:
A Rejoinder to Belfort Bax
Justice, 14 November 1896

Bax has presented the article I wrote some weeks ago in the *Neue Zeit* on the Turkish question in a manner that compels me to reply.

The leading idea of my article is condensed in the following passage in it: –

“Prima facie there is for Socialists inducement to sympathise with every struggle for emancipation, and generally it will be right to investigate the case at the outset from this point of view, so natural for a democratic party. Let us first satisfy sentiment, and then ask whether sense and just interest come to the same conclusion, or where they modify it.

“Not every rising of conquered races against their conquerors is, however, in the same manner a struggle for emancipation. Africa harbours tribes who adjudge to themselves the right of trading in

slaves, and who can only be prevented from this sort of thing by the civilised nations of Europe. Their risings against the latter do not interest us – nay, will have us, in given cases, as opponents. The same applies to those barbaric and semi-barbaric races who make it a regular profession to invade neighboring agricultural communities, to rob cattle, etc. Races who are hostile to, or incapable of, civilisation, cannot claim our sympathy when they stand against civilisation. We do not acknowledge any right of robbery, nor any right of hunters over or against cultivators. To put it briefly, strongly as we criticise present civilisation, we acknowledge its relative acquisitions, and make them a criterion of our sympathy. We will condemn and oppose certain methods of the subjugation of savage races, but not that savage races are at all subjugated and compelled to conform with the rules of higher civilisation.

“A struggle for emancipation must contain in itself an element of civilisation if it shall have a claim on our deep sympathy, and eventually active support, be it that races or nationalities who have developed a civilisation of their own stand up against foreign domination that hinders their further development, or that an advancing class rebels against its suppression by retrograde classes. We acknowledge the right of nationality to every people that has shown itself capable of developing or maintaining such national civilisation.”²⁰

This is my standpoint. It can be opposed from the point of view either of visionary enthusiasm for the state of nature, or from that of a very narrow and gross materialism. Now, it is undoubtedly very heroic to expatiate in an easy chair in the Temple or one of the West End clubs on the “squalor of modern civilisation,” and the preferability of primitive barbarism, but it is not very convincing. On the other hand, it surprises me not a little to find the same Bax who, only a few weeks ago, in the Fabianese *Vienna Zeit*, inveighed so severely against what he describes as the too narrow application of historic materialism by some Marxists suddenly preach in *Justice* the narrowest and grossest materialistic conception of the struggle of Social-Democracy.²¹ To call modern civilisation “a curse and an evil *per se*” and “absolutely antithetic to Socialism,” to proclaim all and every national sentiment a “fraud,” to give out mottoes like “slavery better than capitalism” is materialism with a vengeance. He implies the denial of all ideological acquisition of modern civilisation, of all evolution of ethics.

How little this is in the spirit of Frederick Engels whom Bax invokes against me, a letter which Engels wrote to me on February 22, 1882, on the Balkan Question, shows. Engels says of that romantic

semi-barbaric people, the Herzegovinians: "Their autonomy consists in their stealing – in order to prove their hatred against oppressors – from their own 'suppressed' Servian countrymen, cattle and other movable things of any value. For they have done this since a thousand years, and he who interferes with their right of robbery interferes with their autonomy. I am enough of an *authoritaire* to call the existence of such primitive folk in the midst of Europe an anachronism. And if these good people stood as high as the Scotch Highlanders glorified by Walter Scott – who, too, were the most desperate cattle stealers – we can, *at the utmost*, condemn the methods present society employs against them. Were we in power, *we too* (underlined by Engels) would have to make an end of the inherited *Rinaldo Rinaldinism* and *Schinderhannesdom* of these fellows."²²

Thus Engels – what a Philistine! As to Karl Marx I advise Bax to read in the 'Kapital' the foot-note to paragraph 3, chapter viii., where Marx in the most severe way censures Carlyle for having, in the same fashion as Bax does today, taken sides "for slavery against capitalist civilisation." Philistine Marx there calls the anti-slavery war "the only magnificent contemporary event."²³

What I wrote concerning the rights of nationality is in the main a repetition of what Ferdinand Lassalle in the pamphlet on the Italian war wrote on this subject.²⁴ Another Philistine! And again I have to refer Bax to what Marx and Engels have written, prophetically written, in the seventieth [*sic*] about the great historical importance, for the advance of Social Democracy, of the unification of Germany, all its military codes notwithstanding.²⁵

But Bax will object today things have much changed, that bourgeois civilisation is visibly breaking down and has but one chance for prolonging its life, viz., "in annexing industrially and commercially the outlying territories of the earth's surface." Consequently, Social-Democrats must do all they can to prevent this process of expanding, and not as I, according to him, defend it.

To this I have to reply that in my article I had not to deal with this question. Only incidentally I referred to the struggle of the slave trading tribes against European interference. But I never shirk a discussion, and so I add that what Bax advocates is sheer waste of time and energy. To aid, as he proposes, the savages against advancing capitalist civilisation, if it were feasible, which it is not, would only prolong the struggle, not prevent it. Bax, some time ago, advocated furnishing fire-arms to the savages in order to stiffen their power of resistance.²⁶ But he forgot that he who uses fire-arms wants now and then fresh powder or cartridges, and that these do not, as yet, grow wild.

To get them the savage must go to the – *trader*, and once in intercourse with him he is irresistibly drawn into the charm of the same commercial influence the fire-arms were to protect him against. Bax's prescription, like his logic, turns round its own tail. The hypocritical and what else Nonconformist is at least more logical when he advocated the prohibition of the sale of fire-water to the savage.

And now to the question of the Armenians. Bax called them a "nation of usurers." In reality they are a nation of peasants and artisans, surrounded by semi-barbaric pastoral tribes. These tribes, once only violent, are now extortionists of the worst type. They, too, have come under the spell of the money system, and, as Bax again can read in Marx, [there are] no worse atrocities than those practised there where semi-barbaric races are drawn inside the circle of the world-market. Besides the Turkish official – the tax farmers etc., the money-hungry Kurd, protected by Mahommedan law, presses shamefully on the poor Armenian. Shall the latter be sacrificed because he is more civilised than the Kurd, because he cultivates his field, or works at some trade, instead of hunting and stealing? If radical revolutionarism demands this I prefer being a Philistine.

But Bax is sorely mistaken if he assumes that I stand alone with my view on the Turkish question in the Germany Party. Not that I mind standing alone where I believe to be right. What the rank and file of the party think neither he nor I can sound, but I can name him most influential leaders who are quite at one with me. In fact, I have good reason to believe that the great majority of them share my view. Nor does Jaurès's speech in the French Chamber on the subject breathe a different spirit.²⁷ And if I turn to this side of the Channel I see the S.D.F. adopt a resolution where they, whilst rightly protesting against the exaggerated proposals of some Nonconformists, declare, as I did, against the continuation of Turkish misrule in Armenia.²⁸ The same did the I.L.P. How came all these Sauls to join the Philistine?

To conclude, what Bax says about Fabian influence on me is partly untrue, partly of a nature not worth answering. It is not true that I have published Mr. Macdonald's lecture as "the last word of wisdom" – In fact, I stated in the introduction to his paper that I differed from it in many points; and it is not true that Macdonald said those things about bureaucracy Bax makes him say. I have often criticised the Fabians in the *Neue Zeit* and elsewhere, but I have acknowledged and *do* acknowledge that I regard them as Socialists whom I believe to be in their way as honest and devoted as any in England.²⁹

Bax mildly suggests that I have “*unconsciously* ceased to be a Social-Democrat.” If to be a Social-Democrat requires to advocate the maintenance of the Turkish Empire, not although, but *because*, it is unreformed and a pandemonium of blood-sucking pashas; if it means cherishing the superstition that advanced industrialism is the only and worst form of exploitation and suppression, I prefer belonging to the Philistines.

ERNEST BELFORT BAX
 The Socialism of Bernstein
Justice, 21 November 1896

Dear Comrade,

I must confess to feeling some disappointment at the indefiniteness of Bernstein’s reply (not rejoinder) to my article in *Justice*. As to his translation of a portion of his “Türkische Wirren” it only confirms my paraphrase of it, and the justification of my criticism on it. The paragraph in depreciation of my materialism is rather nebulous, and I don’t see what the Temple or West End clubs either, have to do with the question. If it means anything it only makes my case stronger. For if the squalor of modern civilisation, viewed from the standpoint of, say, the Temple is so bad, what must it be viewed from that of the slum. (I can only say I, for one, should have preferred even the Middle Temple before the *höhere Kultur* had taken such complete possession of it as it has now, for sundry, and I fear grossly, materialistic reasons). For the rest I confess I don’t see why it should be regarded as specially materialistic to prefer primitive barbarism to capitalistic civilisation. The distinctive social ideal of the former, limited and crude though it be, seems to me not more, but less materialistic than the calculated individualist aims of the latter. However, perhaps I have missed Bernstein’s point. Moreover, I must protest against the allegation that I “inveighed” against the Neo-Marxists in the non-party literary review which Bernstein terms the “Fabianese” *Zeit*. My article was strictly academical in character, and merely pointed out what I regard (rightly or wrongly) as an untenable application of the materialist doctrine of history. Whether materialistic or not, I *do* most certainly call every purely national aspiration in the present day a *fraud* in every sense of the word. I can find nothing ideal, in the better sense of the word, about it.

The quotations from Marx and from Engels are beside the point. Engels referred to the Herzegovinians as, he says, “a primitive folk *in the midst of Europe*.” The phrase I have italicised makes the whole

difference. His contention evidently was that the Herzegovinians rendered themselves impossible to their neighbours, who were, *bien entendu*, not colonists or "pioneers," but, like themselves, a people living in the country, (for practical purposes) from time immemorial. As a matter of fact, I have repeatedly discussed this question with Engels, and I have no doubt as to his opinions on the subject. An article of mine, three or four years ago, on the Uganda question, presenting absolutely the same view, met with his complete approval.³⁰

Similarly, the reference to Marx leaves my withers unwrung. Marx had in view not the natural primitive slavery of Central Africa, but a slavery that had survived its function and obtained in the very heart of a capitalist state of society — a society which was ready for free labour, but, from short-sightedness or indolence, preferred slave-labour. All the same, I would not like to swear that the condition of the Southern State negro is better today than under the old slave-holding system.

As for Lassalle, we all know he was a strong nationalist, and even a bit of a Jingo, and in so far, he *was* a Philistine, indeed. But as his own followers have long since thrown overboard this side of his teaching, it matters little now.

Bernstein says that to furnish savages with the power of successfully resisting buccaneering capitalism is (1) impossible, and (2) would only prolong the struggle, not prevent the catastrophe, even if it were possible. As regards the first point, as a well-known member of the Aborigines Protection Society was saying to me the other day, the great difficulty is the furnishing of maxim guns. African warfare turns largely on the maxim gun. The Matabele had rifles and ammunition galore, but they had no maxims. If this difficulty could be got over, as well it might be, and if the natives could be taught the effective use of the maxims, which I am told is simple enough, there is no reason why a successful resistance should not be made in any given case. But, says Bernstein, it would only prolong the agony, not prevent the inevitable end. Good! If it but prolonged matters till capitalism, unable to expand itself had succumbed, that is all I want — the battle is won then. It is a simple misrepresentation to say that I advocate the continuance of Turkish *mis*-rule. My standpoint as regards this is exactly that of the S.D.F. resolution referred to by Bernstein. In fact, I expressly stated that all Socialists wish to see an end of any real grievances under which the Armenians or other subject races of the Turkish Empire suffered. But Socialists, I repeat, are by no means unanimous in wishing to see an Armenian nationality grow up in which the successful Armenian money-lender may disport himself as

a ministerial big-wig for the honour and glory of his "country." We have got quite enough of these "fatherlands" knocking about already, and it is not our business to increase them.

Whatever Bernstein may like to say about Macdonald, it is true (assuming, of course, that Bernstein translated him correctly) that he questioned the desirability of abolishing the most flagrant and infamous administrative abuse in this country – i.e., the institution of permanent heads of departments. For this reason alone I say that not only all Socialists, but all Democrats and even Radicals with any respect for consistency, must regard Mr. Macdonald as an enemy.

That Bernstein has unconsciously ceased to be a Social-Democrat I judged not only from the article criticised but from other utterances of his, notably his review of Hyndman's book, some of the views expressed in which I shall take the opportunity of controverting on another occasion.³¹

Yours, E. Belfort Bax

P.S. – By the way, I should really like to know what Bernstein thinks Italy (which he mentions) has gained by her precious National "freedom" and "unity."³²

Notes

- (i) This article was nearly finished when I received the number of the *Sächsische Arbeiterzeitung* with Miss Rosa Luxemburg's articles on the national struggles in Turkey and Social Democracy.³³ It is evident from what follows how much I am in agreement with the basic thinking and with the conclusions of this excellent work.
- (ii) "In fact, like all Oriental governments, the Turkish government is incompatible with capitalist society; the surplus value collected is not safe in the hands of rapacious satraps and pashas; the first precondition of bourgeois industry is lacking: security of the merchant's person and property." Friedrich Engels, "The Foreign Policy of the Russian Czarist Government," *Neue Zeit*, viii, p. 193.³⁴ The economic progress of all countries released from Turkish dominion shows how true this is.

Problems of Socialism

First Series

EDUARD BERNSTEIN

1. General Observations on Utopianism and Eclecticism

Neue Zeit, 28 October 1896

In recent years, the Social Democratic movement has made significant advances in almost all civilised countries. Even where this process is reflected in a smaller increase in the number of votes won for Social Democracy than in Germany, it is still unmistakable. In the September issue of *Cosmopolis*, the well-known Fabian Socialist, G. B. Shaw, published an article on the International Socialist Congress in London.¹ The article has its errors and exaggerations, but it is well worth reading. In it, Shaw points out that although Social Democracy in England is not yet strong enough to send representatives to Parliament, and although it has mustered fewer than 100,000 votes for its candidates, nonetheless socialist tendencies are increasingly manifested in legislation. The fact itself is indisputable, though the conclusions Shaw draws from it are, to say the least, biased. The situation is, quite simply, that in England the economic and other social presuppositions of socialism are, on the whole, more advanced than in Germany, and the bourgeois parties are not so unreceptive to timely socialist demands. The established parties here are more capable of development and therefore also more capable of opposing Social Democracy when it confronts them as a *party*; and so, for the present, the influence of socialist propaganda is manifested less directly but nonetheless effectively. A similar situation obtains in France and Switzerland, in accordance with their differently constituted circumstances. Even in relatively backward countries, such as Austria and Italy, there has been a significant increase in the influence of Social Democratic propaganda. Here, the example of large neighbouring countries has had an effect. In short, all things con-

sidered, Social Democracy is making palpable advances in all these countries.

It would be highly premature to conclude from this that the decisive victory of socialism is at hand. But in view of the wide dissemination of socialist thinking and of the corresponding manifestations in production, trade, commerce, the professions, and the workers' movement, we may conclude that we are moving with giant strides towards the point at which Social Democracy will have to modify its current, largely negative standpoint and come forward with positive suggestions of reform, beyond the sphere of wage and workers' protection and the like. In the most advanced countries, we stand at the threshold, if not of the "dictatorship of the proletariat," then of a state of affairs where the working class and the parties which represent it exercise a decisive influence. It cannot therefore be idle to examine, for once, the intellectual equipment with which we approach this epoch.

Modern Social Democracy prides itself on having superseded the theoretical standpoint of utopian socialism, and no doubt it is quite right to do so insofar as utopianism is a matter of drawing up models of the future state. No responsible Socialist nowadays paints pictures of the future with the aim of showing mankind precisely how things must be if perfect happiness is to prevail on earth, or to provide the recipe for reaching the desired end most swiftly and surely. The futurist speculations of contemporary Socialists are either attempts to give a broad outline of the probable course of development towards a socialist social order, or they are pictures of a socialist society (painted with varying degrees of talent) which make no claim to be anything more than fantasies. Even here, many utopian notions can creep in, but the real utopia which presents itself as "the recipe for the cook-shops of the future"² is a thing of the past.

There is, however, another kind of utopianism, and it, alas, is not extinct. This other kind is the opposite extreme of the old sort. It is anxious to avoid discussing the future organisation of society, but instead it assumes an abrupt leap from capitalist to socialist society. Everything that takes place in the former is mere patchwork, palliative and "capitalist"; but socialist society will sort everything out, if not overnight, then within a very short time. Miracles are not believed, just assumed. A heavy line is drawn between capitalist society on the one side and socialist society on the other. No attempt is made at systematic work in the former. Here, we live from hand to mouth and allow ourselves to be carried along by events. Any theoretical

difficulties can be overcome by reference to economic development and to a very one-sided notion of the class struggle.

Now, although the fundamental importance of both these historical forces cannot be denied, it is clear that if we rely on them alone, and with no qualifications, then we leave many things undefined which socialism, in particular, has a duty to clarify and investigate, if it is to be truly *scientific*. Insight into the driving forces and the course of social development hitherto is of very little value if it stops short just at the point where conscious and systematic action should begin.

Deferring all solutions until the "decisive victory of socialism," as the current phrase has it, is no less utopian for being embellished with slogans from the arsenal of the writings of Marx and Engels. The most scientific of theories can lead to utopianism, if its conclusions are interpreted dogmatically. Take, for example, the much-quoted chapter, "The Historical Tendency of Capitalist Accumulation," in the first volume of *Capital*. The very word "tendency" in the title should be enough to warn us against taking statements from this chapter out of their context and interpreting them literally. Yet again and again the phrase "expropriation of the expropriators"³ is interpreted as signifying an event which necessarily begins with a catastrophe and takes place simultaneously all along the line. That, however, is a purely utopian notion. For although social catastrophes no doubt can, and probably will, greatly hasten the pace of developments, they cannot create overnight the uniformity of conditions which would be necessary to restructure the entire economic system at once, and this uniformity certainly does not exist at the present. Meanwhile, the world does not stand still. Particular branches of production and industry are ripening into a condition in which it would be impractical for them to be left to private exploitation, if not actually harmful to the general needs of society. At the same time, although we cannot speak of a dictatorship of the proletariat, the influence of the working class and of the parties which represent it is growing. It is inevitable that questions will appear on the agenda which, according to the view described above, properly belong after the catastrophe. In this sense, it was not incorrect to speak of society growing into socialism,⁴ except that the term suggested a rather too mechanical process of growth. But what can one say when all state and municipal economic enterprises which come into being before the catastrophe are written off with such mindless slogans as "state capitalism" and "municipal capitalism"? This is going full steam

backwards to utopianism. The old terms "fiscalism" and "fiscal enterprise" are perfectly adequate for state or municipal enterprises which are intended simply to create sources of finance or which are kept apart from private profiteering for reasons which have nothing to do with their actual economic and political functions. Such terms are especially appropriate where a privileged minority bureaucratically administers the body in question for its own benefit. But such a situation is becoming rare. As we have seen, modern democracy rooted in the working class has a growing influence, direct and indirect, on state and municipality. As this influence becomes stronger, the principles of industrial management will be modified along democratic lines, and the interests of the privileged minority will be increasingly subordinated to the interest of the community. There are a growing number of industrial enterprises whose economic and political functions have priority over the fiscal interest, and in the old state and municipal enterprises, originally monopolised for purely fiscal ends, the economic and political aspect is also becoming more prominent. This development is unmistakably under way, and to describe it in terms such as state capitalism or municipal capitalism is to cut oneself off from any understanding of its historical significance. For it is most definitely *anticapitalist*. It is directed against the appropriation of the *means of production* and the *surplus of production* by the capitalists, and that is precisely the most characteristic and crucial aspect of the capitalist economic system. The use of the word "capitalism" could only be justified with reference to the present form of distributing the profits of production and industrial enterprise, but to regard the form of *distribution* as the decisive criterion is anything but scientific socialism. Scientific socialism is based precisely on the realisation that it is the *mode of production* and the *conditions of production* which are *decisive*. To this extent, the term "state capitalism" conceals a markedly *utopian* train of thought, proceeding not from the laws of social development but from some sort of preconceived future state with its own individual form of distribution. And, just as disastrously, the fact that there are different types of state is lost from view. State enterprise where the state is set above society and confronts it as an almost independent organisation is equated with state enterprise where the state is *subordinate* to society, and where this society is itself democratised to a high degree. As I have said, the term is completely meaningless, and the sooner it disappears from the vocabulary of Social Democracy the better.

The trouble with all such catch-phrases based on secondary factors

is that they pre-empt any rational distinction and militate against any systematic understanding and treatment of things. Indeed, where they do not end in undiluted impossibilism, they lead to a completely rootless eclecticism. Though the English Fabians, who have inscribed state and municipal socialism on their banner, are eclectics, they are at least conscious eclectics and have precise and realistic criteria on the basis of which they often reach the same conclusions on questions of political economy as scientific socialism does on the basis of historical materialism.⁽ⁱ⁾ But if we assess economic institutions, not according to their place and significance in a social development actually taking place, but by the criteria of some imaginary state of society, then the inevitable result is that practice comes to be characterised by arbitrary evaluations and caprice. It becomes a matter of pure chance whether the lever of social reform is applied at the right place to shorten and alleviate the pains of the social revolutionary process – which is, after all, the mission of Social Democracy as a party.

Apart from drawing attention to the class war, the adherents of scientific socialism have, so far, produced no arguments which might persuade the Fabians to abandon their eclectic approach. But the class war is pre-eminently an uncontrolled force in the evolution of society. It works like a natural law in a natural order independent of man, and involves endless waste of time, effort, and material. This is exactly the spectacle presented by the empirically minded English labour movement. Nobody denies that this is unsatisfactory, but revolutionary phrase-mongering is no cure for it, since this produces just as much waste, though in other ways. In this regard, lack of principle and principled knight-errantry – or, to put it differently, raw empiricism and utopian dogmatism – have almost the same effect.

As I explained on an earlier occasion,⁵ the Fabians represent a reaction to the sectarian, utopian revolutionism preached by socialist enthusiasts in England in the early eighties. Any reaction, however healthy, tends to exaggerate, and this one was no exception. Far more went overboard than just a ballast of phraseology. Socialism was reduced to a series of socio-political measures, without anything to show how action was to be related to basic ideas. In individual investigations and as pragmatic Socialists, the Fabians have achieved much that is excellent. However, they have, insofar as it lay in their power, deprived the socialist movement of the compass which keeps it from just fumbling about in the dark.

This dissatisfaction is felt in many quarters, but so far it has found

expression only in personal invective and unconvincing generalisations. The entire polemic against Fabianism has hinged on superficialities. A few slogans borrowed from the arsenal of Marxism have been hurled at it, but nobody has taken the trouble to develop Marx's theory beyond the point at which the great thinker himself left it. Even the amendments which Marx and Engels themselves made to their earlier writings have been ignored. So it is hardly surprising that the slogan of state capitalism found ready currency even in England, where it has even less meaning than anywhere else.

We do find one serious attempt at scientific opposition to socio-political eclecticism in the first number of a socio-political monthly, the *Progressive Review*, which has just appeared in London. According to the leading article, this periodical hopes to bring consistency and precision to the indeterminate striving for social reform, and its ambition is to be for the badly fragmented movement for social progress what, in its day, the *Edinburgh Review* was for the Whigs, and what the *Westminster Review* and, later, the *Fortnightly Review* were for the radical followers of Bentham and Mill. It is edited by Messrs William Clark and John A. Hobson. The former is a member of the Fabian Society and the author of one of the best socio-political essays published by that body;⁶ the latter is a lecturer for the University Extension Society and the author of a very good work, reviewed in this journal, *The Evolution of Modern Capitalism*,⁷ as well as of various works, still to be reviewed, on charity organisations, the unemployment question, etc. The editorial staff also includes John R. Macdonald, a member of the Independent Labour Party, and most of its contributors are well-known Socialists and advanced radicals. "Our appeal," the introductory article concludes, "is to all stout upholders of free thought and of the cause of social justice, to all who believe that the pace and character of popular progress are not set or measured by the blind and unconscious efforts of the past, but that they may be indefinitely quickened and improved by imparting a higher conscious purpose to the operations of the social will." And further: "Faith in ideas, and in the growing capacity of the mass of the common people to absorb and to apply ideas in reasonably working out the progress of the Commonwealth, forms the moral foundation of democracy." Again, elsewhere: "A careful study of the laws of the composition and interaction of these social forces will help to relieve progressive movements from the imputations of blind opportunism, irrational compromise, and utopian aspirations under which they labour, and to establish a safer and more scientific basis for

social activity.”⁸ In short, the *Progressive Review* aims to be more than an organ for a purely superficial combination of radical and socialist elements. It is in this spirit that the aforementioned article, entitled “Collectivism in Industry,” is conceived, and it commands our interest if only for that reason. Like all articles emanating from the editors of the journal, it is unsigned;⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾ but there can be no doubt that John A. Hobson is the main author. He begins with a declaration of war against eclecticism and raw empiricism, from which we now cite some key passages. We will then consider the principal features of his positive critique.

“A contemptuous neglect – sometimes a boastful repudiation – of principles or theories of social reform is a characteristic attitude of most ‘social reformers’ in England today. Rejecting the ‘scientific’ claims of Social Democracy upon the double ground that its analysis of economic problems is radically defective and that it fails to apply practically to the future the conception of historic evolution which it recognises in interpreting the past, English ‘progressives’ present no alternative analysis or theory, nor do they recognise the need of forming any. Not a few among them have passed through a period of half-intellectual, half-emotional Utopianism, dreaming dreams and seeing visions, but they have come out at the other side, and pride themselves upon having sloughed off all hallucinations and settled down to the practical work of detailed reform. Most of them frankly admit that along with their early hallucinations they have shed all ‘theory’ or ‘principle’ as awkward encumbrances which impede that facility of compromise by which alone they deem each separate measure of real progress can be achieved.

“Earnest workers in the cause of that expansion of Municipal and State activity, which is termed Collectivism, are especially impressed by this conviction of the futility of theories and ideas. Progress is for them purely a matter of detailed experiment, which shall concern itself only with the special circumstances of each case. Such work, they hold, is best entrusted to men with no particular intellectual principles or broad convictions, or who, if they have any, will be careful not to seek to bring them into application. Mazzini, indeed, has told us that ‘principles alone are constructive,’ but our practical reformer is sure that he knows better: he sees how very apt principles are to get in the way and clog the wheels of progress. Whatever may be true of France or Germany, English history, as he reads it, proves that progress is not governed by the conscious operation of ideas. This revolt against ideas is carried so far that able men have

come seriously to look upon progress as a matter for the manipulation of wirepullers, something to be 'jobbed' in committee by sophistical motions or other clever trickery. Great national issues really turn, according to this judgment, upon the arts of political management, the play of the adroit tactician and the complete canvasser. This is the 'work' that tells: elections, the sane expression of the national will, are won by these and by no other means.

"Nowhere has this mechanical conception of progress worked more disastrously than in the movement towards Collectivism. Suppose that the mechanism of reform were perfected, that each little clique of specialists and wirepullers were placed at its proper point in the machinery of public life, will this machinery grind out progress? Every student of industrial history knows that the application of a powerful 'motor' is of vastly greater importance than the invention of the special machine. Now, what provision is made for generating the motor-power of progress in Collectivism? Will it come of its own accord? Our mechanical reformer apparently thinks it will. The attraction of some present obvious gain, the suppression of some scandalous abuse of monopolist power by a private company, some needed enlargement of existing Municipal or State enterprise by lateral expansion – such are the sole springs of action. In this way the Municipalisation of public services, increased assertion of State control over mines, railways, and factories, the assumption under State control of large departments of transport trade, proceed without any recognition of the guidance of general principles. Everywhere the pressure of concrete interests, nowhere the conscious play of organised human intelligence! Yet the folly of thus ignoring ideas and the enthusiasm they can evoke, and of trusting entirely to the detailed pressure of felt needs and grievances, can be made manifest even to the practical man by pointing out how such an expansion of Collective action by redress of known long-standing grievances not merely implies a waste of Collective energy in the past, but involves the grievous expense of compensating vested interests which a wiser regard for 'theory' would never have permitted to grow up."⁹

Thus the introduction. Anyone familiar with the literature of the Fabians will immediately recognise that this introduction is aimed *inter alia* at certain tendencies expressed in their work. But it applies not only to the Fabians. Many of us non-English Socialists, and by no means the worst of us, have (to pick up the author's image) gone through the same development from semi-utopianism to mechanistic social theory. Because of our different circumstances, we have not always expressed ourselves as openly as the Fabians but have pre-

ferred to work through the conflict in private. And, as I have shown above, we are not completely immune to such maladies even today.

The author then attempts to establish the practical usefulness of theory and principle for the collectivist movement and to show that "reformers who repudiate the guidance of Utopia, and even distrust the application of economic first principles, are not thrown back entirely upon that crude empiricism which insists that each case is to be judged separately and exclusively on its own individual merits."¹⁰ In another article, we shall see how he sets about this.¹¹

ADLER to KAUTSKY (extract)¹²

Vienna, 9 November 1896

[. . .] Ede has got quite beyond me. It is not so terrible that Bax should coolly call him a Fabian. The disaster is that his article on the Armenians really was incredible. The best one can do with the French and their dastardly chauvinism is to tolerate it in silence (and I couldn't bring myself to do even that), but to make excuses for them is going too far. Bax is right on one point — Ede is as sentimental as an ageing tart. If he doesn't deal with Shaw a bit more vigorously in his second "Problems" article, I shall wash my hands of the whole "science" and "justice" business. They are just irresponsible speechifiers, and they will have to be told so. If I am keeping very quiet with regard to Kanner¹³ it is because I don't want to give the man stuff for publicity. Nowadays, an attack from the *Arb. Z.* throws a paper into fairly high profile, and I want to avoid that if possible, for the time being. But that needn't stand in your way, least of all where Shaw is concerned. I read all Ede's articles with such profit, I've learned so much from him and esteem him so highly that *Schmockerei* of this sort makes me simply furious. I think you should go ahead and give Shaw a thrashing.

KAUTSKY to ADLER (extract)¹⁴

Stuttgart, 12 November 1896

[. . .] I couldn't find much to agree with in Ede's second "Problems" article. Let us hope that there is a third on the way.¹⁵ The Fabians will have to be dealt with more vigorously, and in particular they must be made aware that they are setting the consumers' interest above that of the producers, though it is the latter which is crucial. In the last resort, the position of the workers is determined by their interests as producers, not as consumers; and the first concern of socialism is to abolish the exploitation of the workers, not of the

consumers. This means that collectivism will certainly not be defined as Hobson defines it, and someone ought to say so.

Although I was very dissatisfied with Ede's attitude in his second "Problems of Socialism" article, I did agree with his Armenian article. I don't see at all how you can call it "incredible." I suppose he was a little too "fair" to the French, but that is not the main point of the article, and you can see what he means if you've read *Vorwärts*. It is just as pointless to gloss over French chauvinism as it is to get into a state of furious moral indignation about it. After all, we ought to try and understand the French, and it won't do our people outside France any harm to realise that French esteem for Russia is not mere lunacy but is well grounded in circumstances. Let us have no illusions!

Of course, Ede should have pointed out that a thing is not necessarily right just because it is understandable, and that our people in France should have shown more backbone in resisting the prevailing mood. In that respect, his article was rather one-sided, but this was, after all, a secondary matter; and it is manifest that he was emphasising precisely the point that had been overlooked by the other side, and was leaving out what they had already stressed with sufficient urgency.

As regards the main issue, the Oriental question, I am wholly in agreement with Ede and felt that his article was all the more significant because Liebknecht's quite incredible stance on the question entrenches itself behind the authority of Marx.¹⁶ I am afraid Liebknecht still stands on all points exactly where he stood at the time of the Crimean War. But what was right then may well be wrong now, and usually is.

I also played a part in instigating Ede's article, and in it he has used some observations from my letters. Perhaps that is why I am enthusiastic about the article. I'm afraid I hold the view, both on the Oriental and on the Polish questions, that the old Marxist line has become untenable, and so has Marx's attitude to the Czechs.¹⁷ It would be completely un-Marxlike to close one's eyes to the facts and persist in the old Marxist view.

. . . I don't agree with the Fabians on theoretical matters, but I still prefer them to Bax and Hyndman with their utopianism wrapped up in Marxist phraseology. The Fabians have done far less damage to our movement in England by their critique of what passes for Marxism than Bax and Hyndman have by compromising Marxism. And I'll find a way of drumming that into Bax in my reply.¹⁸

EDUARD BERNSTEIN
5. The Social and Political Significance
of Space and Number
Neue Zeit, 14 and 21 April 1897

I

In such current socialist discussions as go beyond day-to-day matters, certain points have been treated in a quite remarkably casual and superficial manner. Yet these very points are of immense importance to a social doctrine which claims to be scientific. I refer to the problem of socio-political area units and to the closely related problem of socio-political accountability.

These matters have not always been neglected. Disregarding those utopians who were content to paint poetic visions of a land of endless bliss, many of the earlier Socialists did give thought to these questions. They specified particular sizes and populations for their model communities and tried to find norms by which relationships of mutual responsibility could be regulated. Incidentally, the utopians were by no means always dreamers. They were mistaken about the means and possibilities available, but even that was hardly strange while princely absolutism flourished. By contrast, they often displayed a highly developed realism in their social criticism and even in their utopias. Among the great utopians of our own century, we find Owen calculating his plan for society arithmetically right down to the smallest detail, in order to prove its feasibility; and Fourier analysing human instincts and passions with great psychological insight and in considerable detail, in order to make full allowance for them in the Phalanstery, and indeed to make them the corner-stone of it. Both Owen and Fourier suggest specific average units for the population and territory of their communistic communities, and Fourier gives his Phalanstery the function of serving as the basic unit in a great national and international federation intended to replace the old state units.¹⁹

Owen, Fourier, and the Fourierists have already one foot in the camp of those Socialists who have emancipated practical measures for realising their aims from any utopian vision of the future and who try to bring society to the desired goal by means of reforms related to existing conditions.

From then on, two main currents of thought may be distinguished among Socialists. The one attempts to reshape the existing state according to specific principles in order to make it the vehicle of social

reform until it finally becomes completely socialist in character. The other attempts to eliminate the state entirely, breaking it up into a series of completely autonomous communities, or loosely knit groups, which are free to organise themselves and to form alliances as they feel the urge or the need.

The first alternative, that of beginning with the existing state, is the one to which German Social Democrats nowadays subscribe. However, a crucial change has taken place in their attitude to the state since Engels coined the familiar phrase in his *Anti-Dühring* about the "withering away" of the state.²⁰ Not only do they resist the state insofar as it is the vehicle of certain exploitative tendencies; they also insist that there can be no form of state other than the feudal state or the bourgeois-capitalist state. They are not so doctrinaire that they are afraid to entrust certain social functions to the state, but they will not accept that the state itself might eventually become socialist. With the victory of socialism the state ceases to exist, and socialist *society* begins.

Now, it is true that we can never be too careful in dealing with the state. It is, as the familiar saying has it, a "rogue." It is the means by which class interests are simultaneously pursued and disguised. And because it does this while formally representing the common interest, it has got many Socialists confused. A fairly uncritical cult of the state was once widespread in Social Democracy,²¹ and it was against this cult that Engels's famous dictum was chiefly aimed. It was first and foremost a protest against the bureaucratic concept of socialism and was based on the idea that the present functions of the state be gradually removed by the agency of democratic self-government. Now, if by "state" we mean simply a power set above the nation as a whole and deriving its sovereign authority from some entitlement other than the express will and needs of that nation, then it is clear that the state is incompatible with democratic self-government. But one must ask whether this is not too narrow a use of the word, and one that is already partly obsolete.

We need only look about us to see how variable a thing the state is. Russia is a state, Prussia and Austria are states, France is a state, and even the Swiss cantons are states with sovereign rights. But if the republican canton of Zürich, which appoints its government and many officials by direct popular election, chooses, or retains, the same expression to designate the legal arrangements governing the relations of its citizens with one another and with the whole as do the monarchical despotisms, then, in years to come, men may very well keep the word "state" to signify the entity which embraces the

whole of a nation, however much the character of that entity may have changed.

However, it is not our business to salvage the word. We cheerfully abandon it, if that helps clarify the problem in hand. Apparently, however, it goes only halfway towards doing this, for confusion over the concept of the state, or the confused use of the word, is replaced by another confusion which could be equally pernicious. One sign of this is the indiscriminate use of the word "society."⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾

As everyone knows, the term "society" stands for an extraordinary range of things. It is used for associations with strictly defined membership as well as for looser groupings distinguished only by the possession of certain common characteristics. Thus we speak of clubs as societies, and we also speak of human society, which, since it includes the whole human race, is a merely conceptual agglomeration. Then again, for the sake of brevity, we call certain forms or conditions of communal existence "societies"; thus we speak of ancient, feudal, or bourgeois society. In this last sense of the term, it must, of course, also be legitimate to speak of socialist or communist society. The adjective makes perfectly clear what is meant. However, communist societies can be organised in many different ways and governed according to many different principles, and it is meaningless to say that, in the communist future, "society" will do this or that or arrange matters in such and such a fashion. "Society" is, quite simply, an indeterminate concept, as the much-used current phrase has it. And yet this metaphysical entity, this infinite unit, is credited with achievements of an equally infinite magnitude. It brings into being and guarantees the most complete harmony and the most wonderful solidarity imaginable. In "society," exploitation and oppression have ceased, and both production and exchange are regulated to perfection.

The opponents of socialism rightly refuse to give unqualified credence to such claims. They rest on a purely metaphysical argument and have no greater intrinsic validity than the much-despised ontological proof of the existence of God: we can only conceive of God as perfect, perfection entails existence, therefore God exists. Similarly: the society we seek to create will be purged of all the evils of present society; these evils, or their consequences, include legal and other obligations together with the apparatus for their implementation; therefore the society we seek to create will not have such an apparatus. The argument in both cases is pretty much the same.

To this it will be replied that belief in a future society's ability to operate without legal obligations rests on solid facts, and that, in general, the development of society towards communism is vouched

for by economic and social developments taking place before our very eyes, notably the increasing concentration of industry and hence the intensified development of collective production. Collective production, however, develops all the human characteristics required for a communist society, i.e. the voluntary submission of the individual to the requirements of the whole, solidarity of consciousness, sense of duty, etc. The rising level of popular education, the increasing benefits the individual receives from the community as a whole, the abolition of all legal inequalities, and the guarantee of equal opportunities for everyone all work towards the same end and thus justify the conclusion that one day individual and communal interests will coincide and that men will, as a matter of course, do what the communal interest requires.

I do not of course wish to deny that these tendencies exist, or that in general social development is moving in this direction. But the factors underlying this movement are not the only forces at work in modern society. Alongside them, other powerful factors work in the opposite direction and largely cancel out many of their effects. These factors include the effect which spatial relationships and the increase of population have on the rest of the social and economic life of a nation.

Although they seem to be opposed to each other, there are certain respects in which spatial relationships and increase of population work in the same direction.

Technical progress has immeasurably increased our ability to deal with distances. Where mobility is concerned, mankind is well on the way "to abolish space,"²² as the vivid English phrase has it. However, our ability to overcome distances physically has scarcely affected our physical [*sic*; psychological?] ability to cope with space. For the modern traveller, hundreds of miles may well mean less than a single mile once used to mean, but mentally we have no better grasp of space than an African Negro or a Tierra del Fuegoan. For us, distances which exceed our mental range are merely derived concepts – be they huge distances in outer space or a paltry mile on our own small earth. We master them as distances, but we cannot conceive them as space. The same goes for the economic mastery of space. No matter how fast the steam locomotive and the electric or pneumatic vehicle may carry us overland, the steam-plough will not keep pace with them, not even relatively, because the difficulties still to be overcome in its case are nowhere near as easy to solve. Cultivation of the soil has a tendency to put more and more labour into the ground and to fix installations increasingly in a given locality. How-

ever easy it may be for man and the products of his labour to be moved from place to place, the institutions of production, and with them a large percentage of the population, remain essentially tied to a given territory.

Meanwhile, the population increases and, with the increase in population, the whole economic system becomes more complex. Everyone knows how important the growth and increasing density of population have been in developing the division of labour in industry. This differentiation is becoming even more extensive as technical expertise is perfected. However, this also increases the burden of administration, which becomes all the greater as more branches of industry are taken over and turned into public services.

So who is "society"? Obviously, we can define administrative areas only in territorial terms. And here number is just as vital a consideration as space. At a pinch, ten or a hundred people can consult and decide collectively on all matters that concern them, but it is physically impossible for a thousand to deal with every detail by direct consultation, and ten thousand can at best consult directly only on the most important matters. And here we are talking of millions, not tens of thousands. If, as the anarchists suggest, we were to break up the existing nation-states into countless small, fully autonomous communities, we could, if successful, achieve a state of affairs in which "society" in each of these small communities governed itself in every detail. Under favourable conditions, it might also be possible to achieve such a high degree of solidarity within these groups that any written legal code would be superfluous. But, on the whole, we would merely create a special kind of property which would be much worse than private property as we have it today. And since the possibilities of making a living would vary enormously according to differences in situation and soil condition, we would lay the foundation for the most bitter conflicts of interest between one community and another. Such a state of affairs is quite unthinkable, given the resources of present-day communications, which are a compelling argument in favour of territorially large communities. There is no evident reason why the great nations which history has produced should not, in the future, continue to constitute administrative units. The complete amalgamation of nation-states is neither likely nor desirable. They are well able to attend to their common cultural interests by mutual agreement and by developing the system of international law, and they can do this without relinquishing their individuality. Similarly, the continued existence of national federations does not mean the continuation of state centralisation in its present form.

But however decentralised an administration we envisage, there will always be a large number of social tasks which are incompatible with the notion of the autonomous activity of society. Take an example which lies readily to hand: the administration of the transport system. Do we really imagine that "society" could, by direct annual election, appoint all the officials of this major administrative body? Nor would it be possible for "society" to delegate this and similar branches of administration to free associations. It would have to establish permanent offices and norms for the principles on which they operate. And, unless socialist society is to make dilettantism a guiding principle, it will need experienced officials who are given long-term appointments on condition of good conduct. In addition, of course, some apparatus of control for these and other offices will be necessary.

Who, then, is going to make the decisions about all these matters and any other modifications which may become necessary? The people themselves? But they will often be faced with detailed questions of a highly specialised sort, and, until the happy day when mankind consists entirely of walking encyclopaedias, only a tiny minority of the population will have the requisite interest and understanding. Besides, even if the popular vote were confined to major administrative measures, the fortunate citizen of the future would find himself confronted every Sunday by a questionnaire of truly staggering proportions. He would need a very highly developed sense of duty to inform himself properly on all these questions before casting his vote, and it would be a totally unjustified self-deception to assume any such sense of duty in a body of ten million voters. Previous experience suggests, on the contrary, that the larger the group of persons responsible in any particular case, the less the individual's sense of responsibility will be. Here too, numbers have an effect. In time, voting would degenerate into a farce, and in any case, it would provide a much weaker guarantee of good management than investing control in popular representatives or in bodies accountable to them. Direct popular election is entirely justified at certain stages of democratic development, but, if it is to function in a manner likely to further the common interest, it must, in the case of larger communities, be confined to questions which have a major impact on the common interest and are not too highly specialised in character. Imagine a community the size of contemporary Prussia and suppose that it had assumed a large number of administrative tasks additional to those it already undertakes. It is easy to see what a host of vital questions would have to be decided, week after week.

But there is another respect in which a community which counts its adult citizens in millions must face the consequences of space and number.

Communist communities of the past could dispense with laws because they were very small and relationships within them were very straightforward. Custom and tradition determined the law, and public opinion enforced its observance. Moreover, the incentive to offend against the common interest was very small indeed.

The socialised state will not, for some time to come, be able to rely with certainty on analogous safeguards for its legal code. The network of relationships, especially within the great centres of population, is highly complex, and even where public opinion is not divided, growing ease of movement from place to place makes it difficult to mobilise it as a guardian of law and morality. And where there are strong incentives to transgress, the pressure to respect the common interest is not sufficiently strong to prevent offences being committed. All but the most superficial will see that there is a danger here which should be provided for in advance, especially considering that such offences include sins of omission as well as of commission. A sense of responsibility strong enough to prevent the latter is not necessarily strong enough to prevent the former, and confidence in the strength of a sense of solidarity can easily prove deceptive. We may permit ourselves to repeat an idea already expressed in the article quoted earlier from volume 10 of *Neue Zeit*. In a large area, the argument runs, "it is only under a certain *pressure* that the consciousness of solidarity is strong enough to bring about voluntary renunciation of individual interests." Where obligations are shared among millions, the sense of responsibility for those obligations felt by any one individual is not great.

This line of thought should make Socialists in particular think twice about agitating and pressing for legislative action on measures likely to teach people to think of themselves as receivers of charity. Blunting the sense of social responsibility is not in the interests of Social Democracy and is, in any case, bad social policy.

Anyone who finds this philistine, petty-bourgeois, or Manchesterish should study the history of the English Poor Law. It has a lesson to teach him. It is true that when, in 1834, the English Parliament abolished the old Poor Law under which a large number of workers received charity, it overstepped the mark in going to the opposite extreme and treating poverty as a crime. But the removal of the weak Poor Law, which caused such indignation among Socialists and philanthropists at the time, has proved extremely healthy for the moral

and economic elevation of the working class as a whole. No sensible Socialist nowadays would wish the old "humane" Poor Law back again.

If trade unions and co-operatives had no other function than to keep a sense of solidarity and mutual responsibility alive in the workers, then for that reason alone they would meet with the warm approval of any Socialist.

But to return to the socialist state. As we said, it could not rely absolutely on its citizens to do their duty to the community of their own accord. A large community cannot operate without a punitive legal apparatus to deal with major positive crimes. Even if it treats the criminal as being ill, this is a change in form rather than substance. Whether a man is sentenced to prison for rape or put into a moral hospital for a while as suffering from a "sexual disease," the principal effect is the same. Because the community protects the right of the person, it cannot simply dismiss an assault by saying, "Go, and sin no more."

However, it goes without saying that the repressive use of force should be kept to a minimum. So the question remains: by what means can a socialist community make its members perform their civic duty and, in particular, their allotted share of the common task, given that it cannot rely wholly on the force of moral compulsion?

II

In present-day society, the duty to work is normally enforced by the threat of starvation. With the obvious exception of children and those who are unable to work, anyone who will not work must go hungry, unless he benefits in some way from accumulated labour or can, without using physical force, persuade others to work for him. A society based on private property is entirely consistent in regarding poverty in general as a social offence. Such a society can be required to distinguish between kinds of poverty as it does between kinds of crime, to assist those impoverished through no fault of their own, and to make provision for the support of the involuntarily unemployed. But it is unreasonable to expect, and pure demagogy to demand, that it give the able-bodied unemployed more assistance than is necessary to keep them fit for work without weakening their incentive to look for work unconnected with the assistance they receive. The basic socio-economic principle of present society is that of economic self-reliance, and any welfare policy which seriously challenges this principle would be unsocial, or even antisocial, from the stand-

point of the present social order. When state and municipality take it upon themselves to provide, free of charge, a number of necessities for which the individual was previously responsible, they do, to that extent, reduce his obligation to provide for himself, but they do not undermine the principle itself. As a rule, they limit free services to those where the benefit accruing to any individual citizen cannot be measured or where they wish, and prescribe, the service to be used in the common interest. The provision of street-lighting will serve as an example of the former and the elementary education system as an example of the latter.

Socialism has inscribed on its banner the demand for a steady increase in the services which the organised community provides free of charge to its members. But it is immediately obvious that the community cannot give its members anything which it has not previously received in one form or another. So the individual's claim as of right to the services provided by the community is balanced by his duty to contribute, in a certain proportion, to the costs of these services or to the work necessary to provide them. No Socialist would quarrel with this. "No rights without duties," say the statutes of the International Workers' Association. But the political position of Social Democracy *vis-à-vis* the state as now constituted means that, for the time being, this acknowledgment remains theoretical while in practice – and practice is what counts – our agitation stresses the claims of the citizen on the community but says little about the community's economic claims on its citizens – apart from those affecting the higher income groups. At present, this is no doubt justified from an economic and social point of view, but its effect on the social ethos of the masses is not without its dangers.

We cannot expect that, after a Social Democratic victory, the whole population will suddenly adopt a social attitude different from the one it held before. It is indeed possible, even probable, that the moral impetus of such a victory would inspire part of the working class to greater dedication in the common cause than it had shown before. Something like this happened in Paris in 1848, and there seems no reason why it should not occasionally happen again on an even larger scale. But this increased self-sacrifice on the part of some would be offset by exceptionally high expectations and claims from others, and we must admit that, as a proportion of the working class as a whole, those prepared to make sacrifices for political or trade union ends will probably be only a minority while the others will be the great majority.

Will society be able to satisfy these enhanced expectations all at

once? If, in the foreseeable future, political conjunctures or unexpected catastrophes were to cause a sudden change which put power into the hands of Social Democracy, could this lead directly to society's relieving the individual of his duty to provide for himself? If we are to have a clear answer to this question, we shall do well to re-examine carefully the state of development which production has reached.

In an earlier chapter,²³ we saw that the concentration and centralisation of industry are by no means the only direction in which production is moving, that the formation of large and even giant companies is the main but not the universal tendency in industry, and that technical progress and the increased productivity of labour are constantly bringing new branches of production into being alongside the old, so that despite the increased concentration of industry the overall number of companies has not fallen significantly. According to the figures given earlier for the thirteen years between the industrial census of 1882 and that of 1895, the number of self-employed businessmen in industry fell from approximately 1,861,000 to 1,774,000, i.e. by 87,000, a fall of less than 5 per cent. Even if we assume that the decrease will double during the next thirteen years and proportionately thereafter, we will still be left with 1,600,000 independent businessmen or companies by 1908 and with 1,280,000 by 1921.^(iv) In 1882 there were, all told, 40,000 large and medium-sized companies. Even if a number of these gradually fall victim to the concentration of industry, their places will be taken by an even larger number which will, during the same period, have developed from small workshops into medium-sized or large companies. It would probably not be underestimating the rate of concentration to assume that, on average, there will be one new medium-sized or large company for every twenty small ones that close down. But even assuming a proportion of 25:1, there would still be 24,000 new medium-sized and large companies for roughly 600,000 of the vanished small ones. If we add the 40,000 mentioned above, we get 64,000, of which perhaps 4,000 could be set off as medium-sized or large companies swallowed up by the very large companies. So quite apart from any small workshops (cottage industries are not included in the calculations), in industry alone "society" in Germany would have to deal with approximately 60,000 large and medium-sized companies by 1921.

Do we realise what this means? The figure rolls easily from the pen and more easily still from the tongue. But let us make a serious attempt to envisage its social and political implications and to see what

is involved in placing the management of 60,000 companies under the *direct* control of "society." This figure alone – to which we must add at least as many, if not more, medium-sized and large agricultural enterprises – suggests that for a long time it would be little more than an abstraction to speak of "society" producing. Even if society were dealing only with the large and medium-sized companies, the production directly under its control would require an administrative machine so vast and complex as to dwarf the present postal and railway systems. And such an administrative machine cannot be created overnight, especially in troubled times. Some delegation, whether to groups of private producers or to public bodies, will be inevitable, and rights will have to be delegated as well as responsibilities.

Once again we find an underlying common interest which has to be protected against partial or particular interests. To do this effectively, the community needs regularly functioning plenipotentiaries, i.e. *officials*; and to prevent arbitrary judgment and supervision, it needs standing, universally applicable rules, i.e. *laws*. The size of the population in question, the extent of the territory it occupies, the growing number of branches into which production is differentiated, and the great number, variety, and extent of the units of production – all these factors make it highly improbable that all individual interests will automatically harmonise into a uniform and evenly maintained common interest. It is only in undifferentiated economies that "society" can pursue its existence like a mollusc or flatworm – to take an image from biology. Just as in the zoological world the formation of a skeleton becomes an unavoidable necessity as the differentiation of functions advances, so also in the life of a society the differentiation of the economy brings with it the need to develop an administrative body which will represent the interests of society as such. Such a body was, and still is, the *state*.^(v) Clearly, the further development of production cannot proceed by the abolition of differentiated production but only by new combinations on the basis of the differentiation already achieved. Similarly with human beings. Progress lies, not in abolishing the occupational division of labour, but in *completing the process*, and the administrative body of society in the foreseeable future will differ only in degree from the state as we now know it.^(vi)

And for the foreseeable future, the *responsibility for economic self-reliance* laid on those who are able to work can be changed only in *degree*. Employment *statistics* can be greatly extended in scope, the *exchange* and *mobility of labour* can be much improved and facili-

tated, and a system of labour *law* can be developed which would give the individual much greater security and a more flexible choice of occupation than at present. In this respect, the most advanced organisations of economic self-help, the large trade unions, are already showing the way things are likely to develop. But it will not be possible for the right to work to take the form of an unconditional right to employment in a given occupation or even in a given locality; nor can it be regarded as desirable for such a right to exist. In an organism as large and complex as the modern civilised nations are (and, as we saw, will continue to be for a long time), an unconditional right to work would in fact be nothing but a source of vindictive wilfulness and endless strife, as well as economic nonsense. On this point, the opponents of socialism are right. But it is also entirely wrong to conclude that any such unconditional "right to work" follows necessarily from socialist doctrine, just as it is wrong to say that socialism implies a duty to work and therefore that anybody and everybody can be directed to do a particular job.

In the most immediately feasible stage of social development, there can be no more than a conditional right to work and a conditional duty to work. As we have said, there are already some indications that a democratic system of labour law is emerging. Strong unions are able to secure a kind of right to employment for their able-bodied members by pointing out to the employers that they would be very ill advised to dismiss a union member without a very good cause acknowledged as such by the union; and in the allocation of work they take both the order of registration and the need of the worker into account. But, apart from emergencies and communal tasks which all members of society take turns to perform, the duty to work can be enforced only by the rule that he who will not work shall not eat, i.e. *by upholding the already accepted principle that the individual is responsible for his own economic welfare.*

There is no prospect whatever that the individual's responsibility for his own economic welfare will be abolished in any future social order. Socialism can only *facilitate the discharge of this duty.* Anything more than that would be undesirable. We all know that responsibility for oneself is only one side of a social principle, the obverse of which is personal freedom. The one is inconceivable without the other. However contradictory it may sound, the notion of abolishing the individual's responsibility for his own economic welfare is thoroughly antisocialist. The alternatives would be either complete tyranny or the dissolution of all social order.

Once again, we must reject as absolutely utopian the idea that a

socialist revolution could transform the state into an automatic welfare organisation. So, bearing this in mind, Social Democracy has to solve the problem of how agitation for greater state and municipal benefits for the welfare of the masses can be combined with the maintenance of a sense of social responsibility. And here the institutions created by social self-help acquire an enhanced significance for any future society. If the socialist movement were confined just to political agitation, it could very well accomplish the opposite of what it is trying to achieve; that is, it could undermine, not the present condition of society, but the society it is striving to establish. The sense of social duty conveyed to the masses by *political* agitation as such is no more than skin-deep, for it can only consist of making demands on behalf of the masses. This is particularly apparent in countries where the masses are no longer denied important political rights. The result is that the political struggle has lost a powerful moral impulse. Self-help organisations work differently. Co-operatives and trade unions can be extremely petty and even reactionary *vis-à-vis* the community at large, but within their own sphere they inevitably strengthen the sense of social duty. The potential achievements of a union depend on the extent of the sacrifices which its members are prepared to make for it, and its strength depends on the discipline which it can impose on its members. Like all democratic bodies, a well-run union views derelictions of duty with great severity. It can judge its members' capacity for responsibility, and it sees that it is maintained.

The large territories and vast populations of modern states make it increasingly difficult for the individual to get an overall idea of what a state administration might be expected to achieve. The figures he encounters in connection with the subject are so huge that they have no reality for him. No matter how hard we try to understand and retain them, they speak a language the full meaning of which constantly eludes us. If the individual were to confront this vast community with no intermediary, merely as one unit among a million others, then democracy would be no more than an empty word. The most perfect electoral system, the most far-reaching application of the principle of direct legislation, would, of itself, make very little difference. The will of each individual would be neutralised by that of other individuals, and the real rulers would be the heads of the administration, the bureaucracy. Hence the importance and actual necessity of *intermediate institutions*. Such institutions include those creations of the representation of economic interests already mentioned and others of the kind, as well as those political bodies specif-

ically designated as organs of self-government: local, district, and regional representative bodies. So far, German socialist literature has paid very little attention to them. In practice, we have taken them as they stand; we have usually demanded universal suffrage, and where the existing suffrage enabled representatives to be elected, we have tried to advance the workers' interests within them. But all this has been purely eclectic, pursued, so to speak, from case to case. Because no practical occasion arose, nobody troubled to ask what functions other than the existing ones these representative bodies might assume in a socialist community (whether as state, republic, or whatever) or what economic role they might play in a socialist society or in relation to a socialist state. All told, very little has been said about district or regional representation, and any theorising about municipalities [*Gemeinden*] has taken place almost entirely in the context of discussions of anarchism; here, understandably, the difference between municipality and state has been more strongly emphasised than what connects them, and their formal differences have been stressed more than their close economic links. It is only recently, under the influence of municipal socialism in England and France, that we have begun to consider the matter on the level of principle. This is very gratifying for, as is clear from what we have said, the self-government of a municipality involves rather more for socialism than just the administration of gas, water, tramways, etc., the determination of trade unionists' wages, and the like. Left to itself, the state or any analogous central administration would be more or less helpless when faced by the huge mass of industrial enterprises, the figures for which we considered above. Space and quantity would prevent anything more than a superficial intervention in their economic management. But if the organs of self-government are brought into the picture, everything looks different. The enormity [*Ungeheuerlichkeit*] of spatial relations vanishes, and quantitative relations become more human. However, this does not render the "state" redundant. The efficient distribution of functions between central and local administration naturally entails limiting the sovereign rights of the central administration. But these rights cannot be completely delegated to local administration, if only because the political connection between the two would then cease. And in any case, it would mean the reduction, not the abolition, of the areas under central administration.

So, as Marx explains in *The Civil War in France*, the crux of the matter is not to dissolve the unity of the great nations which history has produced but to find a new basis for that unity. Whether this can be achieved in every case in the way which Marx describes in this

work need not concern us here. But it is vital to keep a firm grasp on the basic idea: that most of the functions at present carried out by the state must be taken over by self-governing democratic bodies. Only a very small part of the transfer of production to public enterprise can be accomplished directly via the state. If we are to avoid being limited in this matter to whatever is within the administrative capacity of the state and the bureaucracy, then it is absolutely necessary that we bring the democratic organs of self-government into fuller operation. It is only with their help that we can overcome the difficulties which space and number put in the way of socialist reform in the social and political fields.

Notes

- (i) See, among others, the pamphlet "Socialism: True and False," by Sidney Webb.
- (ii) It says in the Introduction: "Since it is our purpose to impose unity of thought and endeavour upon the work of criticism and construction which we essay, and not merely to collect a number of detached personal judgments, it has seemed best to somewhat divest ourselves of the interest and authority which might attach to individual names and to preserve in an Editorial section a strict practice of anonymity."
- (iii) The author cannot absolve himself from having contributed in his time a good deal to this confusion. However, I think I ought to point out that, in the *Zürich Sozialdemokrat*, I have repeatedly opposed exaggerated interpretations of the withering away of the state.²⁴ Likewise in this journal. "Now, the word society sounds harmless enough. It can evoke something completely innocent, the pure concept of a multiplicity of individuals living unconstrainedly together. But, in reality, a society which is to intervene to meet certain needs and regulate certain abuses requires organs, a constitution, financial resources, and, in the end, means of coercion . . . It is obvious that this involves more than a mystical, incorporeal society." (*Neue Zeit*, x, 2, p. 815). E.B.

I permit myself the observation that we could get around the difficulty by using the word *Gemeinwesen* (commonwealth, *res publica*). A *Gemeinwesen* is not necessarily a ruling organisation, a state; but it is always a stable, strictly circumscribed social organism, provided with laws and executive officers. One could not call a municipality or a marketing co-operative a state, but they are more than a vague "society." They are specific collectivities. I do not make this observation *against* Bernstein. On the contrary. Unless I am mistaken, he has himself pointed out many years ago in the *Sozialdemokrat* that the socialist social organism is best described as a socialist community or socialist republic.²⁵ K.K.

- (iv) For the sake of brevity, the figures for self-employed businessmen have been assumed to be the same as those for industrial enterprises. Statistics show that for our purposes this does not lead to significant errors. In 1882, there were 1,861,000 self-employed businessmen and 1,954,000 industrial enterprises, so that the enterprises were even more numerous than the businessmen.
- (v) On the development of the state as a consequence of the expansion and differentiation of economic life and the extension of the territory occupied, see K. Kautsky, *Parliamentarianism, Popular Legislation, and Social Democracy*, pp. 9ff.²⁶
- (vi) The proposition that society takes the place of the state contains a conceptual ellipse. The state can be replaced by an administration which champions the interests of members of society as a whole against any particular or class interest, but it cannot be replaced by "society." Otherwise, it would be just as logical to argue that instead of capitalist industry (or socialist or communal industry) we are to have the "totality of the workers." Change of content brings change of form, but content is not a substitute for form.

Socialism and the Proletariat

EDUARD BERNSTEIN

**Problems of Socialism, Second Series:
Socialism and Child Labour in Industry**
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The Zürich Conference on Workers' Protection resolved the question of child labour – meaning industrial work performed by young persons of all ages – by demanding that school attendance be compulsory and all forms of industrial employment be banned for all persons under fifteen. Additional demands were made concerning the employment of young persons between fifteen and eighteen years of age: restriction to a maximum of eight hours per day; the abolition of all Sunday work; time allowed within the permitted eight hours of work for attendance at technical and general institutions of further education.

These resolutions, and some of the speeches made on the subject by Socialists and social reformers, suggest that further discussion is needed on certain matters which the conference considered fleetingly or not at all.

There is general agreement in principle that child labour must be subject to restrictions governing the minimum age at which it is allowed and the hours worked. And it would seem to be equally well established in principle that regulations for school education should be closely co-ordinated with regulations for child labour. A minority of those attending the conference did admittedly take the view that this correlation was unnecessary or even detrimental, but they clearly did so only because they felt that the very specific connection urged by the majority was undesirable. At all events it is impossible to see what objection could be raised in principle once the restriction of child labour has been declared necessary. But the question does arise as to whether the majority of the conference, and the resolution which they finally adopted, did not take too superficial a view of the

way in which the co-ordination of these regulations should be achieved, and whether they were right to disregard in so summary a fashion the problems which arise in the spheres of educational method and family life.

First and foremost, it is presumably clear that if every child is to be required to attend school until its fifteenth year, this will make demands on schools which, in a depressing majority of cases, they are at present unable to meet. It cannot simply be a matter of keeping children at school until a certain age in order to prevent their being drafted into industrial labour. It must be a matter of the proper education of the young, of the best method of promoting their physical and mental development. Well, the curriculum of the primary schools can be infinitely broadened and their syllabus infinitely extended; here, as elsewhere, our English friends in the Social Democratic Federation seem to have great things in mind. According to their pronouncements, the raising of the minimum age for employment to sixteen years is still not really adequate; and, indeed, the Socialist Congress in London demanded free education and maintenance up to the age of twenty-one years.¹ Insofar as these suggestions are not inspired by the semi-conscious conviction (held by many) that the number of people in *productive* labour should be reduced, they are, in my opinion, based on an exaggerated estimation of the value of academic education for young people in the critical age-range under consideration. A great aversion to all academic learning usually manifests itself in the majority of pupils at the age of fifteen and, in many cases, at the age of fourteen. Only a minority continue to take a full interest in their lessons. The great majority do so under duress and with very little real benefit for their mental development. At the Zürich Congress it was pointed out that the human body must not be physically overstrained during the years of puberty. Quite true! But excessive mental exertion would be just as inappropriate. And given the conditions in which the great mass of people live nowadays, it would be equally a mistake to leave young people too much to their own devices at that age. If we do not want to force a large number of them to sit around in school to no purpose, then we must willy-nilly give them the opportunity to engage in useful physical labour to an extent appropriate to their years. And there is no reason why productive work should be excluded as a matter of principle.

I am aware that, in writing this, I lay myself open to the charge that I am rehearsing an argument advanced by factory-owners eager to exploit children. But in matters like these we must, without prejudice or regard for slogans, examine the effect which any particular

measure would have on social development in general, and only then decide on our position. Not long ago, the great majority of Socialists rejected female labour in industry on principle, as being harmful to the workers' cause. Yet this view is now regarded as reactionary, despite the fact that female labour still means the exploitation of women. The same thing can happen with regard to the question of child labour in industry: the apparently more radical view turns out on closer inspection to be in fact the more conservative. Our friend Mr Burrows² has indeed informed us that to allow young persons under the age of sixteen to take industrial employment is to sink to a level below that of Negroes and Indians. But then Negroes and Indians do not force their children to rack their brains over quadratic equations either. ⁽ⁱ⁾ And Burrows must permit me one other point. He declared that it was a disgrace for the English to go home with conference resolutions demanding less than what had already been partly achieved in England. But only a few days earlier, at the Congress of Textile Workers held at Roubaix, the representatives of the organised workers of England had voted against banning the employment of children under fourteen, because conditions in English industry made such a ban impossible. Even the proposals put forward by the extreme right at the Zürich Congress seemed too far-reaching for these English workers' delegates. They were outvoted at last year's Trades Union Congress, which accepted a resolution much like the one adopted at Zürich.³ Perhaps Burrows had resolutions like this in mind when he made his statement. For the moment, however, all such resolutions are pious hopes.

At the Trades Union Congress I mentioned, the president of the English Textile Workers' Union, David Holmes, denied emphatically that the so-called part-time children were physically or mentally behind their contemporaries and asserted that they gained the highest prizes in state school competitions.⁴ This contradicts the assertion of many teachers that the part-timers usually come to school tired and exhausted and that most of them are in no condition to pay adequate attention to their lessons. No doubt the opinion of the workers, which Holmes was voicing, was influenced by their desire not to give up the established custom of getting the children involved early in earning the family living. But I find it difficult to believe that a work-force as highly developed and, in many respects, self-sacrificing as the Lancashire textile workers would be so barbaric that the great majority of them would *knowingly* sacrifice their children's health for the sake of one or two years' extra factory work.

Readers of *Capital* will recall Marx's comments on this topic. In

chapter thirteen of Book I, in the paragraph dealing with the education clauses of the English Factory Act (#9), Marx makes the following comment on the effects of these provisions (viz. that no child shall be employed in a factory until it has finished primary school, and that children under fourteen years old may work in a factory only if they are at the same time attending school):

“The success of those clauses proved for the first time the possibility of combining education and gymnastics with manual labour, and consequently of combining manual labour with education and gymnastics. The factory inspectors soon found out, by questioning the schoolmasters, that the factory children, although they received only one half of the education of the regular day students, yet learnt quite as much and often more. (Here follows a quotation from the Reports of the factory inspectors.) Further evidence of this will be found in Senior’s speech at the Social Science Congress at Edinburgh in 1863. He shows there, amongst other things, how the monotonous, unproductive and long school day undergone by the children of the upper and middle classes uselessly adds to the labour of the teacher, ‘while he not only fruitlessly but absolutely injuriously wastes the time, health and energy of the children.’ As Robert Owen has shown us in detail, the germ of the education of the future is present in the factory system; this education will, in the case of every child over a given age, combine productive labour with instruction and gymnastics, not only as one of the methods of adding to the efficiency of production, but as the only method of producing fully developed human beings” (*Capital*, vol. I, 2nd imprint, pp. 508–9).⁵

I need hardly stress that Marx was by no means endorsing these requirements of the Factory Act as perfect. Indeed, he remarks on the same occasion that the education clauses of the Act “seem, on the whole . . . paltry.” He is merely acknowledging the relative progress made *vis-à-vis* the previous state of affairs, and that these requirements embody a sound principle. In this respect, the Factory Act has undergone no fundamental change since then. What has happened is that, since the Act was passed in 1870, the standard of English primary education has risen considerably. And it is a significant and illuminating fact that this rise in primary education has brought with it a fall in the number of very young half-timers.

Until the mid-seventies, all branches of the English textile industry, except the silk industry, showed a considerable increase in child labour in the factories, partly attributable to the absorption of cottage industries into the factories, which took place at that time. Accordingly, the increase was particularly marked in the cotton indus-

try. In 1850, 14,993 children under thirteen years of age were employed in English factories. By 1874, the figure was 66,900. ⁽ⁱⁱ⁾ After that date, however, the number of part-time children in the textile industry decreases both relatively and absolutely, as the following figures demonstrate. The numbers engaged in producing textiles in factories were:

	Cotton		Wool		Worsted		Total textiles	
	1874	1890	1874	1890	1874	1890	1874	1890
Men	115,391	141,925	48,050	54,115	31,622	38,386	248,349	298,828
Women & children 13 to 18	297,224	338,737	78,289	89,680	80,647	92,066	631,450	699,304
Children under 13	69,900	48,133	8,266	4,934	29,828	17,872	125,886	86,499
Total	479,515	528,795	134,605	148,729	142,097	148,324	1,005,685	1,084,631

The decrease in child labour is especially striking in the wool and worsted industries whose workers even today evince much less resistance to the raising of the minimum age for part-timers than do the cotton workers – though they too show a decrease of more than 25 per cent in the number of part-timers employed or, comparing the number of part-timers with the total number of workers in the cotton industry, a fall from 14 per cent to 9 per cent of the total. This decrease can, perhaps, be seen as the most compelling evidence that the low age-limit specified for part-timers by the Factory Act no longer accords with the current situation in education. It is, after all, obvious that not all forms of mental exercise are suitable after 5½ hours' work in a factory.

This, however, would condemn only the present system of part-time labour, not the entire notion of combining productive labour with academic education.

Such a combination has been found in the handicraft lessons already introduced into schools in various forms. This is certainly a step in the right direction, and it is the duty of Socialists, wherever they have influence on the school curriculum, to press for the general and systematic introduction of handicraft lessons. But there is a limit to the handicraft skills which can be transmitted in schools. If they are not to degenerate into dilettantism and a more sophisticated form of nursery game, then they must from the start be directed progressively towards the processing of materials *for a useful purpose*, i.e. towards *productive* activity. As even old Bellers says, "A Childish

silly employ leaves their minds silly.”⁶ Not only that, it deprives them of vital interest in their work. At some stage, therefore, handicraft lessons must lead to professional training in a trade, or they lose their point for the pupil. But general education does not exist to provide specialised training, and it would be pointless to equip schools with all sorts of specialised workshops when they can only lay the foundation for professional skills. So, from this angle as well, it appears that, beyond a certain point, productive work can only be undertaken usefully outside school. For most children, however, that point is reached at the age which we described above as being the critical age in schooling, i.e. towards the end of their fourteenth year. At that age, children with no aptitude for academic learning can, without hesitation, be transferred to predominantly manual labour, provided that the law protects them from overwork and guarantees them the time and opportunity for further education. The link between manual and intellectual work remains; only the relative proportion of the two has been changed.

It is merely propagandist prejudice, if I may so express myself, which leads many otherwise conscientious Socialists to raise without limit the age at which young people are allowed to enter productive employment. We are so accustomed to the idea of the absolute horrors of the factory (though in the next breath we praise it as being an enormous advance over piece-work and cottage industry) that we actually believe we are sacrificing our young people to the Moloch of capitalism if we do not keep them out of the factories. But nowhere can exploitation be more effectively checked than where the young are involved, and the presence of young people weighs more heavily than any other factor in favour of improving conditions in the factories. It is highly probable that Marx had this in mind when he wrote: “The fact that the collective working group is composed of individuals of both sexes and all ages must under the appropriate conditions turn into a source of humane development, although in its spontaneously developed, brutal, capitalist form, the system . . . becomes a pestiferous source of corruption and slavery” (op. cit. p. 517).⁷ The same idea is conveyed in his critique of the Gotha Programme,⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾ and Engels expresses himself forcefully along similar lines in his polemic against Dühring (section III, chapter 5, “The Family”).⁸

Since Marx refers to *Robert Owen* in the passage cited above, we should bear in mind that Owen’s plan for society envisaged combining education and productive labour as early as the age of eight. At thirteen, the young begin to take full part in the work of industry, agriculture, mining, and fisheries, although, of course, they are ex-

pected to work only as many hours as are compatible with their physical development and the aims of their intellectual [*wissenschaftlich*] education. After their fifteenth year, the amount of productive labour is increased, although their intellectual education does not therefore come to an end. Only the proportion is changed. At the age of twenty, their obligation to take part in directly productive labour ceases. Age-groups above this limit are allotted the managerial tasks: training, administration of goods (storage and distribution), and other administrative duties.⁹ In short, Owen considers that it is precisely in one's youth that one is best employed in productive labour, and however utopian he was in other respects, as a former factory-owner he had gathered enough experience to know what he was talking about in such matters. The pioneer of child protection was also the pioneer of the systematic deployment of children in productive labour. And the same, in his way, holds for *Fourier*. By appropriate application of the principle of attractive work, children would, according to him, make themselves socially useful in their very earliest years – not merely the little hordes of “urchins” which socialist historians like to dwell on, but all kinds of groups interested in particular activities¹⁰ It is difficult to think of a single one among the older Socialists who seeks to exclude the younger generation from participation in socially useful work.^(iv) However humanitarian they all are, however concerned for the young, they are equally enthusiastic about the idea that the young should share in labour to the limit of their capacities, “work,” as Bellers remarks, “not being more Labour than Play.”¹¹

There are two possible replies to this argument. The first is that these Socialists envisaged rather different kinds of labour from those required in factories today. But this would not, for instance, apply to Owen, whose socialism takes the factory as its starting-point. Furthermore, not all factory work is harder than craft work, and where it is indeed more monotonous and more strenuous, shorter working hours can restore the balance. Despite our enthusiasm for the Indians,¹² it is no part of our purpose to abolish machinery. And nowadays, when we talk of productive labour, we have in mind young people who are already beyond the age at which earlier Socialists would let them begin their participation in socially useful work.

The second objection is that the Owens and Fouriers of this world, and their predecessors, depict a socialist society in which production is for the benefit of the community, whereas today the worker slaves away for the capitalist or for the competitive market which confronts him as an alien force, so that work is synonymous with exploitation.

And, in fact, nowadays the worker produces for society only indirectly and haphazardly. But although modern socialism emphasises this fact, it sees the modern development of the mode of production as the basis for development towards a socialist society. So, precisely from this point of view, it is a nonsense to make one's position on child labour depend on the current opposition between labour and capital rather than on consideration of the physical, mental, and moral development of the young. Furthermore, we grossly misjudge the older Socialists if we assume that they saw their plan for society as the essential point. It was dear to their hearts because it seemed to them the best way to realise their ideas on work, property, marriage, ethics, etc. Modern socialism has rejected all plans for society as being useless and occasionally misleading. It sees the development of production itself and the class struggle as the driving forces which will lead to a socialist society. But the class struggle, left to itself, is an elemental force in which passions, temporary alliances, even special interests of a local or corporate nature will often get the upper hand unless it is given direction by an awareness of the general course of development and of the general goal. A Socialist must therefore be able, when necessary, to look beyond the class struggle of the day.

It is often held to be the best policy in agitation to ask for much in order to gain a little. But it is by no means certain that this policy is always the most effective, or that it guarantees the best results under all circumstances. On the contrary, there is no lack of instances in which it has proved highly impractical. For example, it looks overwhelmingly convincing on paper to reckon that, if everyone is obliged to work and if the social organisation of labour is fully implemented, then four working hours a day, or less, would be sufficient for the ample provision of society's needs and luxuries. But anyone who, on this basis, demanded a four-hour maximum working day here and now would get the same response as if he had asked for the moon. No-one would take him seriously. This is an extreme example, but it illustrates the common experience that if a demand is to make a lasting impact, it must be realistic and it must be tailored to the current situation. It makes sense to advance our demands only where the preconditions for meeting them already exist.

According to the resolution of the Zürich Congress, the obligation to attend school until completion of the fifteenth year should be upheld, and all employment below that age should be banned. I have already remarked that, in matters of workers' protection, I think it fully justified to take account of the laws governing education. The link between them is vital for a whole variety of reasons. This is, after all, legislation for the present, in which we must take as given the

existence of modern cities and industrial towns in which the housing and the living conditions of the working classes will only improve very slowly. I need not dwell on what it would mean for both parents and children if, precisely at the age when the latter acquire a stronger sense of identity and seek new outlets for their energies, their attendance at school were to cease before they were permitted to enter gainful employment. Anyone familiar with the conditions can easily imagine what it would be like. It is therefore of fundamental importance that the law should have due regard to every aspect of the relationship between education and workers' protection. On the other hand, if child labour is limited to a number of hours per day graded according to age and physical development, and if every pupil with an aptitude for scholarly and academic learning is given the means to attend institutions of higher education on completion of his schooling, then the question of whether child labour should be permitted at the end of the fourteenth year or one or two years later becomes purely a matter of practical convenience, from the viewpoint of child protection. On the other hand, forcing the young indiscriminately to occupy themselves exclusively with scholarly learning until the end of their sixteenth year seems to me neither good educational theory nor good social policy. *Sunt certi denique fines.*¹³ In present social conditions this would in many cases do more harm than good, and for the future it is anything but an ideal.

In all probability, I shall find myself somewhat isolated with these views among present-day Social Democrats. Nonetheless, it seems to me to be worthwhile to set forth the considerations which have led me to hold them. Furthermore, I am convinced that Social Democracy would be more likely to achieve a rise in the minimum age for child labour if it set its demand at fourteen years of age rather than fifteen. That, however, is a matter which will be settled by practice when the moment comes. My main concern is the whole set of ideas expounded above. In particular, I wish to combat the superstitious belief in the powers of school education. Continuous attendance at school right through to university is of value only for someone who wishes of his own choice and inclination to pursue a specific course of study; and even for such an individual it is not always of value. For thousands of boys and girls, most of the time they spend in the top classes of secondary school is time lost, because the urge for learning, the appreciation for what is offered in those classes, does not waken in them until later. How is it that, in the field of intellectual activity, there are already a growing number of people who had only a very primitive elementary education and then had to earn their living as workers, but who are holding their own perfectly well

against those with an academic education?^(v) I do not underestimate the dangers of autodidacticism. But many autodidacts would have done much better than they actually have, if they had not been impeded by a pedantic approach which cut them off from many sources of knowledge and enlightenment. This pedantry must be done away with; entry to the temple of science must be open to all who have the desire and the ability to study; elementary education must be improved; and time and opportunity for further instruction must be extended to everyone. But I do not see that the principles of equality are outrageously violated if the state does not compel all proletarian children to stay at school for as long as bourgeois children often do, thanks to the folly of their parents. Nor, by the same token, do I see that socialism requires that everyone wear spectacles.

(ANON.)

Bernstein's Latest

Justice, 16 October 1897

In the current number of the *Neue Zeit* Herr Bernstein develops the thesis that the age at which half-time begins, i.e., at which children are partially removed from school to productive labour, should be certainly not later than fifteen, but that fourteen is more desirable. Herr Bernstein's articles are now chiefly interesting as special pleading for reactionary theories. If there is any position on any subject which is specially repugnant to Social Democrats that position is sure to find an advocate in Herr Bernstein. Not long since he proved to his own satisfaction that English rule in India was all but, if not quite, immaculate, and that our comrade Hyndman was a vile calumniator of a most beneficent institution.¹⁴ He now argues for the removal of children from the school to the factory as young as possible. In support of his thesis he quotes the Utopian Socialist thinkers of the beginning of the century, who argued in favour of the gradual accustoming of the child at a comparatively early age to productive labour. He omits to point out, however, that the sort of productive labour which Owen and Fourier had in their minds was skilled handicraft labour which afforded an occupation for the mind and body alike. That it was desirable that the child should be driven into a factory to tend a machine, i.e., to perform for hours together a monotonous repetition of one or two mechanical actions never entered their heads — yet this is what "productive labour" in nine cases out of ten means nowadays.

EDUARD BERNSTEIN

Crime and the Masses

Neue Zeit, 10 November 1897

Among many Socialists, and particularly in the school of French social revolutionaries, there is an almost mystical belief in the anonymous masses. "Let us play dominoes for a stake of ten words," Alphonse Daudet is reported to have said to Jules Vallès on one occasion, "and if I win them from you, you might as well break your pen in two, for your writing days are over."¹⁵ These ten words included "the street" and "the masses," both of which did indeed play a prominent role in Vallès's leading articles for the *Cri du Peuple*. But in this respect Vallès was merely a striking example of a very common type. Felix Pyat, his opponent Lissagaray, and almost all revolutionaries from the neo-Jacobin and Blanquist schools¹⁶ evince the same tendency to invest assemblies of the anonymous masses with superhumanly enhanced revolutionary attributes.

This fetishism differs only in degree from the democrats' cult of the "people" and the tendency currently evinced by Social Democrats to imagine the modern industrial worker as an ideal being raised above the weaknesses of his fellow-mortals. However, it is supported by certain unassailable facts. We all know what a great and formative part the anonymous masses played in the most significant events in the revolutionary history of France, and how, on the most diverse occasions, the impetus of the masses and their rapid resolve have given clear and decisive direction to confused or ill-conceived manifestations. Even the storming of the Bastille in the first French Revolution occurred because the masses took the initiative. And in February 1848 it was the masses who, contrary to the expectations even of the revolutionary secret societies, transformed a half-heartedly organised demonstration for reform into a rising which was to destroy the July Monarchy.¹⁷ When the masses take to the streets, some unexpected turn of events may be looked for. And, indeed, it is as if the masses have a will of their own. For although they may spontaneously initiate revolutions or revolutionary acts which no-one anticipated, in campaigns which are well planned or set in motion with apparently sufficient energy they often exhibit an appalling inertia and lack of direction – for example, on 9 Thermidor in the year II, when the revolutionary Paris Commune called upon the people of Paris to rebel against the Convention and its increasingly counter-revolutionary tendencies,¹⁸ and similarly on 15 May 1848, when, under the leadership of Blanqui's supporters, they had dispersed the

National Assembly.¹⁹ Perhaps it is mainly this unpredictability of the masses which has led social revolutionaries, otherwise so proud of their religious unbelief, to set up what is almost a religious cult of the masses. It is the worship of uncontrollable elements, in a different form.

Undoubtedly, there is an element of mystery about the masses. It is a widely known fact that human beings *en masse* exhibit qualities and behaviour quite other than those they exhibit as individuals. How does this change come about, and by what laws does it operate? Individual studies of the minutiae of such changes have been plentiful for some time, but recently efforts have been made to extend the principles of scientific research into this area, to discover order even in the apparently unpredictable, and to achieve in the world of social elemental forces, i.e. the psyche of the masses, what meteorology has achieved in the realm of physical elemental forces.

Of the various studies of this kind, we have before us today the work of an Italian anthropologist which is especially concerned with the psyche of the masses in relation to mass crime. It is the book by Professor Scipio Sighele, *The Psychology of Public Disorder and Mass Crime*, translated into German by Dr Hans Kurella from the second Italian edition.^(vi) The author belongs to the group of criminological theorists led by C. Lombroso and Enrico Ferri, a school which describes itself as positivist and regards anthropological factors such as inherited and innate characters as a crucial cause of crime.²⁰ Over the years, this school has distanced itself somewhat from the exaggerations initially advanced in the field (although these were no greater than the one-sided view that all crime derives from economic causes), and the present book is unlikely to provoke the criticism that it gives undue emphasis to the anthropological factor.

Sighele distinguishes between permanent and homogeneous groups, on the one hand, and occasional and heterogeneous or mixed groups, on the other; his present study is principally concerned with the latter. He takes it as given that, in most cases, the assembled masses will be disposed to bad rather than good actions, to destructive rather than creative activity, and to sacrifice rather than to self-sacrifice. He does not of course deny that the masses may perform deeds of great self-sacrifice and may incite an individual to deeds of selflessness which he would hardly contemplate when alone. But he asserts that in any crowd of people the predisposition to evil lies nearer the surface than the tendency to good. Is this correct?

His arguments are as follows.

Any group, however select, is intellectually on the level of medioc-

riety. The talent, genius, and knowledge represented by individuals are not aggregated because they are individual and specialised qualities. Only those qualities are aggregated which are common to all, that is, the mediocre qualities. Hence the familiar phenomenon that juries composed of highly educated men are capable of verdicts just as foolish as those of uneducated peasants or artisans, and that panels of experts can produce the most implausible judgments which no single one of them would endorse if he had to decide the matter alone. As an ancient Roman proverb has it: "The Senators are good, but the Senate is a beast." In an assembled crowd, this intellectual inferiority emerges even more clearly. Its intelligence falls well below the average of the intelligences represented within it. But the factors of emotion and excitement are correspondingly stronger in their effect on a crowd.

We can see from our own behaviour on any given occasion that the mere fact of belonging to a crowd or to some other group of people makes an individual more liable to emotional excitement. If we are together with many others, we are amused by things we normally find uninteresting or even distasteful, we are indignant at things we normally sanction or excuse, and we are inspired by things we normally regard with little or no esteem. In short, we lose a great part of our independence of judgment and allow ourselves to be carried away by impulses normally foreign to us. I remember as a schoolboy, with no moral pressure from my fellows, engaging in acts of sophisticated malice against a teacher for whom I personally had a regard verging on adoration, and yet malice was not at the time part of my nature. But malice and evil intent are more active properties than kindness, which is usually passive in nature. Human beings who are actively good, that is, who have the will-power to oppose a crowd bent on riot, are rare; and if the excitement of the crowd rises above a certain level, then even they are powerless against it.

This fact is so familiar and well attested that it need detain us no longer. In any case, our business is not to establish it but to explain it.

Sighele distinguishes between two types of cause which have the effect of making it easier for the evil or (to use a less loaded term) angry emotions to gain the upper hand than the kindly emotions. The one is rooted in the interrelation of the moral characteristics of human beings, as defined by the anthropological school of thought to which Sighele belongs, viz. the durability of the original instincts inherited from prehistoric times and the relatively low resistance displayed by characteristics acquired through culture and education. In

normal social intercourse, human beings are guided by the latter, while the influence of the original instincts seems to wane, or to become entirely dormant, the more ancient they are. But in a crowd, instinct follows the same pattern as intelligence; the baser motives predominate. The anthropological theory to which Sighele subscribes sees the relationship between acquired and inherited characteristics in the human psyche as being similar to stratified deposits in geology. The original human traits developed in prehistoric times form the lowest layer; those acquired in the course of the history of the species, and of the individual, form corresponding layers above these, so that the most recently acquired traits, i.e. those which represent the highest level of culture, lie nearest the surface and are the least firmly established. There is much to be said against a schema of this kind; though it can hardly be denied that we carry around with us the moral impulses of our forefathers, just as we inherit their physical characteristics, and that, when moved by excitement of whatever kind, our first reaction is to behave like savages. A certain amount of reflection is always necessary before we can restrain ourselves, and if circumstances prevent this, we either do behave like savages or catch ourselves wanting to do so, e.g. to gnash our teeth, lash out, shout, dance about, etc. This can, of course, be explained purely by reference to the structure of our nervous system, the close connection between optic and motor nerves; but this psychophysiological explanation casts no light on many phenomena which are comprehensible only when we take anthropological findings into account. For our purposes, however, we need pursue the point no further, since the phenomena with which we are concerned fall mainly into the second, purely psychological group of explanations.

Here Sighele's study starts from the fact that the impressionability (suggestibility) of human beings is significantly increased by their presence in a crowd. Of course, this characteristic can also be seen as inherited in the anthropological sense, for a very basic instinct is involved here: imitation. In a crowd, most human beings tend to imitate the gestures and facial expressions of those around them, and many evince, more or less consciously, a kind of "psychic mimicry" as Sighele calls it. Now anger, hatred, and other emotions tending to destructiveness are expressed in much more vigorous movements than those of benevolence or even sympathy. But, as Lessing stressed in the *Hamburg Dramaturgy* it is not possible for us to make these movements without experiencing to some degree the feelings which they express,²¹ and scientific investigators have since established this beyond all doubt. We can, if we wish, assume the tone and gestures

of extreme anger with no real cause for anger, but as soon as we do so our facial expression involuntarily registers something like anger. If we are part of a crowd, where emotions are in any case given stronger expression, then even the initially deliberate imitation of attitudes and gestures of hatred finally produces in us a mood of hate, and it is often only a very short step from this mood to active participation in acts of hatred. Just as a coward becomes courageous in a crowd, because the mere consciousness of being with many others gives him a sense of strength which he normally lacks, so also the peaceable man becomes quarrelsome under these conditions, the phlegmatic man passionate, and the otherwise kindly man brutal. He behaves in a fashion which he later finds ridiculous or contemptible. A mild incidence of this can be found in the extraordinary scenes induced by relatively harmless interruptions at meetings, as soon as the speaker or chairman becomes inaudible to most or all of the audience – whether as a result of the noise or for some other reason, such as language differences at international conferences. ^(vii)

In this way, the mere influence of large numbers can create a situation in which trifling causes inflame a crowd to the point of frenzy. The extent to which our emotional lives in general are influenced by our presence in a crowd can be seen, for example, in the theatre. The circumstance that the gallery and the pit react more strongly to spectacular theatrical effects than the stalls and the dress circle has at least as much to do with the closer crowding of the people in these areas as with the often non-existent inferiority of their education and intelligence. Even those in the stalls behave differently in a full theatre and in a half-empty one. The same individual will produce different reactions when he is in a tightly packed crowd and when he is sitting or standing with a reasonable amount of space around him. In the first case, he is in fact less free, his nerves are more highly tensed, his imagination is much more attuned to excitement, whereas (or rather wherefore) his critical faculties are considerably diminished. To a great extent, he does indeed become a “herd animal.”

Nonetheless, though all human beings are rendered more excitable and less critical by being in a crowd, they do not therefore all respond to stimuli in the same way. The intellect may be suppressed, but it is not eliminated; habits of moral behaviour may be slackened but they are not entirely extinguished from the memory. Just as those under hypnosis may react variously to the hypnotist’s suggestions, so individuals in a crowd may respond differently to certain stimuli, and, to some extent, this affects the crowd itself. Differences of race and variations of custom, as they arise from conditions of existence

and dispositions of character, produce considerable variations in the behaviour of agitated masses. Sighele does not examine the former, but the Frenchman, Gustave Le Bon, attributes considerable importance to them in his book on crowd psychology, which discusses the question not only with reference to crime but in its bearing on social life as a whole.²² We shall return to this book on another occasion. What it says about the influence of racial peculiarities on mass actions is fully borne out by experience. For instance, an Anglo-Saxon crowd will, in the same circumstances, often react quite differently from a French or German crowd. They are all liable to resort to brutalities, but their brutality will be expressed in different ways. Deeds such as those committed by the murder squads of September 1792²³ are unlikely to be repeated in England or Germany. Although the English and the Germans are, in general, less refined than the French, they are evidently incapable of that kind of outrage. London has its riots and atrocities, as does Paris; but its history records no Saint Bartholomew's Night, no September Massacres, no May Week.²⁴ The bloodiest slaughter in recent English history, the massacre of the inhabitants of Drogheda by Cromwell's soldiers, occurred as a direct sequel to the storming of the town after a lengthy siege.²⁵ The victims were foreigners (as the English then regarded the Irish), and, in addition, they were countrymen and co-religionists of the very people who, a few years before, had initiated a dreadful and much more extensive slaughter of Protestants.

Given what we have already said, we need not labour the point that, in a state of excitement, a crowd of people who have enjoyed a refined upbringing will behave differently from, though not necessarily more humanely than, a mob of plebeians of the same nationality. But even crowds composed of plebeians, i.e. of those from the non-privileged classes, will behave differently according to the particular nature of their composition. A classic example of this can be found in the difference between the conduct of the populace behind the barricade of the Fontainebleau toll bar and that of the inhabitants of the barricaded suburb of Saint Antoine in the battle of June 1848.²⁶ The emotional excitement was the same in both cases. However, whereas it was the workers who dominated the scene in Saint Antoine, they had to share the streets behind the earlier barricade with cattedroppers, pimps, and all sorts of other urban riff-raff. It was this district which was the scene of the cowardly murder of General Bréa, who had put himself in the hands of the people at the barricade with the benevolent intention of preventing unnecessary bloodshed. A few workers who attempted to rescue him from the mob goaded on by

brutalised women and people such as the cattle-dealer Vappereau, the butcher Choppart, and others, found their own lives at risk. And although the general had agreed to all their demands, not only did the mob shoot him down from behind, together with his companion, Captain Magnin; they plundered the corpses as well. In the Faubourg Saint Antoine the members of the delegation which came to parley were taken hostage, but they were unharmed, although they refused absolutely to sign a decree demanded by the masses.

Sighele contrasts two similar instances: the scenes at the miners' strike at Décazeville (1886) where the mine-owner Watrin was murdered in the most brutal manner, and a demonstration of the unemployed in Rome which, despite the agitation of the crowd, passed without bloodshed, though not without damage to property. Of the thirty-two people arrested in this demonstration not one had a previous conviction, whereas of the four principally involved in Watrin's murder three had been convicted of assault (two of them, including the ringleader, of theft as well), and the fourth was a fellow notorious for the brutal treatment of his wife.

Such elements are never absent where a gathering in the streets or public places offers the prospect of excitement. The danger of all this turning into destruction and killing is greater or lesser according to the proportion of such elements in relation to the sounder elements of the population. Hence the remarkably peaceful course usually taken by street demonstrations of the London workers. The metropolis on the Thames has a larger contingent of quarrelsome and violent riff-raff than any other city. However, the workers' demonstrations have no attraction for them. In a procession of workers they would be either banned or strictly controlled, and merely listening to speeches in parks is not their idea of pleasure. It is a different matter when a mixed crowd gathers, agitated by curiosity and passion, or when demonstrations are pushed into a breach of the peace by police intervention and put into an embittered mood. In such situations, the criminally inclined elements can more easily gain influence and even perhaps the upper hand. The only exceptions are cases in which, as in February 1848 in Paris, the sounder elements of the populace have certain general legislative demands in mind and take to the streets in such numbers that they dominate them themselves.^(viii) It is, of course, nothing but a myth that in February 1848 and similar popular uprisings, burglars, swindlers, and the like suddenly "vanished from the face of the earth." It is much more probable that, in such times of excitement, minor offences against property are silently accepted by the victims and thus do not come to official notice, while

there is less opportunity than usual for major property offences. Moreover, a certain communism comes to the fore in large popular uprisings. While the street fighting lasts, the urges of the elements disposed to violence are diverted into legitimate channels and thus subjected to the regulating influence of the rules of combat. But even in a movement as much under the sway of political ideas as the February Revolution in Paris, the masses are not immune from perpetrating acts of savage cruelty in moments of great excitement, as is shown by the events which occurred on the third day of the siege of the Château d'Eu [*sic*].²⁷ Although the struggle did not at the time absolutely require it, it was in itself excusable that the crowd should set fire to the building, since it was stoutly defended by the military. But acts of arson continued well after the garrison had ceased firing. A long time elapsed before the better elements in the crowd regained control and began to put out the fire. Later, twenty-nine almost completely charred bodies and a number of soldiers still dying were found in the half-demolished building. And the nature of part of the crowd operating in that quarter of the city can be seen from the scenes of destruction concurrently taking place in the adjacent Palais Royal, where frenzied human beings – “Canaille who had taken no part at all in the fighting,” as the Socialist H. Castille puts it²⁸ – vented their destructive urges on pictures and statues and held drunken orgies in the cellars that had been stormed.

But in February 1848 these were the exceptions, for the reasons mentioned above. It is precisely the sounder element in the populace who tend to stay away from ordinary gatherings, because these attract both those intrinsically disposed to violence and unrest and also the naive and mindless elements. By nature the latter are, in every respect, the easiest to influence, and they tend to follow each and every impulse. Sighele likens the mental state of a man taking part in mass unrest to hypnosis, or rather, he declares it to be a waking state of hypnosis. Every individual in a crowd is caught up, is more open to suggestion than in normal life, albeit to a degree that varies according to his character. But since the majority in a crowd consists of easily roused and weak-willed individuals, the crowd develops all the characteristics usually termed female, i.e. great susceptibility and a tendency to extreme actions, whether exaggerated self-sacrifice or exaggerated savagery and cruelty. The assembled crowd and each individual in it – including the passive and good-natured characters – are much more easily moved to crime than the average of its component persons would be *per se*.

What conclusions are to be drawn from this concerning responsi-

bility in criminal law for crimes committed in a crowd and by a crowd? There is no doubt that, in a crowd, the moral responsibility of the individual is diminished. Even the ringleader in a criminal act is often operating under the suggestive influence exercised on him by the behaviour of the crowd. An idea flashes through his mind which he would normally keep to himself and immediately dismiss, but now in the excitement he voices it aloud, and for that very reason the effect is all the more disastrous. In his essay on liberty, Stuart Mill [*sic*] has already explained that an opinion which ought to be expressed in the press with impunity could become culpable if uttered, or displayed on placards, before an agitated crowd in circumstances in which they could be incited to translate it directly into an act of violence; as, for example, if an excited mob were told outside a grain merchant's house that grain merchants were sucking the people dry, or outside a clergyman's house that all clergy were deceivers of the people.²⁹ In such circumstances, the allegation is intended to provoke an act of violence against an individual. It is Sighele's view that one cannot establish a universally applicable abstract norm for mass crime. As far as possible, the *primary motive* of the participants should be traced, a distinction made between premeditated and merely spontaneous mass crime, and consideration given to the threat to society presented by the perpetrators, i.e. whether they are "natural" or merely occasional criminals. There is no compelling reason to regard incitement by a crowd as grounds for not neutralising the habitual or "natural" criminal, but otherwise crimes committed during a riot should be regarded as committed by semi-responsible persons. As Sighele admits to one reviewer, this amounts to a practice already followed by judges nowadays. His work does not claim to do more than prepare the ground for future legislative reforms.

In our opinion, this rather disappointing conclusion to Sighele's work could have been avoided if he had gone beyond the question of responsibility and considered the social function of punishment. In this respect, the criticism of his book in *Die Zeit* is not unjustified.³⁰ Yet to any attentive reader of the book it is clear that this weakness is purely formal; that, from the beginning, the study is based on a precise concept of the function of punishment; and that Sighele shares the view that punishment is solely a matter of considering the past act and the circumstances in which it was committed "insofar as they are factors influencing the future shape of events." Otherwise, of course, in any study which tackles the question of penal sentencing, it is of fundamental importance to reach an understanding as to whether punishment is intended primarily as retribution or as a de-

terrent, and whether its highest purpose is the protection of society or some other end. For a consistent standard for sentencing can be established only by reference to the ultimate purpose of sentencing. The responsibility factor will never be more than a secondary consideration.

Apart from this, however, Sighele's study seems to us to be not without merit. The reviewer in *Die Zeit*, though on the whole hostile, does in the end get around to discussing sentencing in relation to the motives of the perpetrator and the powers of external suggestion affecting him and thereby overturns a great deal of what he has previously said against Sighele. For whether or not Sighele has overextended the concept of suggestion, his study is concerned precisely with establishing fixed criteria for assessing the relation between the suggestive power of the occasion and the personal motives of the criminal; and in this respect he has certainly not exaggerated the importance of external suggestion.

The mob, the assembled crowd, the "populace on the streets" is as such a potential power that can turn into anything. It can be revolutionary or reactionary, heroic or cowardly, humane or bestial, but in most cases it is more inclined to destroy than create. In Paris, the city of light, it did indeed cry *Vive la Révolution!* and *Vive la Commune!* but it also cried *Vive l'Empereur!* and *à Berlin! à Berlin!* We may respect it; but if we are asked to worship it, we would sooner be fire-worshippers.

BEBEL to KAUTSKY (extract)³¹

Berlin, 16 November 1897

[. . .]Ede's article in today's number of *Neue Zeit*³² struck me as highly dubious. He concedes things which a reactionary can use to ban *all* meetings, especially in times of unrest or on subjects which might cause unrest. Objectivity is all very well, and so is the urge to correct biased opinions and judgments within one's own party; but the trouble is that one then so easily gets into biased positions oneself.

EDUARD BERNSTEIN

The Conflict in the English Engineering Industry:

1. The Issues of Principle in the Conflict

Neue Zeit, 28 December 1897

The great conflict in the English engineering industry³³ is not yet over, and no overall assessment of it is as yet feasible. Even discus-

sion of the question which has now become central, that of the unions' right to a say in management, is untimely (unless conducted on a purely abstract level) until the conflicting parties themselves have reached an agreement which will end the present dispute. Only then will it be possible to go into the details of the conflict with the freedom which alone enables us to understand the conflict and its lessons correctly. In the workers' press and elsewhere the engineers' struggle has been represented as a struggle for the existence of trade unions. But it was and is no such thing, any more than the dispute over the Prussian constitution in the sixties was a struggle for the existence of popular representation.³⁴ Just as the issue then was not the existence or non-existence of popular representation but the degree of power to be invested in it, so now the issue in the English engineering industry is not the existence or nonexistence of trade unions but the extent of their rights in the industry.

In emphasising this I do not mean to belittle the importance of this struggle or to set less value upon it than on any other such battle for basic union rights. Each phase in the movement for the emancipation of the working class is in principle equally important, irrespective of how much ground is to be won in each case. Or, to continue the previous comparison, the difference between completely unconstitutional absolutism and even the smallest degree of constitutional government is certainly greater than that between partially and fully developed constitutional government; but in the development of modern democracy this last transition is just as important as the first. Democracy cannot reach its goal without passing through this stage. No nation striving to advance can shrink from making, where necessary, the same sacrifices to complete this stage as it would to overcome the initial obstacles to political liberty. Seen from this standpoint, the struggle of the English engineering unions will surely not forfeit the interest and sympathy of our readers if they are aware that it is not a matter of "life and death," of saving the unions from being "destroyed" or "smashed" as Professor L. Brentano, for example, maintains in *Soziale Praxis*,³⁵ but of maintaining or retrieving an advanced position which has already been attained. On the contrary, this knowledge should increase their interest, for the more advanced the line of battle, the more there is to be learned from the struggle. On the other hand, we cut ourselves off from any understanding of the crucial features of the present struggle if we simply put it on a level with the campaign of "King" Stumm³⁶ against the unions.

Thus Brentano, for example, is forced to give a completely false version of the history of the conflict in order to lend credence to the

notion that it is a well-prepared campaign by the engineering employers to "destroy" the unions. He suppresses facts which are vital to an accurate assessment of the nature of the conflict and presents pure speculation as established fact. He also entangles himself in crass contradictions. For instance, he reprints a section of the agreement between the shipbuilding firms on the Tyne, Wear, and Tees, on the one hand, and the boilermakers' union on the other, in which Colonel Dyer, as representative of the former,³⁷ is said to have "fully recognised the legitimate function of the trade unions." The fact that this agreement has been in force for more than three years, and that the owners have shown no sign whatever of wanting to break it, should in itself have been enough to warn Brentano that the present conflict between employers and engineering unions is not in fact concerned with the "legitimate function of the trade unions," as the agreement with the boilermakers phrases it.^(ix) And even if it were clear that the employers' federation had denied the engineering union the very same thing that they allowed the boilermakers' union, one would first have to investigate the reason why they had made such a distinction before simply talking of campaigns to "destroy the unions." However important the role played by the Amalgamated Society of Engineers in the English trade union movement, this union is fortunately much too well established overall for its fate to depend on the outcome of this conflict. Nothing more is at stake than a temporary weakening of its cause. That, however, is quite enough to spur on the English trade unions and their supporters to give the engineering union all the support they can.

The exaggerated conception of the magnitude of the crisis now facing the engineering union is only a product of the exaggerated conception often entertained of its strength. Some time ago, many German newspapers told us that the union represented 80 per cent of the workers in the industry. But that is very far from being the case. Discounting pensioned and overseas members, the Amalgamated Society of Engineers has approximately 80,000 members at present. However, according to the Factory Inspectorate report of 1896, no fewer than 548,043 workers were employed in the engineering factories and workshops of the United Kingdom. If we subtract all the groups of employees outside the recruitment area of the engineering union, we are left with a good 300,000–400,000 workers in the groups which it does represent. Accordingly, this union represents, not 80 per cent, but less than 25 per cent of those employed in the industry; and even if we include the unions currently allied with the engineers, the total would be no more than approximately $33\frac{1}{3}$ per

cent. That is a very respectable number, especially since the proportion would be still higher amongst the skilled workers; but it is still a long way from "80 per cent." And it shows that lack of political power is not solely to blame for the fact that English Socialists are not yet in a position to decree: "From noon tomorrow the management of all factories will be transferred to the organised work-force"—quite apart from the fact that the execution of such a decree would take more than the organisation of the work-force into unions, and that the engineers are among the best organised professions in England.^(x)

The engineering union has never possessed the power attributed to it by a few imaginative individuals, and on the other side, although the Federation of Engineering Employers may occasionally be able to weaken it, they can never do it the amount of damage feared by over-anxious spectators of the conflict. This follows from the fact that barely half of its members are employed by firms belonging to the Federation. But I will go further and say that it is no part of the Federation of Employers' intention to destroy the union.

I am not (as I have elsewhere been accused of being) driven to this conclusion by superstitious faith in the magnanimity of English industrialists. As individuals, I consider them to be no worse and no better than German industrialists. In any case, personal kindness has relatively little to do with the attitude of industrialists to the trade union movement. In any large group personal characteristics are obscured. The decisive factors are the degree of insight into *what is possible*, the capacity to consider calmly the pros and cons of a matter, and the intelligence to foresee which of two evils will be the lesser. In these respects, most English industrialists are indeed ahead of their Continental counterparts. In particular — and this stems from the fact that England's general social development is more advanced — they excel them in *self-control*. Self-control, however, has little to do with kindness of heart. Often enough it is the kindly man who loses patience most easily, while the egotist retains his composure to the last.^(xi)

If the English industrialists were convinced that it was possible to eradicate the trade union movement root and branch, they, or at least the majority of them, would no doubt make the attempt. But they have long since abandoned this belief. They know the temper of their people, and they are aware of public opinion in the country at large. They know that they must come to terms with the trade unions as best they can.

"As best they can." But that leaves a great deal of leeway. The

battle is not over when the trade unions are recognised; its field is merely narrowed down. Within its limits, endless variations are possible. "King" Stumm would no doubt consider it a huge concession to allow trade unionists in his factories at all. But in the present conflict this fundamental right has never been challenged. Indeed, from the very beginning of the conflict, the confederated industrialists declared themselves ready to negotiate with the executive committees of the combined trade unions as the legitimate spokesmen for their members, just as they negotiated with them a mere few weeks before the outbreak of the eight-hour dispute. On 1, 2, 13, 14, and 15 April 1897, eight representatives of the Federation of Engineering and Shipbuilding Employers and eight representatives of the engineering union spent the entire day discussing in detail labour relations in their factories and workshops. The stenographic record of these proceedings, approved by both sides, fills 150 folio pages in print. Agreement was reached on two of the points discussed. Two or three others, including the question of manning and the fixing of union rates for operating the machines, remained unresolved. In the organ of the engineering union for May 1897, the following comments appear: "Briefly put our position is that your interests in the trade should be safeguarded by provision being made for the payment of standard rates of wages at machines which displaced skilled hand labour. The employers' position on the other hand is that each individual employer must be left in this matter to manage his business as he thinks proper. The attitude of the employers on this, as compared with that upon other questions, is not quite consistent. Upon the questions of trial trips and overtime they frankly abandoned (at the subsequent meetings beginning April 17) the claim of each 'doing what he liked with his own', admitted the right and competence of the conference to determine upon uniform payments binding upon all employers within the federation. However, we may readily admit that we were treated with every courtesy, and the last letter of the employers is couched in conciliatory language. That being so, it seems to us all the more regrettable that they failed to meet our proposals in a favourable manner."³⁸

Apart from demands concerning the rights of skilled workers to specific jobs as a matter of principle, whatever the technical requirements of those jobs, these suggestions culminated in the idea that standing committees with equal representation of employers and workers should be set up in all union districts for the purpose of settling disputes over manning and the fixing of union rates for the

operation of machines, if necessary with the assistance of a representative of the Board of Trade.

The employers rejected the idea of standing committees, maintaining that the rights of skilled workers were adequately protected by their higher wage-rates and by the manufacturer's natural interest in ensuring that only trained workers were entrusted with the better and more sophisticated jobs. They were also averse to any involvement of "impartial arbitration." "Consult with you, yes; but be at the mercy of 'impartial arbitration' in these technical matters, no" was the oft-repeated burden of their remarks. They have stuck to this position throughout the dispute – to the great indignation of a section of the public, including Professor Brentano.

Unfortunately, at the very time when these employers were rejecting impartial arbitration, the employers in another branch of industry were virtually begging the organised workers to take the differences that remained between them to arbitration, and they received an obdurate "no" for an answer. I refer, of course, to the question of wage-levels in the Lancashire cotton industry. With rigorous consistency the cotton-spinners refused to take to arbitration the question of whether the state of the cotton market justified a reduction in wages. They argued that since they were in the industry, they could judge the market much better themselves, and where a reduction was justified, they would say so and make the necessary concessions to the employers.

It is not the first time that these weather-wise Lancashire unionists have refused arbitration, and they are not the only unionists to adopt this attitude. In the recent book by the Webbs, *Industrial Democracy*, the chapter on tribunals quotes various remarks by eminent trade unionists rejecting the involvement of "outsiders"³⁹ in the settlement of industrial disputes. And it is by no means the extremists or the inexperienced who reject such third-party involvement. On the contrary, it is precisely the most experienced and cautious trade unionists who take this view. Along with Mawdsley, the conservative leader of the cotton-spinners, we have Pickard and other members of the executive of the Miners' Federation, as well as Robert Knight, the leader of the United Society of Boilermakers, with whom the Federation of Engineering and Shipbuilding Employers signed the agreement cited by Brentano as an acknowledgment of the legitimate function of trade unions. "I speak from long experience of this large organisation that I represent here today," said Knight when speaking before the Royal Commission on Labour, "and I say we can settle

all our differences without any intervention on the part of Parliament or anybody else" (group A, reply 20,833, cited by S. and B. Webb, p. 204).⁴⁰

This rejection of arbitrators or intermediaries by moderate union leaders will seem strange to those who remember the scorn with which the idea of industrial tribunals was once rejected in Germany precisely by the most radical elements in the working-class movement. Nowadays, however, many radicals find the idea of mediation by outsiders or by impartial established officials entirely acceptable. Similarly, the leaders of the great engineering union, who as we saw campaigned vigorously for the involvement of outsiders, nowadays occupy a general position closer to the radical than to the moderate wing of the working-class movement. On this question it really does seem that "right is left and left is right."

Nonetheless, there is some sense in these developments. They correspond to certain phases in the growth of individual organisations or of the movement as a whole. Where the movement is still at a rudimentary stage and dominated by preconceived ideas or doctrinaire theoretical constructs (e.g. the simplistic notion of the class struggle long cherished in Germany and still not quite dead in our literature), the idea of settling industrial disputes by arbitration will appear utopian, if not positively fraudulent. At a later stage, when the organisations are stronger and more experienced and have won a certain respect from the employers but have not yet got beyond the need to dispute with them about basic preconditions for a possible agreement, then the services of an intermediary will often be sought as a means of preventing unnecessary strikes and other kinds of friction. When, however, they have achieved even greater strength and recognition and have, in the course of a long struggle with the employers, established all the procedural formalities and preliminaries for settling disputes, then tribunals and impartial intermediaries will be as superfluous as they now are in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred between the governments of two nations. Each side knows exactly both its own strength and that of the other. Nothing is kept secret. They have, as it were, their cards on the table.

With appropriate modifications, the same holds good for the employers. At first, the employer will see it as a violation of his most sacred rights if he is required to discuss business matters with his workers under the chairmanship of a third party. Later, however, he will see this as the lesser evil, and finally he will regard a third party as superfluous. He knows from the outset what he can concede and what not, and he will be able to explain this to the representative, or representatives, of the workers without outside intervention.^(xii)

Of course, it is still possible that, even at this stage in their power relationship, one or both parties will find it necessary to bring in a third. This is especially likely where the establishment of a new principle is involved, as e.g. in 1893–4 with the Miners' Federation and the minimum living wage.⁴¹ Such a new principle, or at least the newly extended application of a principle, is at stake in the struggle of the engineering union, as it has now come to a head. Hence the strong inclination of its delegates to bring in intermediaries, or at least standing committees, to handle the problems arising from this struggle and its consequences, and hence, conversely, the reluctance of the employers to accept that the question is an open one.

After the aforementioned article had appeared in the organ of the engineering union, further written exchanges took place between the union representatives and those of the employers. In the course of these, on 20 May, the secretary of the Employers' Federation wrote:

"The position of the employers on trial trips and overtime embodies no new principle. It adheres to the line followed in the past, and which we hope will also be maintained in the future, namely, that we discuss any question that might arise in a friendly fashion and, where possible, reach an agreement satisfactory to both parties." (The letter then explains why the employers cannot pursue the question of machines any further and continues):

"The employers recognise the right of your union to reach agreements with them on conditions for your members, but they cannot concede your right to interfere with the liberty of other workers to sell their labour on conditions that seem satisfactory to them, nor can they consent to be party to any such agreement. They hope that your executive will see the reasonableness of their position and that you will not pursue any further your new idea as regards the manning of, and the fixing of tariffs for, machines."

This letter is reprinted in a circular from the executive of the engineering union to its branch secretaries, which circular also contains notice of the campaign launched in London for a shorter working-day. Six weeks later a strike was called, whereupon a lock-out was declared. The subsequent conduct of the manufacturers and the conditions they imposed as soon as they scented victory do not, for the moment, concern us. Our only concern has been to categorise the conflict. And it must be admitted, from what has been said, that the conflict bears no more than a formal resemblance to "King" Stumm's conflict with the unions, and that we do Stumm and his ilk in Germany too much honour if we allow this superficial analogy to obscure the great and fundamental difference between petty attempts to prevent the rise of the unions and the struggle being conducted at

present. It is tantamount to saying that the political conflict in England today involves nothing more than the political conflict in the Prussia of 1847. In Prussia at the time "no piece of paper came between the king and his people."⁴² And England is still without a written constitution to this day.

The trade union rights of English workers are thus part of the unwritten constitution. Hence the great agitation of public opinion when it really seemed, for a moment, that those rights were to be forcibly curtailed. Removing them altogether would involve the employers in a conflict with half the nation; to extend them, the workers must rely primarily on themselves and on the support of their comrades.

EDUARD BERNSTEIN

The Conflict in the English Engineering Industry:

2. Its Aims and Consequences

Neue Zeit, 19 January 1898

The struggle of the organised engineers in England has come to an end after almost seven months. The workers involved have accepted by 28,588 votes to 13,727 the conditions finally agreed between the union leaders and the employers. Under this agreement, the employers acquire the right:

(a) to extend working arrangements which already obtained in a significant number of factories belonging to members of the Employers' Federation;

(b) to employ *non-union workers*, although it is specified that they shall have no advantage over union members and that non-membership of a union shall not be a condition of employment;

(c) to introduce *piece-work* at their discretion;

(d) to introduce *over-time*, which, however, shall not exceed forty hours in any four-week period, except in dire emergency;

(e) to *determine unilaterally* which jobs shall be done by *skilled* and which by *unskilled* labour;

(f) to employ *apprentices* at their discretion; [and finally,]

(g) the campaign for an eight-hour day is to be abandoned.

In return, the employers guarantee the organised workers:

(a) the right to *collective bargaining* on *wage-rates* and *standard working hours*; that the *unions* continue to be recognised as the appointed agents for the conclusion of agreements with the employers on the wages and working hours of their members, and that the em-

ployers undertake to consult at all times with the union representatives when proposals, complaints, objections, etc. are to be made;

(b) *no new category of privileged workers* is to be created;

(c) *the wage-rates previously paid to skilled workers are to be maintained.* This applies to *hourly rates* as well as to *piece-work*; the latter is to be assessed in such a way that a worker of *average capability and assiduity* can earn the *standard wage*, and any *additional effort* receives *additional payment*.

The final negotiations were conducted in a consistently friendly atmosphere. "The employers," says the *Daily Chronicle*, "testified that the workers had fought courageously and expressed the hope that, however bitter the struggle, workers and employers would in the future stand in no less friendly a relationship to one another than they had in the past." According to another report, they added that the workers would soon find themselves making better progress under these new conditions which allowed employers to keep their factories abreast of the times.⁴³

That remains to be seen, for the moment. What does emerge from the manner in which this business has been concluded is that the unions are beaten, but not defeated. To borrow a military image, the conflict and its outcome may best be described by saying that the employers have successfully beaten off an attack by the unions.

For now that the conflict is over, nothing prevents us from depicting it as it really was. It was not an attack by capital on labour in which capital emerged victorious, but an unsuccessful attempt by organised labour to wrest from capital a reduction of working hours and rights of participation in factory management.

Formally speaking, the initial impetus came from the campaign for a reduction in working hours. As explained above (see pp. 20ff. in the current volume of *Neue Zeit*) this campaign was initiated solely by the London sections of the engineering union and was officially confined to London. But when the unions called a strike in three London firms belonging to the Federation, and the federated employers replied with a nationwide lock-out against the 25 per cent of their employees who were union members, it became obvious that if the unions won they would enforce the eight-hour day nationwide. But even if the conflict had been confined to London, its successful outcome would inevitably have spread to the provinces. There is therefore no point at all in discussing whether the employers acted criminally in telling the unions that they would respond to the London strike with a nationwide lock-out, and then suiting the action to the word. War is war, and in any case, prominent members of the

engineering union had, from the very beginning, been saying openly that the time had come to fight for an eight-hour day.

But disputes over matters of management (job allocation, manning of machinery, etc.) had been going on even before the London campaign for an eight-hour day got under way – not in London, where the issue had caused no serious strife for quite a long time, but in the North of England where for years it had caused concern and even trouble in the engineering industry. In the North-East of England (the East Riding of Yorkshire, Durham, and Northumberland), on the Clyde in Scotland (Glasgow and its neighbourhood), and in Belfast, we find the largest engineering and shipbuilding works in England [*sic*]. This is where the workers' organisations are strongest and where industry is so concentrated that a worker who wishes to change his job can do so easily when trade is good without leaving the district. And it is chiefly in these areas that demarcation disputes inspired by a semi-craftguild mentality have occurred, so that if the manufacturer is faced with two strong organisations he finds himself so to speak between the devil and the deep blue sea: i.e. production comes to a standstill whichever party he inclines to. The most famous, or rather notorious, of these disputes took place in 1892 in the Tyne shipyards, where thousands of workers were idle for three months because engineers and plumbers were fighting one another for the exclusive right to, or monopoly of, work involving 2½-inch metal pipes.

Such demarcation disputes between skilled workers are usually just a matter of competition between their respective organisations; although, as the Webbs' book on the theory of trade unionism makes clear, wrangles over particular jobs can mask deeper divisions over matters of union policy.^(xiii) But where skilled workers are protesting against the allocation of certain types of work to unskilled workers, the motivation is clearly on the level of industrial policy. Here we are dealing, not with unions, but with whole classes of workers. The aim is to prevent the reduction of higher-paid workers to the level of day-labourers and to prevent any change in the relative proportion of the two categories. Such disputes have occurred in the English engineering industry at various times in recent years, and in various forms. As a rule, they have not led to any major conflicts but have been confined to individual workshops where new procedures were introduced or planned. Given the strength of the unions they faced, the employers usually gave way to the demands of the engineers (in most cases the union involved was the large Amalgamated Society of Engineers) or abandoned their innovations completely. They main-

tain that in this way, or by virtue of this union policy, the technical development of the English engineering industry has been seriously affected. Their claims on this point may be exaggerated, but it cannot be denied that such a policy existed. It has repeatedly been proclaimed in the official publications of the union.

As a circular from the executive to the members of the union states, "Briefly put our position is that your interests in the trade should be safeguarded by provision being made for the payment of standard rates of wages at machines which displaced skilled hand labour" (*Amalgamated Engineers' Journal and Monthly Record*, May 1897).

At a delegates' conference in June 1897, a resolution was passed concerning a dispute which had broken out in Sunderland over machine-manning, to the effect that the question (a day-labourer had been set to man a new drill) should be fought out "on the right of skilled men to work the machines rather than upon a wage basis" (*Monthly Record*, July). In other words, the original suggestion – that the use of the day-labourer should be conceded on condition that he be paid a higher wage – was rejected in favour of a defence on principle of the skilled workers' *exclusive right to this machine*. The outbreak of the struggle for an eight-hour day in London, and its subsequent extension to the rest of the country, pushed this particular issue into the background.^(xiv) However, the employers made corresponding efforts to bring the debate back to the issue of machine-manning, and they succeeded.

It could hardly have been otherwise. The employers declared that in view of foreign competition, especially from the United States, they could not agree to any reduction in working hours. Whereupon spokesmen for the workers (John Burns *et al.*) accused them of making feeble excuses. The strength of American competition, said Burns, was based on the superiority of American industrial organisation, not on longer working hours. That set the ball in motion. The daily press and the specialist journals were snowed under with letters claiming to prove that in the United States no union regulations stand in the way of the introduction of piece-work and of more advanced machinery, that the American worker produces as much as a reasonable exertion of his energies will allow, and that the situation is similar in other industrial countries, whereas in England union policy consists in keeping production per worker at as low a level as possible.

Much of this was probably exaggerated, but on the whole it must be admitted that members of the engineering union do exhibit such tendencies. This should not be condemned out of hand – in eco-

conomic terms, that is, since ethics hardly come into the matter.^(xv) Insofar as ethics do play a part, the workers are mostly guided by a praiseworthy aversion to the idea that one of their number should lose his job because of a new procedure, or that a skilled workman should be replaced by unskilled labour. However, there are also sound economic reasons why the workers should not merely content themselves with the same wages for the same degree of effort when new machinery or processes are introduced, but should attempt to share in the benefits of the innovation. The question is simply how this may be accomplished, and how far one can go without seriously impeding economic progress.

Obviously, no manufacturer will introduce new machinery or work-processes unless they lead to a reduction in the costs of production. So if the workers manage to secure the entire benefit for themselves, they would in effect be operating a ban. But a ban, in this context, is less than satisfactory. Innovations tend to involve all kinds of incidental costs which cannot be recouped for a certain length of time, and the manufacturer will only commit himself to them if a worthwhile advantage is in prospect. And it is necessary to consider not only the employer as well as the worker but also the consumer, the public at large, the community. In the last resort, inventions are their property – a fact acknowledged in law by the limit set on the period during which an inventor is guaranteed exclusive rights to the benefits accruing from his invention. From a social point of view, the community has a right to price reductions. But quite apart from that, unless it is a matter of strictly local industries or industries protected from outside competition of some kind, any policy which delays a fall in prices must inevitably damage the industrial interests of the nation and therewith of its workers, unless it can be pursued internationally. The claim of workers to benefit from technical innovations must therefore have its limits; if these limits are exceeded, they and the community will suffer in one way or another. Conversely, workers usually overestimate the damage caused to employment prospects by cheaper manufacturing processes. The compensation theory of the classical economists may have been wrong,⁴⁴ and in some industries machinery may well have reduced the number of workers; but in general machinery has reduced neither the total number of workers nor the number of skilled workers. This holds above all for the bulk of the metallurgical industries. So far they have experienced no more than temporary fluctuations, which may have hit individual workers very hard indeed but which have left the situation as a whole unchanged.^(xvi) It is only right and proper that the unions, while striving to achieve a gradual improvement in the situation of their members,

should also try to assist individuals in such cases, or attempt to make the transition easier for them. The question is, what is the best way to do this?

The English labour movement is, in general, very strongly of the opinion that the skilled worker has an *invested right* in his industry. In the present conflict, the expression “invested right”⁴⁵ has been extensively used by the engineers, their representatives, and their supporters – and by none more consistently than by the venerable Positivist, Henry Crompton, whose services to the English trade union movement have been considerable. In an article published in the *Daily News*,⁴⁶ Crompton, a lawyer by profession, argued in terms strongly reminiscent of Rodbertus’s relative wage theory that it was absolutely justifiable and necessary that workers should claim for themselves the benefits of any technical innovation.^(xvi) Similarly, a representative of the workers, also as it happens named Crompton, declared at the conference held last spring between delegates of the manufacturers’ federation and of the engineering union: “As a skilled worker, I claim that, having completed my apprenticeship and in every respect learned my trade, whenever one of these (new) drilling machines comes into use and drives me off the lathe, I have a right to a share in the advantages which, in the opinion of the employers, accrues to us from this displacement” (*Proceedings*, p. 13).

This principle was consistently upheld by the union representatives throughout the entire proceedings, which lasted for five days. They demanded the exclusive right for skilled workers to all work on certain machinery, regardless of the nature of the work or the construction of the machinery, and to certain jobs, regardless of the kind of machinery used. They also declared that, except in special cases, they would not recognise a worker as fully skilled until he had completed his apprenticeship and unless he had begun it before reaching the age of sixteen. Finally, the employers complained during the dispute (the subject was not raised at the conference) that the unions would not allow one man to operate two machines simultaneously, however simple they were to operate, needing merely to be supervised and maintained. “One man, one job”⁴⁷ – this general principle of the English labour movement was being applied in such a way that the number of skilled workers per machine could not be reduced.

If all these principles were strictly observed, the skilled worker’s invested rights would be as well protected as one could wish. But it is equally certain that the lowering of production costs would be much delayed. The equivalent in a mechanised weaving-mill would be for each worker to man only one loom, whereas in Lancashire nowadays

he mans between four and six, and in Massachusetts as many as eight. If English weavers were willing and able to impose such a condition on the manufacturers, the English cotton industry would of course succumb to foreign competition and the "invested" right of the weavers would be meaningless. The case of the engineering and metallurgical industries is less extreme, partly because the unions do not insist upon this principle absolutely to the letter and partly because the question of manning several machines at once only arises in specialised branches of the industry. But the more closely the situation approximates to the example described above, the more inevitable it becomes that competitiveness will decline.^(xviii)

The fact of the matter is that, in modern society, it is impossible to uphold for any length of time the idea of "invested rights" in the form maintained by the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. Most English unions have indeed abandoned the idea and are looking for other ways to protect the living standards and working conditions of their members and colleagues. It is a kind of atavism that impels the engineering union to insist upon this principle. Indeed, this union evinces a strange mixture of the outmoded and the ultra-modern in its thinking. It is a serious mistake to regard it as the archetype of the modern trade union. In many important aspects of organisation and administration, it lags behind the workers' organisations in other industries. The Webbs' book brings this out very well. On the one hand, the union has, until now, firmly distanced itself from the movement to form one large association for the engineering and ship-building industry, in the hope of bringing all the workers in this industry into its own particular organisation. However, although this welding together, this "fusion," into a single united organisation may have been an advantage in the early days of the movement, the advantage decreases as the industry develops and becomes more specialised. Each specialised skill requires an independent organisation, and instead of amalgamating, these organisations need to join forces in a federal structure. The engineering union has been unwilling to accept this and has sometimes used less than gentle methods to poach members from the specialist organisations, which explains the peculiar attitude of some of these unions during the engineers' recent struggle. The union was hated by the very organisations closest to it. And although its concept of organisation was strictly unitarian, its system of leadership and administration allowed local branches a high degree of autonomy, which meant that its central authority, which has or ought to have an overall view of the

situation in the industry, was unable to prevent local branches from plunging the entire union into protracted and costly disputes.^(xix)

The position the union has maintained so far on the question of *piece-work* is further evidence of a certain backwardness. Here, like old Wrangel,⁴⁸ I am to some extent obliged to "eat my words." Readers of *Neue Zeit* will perhaps recall the polemical exchanges on the subject of piece-work between myself and Domela Nieuwenhuis after the Brussels International Congress.⁴⁹ Nieuwenhuis attacked the Brussels Congress resolution against the piece-work system, and I defended it. At that time, a friend who had until recently been a wage-labourer and who still belongs to the labour movement, told me that he did not share my views and that, in very many cases, piece-work was both indispensable and a considerable improvement. However, he refused my request to expound his views in *Neue Zeit*. I have always admitted that there are exceptions, and I still hold the view that, in many instances, workers are well advised to resist the introduction of piece-work. But I do not hesitate to say that, by and large, my views at that time were erroneous. Nieuwenhuis failed to convince me because he argued in general terms. The matter could be proved only by a more precise analysis of the relationship between the method of work and the method of payment, and of experiences gathered over a wide field. The history of the English trade unions shows that the largest, wealthiest, and most powerful unions have either accepted the piece-work system or, indeed, insisted upon it. According to the Webbs' statistics (pp. 255ff.):⁵⁰

- 49 unions with 573,000 members insist on piece-work;
- 24 unions with 140,000 members accept piece-work;
- 38 unions with 290,000 members are opposed to piece-work.

Most of the larger unions in the latter category belong to the *building trade*. Others include the bakers, dyers, lithograph printers, cartwrights, patternmakers, iron and brass foundry workers, and the large engineering union.

As mentioned above, the engineering union no longer resists piece-work as a matter of principle. Of necessity, this will affect the rest of its industrial policy, for the struggle for proper rates of pay for piece-work focusses attention on very different issues from the struggle against the actual principle of piece-work. It requires a much more intimate concern with the development and other circumstances of the industry. Points which received great emphasis previously will gradually

diminish in importance, whereas others hitherto neglected will acquire significance. It is more than doubtful whether the principle of "invested rights" in an industry which imposed many hardships on "unskilled" workers can be upheld in the same form as before. Ways and means must be sought of retaining what was valuable in it, in a different and more up-to-date form.

To sum up, our impression of the recent conflict in the English engineering industry is rather different from the one gained by outsiders, and promoted by the contestants themselves, while the conflict was still in progress. I have already explained, in the first part of this article, that the issue was not "the destruction of the trade union system." Now that the dispute is over, this is admitted by others as well, and the very man who was regarded as the arch-enemy of the workers' organisations, Colonel Dyer, is said by *Shipping World* (which is sympathetic to the workers) to have supported those elements in the employers' council who favoured making concessions to the workers.⁵¹ This would tally with his statement to the conference mentioned on several occasions above: "Do not believe for a moment that I have anything against your union. I may be wrong and I may be alone in my view, but I look forward to the day when every worker belongs to a trade union and every employer belongs to an employers' organisation. We will then get together under conditions of equality and discuss matters on a comprehensive and reasonable basis. Until now, we (the manufacturers) have always been compelled to give way in order to avoid conflict, contrary to our better judgment and our knowledge of the trade. I therefore do not think that we can treat present usages as established practice. We would look at everything anew, not from the standpoint of custom, but with a view to what is most advantageous for the industry and all who take part in it" (*Proceedings*, p. 51).

The conflict has brought Mr Dyer's wish close to fulfilment in that it has raised one of its preconditions, the manufacturers' organisation, to a level that was quite unforeseen. On the other hand, the manufacturers themselves have ensured that the workers will very shortly begin to reconstruct the form, constitution, and combat techniques of their organisation in accordance with new principles, and thus render it more effective. For the moment, the struggle for the eight-hour day has faded into the background, perhaps to be taken up in the political arena. But the great engineering union, still powerful even in defeat, will advance towards a revolution of immense importance for the entire engineering and shipbuilding industry of England.

BEBEL to KAUTSKY
15 February 1898 ⁵²

Dear Karl,

I enclose the *Freisinnige Zeitung* containing an article by Richter⁵³ in which he assures Ede of his support. This is Ede's ultimate punishment for the article he wrote.

It is also utterly disgraceful that while Ede censured the engineering strike in his usual fashion, the industrialist, Rose, aligned himself completely with the workers.⁵⁴ Right is left and left is right.

What would Engels say if he saw now how Ede is undermining everything that he himself once helped to build up.

Heine⁵⁵ has also come along recently, singing a similar tune. We'll have to discuss him in the parliamentary party. The most appalling opportunism is spreading among us like wildfire.

Kindest regards from us all.

Yours
A. Bebel

Please can I ask you to send the *Freisinnige* article to Ede; I am sending it to you because I don't know whether you get the paper.

Notes

- (i) Did Burrows mean to say that among primitive peoples children under sixteen are not involved in supporting themselves? If so, we would like to disagree with him emphatically. Primitive races have educational methods different from our own, but their children's games are nothing but imitations of adult work and become increasingly like it. Jung reports of the Australians: "In the earliest years of childhood more or less anything was permitted. But at a very early age, often when still crawling, small children are introduced to the business of *providing for themselves*. They learn from older children how to dig up small roots, insects, etc. with the sharpened stick given them by their mothers. Later, they go to a kind of school where an old man teaches them how to climb, how to know the habits of animals, how to throw a spear, and accustoms them to order and self-control. An old woman teaches the girls how to *build huts*, how to *gather fibres, make thread, weave nets*, etc." (*Der Welttheil Australien*, I, p. 98). Similar things can be said of other primitive peoples. Wage labour and factory work for *children* are admittedly unknown among them, for the simple reason that they have no wage-labour or factory work at all. Ed.

- (ii) The figure for 1850 is probably too low. Factory inspection at the time was grossly inadequate, and many children were registered as being over thirteen who were in fact below the age permitted for full-time work. Cf. Marx, *Capital*. But the margin of error cannot be more than a few thousand at the most, so the total number of children employed in the cotton mills in 1850 was definitely no higher than 20,000.
- (iii) "With a strict regulation of the working time according to the different age-groups and other safety measures for the protection of children, an *early* combination of productive labour with education is one of the most potent means for the transformations of present-day society" (Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*).⁵⁶ Shortly after Engels published the *Critique*, he told the present writer that, with regard to child labour in the textile industry, his view was that a *significant* rise in the age-limit for factory work would be unnecessary *if the working hours of the so-called half-timers were reduced* and three or four shifts introduced instead of two. This, he observed, could quite well be implemented.
- (iv) As Owen was a factory-owner and Fourier a travelling salesman, let us add the example of the revolutionary proletarian, *Wilhelm Weitling*, in whose system the "school companies" of children exist to combine *socially useful* work with education and children are required to do even the most unpleasant tasks.
- (v) This fact may be compared with the familiar cases of individuals who have made the transition from proletarian to wealthy industrialist. There is, however, a significant difference between the two. In order that one man may become an industrialist, hundreds more must remain wage-labourers, but many can become scholars without forcing a single one of their fellow human beings to remain an intellectual proletarian.
- (vi) Dresden and Leipzig, Carl Reissner, 216 pp. octavo.
- (vii) Sighele rightly remarks that this explains why, in such meetings, speakers who intend to calm an audience often have the opposite effect. Their gesticulations, intended to emphasise their words of exhortation, only serve to excite yet further those (the majority) who can see but not hear them. The chairman's bell is not liable to this misinterpretation, and ringing it persistently often deflects people's minds from the cause of their excitement sufficiently to turn an angry audience into a good-humoured one.
- (viii) We may permit ourselves a comment at this point. Sighele's remarks on the "crowd" apply, as Bernstein says above, primarily to the *spontaneously assembled* crowd, which mostly consists of mindless gapers and the down-at-heel urban lumpenproletariat. If any reactionaries are tempted to exploit these remarks in order to increase the powers of the police against the masses, we must point out that the police

have so far proved more effective at provoking crowds than at controlling them.

However, Sighele's remarks do not apply to the *organised*, disciplined crowds of the working proletariat. Where the latter have succeeded in organising themselves effectively, they have, whenever they have appeared on the streets as a "crowd," proved themselves strong enough not only to maintain dignified conduct (often in face of the worst kind of provocation from the police) but also to keep the motley crew of gapers and lumpenproletariat under control.

As cities become larger, the "mob," the convergence of large masses of people on particular occasions, will become an increasingly frequent phenomenon of modern social life. All political parties provide occasions for this, none more so, perhaps, than the representatives and supporters of bureaucracy [*Byzantinismus*] and militarism. The dangers which arise from these mass gatherings can be countered, not by increased reinforcement of the police, but by the increasing extension of the organisation of the working masses. Ed.

- (ix) Brentano's position is conditioned by the stereotyped model which features repeatedly in his writings, and more recently in his letter to George Barnes: "the unions on one side, Social Democracy on the other." The effect of such an arbitrary division between social phenomena can be seen in the fact that *Justice*, the organ of the Social Democratic Federation, reprints Brentano's letter in full as evidence of "the conservative influence of trade unions."⁵⁷ It seems to be the fear that defeat for the engineers might mean the growth of Social Democracy, rather than objective interest in the engineers' demands, which has provoked his otherwise praiseworthy intervention on their behalf. At all events, this fear has seriously distorted his judgment of the situation.
- (x) This last as a fraternal reply to recent talk in this journal about "London mirages" and their "tenfold transparency." People who live in glass houses, etc., etc.
- (xi) The present conflict offers many instances. For example, the workers are well aware that it is by no means always the worthiest specimens of the manufacturer genus who stay outside the employers' federation. I have heard a striking worker give a speech on the conflict, in which he expressed undisguised contempt for the bulk of unfederated manufacturers. Conversely, my enquiries amongst socialist trade unionists about working conditions in the factory belonging to one of the best-known leaders of the Federation elicited uniformly favourable verdicts.
- (xii) The Webbs' book offers an excellent analysis of the shifts in the position of workers and employers *vis-à-vis* tribunals, etc.
- (xiii) All in all, the Webbs' book, written long before the engineers' campaign for the eight-hour day, contains an extraordinary amount of

material that casts light on phenomena which emerged in the course of the conflict.

- (xiv) This is the subject of the letter from George Barnes to the *People's Journal* of Dundee (7 August 1897), quoted by Colonel Dyer in the specialist journal, *Cassiers Magazine*, and probably also reproduced in Continental employers' journals. Barnes writes: "We have so far out-generated Colonel Dyer as to have averted the fight upon an unpopular issue, and to have shunted it on to a question upon which we ought to get, and I believe will get, the support of our fellow-workmen." It is understandable that those who did not know the situation took this to mean that the eight-hour campaign was an excuse and that the question of machine-manning was the real issue. In fact, however, it merely shows that the leaders were glad when the eight-hour campaign relieved them of the necessity to call a strike on an issue which had caused division even within their own ranks.
- (xv) The individual worker who deliberately produces work of a quality or quantity below the standard agreed certainly offends against the moral code as much as the businessman who sells inferior or adulterated goods as genuine and of standard quality. It is short-sighted radicalism to deny the moral implications of such matters. And attempts to establish systematic dawdling ("ca canny")⁵⁸ as a weapon in the union arsenal have met with vigorous resistance from the more perceptive union leaders, because they realise that anything which tends to corrupt the moral consciousness of the workers must ultimately be an obstacle to their advancement. On the other hand, if a union seeks to negotiate regulations which reduce the production quota for the individual worker, or prevent it from being increased, then such a policy must be judged primarily by its economic effectiveness. The London bricklayer has certainly not lowered his moral standards because he now lays 400–500 bricks a day instead of 800–1,000.
- (xvi) "Remember that, thirty years ago, skilled workers in the file-making industry tried to prevent any use of machines, be it for cutting, hammering or grinding. The issue came to open conflict, the union permitted the full use of machinery, and the file-making industry has never been in a more flourishing condition than in recent years." Letter from Sir Frederic Mappin to a meeting of striking engineers in Sheffield.⁵⁹ Mappin is Liberal MP for an industrial constituency near Sheffield. When the engineering manufacturers refused to take their differences with the workers to arbitration, he contributed personally to the workers' support fund.
- (xvii) John Stuart Mill also asserted that a worker whose right to his trade was infringed by the use of machinery had a claim to compensation.⁶⁰ Cf. the Webbs' highly instructive chapter on the theoretical basis of the trade union system.
- (xviii) An exception may be made for jobs which involve exclusively highly skilled labour and where machines play a subordinate role. But gener-

ally speaking the English workman is not good at fine craftsmanship. The more delicate mechanical instruments are usually imported from abroad or made in England by foreign craftsmen.

- (xix) Cf. Webb, *Theorie und Praxis der englischen Gewerkvereine*, pp. 85ff. and 115ff.⁶¹ The conflict just terminated will certainly bring changes. Firstly, the sudden and menacing rise of the Employers' Federation is in itself enough to force an improvement in the solidarity and strength of the executive; and secondly, the course taken by the conflict has exposed the dubious wisdom of entrusting decisions on important measures to the membership of local branches who lack a broad view and are governed by the mood of the meeting. "We want leadership," declared an engineer at a meeting I attended, and he did not give the impression of being "one of the herd." "The ordinary man does not have the sources of information open to the executive to inform himself about various circumstances in the industry, and it is the executive's business to keep abreast of these circumstances." In the end, the unfavourable outcome of the conflict did finally bring the engineering union nearer to the idea of federalisation.

The Movement and the Final Goal Bernstein's Second Exchange with Belfort Bax

ERNEST BELFORT BAX
Colonial Policy and Chauvinism
Neue Zeit, 21 December 1897

A few months ago, in an article published in *Neue Zeit*, Eduard Bernstein suggested that the unlimited expansion of so-called modern civilisation – in other words, the present capitalist economy and all that goes with it – was an intrinsically good thing for the savage and barbaric races and for the world at large. He also suggested that the economic expansion of this system was a necessary prerequisite for any further progress whatever. Since it is not uncommon nowadays to hear these and similar views expressed, we should perhaps consider them more closely.

It goes without saying that the capitalist and the supporter of the existing bourgeois system regard its expansion – the opening of new markets, the subjugation of primitive races for the purpose of exploiting them in mines, railway-building and later in factories (which would, of course, render the labour of white proletarians superfluous), the expulsion of natives from their lands, the seizure of their livestock, etc. – as a great blessing for mankind and a significant victory for progress. But for a Social Democrat to hold similar views may very well strike the simple party member as an inexplicable violation of the basic principle of socialism.

To begin with, let us ask what might actually be meant by the expansion of modern civilisation which Bernstein, in concert with the average bourgeois Philistine, commends so highly.ⁱ It means, firstly, the sudden advance of the capitalist form of economy, usually in its crudest form, and the simultaneous suppression of the indigenous agricultural economy and civilisation – first and foremost, of course, the suppression of the prevailing mode of production and the current method of exchange. The old ways of organising labour are, as a rule, forcibly destroyed. A variety of religious and philanthropic

pretexts are used to eliminate the structures of the old economy as well as the old religious practices and folk customs. Slavery in its ancient form, which has evolved with the life-style of the people, is denounced, prohibited, and finally abolished. And for whose benefit? At best, for the benefit of modern wage-slavery and free contract which, moreover, turns out to be much worse for the natives than the caste-slavery to which they are accustomed. But in the worst though frequent cases, it is replaced by forced contract labour, a system whereby the unwitting native is compelled by force or enticed by deceitful promises to contract himself for a certain time, during which he is in the power of his employer and at the expiration of which the latter has no further obligations towards him. In other words, it is a system which combines all the evils of both systems, modern wage-labour and caste-slavery, without possessing the decisive advantages of the latter. Those who have devoted themselves to the cause of the natives, the English "Aborigines Protection Society" for instance (to whose publications I refer the readers of this journal), know well enough how much the natives loathe this philanthropic swindle, the abolition of slavery in savage countries (say, in Africa), and even more the system of forced contract labour by which it is often replaced nowadays.

These, then, are some of the consequences of capitalist conquest for the inhabitants of savage countries. But they are by no means all. The immediate and principal aim of such enterprises is well known: the opening up of new markets for the products of big industry at home. To the degree that this is achieved, the original mode of production of the natives is of course abolished, and the original barter economy is replaced by a money economy. Now, let us take a barbaric country, for example, Morocco. This surviving remnant of old civilisation, so conveniently situated opposite Gibraltar, is notoriously a juicy morsel on which the European capitalist (i.e. "promoter of morality" or "philanthropist") has long cast envious eyes. In order to attain and justify his purpose, he periodically arranges for gruesome accounts of oppression by the pashas and maladministration by the government in general to be broadcast in the press. In this fashion, well-meaning Philistines who themselves have no special interest in the exploitation of Morocco are roused to indignation, and a climate of public opinion is created which facilitates the attainment of the desired goal. Depicting the horrors of slavery and the abuses of the native economy is a well-known method of justifying capitalist fondness for pillage and murder.

Let us now consider the real economic conditions of Morocco, the

conditions that govern the daily lives of the people. So far as food is concerned, wheat, the main constituent of bread and thus the main source of sustenance, costs four francs a hectolitre. In Marseilles, American wheat costs sixteen francs a hectolitre, while French wheat is not to be had for less than twenty-two to twenty-three francs. An important reason for low prices in Morocco is the regulation forbidding the export of grain — good for the people, but highly inconvenient for the capitalist landowner. Other native products are equally cheap. While food is cheap, wages are relatively high. Men receive on average one franc and women half a franc a day. Another regulation which could also be called barbaric forbids the use of agricultural machinery for harvesting corn, the express reason being that otherwise the avarice of the landowner would deprive the poor of their gleanings from the sheaves. As for manual work, the worker of course owns his tools. Production is in its primitive stage. There are no roads in the entire country; the Sultan and the pashas prohibit them; anything that moves on wheels is forbidden. All the efforts of the government are channelled into preventing the introduction of modern commercialism and big industry. Only hand-loom frames are used. Yet, despite these “barbaric” regulations, anyone who visits the country (and I have known many such) returns full of praise for the simplicity of the customs and the prosperity of the people.

Inevitably, Bernstein, like other adulators of modern civilisation, would see it as undoubtedly a great step forward if Morocco were to be appropriated by some European power, and if its primitive customs and economic structures, with which the people are in their way generally content, were to be flung into the maelstrom of big industry and the world market, in which the happiness of the mass of the people is impossible! The Moroccan people would indeed be freed from certain conspicuous abuses, but at what price? They would have exchanged the occasional brutalities and oppressions of the pashas for their general degradation as a proletariat. A wasteland of boilers and chimney-smoke is created and is then called progress and popular well-being. If progress in the capitalist sense, i.e. the introduction of big industry, a money economy, and involvement in the world market is a matter of detrimental “improvements” and thus a misfortune for a country like Morocco, which already possesses a degree of civilisation, how much more is this true for savage and barbaric races who know nothing at all of civilisation and who live entirely in primitive gentile and tribal communities? It certainly cannot be progress in the sense of an increase in the happiness of the population if the majority of them are reduced to proletarians and if

all are condemned to consume the vile and poisonous products of European big industry. Or would Mr Bernstein and those of his opinion (among whom I think it is fair to number the editor of *Neue Zeit*) venture to maintain that it can? If not, then, insofar as they are to be counted as Socialists, other reasons must be decisive.

The only possible remaining reason is this: human society, it is argued, has developed through primitive forms of society to modern capitalism and, furthermore, socialism is the necessary consequence of capitalism; the latter, for its part, bears in its womb the new socialist society; socialism in the modern sense can arise only out of modern capitalism. Hence, it is said (and this is what I venture to call the *non sequitur*), every corner of the earth's surface and all races must pass through the mill of capitalism before they can arrive at socialism. Those who promote this view seem to me to be poor students of history. For they overlook the important fact that there are certain races who, in each major period of human development, are chosen by what we may call historical natural selection to be the main standard-bearers of the civilisation of that period, and who must therefore pass through all the relevant stages of development. The remaining peoples are simply drawn along in the wake of such races as soon as they come into contact with them. The stamp of the contemporary civilisation of the progressive peoples is impressed upon them, and, unless they die out, they arrive in a short time – often not more than a couple of generations – at substantially the very same level, without having passed through anything which might properly be called a course of development. The degree to which an age as a whole makes progress is the degree to which races develop who are the historical standard-bearers of progress in that age. In hoary antiquity, the Oriental peoples were the standard-bearers – Babylonians, Egyptians, Syrians, etc. In the classical period, Greece and Italy; in medieval times, principally the Germanic and related races; in modern times narrowly conceived, the same races grown into independent nations, with their colonies (Western Europe); in modern times more broadly conceived, the whole of Europe. In none of these cases has it required more than relatively small agglomerations of peoples to complete one particular stage of development *definitively* and embark upon another. If all these remarks strike my readers as being long-established historical truths, not to say platitudes, my excuse for citing them is that Bernstein, if I understand him rightly, believes that because modern capitalism is the necessary first step to socialism for those nations which are the vanguard of modern civilisation, it follows that all Hottentots, Kaffirs,

Cameroonians, Patagonians, South Sea Islanders, *et hoc genus omne*¹ must first be capitalised before the era of socialism can dawn for humanity.

The wrong-headedness of this supposition is plain as soon as it is stated clearly and without circumlocution. As Friedrich Engels said more than once to the present author, the only correct policy for Social Democracy towards inferior races, for the time being at least, was that of *laissez-faire*. One might also suppose that it would be obvious to any consistent Socialist not entirely ensnared in the false argument denounced above that it is not a particularly saintly act to destroy a naturally evolved form of society in order to replace it with the modern industrial state. In his enthusiasm for capitalism and the English Liberal Party, Mr Bernstein seems not to think so.

But for Socialists, the exploitation of backward races by conquest and colonisation is morally wrong not merely from the more or less static standpoint of the welfare of those races themselves. For Europe as well, it would be a serious obstacle to the historical realisation of socialism. The one sheet-anchor of the modern capitalist system is the possibility of expanding its area of activity. The effects of the ever more glaring contradiction between the mode of production and the mode of exchange can be overcome temporarily only by winning new outlets, new markets. Needless to say, that is what the whole of modern colonial policy is about. If this process of expansion ceases or proceeds too slowly, then the capitalist system as such necessarily collapses and makes way for collectivism. In addition, there is the consideration of a new "reserve army" of proletarians in the shape of natives who, at least for the moment, know nothing of modern class struggles and who can replace, if necessary, the increasingly rebellious proletarians of civilised countries. The modern capitalist and the modern statesman know this perfectly well; hence the eagerness and the "Storm and Stress" with which, as a matter of priority, they set themselves to seize new countries and new people while there is still time. The trade and industry of the country which manages to appropriate most of the territory still unconquered and unexploited will of course achieve an exceptionally favourable position in the future world market; indeed, under certain circumstances, they will dominate it. Hence the fact that today all major policy is directly or indirectly focussed on the colonial question. For these salient reasons we assert, now as before, that it is the duty of every Social Democrat, no matter to what state he belongs, to resist each and every active colonial policy. The expansion of the world market, the conquest of new outlets, the subjugation of new races, all mean the expansion of

the capitalist economy. This expansion means giving capitalism in general a new lease of life, which again amounts to delaying the new world order and the dawn of Social Democratic society until something like the Greek Calends. From this standpoint, every advance of colonisation is a setback for the socialist cause. It also follows from this standpoint that the socialist party must, if it is to be consistent, welcome every defeat of a civilised power in its struggle with savage and barbaric tribes. Seen from this angle, the cause of the natives is truly our own cause. So, my good friend Kautsky, it is not solely or even mainly for *moral*, or, as you would call it, “*sentimental*” reasons² – i.e. humanity, recognition of the rights of weaker peoples, and sympathy with earlier cultural conditions – that I as a Social Democrat condemn, under all circumstances, the subjugation of lesser peoples by civilised peoples. No, it is also out of absolutely hard economic considerations, and that is why most Social Democrats instinctively do likewise. They know perfectly well that the proletariat has nothing to gain from drawing new countries and peoples into the sphere of modern capitalist development. They realise well enough that colonial power is of benefit exclusively to the property-owning classes, and mostly to the big capitalists.

It is only certain purveyors of moderation, a few would-be practical politicians, who repudiate this standpoint and maintain that the subjugation of backward races for the benefit of European capitalists is perfectly in order and that one might at most criticise the way in which it is done. These gentlemen disavow the standpoint of the party, and this they call reason and moderation. Following the current fashion, they despise “*revolutionary rhetoric*” to the point where there is no thought behind their pronouncements that would not be at home in the *Vossische Zeitung* or the *Daily Chronicle*. They relinquish the final goal of the socialist movement in favour of the set of ideas characteristic of contemporary bourgeois liberalism and radicalism, and this they call practical political sense and “*taking things as they are.*” By contrast, the standpoint I have just explained gives socialist foreign policy a consistent guide-line. Everything that offers a way out for capitalism, for modern big industry, and for world trade impedes socialism, and the party should therefore resist it to the utmost. For instance, there can be no doubt that the destruction of the Turkish Empire and the consequent opening up of the whole of Western Asia to modern industry and trade would greatly enhance the resistance of the capitalist system to its own collapse. Social Democracy is therefore in duty bound to support those efforts which lead to the maintenance of the *status quo* in Turkey. But the main

focus of all the efforts of modern capitalism and its state-systems lies in the speedy opening up of Africa. For modern capitalism, beginning to be hard-pressed in Europe and North America, Africa is the promised land. If only the huge, virgin territory of the African continent could be generally won for civilisation, i.e. modern capitalist civilisation, within the next couple of decades, then, it is supposed, the said civilisation would be saved from its own collapse and from socialist revolution for an infinite length of time. This hope does not always stand as clearly in the forefront of awareness as I have expressed it, but it is present subliminally in the whole attitude of modern colonial policy. Whatever happens, central Africa must be won for capitalism.

In short, the greatest danger for socialism today lies in the possibility that the present economic system might succeed in obtaining room for new development in the above-mentioned way. We can, if we wish, maintain that it is a danger which cannot be averted, since capitalist power is still too great and socialist influence on the masses of the civilised nations is still too weak. But, firstly, this is not proven; and, secondly, even if it were the case, the duty of Social Democracy would still be to put all levers in motion at least to hinder the course of this capitalist policy, even if it were impossible to stop it altogether.

It might seem that the party could allow itself to be fairly indifferent to the international competition for colonial hegemony among the property-owning classes of the various nations. The question appears, indeed, trivial by comparison with the success of the present economic system in winning new elbow-room overall. Yet it is not entirely without significance from the standpoint of the future development of mankind, modern chauvinism quite apart. Naturally, capitalist colonial policy nowadays advertises itself as chauvinism. This simply conceals the wish of a capitalist cartel in one nation to enrich itself at the expense of similar cartels in other nations. However, the predominance of one race, i.e. its establishment in the developing nations of the world (or in most of them), the domination of its language, its customs, and usages, in short, of its cultural characteristics, could conceivably have great significance for later stages of human development. The present writer believes that, considering the matter from this point of view, we now face the danger of experiencing the predominance of one particular race. That race is the Anglo-Saxon. Everywhere the Englishman as a colonist and England as a colonising power are pressing forward, while, as we know, the United States of America lays claim to being the dominant power on

the whole American continent.³ On the continent of Europe we have, until now, been so completely preoccupied with the Jewish question⁴ that we have scarcely noticed this other racial problem. Yet in many respects its significance for the future is much greater. Suetonius reports of the dictator Sulla that, when some of his followers wanted to recall Caesar from exile as no longer dangerous to the state, he said, "In Caesar there is more than one Marius."⁵ Similarly I say to those Continental zealots who resist the alleged advances of Jewry but detect no danger worth mentioning in the advance of the Anglo-Saxons: In every Anglo-Saxon you have ten Jews on your back.

The Anglo-Saxon race stands out among the Aryan peoples very much as the Jewish race does among the Semitic peoples, and, like the Jewish race, it everywhere displays its superiority in certain respects. Hence perhaps the partiality of the Jews for, e.g., England. No British patriots are as fanatical as second-generation immigrant Jews. There are, of course, significant differences in the way racial strength is expressed, but they are often such as to make the Anglo-Saxon seem the more dangerous. This becomes apparent especially in one particular point. Although the Jews admittedly preserve themselves as a race and adhere to their traditional customs as tenaciously as possible under changing circumstances, they do not assimilate the races among which they live. In this sense, Jewry does not expand; it remains a constant quantity. It is quite otherwise with the Anglo-Saxon. Unlike the Jew, he sets up states, and he not only preserves but extends himself. He possesses in marked degree the faculty of absorbing other races, so that their individuality is lost as a result. Although the Jews form part of the population of all civilised countries, the specifically national character of the culture of these countries remains virtually untouched. By contrast, the Anglo-Saxon rarely, or never, settles in other civilised countries. However, he possesses characteristics which enable him, more than other races, to settle among savage tribes or to establish himself in the desolate regions of the earth. In a word, he possesses to an unsurpassed degree the art of colonisation. He has thereby spread himself in all directions and (since it cannot yet be said that the trend is in decline) is spreading himself still. This means that he is disseminating over the whole face of the earth the peculiar characteristics, the special essence, of his culture. And not only that. When the true Anglo-Saxon does settle among civilised races, not only is the national individuality of the latter not respected, it is utterly extinguished. Its immediate heirs become Anglo-Saxons. Many examples of this are provided by Great Britain and the English colonies, but above all by the United

States of America. Indeed, the latter is the classic example. In the United States, all immigrant peoples, be they Germans, Russians, French, or Italians, are caught up in the maelstrom of American Anglo-Saxondom no later than the second generation. They become Americans; i.e. they accept the customs, characteristics, way of thinking, etc. of Anglo-Saxondom, and thus, as we said, their own national individuality is weakened. That the same holds equally for the other branch of the Anglo-Saxon race is easy to see. Even the old French population of Canada, which so far has maintained itself more stubbornly than most, will to all appearances soon be completely Anglicised.

I maintain that all this amounts to a situation which gives cause for concern. We must bear in mind that these newly, or relatively newly, settled countries are destined to become important centres of human development. I would be the last to query the great merits of the Anglo-Saxon race. Nevertheless, we must ask whether the imminent Anglicisation of a large part of developing humanity will not bring with it a tendency to narrow-mindedness and superficiality. Every race has the defects of its qualities. The English chauvinist is naturally delighted that the English-speaking nations should conquer the world. But the rational, thinking man ought to recognise that the preponderance of any particular race is a disadvantage in that the weak and disagreeable characteristics of that race also come to prominence. The Jews have many good qualities too, but, without being regarded as anti-Semitic, we can say that too much Jewry is no blessing for mankind. For my part, it gives me no great pleasure to see the mastery of the world divided between two markedly superior races, such as the Jews and the Anglo-Saxons. I would, accordingly, not be sorry to see a limit set to the ubiquitous acquisitiveness of the Anglo-Saxon race. Comrade Kautsky would probably describe these observations as sentimental. For so hard-nosed a devotee of the materialist conception of history, everything becomes sentimentality which is not directly derived from economic causes in the narrowest sense. However, for those readers of *Neue Zeit* who are less rigid in their conceptions, I have presented the relevant considerations in as short a space as possible. And there, for the time being, we may let the matter rest.

Whatever the case regarding these final points, I believe that I have given here sufficient reasons why a Social Democrat should, under all circumstances, condemn the mere fact "that savages are subjugated and compelled to conform to the rules of higher civilisation," and should not at most be content, as Mr Bernstein believes, to criticise

the "methods of subjugation" by which this is accomplished. These are, after all, quite immaterial.

EDUARD BERNSTEIN

The Struggle of Social Democracy and the Social Revolution:

1. Polemical Aspects

Neue Zeit, 5 January 1898

Wherever the socialist party has achieved political significance, the same phenomenon tends to recur: the party undergoes an internal change. Earlier excesses of phraseology and argument are shed; the enthusiasm for generalisation abates; and there is less speculation about how the spoils are to be divided after Armageddon. People are, indeed, very little preoccupied with this interesting event. Instead, they study the details of topical problems and look for ways and means of using them to push the development of society in a socialist direction.

This process of change is not always completely conscious and deliberate, and even more rarely is it uniform. In different countries it takes place with varying speed and ease depending on all kinds of traditions and differences in political and economic development; and in different individuals it varies according to differences of temperament and understanding. But everywhere the principal characteristic is the same, whether in German, French, Scandinavian, or Italian Social Democracy.

Outwardly, this change appears as a falling off from the purity of principle. There are therefore always elements who oppose it with passion. In the early 'nineties, for instance, German Social Democracy had its "Youngsters" who were in fact oldsters inasmuch as they clung to old phrases and slogans which had, until then, enjoyed almost the force of dogma at times and never had less than wide circulation within the party. This much we must, in retrospect, concede to those among them for whom it was a matter of doctrinaire differences over the tactics of the party at the time. There was much in the literature of the party to justify their opposition. Suffice it to recall the Address of the Central Committee of the Communist League of March 1850, cited by the editors of a party newspaper, which at that time sided with the opposition. They overlooked, as many others were willing to overlook, the fact that, when the address was composed, its author was not yet at the height of his socio-political un-

derstanding, and that, since it was written, major changes had taken place in the presuppositions on which the work was based.

There are two kinds of presupposition on which the determination of tactical questions depends. Firstly, there are of course the external effects of purely empirical relationships: the economic constitution of the country in question, its social structure, its political circumstances, and the natures and relative strengths of its political parties. The second factor is *intellectual* in character; it is the extent to which social conditions are *understood* and the degree of *insight* into the nature and laws of development of the social organism and its elements. Both these factors change, and changes in both need to be considered in discussions of tactical questions. This sounds like a commonplace, and that is what it ought to be. In fact, however, we find that the rule is frequently ignored, and those who are especially liable to think they can ignore it are those who look for the complete realisation of socialism from a general breakdown of major proportions, which they see as the fundamental prerequisite for the decisive victory of socialism.

It is no paradox but a frequently observed fact that revolutionary dogmatism is inherently every bit as conservative as the dogmatism of reactionary extremists. Both refuse with equal obstinacy to acknowledge developments which contradict their "principle." If the facts speak with too loud a voice to be flatly denied, they are attributed to every conceivable contingency but never to their true and proper causes. This is perfectly natural. For where doctrine becomes a hobby-horse – and there are Don Quixotes of revolution just as there are of legitimacy – its adherent can never concede that anything essential in its presuppositions has changed. From every possible nook and cranny he will seek out causes for those facts he finds inconvenient, but the one thing he will studiously avoid is a proper *examination* of their real origins and connections.

Well, have the presuppositions of the socialist movement changed sufficiently to justify the changes, or tendencies to change, which I have just characterised? I have intended for some time to consider this question, and it therefore suits me very well that, in his article "Colonial Policy and Chauvinism," Mr Belfort Bax should challenge me to a debate which in the last resort concerns this very question. For *why* play hide-and-seek? The seemingly incidental accusation which Mr Bax levels at the present author – namely that he seeks to inculcate a new and pernicious spirit into Social Democracy, or, as Mr Bax puts it, that he "relinquishes the final goal of the socialist movement in favour of the set of ideas characteristic of contempo-

rary bourgeois liberalism and radicalism” – constitutes the main aim, the core of Bax’s article; the rest is merely the shell. By this I do not mean to deny that, in his article, Mr Bax is in deadly earnest when he summons us to battle against windmills – or rather against steam-mills. But if this fascinating campaign is to be conducted with all the energy it requires, then it goes without saying that persons who stand in the way must first be put out of action. And that clearly means outrageously Philistine “moderates” as typified by the writer of these pages.

Being thus far at one with Mr Bax, I must inform the readers of *Neue Zeit* that Mr Bax’s article published in number 14 has a prehistory. It is, so to speak, our valiant warrior’s second passage of arms, or to put it in more modern terms, it is a writ of appeal brought to its second hearing. Knowledge of what happened at the first hearing is not irrelevant to a thorough evaluation of it, so I hope to be forgiven if I begin by devoting a few words to the matter [. . .]⁶

[. . .]So much for the first hearing. It will be conceded that, if my impugned article – perhaps because of insufficiently precise expression – really permitted the interpretation which Bax puts upon it in *Justice*, then the foregoing discussion should have cleared up any misunderstanding. And we can accordingly evaluate the combat methods of one who, after all these arguments, blithely and without hesitation begins: “A few months ago, in an article published in *Neue Zeit*, Eduard Bernstein suggested that the unlimited expansion of so-called modern civilisation – in other words, *the present capitalist economy and all that goes with it* – was an *intrinsically good thing for the savage and barbaric races*.” It is “as if” – but, no, I will suppress the comparison.

However, let me reply to Mr Belfort Bax – who with his “synthetic conception of history” fancies himself so superior to the “extreme Marxism” of the “neo-Marxists” – by citing the small fact that, while modern civilisation is much indebted to the capitalist economy, it is by no means confined to it. One of the main achievements of this civilisation is to value the rights of *personality*, of *human life*, which, in the general application and broad interpretation they enjoy today, were unknown to any earlier civilisation. If Mr Bax regards this as a matter of such little importance that he simply ignores it when discussing modern civilisation, then I am bound to ask why and wherefore Mr Bax is a Socialist at all? Assuming that Bax really does have modern proletarians in mind when he suffers aesthetic convulsions at the mere thought of factory chimneys, then there is more to socialism than just feeding people better. There are

plenty of factory-owners who take the material welfare of their workers (as they understand it) very much to heart and spend a lot of money on arrangements to improve it. Were Mr Bax consistent, he ought to place them on at least the same level as his beloved Moroccan pashas, all of whose brutalities against slaves and oppression of the rest of the people he generously forgives, for the sake of their hostility to roads.ⁱⁱ

The Moroccan idyll Mr Bax puts before us is tempting enough. One might almost be taken with a desire to emigrate to this happy land – were it not for a few minor reservations. There are, to begin with, endless rebellions in the interior of the country, which are, of course, countered with the bloodiest brutality – only recently the heads of fifty rebels decorated the walls of the capital (see *Times Weekly*, 26 November) – or they end with the flight of entire tribes to Algeria. This summer, 700 members of the Sekhera tribe fled from the Moroccan paradise and pleaded to be allowed to settle under the yoke of European rule. At present, the English Socialist, Cunningham Graham, is travelling in Morocco. Graham, who is himself half Latin (his mother is Spanish) and feels drawn towards semi-civilised peoples, tried to get across the Atlas to the province of Sus. He was arrested by command of the provincial governor, kept under strict guard for days under various pretexts, and was finally released on condition that he turn back at once. For Sus is one of the hunting-grounds for slaves. In a humorous letter to the *Daily Chronicle*, Graham describes the rural scenery in front of his tent and then holds forth as follows: “Horses and mules are driven down to drink by negro slaves, prisoners clank past in chains, knots of retainers armed with six-foot guns stroll about carelessly, pretending to guard the place – it is in fact Arcadia grafted on feudalism, or feudalism steeped in Arcadia.”⁷ However picturesque the scenery, the life of the people in this Arcadia has little to recommend it. In any case, it is clear that the Moroccan economy is based on feudalism *and* slavery, and this alone would suffice to render everything Mr Bax tells us about the well-being of Moroccan workers suspect.

It is perfectly possible that certain urban trades pursued along the same lines as guilds, such as the manufacture of Moroccan leather, do provide an adequate existence for their workers. In feudal society, guild members in the more favoured industries have always been the aristocrats of labour. However, if Mr Bax wants us to believe that the average daily wage of the Moroccan worker is equivalent to twenty-five litres of corn, he must give us something more than mere assertions. He tells us, for example, that in Morocco the export of

grain is prohibited, and that this beneficent prohibition keeps food cheap and capitalist landowners out of the country. Well, to begin with, Morocco does export food, as Mr Bax can discover from the trade statistics. In 1888 (the most recent figures I have to hand), three million marks' worth of maize, which does after all count as grain, and seven million marks' worth of pulses were exported, as were also various other kinds of fruit, cattle, poultry, eggs, etc. I know nothing of any *prohibition* against the export of corn; I know only of an admittedly high *export duty*. But whether it be a direct prohibition or a prohibitively high duty, it takes unparalleled gullibility to discern in so antiquated an economic policy any real solicitude for the welfare of the *people*. It would at best be an appendage to the policy of doing without roads, which, incidentally, also found advocates among the reactionary European governments of the previous century. Frederick II of Prussia, for instance, declared himself against the building of roads on the grounds that they would enable foreigners passing through the country to travel too fast and thus spend too little money in the country! In Morocco, the aim is clearly to safeguard the sultan's despotic-feudal system of government, and to this end it is apparently thought politic to keep the centres of population isolated from one another. Whatever the welfare considerations are which make it desirable to have no roads, they remain for the moment Bax's secret.

There is nothing, absolutely nothing admirable about Morocco. Simple customsⁱⁱⁱ and relative prosperity for certain classes of people do not in any way involve slavery, travel restrictions, and pasha despotism, for they exist also where this charming trio is absent. Mr Bax pretends that where there is no capitalism there is no deprivation and exploitation, and that commerce necessarily impoverishes people. Such delusions defy serious discussion. On the other hand, Bax seems unaware that capitalism has its own history of development and takes on different aspects at different times, that under the pressure of modern democratic institutions, and the concepts of social obligation which they entail, it *must* assume a face other than the one in evidence when political power was monopolised by private property.

There is a great deal of sound evidence to support the view that, in the present state of public opinion in Europe, the subjection of natives to the authority of European administration does not always entail a worsening of their condition, but often means the opposite. However much violence, fraud, and other unworthy actions accompanied the spread of European rule in earlier centuries, as they often still do today, the other side of the picture is that, under direct Euro-

pean rule, savages are *without exception better off* than they were before. Even before the arrival of Europeans in Africa, brutal wars, robbery, and slavery were not unknown. Indeed, they were the regular order of the day. What was unknown was the degree of peace and legal protection made possible by European institutions and the consequent *sharp rise in food resources*. I have previously, in this journal, quoted a bitterly *anti-English* article from *Grenzbote* in which it was, half-reproachfully, established that, under the protection of British rule, the Negro population of Shira province (between Lake Nyasa and the Zambesi) *increased tenfold in the space of a few years* (see *Neue Zeit*, xiv, 1, p. 485, and *Grenzbote*, 14 July 1895). Of course, the Negroes have not yet read Bax's work and, in their Philistinism, would rather live under English protection than in that African paradise where slave-raiding adds zest to life. The same is true elsewhere. In the United States today, where previously a few hundred thousand Indians fought endless internecine battles over hunting grounds, sixty million people, most of them perfectly respectable, live and export food for further millions of people. Romantics may find this deplorable, but, despite the dark side of contemporary American life, we find nothing in it that is "intrinsically evil." Whatever wrongs were previously perpetrated on the Indians, nowadays their rights are protected, and it is a known fact that their numbers are no longer declining but are, once again, on the increase.

Am I, because I acknowledge all this, an "adulator" of the present? If so, let me refer Bax to *The Communist Manifesto*, which opens with an "adulation" of the bourgeoisie which no hired hack of the latter could have written more impressively. However, in the fifty years since the *Manifesto* was written the world has advanced rather than regressed; and the revolutions which have been accomplished in public life since then, especially the rise of modern democracy, have not been without influence on the doctrine of social obligation.

An example of how the standard for judging issues of native rights is steadily rising is provided by the current protests against the decision of the Cape government to hire out captured Bechuana rebels for five-year periods of bondage to farmers, under specified conditions.⁸ One can question whether the Bechuanas concerned ought to be called rebels at all, i.e. whether they deserved to be punished in the first place; and one can also take serious exception to the details of the conditions in question. But five years of forced labour is certainly not as bad as being shot, and it is also better than slavery for life, to which, according to Bax, the natives "are accustomed" – rather like the proverbial eels who, as the famous cook said, have

always been accustomed to being skinned alive. In sixteenth-century England, a system of temporary forced labour could strike a Thomas More as an ideal penal reform.⁹ Today it seems a retrograde anomaly.

As for my declaration that Social Democracy should focus its criticism on the manner *in which* savages are subjugated, Mr Bax supposes that he is saying something weighty when he remarks, contemptuously, that such criticism is "after all quite immaterial."^{iv} That, however, very much depends. Criticism is immaterial or not according to *how* and *by whom* it is made. For instance, the criticism which the Social Democrats in the Reichstag levelled at the measures taken in German East Africa has proved to be anything but immaterial – as a certain Dr Peters and others can tell Mr Bax.¹⁰ To have a decisive influence on public opinion, one must first to be in a position to be taken seriously by it.

The pressure of public opinion in England compelled the British South Africa Company to return half of Lobengula's captured stock, namely, 40,000 head of cattle, to the defeated Matabele.¹¹ But for the onset of cattle plague, the Matabele would at least have been better served than with the maxim guns Bax would have given them.

The threatened Anglicisation of the entire world – a prospect which Bax, groping for arguments, borrows from the German colonial chauvinists and tastefully embellishes with mildly anti-Semitic phrases – will not occur, if only because the colonial question is no longer merely, or even mainly, a matter of English expansion. Nowadays, France and Germany on the one hand and Russia on the other do their best to place obstructions in England's path. Were there any practical conclusion at all to be drawn from what Bax says, it would be that German Social Democracy must support the German colonial chauvinists in every way possible. For, with all due respect for the good intentions of Mr Bax and his friends (incidentally, I doubt very much whether Mr Hyndman, for instance, shares Mr Bax's idiosyncratic opposition to Anglo-Saxondom), we venture to entertain a few doubts concerning their ability to translate intention into action. On this point, the gentlemen of the German East Africa Company offer better guarantees.^v

However, like most of his allegations, Mr Bax's assertions about the irresistible assimilation of other nationalities by the Anglo-Saxons do not bear close examination. It is a well-known fact that the English have assimilated, in large numbers, other peoples who live scattered among them or who have (or had) no active national life of their own. But that is as far as the specifically Anglo-Saxon power of

assimilation goes. In earlier times, the Germans were assimilated among the French just as quickly as among the Anglo-Saxons. Conversely, there are, to this very day, hundreds of thousands of Celts (most of the population of Wales) living in their original territory within the United Kingdom who, despite centuries of subjection to the Anglo-Saxons, have not been assimilated but speak their own language and have their own literature. Similarly, the French Canadians are not Anglicised — or at least not yet — and neither are the French in Mauritius. In British South Africa, the Dutch townsmen and farmers have maintained their nationality almost unimpaired; and in the United States, whole areas are still Scandinavian, and the Germans also maintain considerable colonies in which they cultivate their nationality. In short, the danger of the world's being Anglicised is definitely not so great that Mr Bax, like a second Knackfuss,¹² need summon the peoples of Europe to defend their most sacred possession against this nightmare.

In one instance, of course, the Anglo-Saxons were highly successful in assimilation. This vigorous race reduced their Norman conquerors to complete national subordination. This may be a disagreeable thought for those who believe that Norman blood flows in their veins, but ordinary mortals will find something elevating about it. Nowadays, the call to resist Anglo-Saxondom has a very reactionary ring to it. As often as not, it conceals a distaste for the spirit of independence and the free institutions of the Anglo-Saxon races. Or else it is purely a matter of bickering among colony-hunters, and here Socialists must definitely not let their attitude be influenced by such slogans but must let their regard for world peace prevail. So we leave Mr Bax's Knackfussiad to the tender mercies of German, French, and other Anglophobes and turn to the assertion that Social Democrats must resist any colonial policy as energetically as possible, because otherwise the imminent collapse of the present world order would be damagingly delayed.

This, however, brings us to the point where we are no longer dealing with speculations and fantasies^{vi} peculiar to Bax but with a view that is fairly widespread in socialist circles. We will, therefore, devote a separate article to the topic. But one more comment before we take our leave of Mr Bax.

Mr Bax clearly implies, and elsewhere expressly states, that for him I have ceased to be a Social Democrat. My articles, he writes, could have appeared in the *Daily Chronicle* or in the *Vossische Zeitung* just as well as, or indeed even better than, in *Neue Zeit*. The rebuke comes oddly from a man who first showed me how a revolu-

tionary Socialist can write for all kinds of bourgeois papers and who still, if I am not mistaken, works for the *Daily Chronicle*. But, Mr Bax will reply, that is an entirely different matter. Here we are talking specifically about articles meant for Socialists and dealing with specifically socialist questions, and, in my case, the requisite Social Democratic element is lacking. The "purveyors of moderation," he writes, "disavow the standpoint of the party, and then these gentlemen describe this as reason and moderation." If I wanted to polemicise in the manner of Mr Bax, I would reply that, in his view, to let reason and moderation prevail means to disavow the standpoint of the party; and I would, in this case, not be too far from what does in fact lie behind his accusation. According to him, I ought to make my criticism depend entirely on the need to hasten the great crash from which socialism will infallibly emerge victorious. Anything else is irrelevant twaddle. The sooner the great crash is brought about, the sooner socialism will be achieved. I confess that, in this notion, I can discern neither reason nor moderation but only an unwarranted assumption. For me, the preconditions for "the final goal of socialism" involve somewhat more than just a general slump in trade. But then, according to Bax, my socialism will no longer wash.

In view of this accusation, let us take a closer look at Mr Bax's own socialism. The best touchstone for such an investigation is the public issues with which the putative Socialist most concerns himself. Well, what are Mr Bax's preoccupations in this regard? Firstly, we find countless variations on the complaint that, in the Anglo-Saxon world (which must, of course, stand condemned in the eyes of any decent man) *women constitute a privileged class*.¹³ Secondly, we find Mr Bax in great anxiety, after the Conference on Labour Protection in Zürich, lest the English public confuse the resolution condemning Sunday work with a move in favour of the "*horrors of the British Sunday*" (letter to the *Daily Chronicle*).¹⁴ To this we may add a recent severe vexation at the fact that many British Socialists (and not only Fabians) view with indifference, if not hostility, the question of abolishing the *monarchical form of government*. And finally Mr Bax finds the attitude of many Socialists on the question of *religion* insufficiently aggressive. According to him, "What the Germans call 'Kulturkampf' is *by no means out of date*." (On the last two points see his letter to *Reynolds Newspaper*, 21 November 1897.)

Now, what are we to make of all this? On *the question of women*, Mr Bax strains at a gnat and swallows a camel. He bewails the protection the law provides for women as the socially and legally weaker

sex and fails to see the indignity women must accept as part of the bargain. The *horrors of the British Sunday* are, nine-tenths of the time, horrors only for a minority of bored bourgeoisie. It is precisely the great mass of progressively minded workers who are, no less than most of the bourgeoisie, disinclined to make substantial changes in the character of Sunday as a general day of rest. In England today, opposition to the *monarchical form of government* would be worse than a waste of time. For, apart from the expenditure of time which republican agitation would require, its practical consequence – even if, or especially if, it were successful – would be that a large part of public interest would be constantly directed towards purely irrelevant personal questions and all kinds of silly intrigues, and away from really important legislative and administrative issues. In England nowadays, the monarchy is no obstacle to any reform which the people seriously want. And finally, the desire for a “*Kulturkampf*” against religion, *écrasez l’infâme*, at a time when none of the major European churches is obstructing the expansion of our understanding of nature, is, to put it mildly, so obviously futile that it seems unnecessary to waste words upon it. Nowadays, any genuinely reactionary tendencies in the various churches can be effectively opposed in the general area of social and political legislation and successfully neutralised by improving the schools and democratising the social services. Under these circumstances, anyone who really wants to start a *Kulturkampf* against religion in the advanced countries must see the Sultan of Morocco as some sort of blood brother.

In short, the issues which move Mr Bax’s socialist spirit are at best entirely secondary. They are partly political and partly metaphysical frippery, and partly pure phantasmagoria. If we want information from English Socialists on the significant questions of social legislation and political administration in modern England, then we must turn to the writings of such Philistines as the Fabians. We will find no information on the matter in the writings of Mr Bax. Instead, we find such carefully reasoned recommendations as “the abolition of actions for breach of contract,” the utopian nature of which is immediately obvious.¹⁵ I will not follow Mr Bax’s example in raising the shades of the dead, especially since we really need no Friedrich Engels to show us what level of socio-political awareness such prescriptions display. Closer inspection reveals that Mr Bax’s socialism has certain familiar traits. Unbridled hatred of religion in general and Christianity in particular, exaggerated importance attached to forms of government, and speculation on the possibility that a great crash might catapult us into the promised land of socialism, all are symp-

toms of good old *Blanquism*. The synthetic socialism of Bax resolves itself into the type of Blanquism that is virtually obsolete even in France, mingled with Marxist phrases and a due proportion of Bax's inimitable idiosyncracies. Compared with so potent a mixture, the socialism of ordinary mortals can, indeed, expect no other judgment than: "weighed in the balance and found wanting."

EDUARD BERNSTEIN

The Struggle of Social Democracy and the Social Revolution:

2. The Theory of Collapse and Colonial Policy *Neue Zeit*, 19 January 1898

At the London Congress of the Socialist International in 1896, the following declaration was adopted as part of the resolution on economic tasks:

Economic development has now reached a point where a crisis could be imminent. The Congress therefore calls upon the workers of the world to learn the management of production, so that they are in a position to take over the management of production as class-conscious workers for the common good.

It is clear that the crisis referred to is not an ordinary trade crisis of the kind modern society has experienced so often before, but the real, great world-historical crisis, the failure not of so and so many capitalist enterprises but of the capitalist economy as a whole. This emerges even more clearly from the English text, which presumably gives the original, whereas the German shows unmistakable traces of translation, and of hasty translation at that. The English version speaks of "economic development . . . going on with such rapidity" that it is "imperative" for the proletariat to study administration as "class-conscious citizens."^{vii}

This statement, like much else in the Congress, was accepted as part of a "job lot," with no attempt at discussion. But we may assume that it would have been passed even if the proceedings had been less hasty. What it recommends is, like porridge-oats, always useful, and what it asserts is, in principle at least, in keeping with the notion of modern social development currently predominant among Social Democrats.

According to this notion, a trade crisis of immense severity and magnitude will, sooner or later, occur. It will cause enough misery to arouse passionate resentment against the capitalist economic system and so completely convince the masses that the given forces of

production cannot be harnessed for the public good that the movement against this system will gather irresistible momentum and, under its pressure, the system itself will suffer an irretrievable collapse. In other words, the inevitable major economic crisis will expand into a comprehensive social crisis. The outcome of this will be the political rule of the proletariat, as the only consciously revolutionary class, and, under the rule of this class, the complete transformation of society along socialist lines.

The argument which supports this view is familiar. It is based on the increasing concentration of industry taking place before our very eyes, the growth of the wage-labouring classes, the conflicts that prevail between them and the capitalist classes and within the capitalist classes themselves, the coercive laws of competition, and the effect of economic fluctuations on the political structure of parties and on public life in general. All these are empirically verifiable facts, from which it would seem to follow with absolute necessity that a major economic crisis will eventually bring about the decisive change. The conviction has thus established itself in Social Democracy that this course of development is an absolute law of nature and that the great, all-embracing economic crisis is the one and only way to a socialist society. Moreover, it appears to be the surest and shortest way; and once one has got into the habit of investigating economic events and assessments solely with a view to finding facts which support this conception, and of being preoccupied mainly with such facts, then one soon becomes convinced that the great, redeeming crisis cannot possibly be far away – unless unforeseen events intervene to give the capitalist world a new stay of execution.

In actual fact, what prospect is there of this great crisis? A few weeks ago, a number of party newspapers examined the results of the Prussian trade census of 1895 and came to exceedingly pessimistic conclusions about the life-expectation of the existing social order. The investigations unquestionably showed a very considerable increase in the number of large companies in industry and trade; and if this is taken in isolation without regard to its wider consequences, then expressions such as “rapid concentration of industry” and “irresistible force with which large companies prevail” are quite justified. But when we ask what this increase means for the development towards socialism – a question dear to the heart of the socialist reader – expressions such as “rapid concentration” are very apt to suggest images which do not correspond to the actual state of affairs. We may therefore be permitted to dwell, for a moment, on the relevant figures.

The concentration of companies is most intense in *industry* itself. Here we see that, compared with 1882, companies run by a single person have *decreased* by about 12 per cent and small companies (1-5 employees) by 0.75 per cent, whereas medium-sized companies have *increased* by 60 per cent and large companies by 83 per cent. These comparative figures appear to justify the most dramatic conclusions. However, the figures for the absolute number of companies present a completely different picture. They are as follows:

	1882		1895	
	No. of cos.	% of cos.	No. of cos.	% of cos.
One-man operations	775,176	61.8	674,042	57.5
Small cos. (1-5 employees)	412,424	33.7	409,332	34.9
Medium cos. (6-50 employees)	49,010	4.0	78,627	6.7
Large cos. (51 + employees)	<u>5,529</u>	<u>0.5</u>	<u>10,139</u>	<u>0.9</u>
	1,222,139	100.0	1,172,140	100.0

Here the change looks almost insignificant. Small and very small companies together still constitute 90 per cent of all industrial companies. Of course, these figures are also deceptive, with a bias in the opposite direction. They present the proportion of large companies to small as being significantly smaller than it actually is. The table giving the number of *persons* employed in each group of companies brings us closest to the true state of affairs. These figures show the following development:

	1882	%	1895	%
One-man operations	755,176	22.3	674,042	14.78
Small cos.	1,031,141	30.4	1,078,396	23.66
Medium cos.	641,594	18.9	1,070,427	23.48
Large cos.	<u>962,382</u>	<u>28.4</u>	<u>1,734,884</u>	<u>38.06</u>
	3,390,293	100.0	4,557,749	100.00

The part which large companies play in industrial production thus proves to be immeasurably more significant than appears from the figures for companies alone. Meanwhile, it should be noted that all companies with more than 50 employees are here counted as large companies. If we distinguish companies employing between 51 and

200 persons from those that employ 201 or more persons, then the last line in the preceding table is distributed as follows:

	1882	%	1895	%
Medium-large cos.	403,049	11.9	757,357	16.62
Very large cos.	<u>559,333</u>	<u>16.5</u>	<u>977,527</u>	<u>21.44</u>
	962,382	28.4	1,734,884	38.06

Here the proportion and the growth of very large companies seem less significant. The employees of such companies amounted to something more than one-fifth of the total number of industrial employees in 1895, while the medium and medium-large companies account for a further two-fifths. And if we look at the more detailed figures for small companies, we find that it is precisely the largest among them (those employing between 3 and 5 persons) which show an absolute and relative *increase*. They employed 564,652 persons in 1882 but 665,607 persons in 1895, an increase of 17.88 per cent when the total population growth was about 15.5 per cent. It is *only the very small, the tiny companies* (two employees or fewer) *that have declined, in part absolutely and in part relatively*.

Thus the larger of the small companies and the medium-sized companies show little inclination as yet to disappear from the scene. They are gradually declining, or being overtaken, only in relation to big industry – admittedly with “giant strides.” And if we take it a step further and, following the example of Dr L. Sinzheimer in his book on the future development of the large manufacturing company,^{viii} compare the proportions of the gross product accounted for by each of these groups of companies, then the resulting figures are even more favourable to the large companies. They account for nearly 60 per cent of total production. However, the fact remains that there are still a quarter of a million of the larger of the small companies and of the medium-sized companies with nearly two million workers. Nor should we overlook the fact that, since a very considerable proportion of the large companies are devoted to the production of raw materials and half-finished products, the figure giving simply their share of the gross product is of limited significance. Apart from mechanised production, most precision work is still done by medium-sized industries; and they are increasing, not decreasing. In strictly quantitative terms, big industry is swallowing up the very

small companies rather than the medium-sized ones which, according to the foregoing statistical tables, appear as an almost solid phalanx.

Admittedly, this solidarity is only superficial. In fact, this sector is anything but stable. On the one hand, all sorts of companies hitherto run as small businesses are being absorbed into big industry or otherwise going out of existence, whereas elsewhere new medium-sized companies are developing on the basis of new technology or new conditions generated by big industry. There is constant movement, the demise of old and the emergence of new kinds of business, as well as frequent upheavals within individual occupational groups. But important though this is for the psychology of modern craft-production and small-scale manufacturing, it is incidental to our present considerations. We are concerned not with individuals but with whole sectors. And here the aggregate condition of the molecules has changed, but their mass is undiminished and their dissolution a distant prospect.^{ix}

It is well known that in *trade and commerce* and in *agriculture* the medium-sized and large companies are even more closely related than they are in industry. In trade and commerce, the number of persons employed was distributed as follows:

	1882	1895
Cos. with 2 employees or fewer	411,509	467,656
Cos. with 3-5 employees	176,867	342,112
Cos. with 6-50 employees	157,328	303,078
Cos. with 51 employees or more	25,619	62,056
	771,323	1,174,902

And in agriculture the figures were:

	No. in 1882	No. in 1895	Area (hectares) in 1895
Small plots	3,061,831	3,235,169	1,807,870
Small holdings	981,407	1,016,239	3,285,720
Medium holdings	926,605	998,701	9,720,935
Larger holdings	281,510	281,726	9,868,367
Large companies	24,991	25,057	7,829,007

Compared with the figures for 1882, the medium-sized and medium-to-small companies in *trade and commerce* have experienced the greatest increase; and in *agriculture*, viewed superficially, the medium-sized holdings were, compared with 1882, better placed than any other class of operation. The area they covered rose from 9,158,398 to 9,720,935 hectares. We need not discuss how a closer and more detailed investigation by region, administrative district, and type of company might change this picture. For our purposes, the rough figures we have cited will suffice.

They show that, whatever sector of economic life we turn to, we find no major changes, or even reductions, in the number of medium-sized companies. However hard-pressed many proprietors of such companies may be, however many ephemeral operations there are within the various classes of company at any given time, especially in trade, their extinction does not affect the whole. The total picture does not change.

And yet the steadily progressing growth of the large and very large companies is no myth. The statistics for industry, trade, and commerce confirm it with compelling force — especially if we remember that, in trade, companies with more than ten to fifteen employees must be regarded as large. What these statistics do not tell us is that the increase in large companies means a decrease in medium-sized companies. Indeed, they allow scope for the idea that what we have is *coexistence* rather than mortal combat.

In very many cases this idea would certainly be contrary to the facts. The history of many trades tells of a bitter struggle for existence among the various types of company and of the almost complete displacement, indeed the total suppression, of small and medium-sized companies by the large ones. If we look at individual business sectors, the concurrent increase of both medium-sized and large companies is an exception. If the total picture of industry, trade, and commerce does show such an increase, then this is explained, firstly, by the *steadily growing number of different kinds of business* in modern society and, secondly, by the *growing adaptability and flexibility* of the contemporary business world.

In our socialist literature, these highly significant factors receive only scant attention. Just occasionally, perhaps when we have to rebut sectarians or other reactionaries, we condescend to draw on the arsenal of economic liberalism and talk about the extraordinary *diversity and flexibility* of business activity nowadays. But otherwise we characterise the laws of economic development in much the same way as we do when arguing in support of wages legislation. We im-

pute to business relationships a *rigidity and narrowness* which might pertain to the age of manufacture or the beginning of the machine age, when the business world had not yet rid itself of the traces of traditional economic conditions, but which are blatantly at odds with the characteristic features of modern industrial life. We often argue as if the highly developed and extensive *modern credit system* and the daily increase in the *extent* and *efficiency* of transport and communications were beyond our comprehension, or at least of very little significance. Whereas in fact they are economic factors of fundamental importance for social life and development, no less than the production techniques to which we rightly give so much attention.

These factors were certainly not ignored in *The Communist Manifesto*, the anniversary of which we are currently celebrating, nor in the writings which Marx and Engels produced during the same period. On the contrary, they were expressly emphasised. Yet however many of their effects were forecast in the *Manifesto*, it goes without saying that not all developments could have been foreseen in 1848. So any celebratory work worthy of the name of “*scientific socialism*” would have to examine how far the actual development of things has departed from the assumptions made in the *Manifesto* and its associated literature, as well as establish which of its forecasts have been proved correct. In the meantime, serious attempts to pursue scientific socialism scientifically remain few and far between.

Marx and Engels themselves never let theory blind them to facts but always gave them their fullest attention. Thus when Engels was editing the third volume of *Capital*, he did not hesitate to treat as outdated the idea of a ten-year production cycle previously put forward by Marx and himself. He comments that “*most of the former breeding-grounds of crises and occasions for crisis formation have been abolished or severely weakened,*” and mentions several factors which brought this about: “colossal expansion of means of communication” – ocean-going steamships, railways, electric telegraphs, the Suez Canal – and the circumstance that “the investment of surplus European capital in all parts of the globe is infinitely greater and more widespread” (*Capital*, III, part 2, p. 27, note; see also part I, p. 395, and part II, p. 145). However, Engels conjectures that the cycle has merely been lengthened in time-scale, and he goes on to say that each of the elements militating against a return to the old crises, such as cartels, protective tariffs, and trusts, conceals “*within it the nucleus of far more violent future crises*” (loc. cit.).¹⁶

There is, it seems to me, much to be said against this latter assumption, at least as far as cartels and trusts are concerned. There

are so many forms and possibilities of adaptation that there is at the very least no compelling reason to take this as the only likely development. For the rest – given the growing expansion of the market, the speedy communication of information on market conditions, and the continuing increase in the number of branches of production – it remains to be seen whether we shall, in the near future, experience *general crises* of the kind we used to have, or whether they will not be replaced by international crises *limited to particular groups of industries*. The fact that in recent years the great stagnation in the textile industry has left most other industries virtually unscathed is, perhaps, not in itself proof of this argument, since the concurrent prosperity of the metallurgical industry, for instance, is largely due to the abnormally heavy demands of militarism and navalism. Nonetheless, it can be established that even in industries where these have little influence, relatively few repercussions of the textile crisis have been observed. Nowadays the range of industries and their markets seems too wide to be affected by crises simultaneously at all points and with equal severity, unless quite extraordinary events were to throw the business world in all countries into an equal panic and cause credit to dry up everywhere.

I do not say that this is so. I only offer a conjecture. *Vestigia terrent*.¹⁷ I have an unholy awe of prophecy in these matters. But the *elasticity of the modern credit system combined with enormous growth in capital wealth*, the perfected mechanism of all branches of communication – postal and telegraph services, passenger and goods traffic, the extension of trade statistics and of the news service, the spread of employers' organisations – these are *facts*, and it is quite unthinkable that they should fail to have a significant influence on the relationship between productive activity and market conditions.

This suggests a strong likelihood that, with the advance of economic development, we shall no longer normally be dealing with the old kind of trade crisis and will have to throw overboard all speculations that such crises will bring about the great social upheaval.

Those attached to "old established" slogans may regret this,^x but the socialist way of thinking loses none of its persuasive force thereby. For, on closer inspection, what are all these factors we have listed which tend to eliminate or modify the old type of crisis? They are all things which are both the prerequisites and to some extent the beginnings of the socialisation of production and exchange. It is entirely in keeping with socialist doctrine that their development should have some effect on the formation of crises. Otherwise, a serious error in that doctrine would be indicated.

But let us suppose that crises will remain as they were. Would Social Democracy still have any real reason to hope for the speedy occurrence of the great collapse?

Let us look at the figures cited earlier for Prussia, the largest and one of the most advanced states of Germany. It is obvious that they show a fragmentation of companies in industry, trade, and agriculture which would pose an insoluble problem for Social Democracy – the only party which, in view of the way parties have developed in Germany, could be brought to power by a rising of the masses. Social Democracy could not abolish capitalism by decree and could not indeed manage without it, but neither could it guarantee capitalism the security which it needs to fulfil its functions. This contradiction would irrevocably destroy Social Democracy; the outcome could only be a colossal defeat. This year we celebrate the anniversary of the February Revolution in France, and it is highly desirable that in recalling the people's days of glory and the shameful deeds of the reactionaries we should not overlook the real lessons of that year but should give sober consideration to the events between the jubilation of 24 February and the drama of 24 June.¹⁸ The embarrassments of the provisional government of 1848, great though they were, would pale into insignificance compared with the embarrassments which Social Democracy would face if a general trade crisis brought it to power at a time when the composition of society was still similar to that set forth in the statistical tables.

One might object that the collapse of present-day society means not just a general trade crisis of unprecedented severity but a total collapse of the capitalist system under the weight of its own contradictions. However, this concept is extremely vague and quite overlooks the great differences in the nature and course of development of the various industries, as well as their very varied capacity to assume the form of public services. As society develops, anything resembling a simultaneous and total collapse of the present system of production becomes less likely rather than more, because this advance increases simultaneously both the adaptability of industry and its differentiation. Nor does it help to fall back on the idea that the popular uprising accompanying such a collapse could conceivably bring things to a head with hothouse speed. This supposition, derived from the history of the great French Revolution, is based on a complete misunderstanding of the great difference between feudal and liberal institutions, between landed property managed on feudal lines and modern industry. It was possible to make a clean sweep of most feudal rights without causing damage to more than a relatively small

section of the population, but radical infringements of bourgeois property rights would affect an infinitely wider range of interested parties, not all of whom could be induced to emigrate. Feudal estates could be broken up and sold off piecemeal, but this cannot be done with modern factories. The greater the number of factories expropriated after the manner of the Commune, the greater the difficulty of keeping them in operation during an uprising. The purely external aggravation of the situation would certainly not go hand in hand with an acceleration in the internal process of industrial development. Indeed, it would delay this process in various ways.

It will now be asked whether this view of the matter does not mean that the realisation of socialism is relegated to doomsday – “until the Greek Calends,” as Mr Bax puts it – or postponed for many, many generations. If by the realisation of socialism we understand the establishment of a society organised in all respects along strictly communist lines, then indeed I do not hesitate to say that this seems to me to be a long way off yet. On the other hand, it is my firm conviction that even the present generation will see the realisation of a good deal of socialism, if not in the patented form, then at least in *fact*. The steady expansion of the sphere of social obligations (i.e. the obligations of the individual towards society, his corresponding rights, and the obligations of society towards individuals), the extension of the right of society, as organised in the nation or the state, to regulate economic life; the growth of democratic self-government in municipality, district, and province, and the extended responsibilities of these bodies – for me all these things mean development towards socialism or, if you will, piecemeal realisation of socialism. The transfer of companies from private to public management will naturally accompany this development, but it can only proceed by degrees. Indeed, there are cogent practical reasons which dictate restraint in this matter. Time, above all else, is required to develop and consolidate good democratic management – a problem the difficulty of which is illustrated by, e.g., the internal history of the Works Department of the London County Council. Such things cannot be improvised. However, it is also true that as soon as the community makes proper use of its right to control economic conditions, the actual transfer of economic enterprises to public management ceases to have the fundamental importance commonly ascribed to it. There can be more socialism in a good factory act than in the nationalisation of a whole group of factories.

I frankly admit that I have extraordinarily little feeling for, or interest in, what is usually termed “the final goal of socialism.” This

goal, whatever it may be, is nothing to me, the movement is everything. And by movement I mean both the general movement of society, i.e. social progress, and the political and economic agitation and organisation to bring about this progress.

According to this view, Social Democracy should neither expect nor desire the imminent collapse of the existing economic system, if this is to be envisaged as the product of a great and catastrophic trade crisis. What Social Democracy should be doing, and doing for a long time to come, is organise the working class politically, train it for democracy, and fight for any and all reforms in the state which are designed to raise the working class and make the state more democratic. In matters of colonial policy and the conquest of new markets, Social Democracy will have to oppose all colonial chauvinism, indeed all chauvinism of any kind, if it is to maintain its own principles; but it must not permit itself to be pushed to the opposite extreme which indiscriminately outlaws as chauvinistic all assertions and vindications of national rights, and any form of national consciousness. Social Democracy must oppose the violation and fraudulent exploitation of savage and barbaric peoples, but it must not oppose their absorption into the sphere of influence of civilised institutions, since that would be counter-productive, and it must distance itself from any resistance on principle to the expansion of markets, since that would be utopian. The expansion of markets and of international trade relations has been one of the most powerful levers of social progress. It has furthered the development of the relationships of production to an extraordinary degree and has become an established factor in the increase of the wealth of nations. But, as soon as the right of combination, effective protection laws, and political franchise put the workers in a position to secure a growing share of that wealth, they too acquired an interest in that increase. The richer society becomes, the easier and more certain is the realisation of socialism.

Despite all this, the position of Socialists on colonial policy will necessarily be very different in different countries. For very much depends on the institutions and circumstances of the country intending to pursue such a policy, on the nature of the colonies planned, and on the manner in which the country in question colonises and administers its colonies. In most countries, colonial administration is the exclusive business of the privileged classes, and this alone is enough to suggest that Social Democracy should adopt a critical attitude. But the notion that we can hasten the revolution at home by resisting any and every colonial policy is totally untenable – quite

apart from the fact that the idea itself is utopian. To consider it at all is to pretend that steamships and railways do not exist. We can see just how utopian the idea is from the fact that it had its strongest appeal in the infancy of the socialist movement. In the socialist literature of the third decade of this century, we already find the suggestion that colonial policy should be opposed because it will delay the victory of the popular cause. "Not a single young person," writes the *Poor Man's Guardian* of 15 February 1831, "should be permitted to go abroad until he has experienced the rebirth of this country," and it thunders against the colonial and emigration policy that tempts people into the "Canadian swamps" and the "wilderness of New South Wales." If we read this and then recall what Canada and New South Wales have become, we are compelled to regard such slogans with caution. There is, of course, much to be said in defence of the *Poor Man's Guardian*. The movement was still young, and at the time England really did face an imminent upheaval — though the outcome was not the one for which the courageous publishers of this paper had worked. But after more than two generations, we should now be beyond the naïve conceptions which prevailed at the beginnings of modern Social Democracy. Anyone nowadays who espouses the cause of the Matabele because of the injustice done to them yields to a noble impulse which we cannot but respect, although we regard the cause itself as lost. But anyone who makes the cause of the Matabele his own in order to hinder the spread of civilisation and the expansion of the world market and to hasten the advent of the great collapse is, first and foremost, committing a colossal anachronism. He writes 1898 but really means 1831; the experiences of seventy intervening years do not exist for him.

Notes

- (i) Bax, unfortunately, omits to state more precisely against which of Bernstein's articles he is polemicising. But so far as we can recall, the only passage to which he can be addressing himself is the following. In his article, "German Social Democracy and the Turkish Troubles," *NZ* xv, 1, p. 109, Bernstein said, among other things: "Africa harbours tribes who claim the right to trade in slaves and who can be prevented from doing so only by the civilised nations of Europe. Their revolts against the latter do not engage our sympathy, and will in certain circumstances evoke our active opposition. The same applies to those barbaric and semi-barbaric races who make a regular living by invading neighbouring agricultural peoples, by stealing cattle, etc. Races who are hostile to or incapable of civilisation cannot claim our sympathy when they revolt

against civilisation. We recognise no right of robbery, no right of hunters against cultivators. In short, however critical our view of contemporary civilisation may be, we nonetheless acknowledge its relative achievements and take them as the criterion for our sympathy. We will condemn and oppose certain methods of subjugating savages. But we will not condemn the idea that savages be subjugated and compelled to conform to rules of high civilisation."

As this seems to us quite different from what Bax asserts that Bernstein says, we might perhaps have been justified in rejecting the present polemic, since a discussion in which one side very largely consists of correcting personal misunderstandings does not promise to be very fruitful. However, we could not bring ourselves to suppress an attack directed at us or at one of our regular contributors.

Besides, the conflict between the positions of Bax and Bernstein on this question does not depend solely on misunderstandings; it is a real and profound conflict, and its clarification can only serve a useful purpose. Ed.

- (ii) An example of the amiable fashion in which slaves are treated in Morocco was recently published in the *Times* by the British Society for the Abolition of Slavery (see *Times Weekly*, 26 November). According to this report, a wealthy Moroccan emir *had all the teeth pulled out* of an *eight-year-old* girl who had tooth-ache, simply because she would not stop crying. Presumably this too is slavery which "has grown out of the development of the life of the people" and the abolition of which "is hated by the natives." But don't ask me by which natives.
- (iii) Insofar as they are to be found in Morocco, they depend on the low standard of living and their small pretensions to decency and comfort. In other matters, the Moroccans are definitely not "simple."
- (iv) Clearly Bax disagrees also with the resolution of the Ghent Congress of the "International" on child labour, which began with the words: "We regard the tendency of modern industry to make children and young persons of both sexes participate in the work of social production as progressive, healthy, and justifiable, although the *ways and means* by which this tendency is implemented under the rule of capital are obnoxious."
- (v) Just a few words on the Anglophilia which Bax ascribes to me. There is much in England about which I am definitely not enthusiastic. But I believe that the job of a socialist writer is not to contribute to the abuse which German chauvinists heap on England but to show his countrymen where other countries are ahead of them, and what in foreign institutions is worthy of their imitation. It would, in any case, be difficult for Mr Bax to cite a single example of uncritical glorification of England in my work.

The same goes for my "enthusiasm for the English Liberal Party." The fact here is that, despite the most zealous agitation, English Social De-

mocracy makes extremely slow progress in parliamentary elections and is defeated even where the present electoral system is practically equivalent to the German. I think the explanation lies in the fact that, in England, Social Democracy has to cope with stronger, more experienced opponents and more flexible political parties than in Germany. Instead of recognising this as an honourable and considerate explanation of their failure, the official leaders of the Social Democratic Federation complain that I am supporting their bitterest foes. I have no connection whatsoever with any of England's Liberal politicians, and furthermore I have never been able to bring myself to accept Mr Bax's repeated and pressing invitations to join the central club of the Liberals, the National Liberal Club, because, *inter alia*, it goes against the grain to accept the hospitality of people I would have to fight the following day. So much the more must I reject the insinuations in Mr Bax's article. Let us allow conditions in England to be atrocious and the English Liberal Party to consist entirely of hypocrites, scoundrels, and fools. In view of the many socialist failures, what conclusions must we draw concerning the tactical abilities of the Social Democratic leaders and the English working man's state of intellectual readiness for the coming crisis and the actualisation of socialism? And how are we to judge Mr Bax's consistency, considering that, in the *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, he fears that if Social Democrats participate in the Prussian state elections "their principles will be watered down," whereas he himself sees no harm in having for years, shall we say, "watered down" his principles in the National Liberal Club?

Nota bene, I do not wish to say that a committed Socialist should not be a member of the National Liberal Club. Conditions here are such that this is perfectly admissible. But if that is so, what point is there in cultivating a political phraseology which flies in the face of reality?

- (vi) Mr Bax envisages the whole of Africa transformed into a forest or wasteland of factory chimneys. But the present object of capitalism in opening up Africa is to gain outlets for industrial products in exchange for primary products. Apart from Bax, nobody has ever dreamed of transforming Africa into a larger edition of Lancashire. Besides, the contemporary aversion to factory chimneys rests on nothing other than aesthetic eccentricity. To be sure, a factory chimney is not especially picturesque. Many a fisherman's hut and many a cottage with the wind whistling through its joints are far more so. But, given a more rational working day, a factory run in accordance with the requirements of modern social hygiene is, in most cases, a much more wholesome place to be than any such hut. In countless cases, factory work is even now healthier than work at home. Moreover, it is factories that produce the wood, metal, and textile products which enable the masses to embellish their surroundings to an extent hitherto unknown. On the basis of factory production, the arts and crafts will open up new territory and

gain an ever-increasing range of customers. And even "the workshop of the world," England, is far from being a "wasteland" of factory chimneys.

- (vii) Here is the English text: "The economic and industrial development is going on with such rapidity that a crisis may occur within a comparatively short time. The congress, therefore, impresses upon the proletariat of all countries the imperative necessity for learning, as class-conscious citizens, how to administer the business of their respective countries for the common good."
- (viii) See *Neue Zeit*, xv, 1, pp. 305ff.
- (ix) In order to avoid misunderstandings, let me point out that the modern medium-sized industrial company is often a highly capitalistic company.
- (x) In a party newspaper, I was reproached with being pleased to "carp and snipe at established Social Democratic theories and demands." But any theoretical work consists in "carping" and "sniping" at hitherto accepted propositions, and if *Neue Zeit* is to be the theoretical organ of Social Democracy, then it cannot do without such "carping." Besides, what error was not, at some time, an "established" truth!

Bernstein's Overthrow of Socialism Parvus's Intervention

PARVUS

1. The Concentration of Industry

Sächsische Arbeiter-Zeitung, 28 January 1898

The basis of our programme is that we seize political power and use it to expropriate the capitalists, abolish private ownership in the means of production, and establish a social organisation of production. This has hitherto been the fundamental starting-point for all party activity. E. Bernstein has categorically rejected it. He believes that if, in the present condition of society, Social Democracy actually were to gain political power – an aim we passionately seek to achieve – then it would face “*an insoluble problem.*” “Social Democracy could not abolish capitalism by decree, *and could not, indeed, manage without it*, but neither could it guarantee capitalism the security which it needs to fulfil its functions. This contradiction would irrevocably destroy Social Democracy; the outcome could only be *a colossal defeat.*”¹ So Bernstein's view of our situation is this: the goal towards which the party has been striving since it came into existence, for which it has made so many sacrifices, overcome so many obstacles, and become so powerful that the end seems within easy reach has proved an illusion, a mirage. Nothing remains but to retreat in order at least to preserve the army we have mobilised; otherwise we might suffer “*a colossal defeat.*”

In his article, Bernstein defends himself against the criticism that he is “carping at” long-established party principles. It would, indeed, be the greatest folly to try to stifle criticism. Bernstein is right on that point. But if he believes that his conclusions are simply a *scientific continuation of socialism*, then he is merely playing with words. If he were right it would be the *abrogation of socialism*. But be that as it may, these are the convictions Bernstein has reached. He is neither a windbag nor a fool; he will have weighed his words carefully. Let us examine his reasons!

Belief in the social revolution rests on two points: the progressive proletarianisation of the masses together with the simultaneous concentration of capital, and the growing extent and intensity of trade crises as production develops. Bernstein aims his criticism at both points.

He believes that the concentration of capital actually occurring has been exaggerated in our party, and in order to show how things stand he goes through the Prussian industrial statistics. The number of one-man operations and small companies (1–5 employees) has, he says, admittedly declined *both absolutely and relatively* since 1882. Nevertheless they amounted to more than 90 per cent of the total even in 1895. Having said this, Bernstein must of course correct himself: the number of *people* employed in companies of various sizes is more relevant to the development of production than the actual number of companies. A hundred factories with 200 workers each are more significant than a thousand workshops with 5 workers each. And it does indeed prove to be the case that in 1895 the *personnel* of one-man operations and small companies accounted for no more than 38.4 per cent of the total, compared with 52.7 per cent in 1882. So the result by no means favours Bernstein's attempt to make the concentration of production seem less intense. Besides, Bernstein must also admit that *the output of large-scale industry* is proportionally *even greater*. Faced with this dilemma, he seeks to salvage his case by introducing a further categorisation of companies: "medium to large companies" (51–200 employees) and "very large companies." (He could equally well have said small large companies and extremely large companies!) And then, at last, he believes he can draw the conclusion: "The proportion and the growth of very large companies seem less significant." In reality, the proportion is this: the personnel of "medium-sized companies" rose from 403,049 to 757,357, or from 11.9 per cent to 16.62 per cent; that of the "large companies" rose from 559,333 to 977,527, or from 16.5 per cent to 21.44 per cent. In both cases we have approximately a *twofold* increase over a period of thirteen years! It is plain that all Bernstein's statistical distillations do not help him surmount the fact of the massive concentration of industry demonstrated by a comparison of the two latest German trade censuses. He then attempts at least to salvage *the small companies* from ruin, and by the method of subdividing them he does indeed succeed in calculating an increase in the personnel of companies with 3–5 employees. Thereby, of course, companies even smaller than that end up in an *even worse* position, since they bear the brunt of the entire loss.

The whole thing is completely unscientific in conception. It is as if the concentration of production has to proceed along a straight course at all levels: one-man operations, small companies, and medium-sized companies all decline while large companies grow; and if our mood leads us to subdivide the category of large companies further, then the same regularity is supposed to emerge here too! In reality, there are countless gradations, distortions, and fluctuations. Nobody has ever doubted it. The crucial factor is the *overall trend*, and that emerged clearly in the fact that, in 1895, the large companies accounted for 38.06 per cent of all industrial employees, as against only 28.4 per cent in 1882. In all this it is obvious that *the concentration of industrial companies*, which is all we are talking about, is *limited* by techniques of production, that these limits are set at different levels in different branches of production, and that, on the other hand, the same number of workers in companies in different branches of production indicates a different degree of concentration of production. A chemical plant with 50 workers is a massive enterprise. Not so a spinning-mill, or even an engineering plant. The massive German dye-stuff industry consists of only 909 companies with 19,418 employees, i.e. about 20 employees per company. According to Bernstein, it would therefore be one of the medium-sized businesses, whereas it is a typical large-scale capitalist industry. It is obvious that a bakery does not lend itself to industrial concentration to the same extent as the cotton or steel industry. Every country displays a rich variety in the structure of its production, but within this certain industries play a leading role, and through their relationship to the world market set their stamp on the character of the country's production. The significance of the cotton industry for England is proverbial in this connection. In Germany, the *steel industry* is of decisive importance. It is in these industries that the tendency of development of capitalist production is best observed. Taking the example of the German steel industry, from 1882 to 1895 the average annual output of the German blast furnaces rose from 14,545 tonnes to 23,027 tonnes, but at the same time the number of blast furnaces fell from 261 to 216.

Whichever way we look at it, the fact remains that a massive concentration of industry has taken place in Germany. And one more word about *small companies*. Bernstein lays particular emphasis on the fact that their number remains large. A glance at the detailed statistics tells us who they are. They are bakers, butchers, cobblers, seamstresses, tailors, and clockmakers, and finally laundresses and barbers. That is the *entire antirevolutionary army* of which Bernstein

stands in dread. And everyone knows that here too a major process of change is taking place. Tailors and cobblers are already so down-trodden by competition from factories and wholesale dealers that their only escape from destitution is the social revolution. Bakers and, in part, butchers depend on the purchasing power of the workers and, to that extent, have common interests with them. And we venture to suggest in conclusion that the social revolution will not be scuppered by the possible, but very unlikely, resistance of laundresses and barbers.

PARVUS

2. Further Forays into Occupational Statistics *Sächsische Arbeiter-Zeitung*, 1 February 1898

Although E. Bernstein had to struggle hard with inconvenient facts in dealing with industry, he has a relatively easy row to hoe with *agriculture* and with *trade and commerce*. Here he is running at open doors. We know that the *steady fall in the price of grain* since the 1870's has hindered the formation of large agricultural operations. But as we all know, capitalist landowners have not exactly hailed this development with joy as a bulwark against socialism. Far otherwise! They have bitterly *deplored* it, for they feel that it has not strengthened them but shaken them to the very foundations. It has brought the capitalist estate-owner to the verge of bankruptcy. We have already reached the stage where he is hatching plans to get himself "expropriated" by the state, though of course he wants to do it in a manner that assures him of a generous income. The peasant has admittedly stuck to his furrow, but he is sunk in destitution and debt. The overwhelming majority keep themselves just above water only by recourse to some other trade or to wage-labour of every kind, and they would long since have starved had they not, throughout this period, had ample opportunity to escape starvation by *emigration*. This is the "sturdy yeomanry" within whose "anticollectivist cranium" even Bernstein seems now to have discovered a great logic. Nonetheless, it is an indisputable fact that the reactionary rural population presents the greatest single difficulty which the social revolution has to overcome. Bernstein himself knew this perfectly well, and it has not in the past kept him from taking a social-revolutionary view of development. What *new factor* has emerged to make him change his mind? He has not disclosed it. We shall, elsewhere, discuss the question of how to win over the rural population.² For the moment, only one general remark: *difficulties* are no proof of *impos-*

sibility. If there had been *no* difficulties in the way of the social revolution, and it had still not taken place, then and only then would we have proof that it is nothing but a chimera!

In *trade and commerce*, a regular development towards industrial concentration is unmistakable. For the Reich as a whole it emerges that the *personnel* in one-man operations has increased by 16.6 per cent since 1882, in companies with 2–5 employees by 76.8 per cent, in companies with 6–10 employees by 82.6 per cent, in those with 11–50 by 105.7 per cent, in companies with 51–200 employees by 103.4 per cent, and, finally, in those with more than 200 employees by 204.5 per cent. But of course the percentages are larger the smaller the numbers to which they apply. In 1882 one-man enterprises still constituted more than a third, 35 per cent of the total, whereas in 1895 they constituted only 25 per cent. Of course we readily admit that, in trade, large companies must be measured by criteria different from those which apply in *industry*. A shop with more than 6 assistants is generally regarded as a sizeable business. Trading enterprises requiring dozens of staff, employing 50 or more people each, are gigantic concerns, roughly comparable to factories employing more than 1,000 workers. Well, in 1895 there were in *trade* alone 32,000 companies with more than 5 employees, giving a total personnel of 389,448; there were 544,546 people in retail businesses with 2–5 employees, and 398,994 in one-man operations. However, if we are to understand the development of trade we must consider its relationship with factories and wholesalers. Bernstein criticises the party press for failing to recognise the importance of the *credit system*, but he himself leaves it entirely out of account precisely where it plays its most important role: in trade. Credit in its various forms has the retail traders so enmeshed that they have *no* chance of escape but remain permanently tributary to their creditors and often endure pressure so great that it bears comparison with industrial exploitation. Here Bernstein allows the *legal form* to deceive him about the nature of the *economic content*. Countless numbers of these self-employed tradesmen are merely the *agents*, the representatives of the wholesale firms and factories. Sometimes a single wholesale company establishes close links with retail outlets in various places, obliges them to do business with no other source of supply, and thus, in effect, monopolises the trade. Indeed, a recent example of this caused a public uproar which reached the floor of the Reichstag. We refer to the case of the *petroleum syndicate*. The firms connected with the syndicate were no doubt registered in the trade census as self-employed tradesmen. The true state of their “independ-

dence" has been revealed by the publication of the contracts dictated to them by the syndicate. These contracts prescribe everything: wholesale price, retail price, their profit, and the extent of their business. Apart from the proud title, what is left of these self-employed tradesmen? Moreover, it is common knowledge that this state of affairs is not confined to dealers in petroleum. The entire wholesale trade consists of subsidiaries to the manufacturing companies. The furniture dealers, for instance, are closely tied to the furniture manufacturers. But take even the retail trade in household provisions, the area with the largest number of traders and, *par excellence*, the domain of the small trader. The grocer gets his petroleum delivered by the syndicate, his beer from the brewery, his confectionery from the factory, and also his cigars. His relationship with all of these is fixed; he is visited by their salesmen and representatives; the merchandise is delivered regularly to his door in fixed quantities; all he has to do is weigh it, sell it, and periodically settle up with his principals. He probably spends cash only on a tub of salt herrings, a few pounds of sausage, potatoes, butter, and eggs from the local market and a barrel of pickled gherkins – and that is your self-employed tradesman! The municipal *housing inspections* tell us how these small tradesmen fare. In no other section of the population do we find such a degree of overcrowding. Nobody else lives in such squalor, darkness, and damp as these "shopkeepers." It is heart-breaking to see these small people when the rent has to be paid or when the date for settling up with the suppliers is drawing near – the blessings of "credit" which, according to Bernstein, are insufficiently appreciated in the party. They scrape together their pennies from every drawer in the house and it is not uncommon for them to seek out the *pawnshop*. These mighty entrepreneurs often do not own even the counter in their shop, it being supplied by the landlord. The sum total of their private property consists of a few cardboard boxes. That is how matters stand in trade. For most of these tradesmen, the change-over to a socialist economy would simply mean that a socialist company would serve as *supplier* in place of their present *capitalist suppliers*.

We have examined Bernstein's statistical assertions closely because he insists that, in his opinion, the party passes too easily over inconvenient statistical facts. We believe we have shown that in fact it is Bernstein's way of interpreting the figures that is superficial, and that because of his superficiality he fails to take the most important economic correlations into account. We must now attack his *purely arithmetical way* of solving social problems. Occupational statistics certainly provide us with valuable material for a critical assessment of

the structure of society. But to try to fit the economic development of society into a single model, viz. the articulated structure displayed by business statistics, is a most vulgar procedure. To begin with, it is in the nature of *general statistics* to eliminate distinctions and thus often to yield a result that not only obscures but directly contradicts reality. Let us illustrate this with a number of examples. The most extreme case in point is to be found in "transport." Like trade, transport is meant to demonstrate the resilience of the small company. But there is something that is not included under this heading: the *railways*! In our view, it is hard to imagine anything that could make the present Bernsteinian kind of historical materialism more ridiculous than the circumstance that the development, indeed the very existence, of modern means of transport, the very life-blood of capitalist production, completely eludes him. The *cab-drivers* are made to demonstrate the impossibility of the social revolution, whereas the *railways*, which are actually *accomplishing* this revolution, disappear from the face of the earth as if we were still stuck in the Middle Ages. And to make the absurdity of it all complete, it is precisely in the period between 1882 and 1895 that the German railways were *nationalised*. But Bernstein has nothing to say about this, whereas he finds the great difficulty of the social revolution demonstrated by *grave-diggers*, who oddly enough fall under the heading of "transport" – evidently because they facilitate communication with the next world – and among whom large-scale enterprise is not yet as evident as it is, for instance, in the coal-mining industry. But let us look a little further. Under "commerce" we find the category *credit and finance* with 5,969 self-employed and a total of 33,689 employees, i.e. fewer than 6 persons per company. They are clearly "*small businesses*" and thus help confirm the impossibility of the social revolution. In reality, they are the *banks* and the *stock exchanges*! Let us turn to *industry*. Here it would take several pages to list all the examples of the inadequacy of Bernstein's criteria for assessing social-revolutionary development. The German *textile industry*, for example, must be completely unready for socialisation. And why? Well, there are more than a hundred thousand *hand-loom weavers* who have not yet starved to death! Obviously, we must therefore keep our hands off the large weaving and spinning mills! Furthermore, in the textile industry, particular *specialisations* develop which offer a bolt-hole (Bernstein's favourite notion) for small businesses, for instance, rubber and hair braiding and weaving with 1,284 self-employed and 2,738 employees. Our prospects also look bleak in the *paper industry*. Here a particular specialisation has developed in the making of

toys and *papier mâché*. While we are about it, let us list a few other modern specialisations, such as the manufacture of ties, braces, boracic soap, artificial flowers, and decorative feathers; also stain-removers, cleaners, boot-boys, and rat-catchers. All this proves, according to Bernstein, that the small business is definitely alive and kicking, even though it takes on different forms. The German *gas-works*, 427 in number, now employ only 14,407 persons in all, i.e. about 35 men per company. According to Bernstein, it is quite impossible to socialise them yet. We must wait until they employ at least 50 persons, because only then can they be called "large companies," and only "moderately" large ones at that! But the worst case of all is the German *shipbuilding industry*, where utterly backward conditions still prevail. There are 1,068 self-employed and 22,731 employees, i.e. an average of 22 men per company; and the remarkable thing is that these "small companies" build the *largest ocean-going steamers*! The government report on Germany's seafaring interests has a different tale to tell. It tells of the massive German shipyards capable of meeting the greatest demands, of the floating docks with enormous capacity, of the colossal increase in the number of ships and the tonnage of the German merchant fleet, of which an increasingly large proportion is built in our own German yards. However, the statistical picture is obscured by a few hundred manufacturers of barges and small boats, and here too Bernstein sees only the fleet of small fishing smacks and overlooks the great fleet of German ocean-going ships, just as earlier he noticed the freight waggons but missed the railways!

If we are to get any insight into social development from trade statistics, then we must take them for what they are: *raw material*. Valuable material, of course, but nonetheless material which must first be complemented and corrected by other facts, and above all material which can be comprehended and shaped into a coherent picture only on the basis of knowledge already gained of social relationships, or, in our case, knowledge of the laws of capitalist development. In view of Bernstein's present uncritical approach, we shall give him a brief reminder of how this should be done.

PARVUS

3. The Social-Revolutionary Army⁽ⁱ⁾

Sächsische Arbeiter-Zeitung, 6 February 1898

We have already remarked that the social significance of the various branches of production, or their significance for the revolutionary

process in society, is by no means the same everywhere. The most important consideration for capitalist development is, of course, the relationship between *industrial* and *agricultural* production. It would be fair to say that the whole economic and political development, indeed the whole cultural development, of our time is connected with this relationship. Urban development is affected by it, as are the railways. Now, the fact is that the statistics since 1882 show that this relationship has been completely transformed. The entire *agricultural* population of the Reich now numbers 18.5 millions out of a total population of 51.8, i.e. less than 40 per cent. The overwhelming majority of the population are in industry, trade, etc. These are therefore the people who determine the *economic character* of the country. This is not merely a matter of numerical superiority; it means that this industrial urban population with its interests, conflicts, views, and demands dominates the historical development of Germany, brings all other things under its sway, shapes them in its own likeness, makes them dependent upon itself, and, inevitably, establishes its moral hegemony over them by the vast tide of public opinion it generates. The twenty-eight major German cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants each and 3,300,000 inhabitants in all, are twenty-eight centres for the economic, political, and cultural control of the country. Each of these cities makes the surrounding region dependent upon it over an area which, thanks to the ramification of the railways, extends for a considerable distance. At the same time, it is well known that industry is already striking roots in the remotest corners of the country. Thus the eighteen million peasant population is being in effect surrounded and split up by an industrial population of thirty-three million, criss-crossed by countless strands of industry, enmeshed in a web of railways, and drawn together under the rule of the cities. These economic interconnections do not feature in the trade statistics, which recognise only numerical distinctions. They clarify and label, separate and amalgamate, but have no place for interrelations. A politician using them as the sole basis for his speculations is thus rather like a strategist who knows the number, classification, and perhaps even the equipment of the enemy's troops, but not the manner of their deployment, the condition of the terrain, the roads, or the means of communication, and who nevertheless intends to draw up his plan of campaign on the basis of this information!

Now that the trade statistics have told us that Germany is an *industrial* nation (not only because of the number of industrial employees but in the sense that the entire economic life of the country is dominated by industrial activity) the question arises: what is the

character of this industry? Or what is its relation to the world market? Recent political events have made any detailed discussion unnecessary. Germany's industry is a *capitalist export industry*. This does not mean an industry which, thanks to particular natural conditions or conditions of work, is geared to making certain products primarily for the world market. It means the attainment of a certain *stage of development* of capitalist industry, a stage at which it can continue to *exist* only by finding an outlet for its goods *beyond its own borders*. This kind of industry is already working with a *social deficit*. It produces more than can be consumed within the country, given the prevailing social circumstances. It is proof that the forces of production have outgrown the social framework of the economy, that this framework holds together only so long as it is possible to unload the proliferating mass of products abroad, and that it must inevitably break apart if, by some circumstance, the outlet to other countries is blocked. This fact, which applies to industry as a whole, is a much more important social-revolutionary indicator than the degree of *industrial concentration* attained in any single branch of industry. Although it is interesting to monitor the progress of large-scale industry in the various branches of social production, socialism has never asserted that the highest possible degree of industrial concentration has to be reached in every department before the social revolution is possible. In any case, the degree of industrial concentration only shows how far it is *technically feasible* to socialise production, whereas the relationship just characterised proves that this socialisation has become a *necessity of production*.

Let us now see how *the opposing classes* are distributed and *conflicts of interest* are enacted on this common terrain of the relations of production. It is here that we can make best use of the trade statistics.

We look first at *industry properly speaking*, i.e. trade groups III to XVI in the statistics. Here we find that, in the Reich as a whole, there are 79,286 companies with over 10 employees each. We admit that this is, broadly speaking, the *class of industrial capitalists* who will bear the brunt of the direct damage caused by the social revolution. As we see, this class is not especially *numerous*. By contrast, there are 3,911,072 persons employed in the same companies, not counting the owners. But we must bear in mind that among the *workers* there is no distinction of the kind found among the *employers*. The same worker works in both large and small companies at various times. There is a constant exchange, a continuous fluctuation of workers, among companies of all sizes. The factory worker does not change

his attitudes because he occasionally works in a small firm. Here again, it depends on what is the *determining* factor. Bernstein himself admits that, in industry, it is the *large company*. It is, therefore, the *factory* which determines the *character* of the *working class*. If workers in small firms were left to themselves, they would never progress beyond the attitudes and expectations of journeymen. But since they are in constant contact with truly industrial workers, have themselves done factory work and live in an age of large cities, railways, newspapers, parliamentarianism, etc., they become, just like the factory worker, class-conscious proletarians. There are countless instances of this in the ranks of Social Democracy. The spirit of Social Democracy penetrates even into those trades where artisanship is most firmly entrenched, e.g. the bakers and butchers. It would therefore be correct to set against the class of capitalist entrepreneurs the *total number of wage-labourers*. In industry, this amounted to 5,955,711, together with 263,745 administrative and supervisory personnel. Our initial result is thus as follows:

Industrial capitalist class, approx.	80,000
Industrial proletariat, approx.	6,000,000

These are the two parties whose respective interests are directly opposed, and who are in sharpest conflict with one another. On the one side, we have the economic bulwark of the present social order; on the other, the core of the social-revolutionary army. And even so, we have overestimated the entrepreneurial class, for, as we can see by comparing company statistics with the occupational statistics, the number of those who own companies is smaller than the actual number of companies.

If we subtract the 80,000 proprietors, whom we have designated as the actual industrial capitalist class, from the total number of *self-employed businessmen*, we are left with 1,980,000. These are the one-man operations and other small businesses.

But, firstly, this huge number of approximately 2,000,000 conceals a significant number of workers who are in fact *wage-labourers*, although they appear in a different *legal category*. These consist first and foremost of all the occupations connected with cottage industry, viz. 90,381 self-employed seamstresses, 261,141 self-employed tailors and dressmakers, 15,966 milliners, etc. Approximately 150,000 hand-loom weavers and related occupations must also be included. By far the greater part of these are *proletarians*, who are most shamefully exploited in various ways and who are by no means opposed to the proletariat in its social-revolutionary struggle. On the contrary,

we can point to many dedicated Social Democrats among, for instance, the master tailors. Almost seven-tenths of a million have thus disappeared from the two million.

Secondly, many workers in the *building trade* who are actually *wage-labourers* are registered in the occupational statistics as "self-employed," e.g. masons, slaters, and, to a lesser extent, carpenters. This arises from various circumstances connected with the nature of the trade. Such workers have no fixed relation to any particular employer. They are available for hire by any builder, and they work for a daily rate, or an agreed rate, just like any other worker. In addition, they might occasionally get small incidental jobs which they can do with their own relatively simple tools. Whatever the case, they are *wage-labourers*. There is nothing here for the social revolution to "expropriate," there is nothing to be radically changed – except that, like other workers, their conditions of work would improve. They number approximately 100,000.

Then there are occupations which, to a large extent, combine *wage-labour* with *artisanship*. They depend partly on municipal *house-building* and partly on the need to keep houses and flats in good repair. The large cities with their water and sewage systems, gas-lighting and electricity, etc. provide them with a more than ample field of activity. We could mention the fitters, plumbers, electricians, and interior decorators. They have their own workshops, but very often they work only for wages. Inasmuch as they work outside their workshops, wherever there is a call for repairs to be done or the opportunity for piece-work arises, we cannot see how a technical concentration could be introduced. We will therefore take over these occupations as they stand and, since urban management in a socialist society will certainly be no worse than at present, they too will find a rewarding field of activity opening up before them.

Closely connected with this group are the crafts principally concerned with repairs to goods-vehicles, light agricultural machinery and other equipment. Apart from the fitters and plumbers already mentioned, this group includes wheelwrights and saddlers. Here too the social revolution would effect no radical change. These "artisans" present no problem whatsoever, and they can only benefit from what we are doing.

Then we have the specialised mending trade: *cobbling*; *tailoring* already mentioned, also belongs partly in this category. Altogether 235,328 self-employed cobblers were counted. What is to be said about that? Even in a socialist society, shoe-soles will wear out, and *new boots* are already being made in *factories*. Just one point: ar

increase in the general level of prosperity must also improve the existence of those who are now miserable patch-workers. This category also includes *clockmakers*.

A number of small companies generate types of occupation which, because of the nature of the work – particularly where the main emphasis is on personal service – cannot be concentrated: pharmacists, knackers, barbers, laundresses. Self-employed laundresses number 75,301. The situation will presumably be such that working women are no longer forced to take in other people's washing. They won't object to that. But we shall certainly nationalise the 5,487 German pharmacists.

Now, at last, we come to the true artisans. Here the *bakers* and the *butchers* play the principal part. All told, there are about 150,000 who are self-employed. A great many of them can hardly keep their heads above water. Growing competition from bread-factories, big slaughterhouses, mechanised meat-processing works and sausage wholesalers makes itself felt from day to day. Nonetheless, craft snobbery still prevails. But although the master bakers and butchers will not vote for us in the elections, they cannot, when it comes to it, do us any great harm.

Of the remaining artisans, some of the *cabinet-makers* are totally dependent on the *furniture companies*; some of them labour in their workshops entirely for the *factories*. And the *bookbinders* are in the hands of the *publishing houses*. Both these occupations have only *freedom from exploitation* to expect from the social revolution.

A number of other crafts consist either of occupations which require no particular artistic skill, such as precision engineers and goldsmiths – there are few of them, and in a socialist society they will have their first real opportunity to use their skills to the full – or of occupations which display in a rather more mixed way the characteristics of the others mentioned above – basket-makers, wood-turners, etc.

Our review of “self-employed” traders in small businesses leads to the conclusion that:

Approximately 1,200,000 have solidarity of interest with the wage-labourers (tailors, cobblers, hand-loom weavers, seamstresses, masons, etc.).

Approximately 400,000 to 450,000 will be taken into socialist society as independent craftsmen and will certainly be better off than they are now.

Approximately 200,000 to 250,000 show a more or less *hostile indifference* to radical change.

PARVUS

4. The Social-Revolutionary Army (*continued*)
Sächsische Arbeiter-Zeitung, 8 February 1898

In *trade and commerce* we have, in the first instance, 1,233,000 wage-labourers and 253,000 administrative personnel. For the moment, while capitalist society persists, they are unlikely to be won over to our side in large numbers. But neither would they have any interest in maintaining the existing order during a social revolution. Those who are merely warehouse workers, low-grade clerks, shop-girls, errand-boys, etc., all the 1.2 million who are so shamefully exploited and miserably paid, would clearly be better off in a socialist society which would introduce a civilised regulation of working hours and adequate "wages." (The expression is, of course, not used in the capitalist sense of the market price of labour-power). For various reasons they are, at present, a politically apathetic stratum of society. But they are by no means stupid or mentally inert. On the contrary, they are active and most energetic in establishing where their interests lie. They will probably greet the social revolution with the greatest mistrust, but it will not occur to them to worry very much about the expropriation of their employers, just as they do not at present take it especially to heart that, e.g., Tom's business will go bankrupt if Harry's continues. They will simply see the socialist government as their new employer, much as they now see the company board of directors, and they will certainly not fail to make their demands known. If we can meet these demands and improve their situation, they will become committed supporters of the social-revolutionary government. The fact that we will indeed be able to meet these demands is due to the general productive precondition of the social revolution, viz. that, given the present development of the forces of production, the socialisation of production is capable of providing amply for all members of society.

The position of the higher *technical and administrative* personnel, though certainly not the same, is analogous. We shall consider them as a whole, i.e. not only those in trade but those in all branches of production. There is, incidentally, a wage-labouring group in process of formation within this social stratum as well. But let us approach the matter from a different angle. Although these gentlemen are generally unsympathetic to the workers, and although the workers inevitably see them to some extent as taskmasters, nevertheless it cannot be denied that the proletariat, by its revolutionary activity, does more preliminary work for them than it does for itself. For if we remove

the capitalist class, which reduces administrators to dependence by means of its financial power, then administrators are left as effective masters of the factory. However highly we regard the training which workers receive in co-operatives and trade unions, worker-officials will not be able to replace the entire force of engineers and factory administrators. We are dependent upon them. And with their customary astuteness, these gentlemen will quickly realise how things stand, and they would be poor businessmen indeed if they did not exploit the situation for their own benefit. So they will seek to gain influence for themselves; and, although but recently opponents of social revolution, once the political decision has been made in our favour they will immediately seek to take a *leading role*. Being an uncommonly quick-witted lot, they will embark on all kinds of activities, as orators, organisers, and, especially, as *planners*. They will soon discover the productive opportunities opened up by the social revolution, and they will press the most daring schemes upon the people, developing agitatory skills of which we shall need to be very wary indeed. We, as politicians consciously preparing the way for the social revolution, will then be left with no choice but (1) to bring about a rapid expansion of technical education to ensure that society has plenty of technical administrative personnel at its disposal, and (2) to discourage adventurism by extending the democratic organisation of factory management and by energetic use of central political power. However, for present purposes we need only note that most of these current supporters of capitalism will desert their present lords and masters if the latter lose the decisive battle to the proletariat. The total number of technical and commercial personnel is 621,918.

Let us turn to the respectable *merchants*, i.e. to the self-employed shopkeepers. Here we find 31,990, i.e. roughly 32,000, businesses with more than 5 employees. Their owners we shall count among the *capitalist class*. In addition there are 294,213 businesses with between 3 and 5 employees, including the *owners and any members of their families*. It is well known that, in trade especially, the employment of members of the family is widespread and is indeed the rule among small traders. So if we subtract 30,000 from this number as belonging to the *capitalist class* (i.e. to those whose income derives chiefly from *interest on their capital* and not from their earnings), we shall probably have set our estimate very high. This puts the total representation of capitalist merchants at 82,000. On the other side, apart from 1,600,000 wage-labouring employees, we have 154,000 owners of *small businesses* and 398,094 *one-man trading*

operations: 553,000 small businessmen in all, who in their respective businesses have capital the interest on which probably does not even meet the cost of book-keeping and who make a living only by working as salesmen, porters, and even errand-boys themselves. We have already described how things stand with the financial independence of these "private property owners." A socialist government would act as their supplier. The goods will be allotted to them, and their duty will be to "sell" them to individual consumers as they do now (at this stage we need not trouble ourselves with socialist business terminology), to ensure that the stock is punctually replenished and adequately varied, and that the goods do not spoil. And for their efforts they will be guaranteed an appropriate income.

This treatment of retailers may surprise those who imagined that, when it comes to power, the proletariat will have nothing better to do than transform the whole of society into one single *factory*. We may safely leave such idiocies to social philosophers à la Eugen Richter.³ There is, however, one major difficulty connected with trade and that is the *concentration of business operations*. There is certainly still considerable fragmentation in trade, and this must be remedied; but at some point we must also take account of the fact that the concentration of trade will not result in any *reduction* in the total number of employees in trade. Even *at present* this is not the case, for the massive expansion of trade easily outstrips any reductions in the work-force achieved by concentration. In *industry* too we find that the development of large companies is accompanied by an *increase* in the total number of employees. This will happen to an even greater extent in trade in a socialist society where people's demand for goods will rise.

However, there will probably be a significant number of shopkeepers who will lack the greater intelligence and skill required for trading on a large scale. But even they will not be left helpless, as they are now when they are put out of business by large stores or cooperatives and they do not know where to find the means of supporting their wretched existence. They will find employment suitable for their capabilities in other branches of the infinitely varied socialist economy, or in the extensive network of community services which will certainly be greatly expanded with the socialisation of production. We must, at this stage, point out that the present concentration of trade in co-operatives etc. arises more from an effort to eliminate the *capitalist profit* of the various middlemen through whose hands the goods pass than from any need to *concentrate business operations*, and that the advantage of such co-operatives lies not so much

in any economies of *labour* as in the elimination of capitalist percentages or, to put it simply, in the fact that goods are bought first hand. In socialist society, where all capitalist profiteering is abolished, this trading advantage will disappear, and other factors which tend to work *against* the concentration of trade will make themselves felt – for instance, the necessity for housewives to travel long distances to reach large retail centres and the consequent inconvenience of overcrowding at certain times of the day. This may also serve as a pointer for those who believe that socialist society will have no more sense than to determine the exact mathematical centre of the country and there erect a large central depot to house all production and trade.

The occupational groups still to be considered need not detain us long. The *insurance trade* loses much of its significance with the social revolution since, after all, the whole of socialist society is a mutual insurance organisation. Just as even now it is more advantageous for very large capitalist companies, e.g. North German Lloyd, to budget for their own “private insurance,” i.e. simply to write off certain sums for risks, so the management of socialist production will have no option but to cover its own losses. The personnel of insurance companies, like those of the banks, are eminently suited to be officials and administrators. The book-keeping they do will be just as necessary then as it is now. The possibility of socialising *transport and communications* in all their diverse forms will hardly be denied. Once again, the *occupational statistics* come into play. There are 428,797 actual *wage-labourers* or *manual workers*, together with 113,405 *technical and administrative personnel* (including more than 100,000 administrative staff in the railways and in the postal and telegraphic services), and 63,501 “self-employed,” the great majority of whom are cab-drivers, porters, owners of heavy goods vehicles, river ferries, barges, etc. We reckon that they include 15,000 *owners of capital* in the sense defined above.

A few words now about *public houses*. If we count the owners of businesses with more than 5 employees as *capitalists*, their number amounts to 13,772. Against them, we have 314,396 wage-labourers. The number of self-employed in this sector is very much smaller than the number of businesses, viz. 175,712 out of 234,437. If we subtract the number of large-scale public-house owners mentioned above from the number of “self-employed,” we are left with approximately 162,000 small businesses. In general, what we said of trade applies to them as well. Anyone who wants to see how dependent innkeepers are on the workers should cast his eye over the advertisement columns in the party newspapers, or call to mind the police campaigns

against innkeepers, and also the beer boycotts.⁴ If the workers get more leisure and their standard of living is improved, then alcoholism will surely decrease and the pleasures of the masses will take on a more cultural aspect. That will also *raise the tone of public-house company*, and for that very reason the expansion of public life will bring more rather than fewer customers into the public houses.

We turn now to that class in which the main weight of conservative opinion in contemporary society lies, the *peasantry*.

But first let us briefly summarise the results of today's survey. If we count the 25,000 insurance personnel as administrative and put the administrative staff from all branches of employment under the heading of "trade and commerce," we get, in round figures, the following picture of the social structure of *trade and commerce, including the public-house trade*:

Capitalist class	111,000
Wage-earning working class	3,000,000
Administrative personnel	650,000
Small traders and publicans	760,000

EDUARD BERNSTEIN

A Statement

Vorwärts, 7 February 1898

My article "The Theory of Collapse and Colonial Policy," published in *Neue Zeit* (no. 18), has occasioned remarks, both in the party press and in opposition newspapers, which compel me to reply. My reply will shortly appear in *Neue Zeit*. Meanwhile I will, if I may, make two preliminary points.

The first concerns a personal matter. An article which the Berlin *Volkszeitung* devotes to my piece states that under the Antisocialist Law I was "one of the most intransigent," albeit, as I later confessed on occasion, "for fear of competition from the Mostian camp."

I do not recall ever making any such statement. My intransigence at the time of the emergency law was not in the slightest degree motivated by fear or any form of competition from the Mostian camp. Although my views have changed in many respects over the years, they *have* remained constant in that I would be just as "intransigent" as I was before 1890, if German Social Democracy were once again subjected to an emergency law. The editors of the *Volkszeitung* will be left in no doubt on this point if they read what I wrote in *Neue Zeit* about electoral reform in Saxony.⁵

Perhaps what they have in mind is the tone of the Zürich *Sozialdemokrat*. Here I can indeed allow that, for a while during the early years of the paper, a certain reaction to the mannerisms of *Freiheit* left its mark. But this was temporary and had nothing to do with the principled stand maintained by the *Sozialdemokrat*.

I take this opportunity to correct a mistake which various party newspapers have made in articles following the tragic death of Comrade Conrad Konzett.⁶ This comrade who rendered such excellent service to the party did not (as would appear from these articles) leap to the defence of the *Sozialdemokrat* on the occasion of the 1888 expulsions. He did indeed carry full legal responsibility for the paper from 1883 onwards, and what he did in 1888 was to bring this legal connection (full details of which can be found in the official Zürich company register) very pointedly to the notice of a wider public.

The second matter I wish to discuss concerns the point in my article to which I assume the editors of *Vorwärts* are referring when they say that the way I express some of my points has given rise to serious misunderstandings. I mean the words on page 556 of *Neue Zeit*: "I frankly admit that I have extraordinarily little feeling for, or interest in, what is usually termed 'the final goal of socialism.' This goal, whatever it may be, is nothing to me, the movement is everything." Conclusions have indeed been drawn from this pronouncement which are far removed from anything I intended. While I admit that it can be misunderstood, I must add that misunderstanding is possible only if it is taken out of context.

Basically, it says nothing which socialist writers have not already said on countless occasions, although "the words are not quite all the same."⁷ The somewhat abrupt way in which I expressed myself was provoked by the accusation that I had "relinquished the final goal of the socialist movement in favour of the set of ideas characteristic of contemporary bourgeois liberalism and radicalism."⁸ This accusation – where the stress lies on "final": "the *final* goal of the socialist movement" – seemed, and still seems, to me to be nonsense coming from anyone who claims to be a Scientific Socialist. For, if it has any meaning at all, it implies the utopian notion that it is possible to achieve this final goal in the near future. If, on the other hand, the full implementation of the socialist principle is understood as something that can only be the product of a series of social developments, then it is meaningless to accuse anyone of abandoning the final goal of these developments. They can be accused only of relinquishing certain demands or methods of combat, or of abandoning certain assumptions of socialist theory.

But does it follow that I refuse to concern myself with the so-called final goal of the socialist movement, or that I deny that this movement has any definite goal whatever? I would be very sorry to have my words so understood. A movement without a goal would drift chaotically, for it would be a movement without direction. No goal, no direction. If the socialist movement is not to drift aimlessly without a compass, it must obviously have a goal towards which it consciously strives. However, this goal is not the realisation of a social plan but the implementation of a social *principle*. To the extent that the tasks of Social Democracy are not dictated by the current exigencies of the workers' struggle for political and economic emancipation, we can in fact (if we are to avoid a lapse into utopianism) formulate the goal of the socialist movement only as a principle, such as "the implementation of co-operation across the board." I know of no phrase which spans the whole range of socialist endeavors as this one does, irrespective of whether we are referring to political or to economic demands. It excludes all class domination and class privilege. A man privileged by his class status cannot be a comrade. But although it identifies our goal, it tells us nothing about the ways and means. These can be determined only by reference to present circumstances and must be related to the current state of the movement. It is for this reason that, given the general goal, our main concern is the movement itself and its progress towards this goal, whereas the various ways of envisaging the goal of this development are of no significance whatsoever. Indeed, history has a habit of drawing a thick line through all such speculations. Those ingenious forecasts of the future which have been fulfilled were of a general nature, and the manner and form in which they were fulfilled were other than those envisaged by their authors. There is value only in being clear about the general course of the movement, and in examining closely the factors which influence it. If we do this, we need have no anxiety about our final goal. I believe that I have already quoted elsewhere the saying of that great general and statesman of the English revolution, Oliver Cromwell, that he who does not know where he is going makes the greatest progress.⁹ In any case, it expresses the idea I had in mind when I remarked that I had little feeling for what is normally called the final goal of the socialist movement. Cromwell also simply meant to say that he who knows the general direction in which he is aiming but otherwise keeps a mind open to the given conditions and requirements of the time will make better progress than those whose outlook is limited or mesmerised by some speculatively imagined "final goal."

This is the train of thought which my remark was intended to convey. I could also have formulated it thus: "The movement is everything to me because it bears its goal within itself."

PARVUS

Bernstein's Statement

Sächsische Arbeiter-Zeitung, 9 February 1898¹⁰

[. . .] This statement shows with woeful clarity the mental confusion into which Eduard Bernstein has fallen. He, the historical materialist, betakes himself into the misty realm of ideology in search of a "*principle*" which as far as possible comprehends everything and which, because it is all-embracing, *conveys absolutely nothing*. He says that, while he has no feeling for "the final goal of socialism," he does understand "the principle of *the implementation of co-operation across the board*." Nonetheless, he would like to see the implementation of this principle as the "*goal*" of the movement because otherwise the latter would have no "*direction*." But he does not want the *final goal* because – if we understand him rightly – historical development has no beginning or end and, as he finally tells us, "the movement bears its goal within itself."⁽ⁱⁱ⁾ Well, these are all scholastic speculations completely devoid of *political value*, and for our part we would not waste a drop of ink or a moment of time in discussing such things with him. But unfortunately that is not how things stand. Eduard Bernstein wrote not only the remarks about the "final goal" which he would now have us interpret in this way but a whole *article* which dealt with the most vital questions of practical politics and subjected *all the scientific foundations of current party tactics* to revision – only to reach a negative conclusion.

What is at issue is not the working out of a *social plan* for the future but the *social revolution*. The whole of party policy has hitherto been based on its intention to seize *political power* by as swift a process as possible in order to use this power – the "dictatorship of the proletariat" – to expropriate the capitalists and, by placing those units of production that are already socialised under public control and direction, to create the legal basis for the development of a socialist society – just as, *mutatis mutandis*, the dissolution of feudal castes and privileges and security of private property and freedom of trade were the basis for the development of capitalist society. Bernstein came out emphatically against this. He declared – and, in view of his present nebulous comments, we must remind our readers of the fact – that even if we were to seize political power, it would still

be impossible to abolish capitalism, that we would be faced with an "insoluble task" and that we would inevitably suffer "a colossal defeat." He sought to base this criticism, not on empty speculation, but on *scientific fact*. He cited *statistics* to prove that class conflict had not yet progressed very far. He even opposed, in part, the theory of the intensification of class conflict by pointing to the development of a new *middle class* and, in the process, laying particular emphasis on the importance of the capitalist *credit system*. And finally he mounted a particularly strong attack on the theory of major capitalist *trade crises*, explicitly stressing his opposition to Marx and Engels. If these premises were correct, they would cut the ground from under the whole of party policy. What would be the point of striving to achieve political power if it only led to a "colossal defeat"? What would be the point of opposing capitalism if we could not manage without it? Instead, we would have to *encourage* capitalist development, since, if it is *not interrupted by general trade crises*, it must eventually lead to the prosperity of all! This means that we would have to abandon our social-revolutionary position, accept the bourgeois majority in our assemblies, or amalgamate ourselves with it, and direct our political energies against what are commonly called "abuses." E. Bernstein himself drew the logical *practical conclusions* from his general standpoint, firstly, when he urged us not to oppose *colonial policy on principle* but to attend to the brutalities and injustices which that policy engenders and, secondly, when he heaped reproaches on the heads of the *English engineering workers*, who had just lost a hard fight, because they had made demands on the owners, such as the *eight hour day*, which the owners could not meet because of the *constraints of competition*.¹¹ Clearly, this is rather different from a verbal disagreement about every last detail of the "final goal."

In his article in *Neue Zeit*, Bernstein showed himself fully aware that his position placed him in opposition to the general opinion of the party. We find it both surprising and embarrassing that he now attempts to make the matter appear as innocuous as possible, as a kind of misunderstanding, as though he had, perhaps, merely expressed himself somewhat clumsily. We have only pity for the intellectual labour which has led Bernstein to his present conclusions, for we can find no breadth of vision or trace of original thought in them; but despite this we have the greatest respect for the *integrity* with which he has hitherto expressed his ideas, and we fully appreciate the *courage* required to commit oneself publicly to views, such as these, which go against the grain of general opinion. But anyone who ventures such things must be *consistent*. Bernstein's enterprise, "the

continuation of socialism" (as he calls it), is nothing but an attempt to relegate *Marx* and *Engels* to the honourable niche already occupied by the old *Utopians* and to replace them with the hygienically "derevolutionised" "scientific socialism" of Professors Sombart, Herkner, and Julius Platter!¹² Yes, Bernstein has actually sunk to the level of Platter, that disgusting vulgar Socialist. The only reason why this state of affairs was not greeted with scornful laughter throughout the party, and why the present author exercised rigorous self-control and tapped his pen against the inkwell to shake off any urge to ribaldry, is the respect we have for the Bernstein of the *Sozialdemokrat* and for his present integrity. For this very reason he must have the courage to drain the bitter cup to the dregs. If he flinches, he will himself reduce to shreds the reputation as politician and author which he has so far maintained.

PARVUS

5. The Peasantry and the Social Revolution *Sächsische Arbeiter-Zeitung*, 12 February 1898

Large agricultural holdings properly so-called begin at 100 hectares. There are 25,057 of them. Then we have the medium-sized farms, the *Grossbauerntum* (20–100 hectares) of which there are 281,784. We cannot pursue the *business statistics* any further, since the more the ownership of property is divided, the more *wage-labour* and *secondary occupations* come to the fore. Here, as elsewhere, we must use the *occupational statistics* as a point of comparison. Under *main occupation* these show 2,568,725 *self-employed* peasant farmers. If we subtract the number of large and medium-sized peasant farmers mentioned above, we are left with 2,261,884 independent *small peasants*, i.e. people for whom agriculture is their *main occupation*. In addition, there are 5,627,794 who give *wage-labour* as their main occupation. The great majority of these are *agricultural day-labourers*, hawkers, etc., who also own or rent a piece of land. The large and medium-sized holdings, which together constitute 46 per cent of the total, account for 54.4 per cent of the land under cultivation. So much for the figures.

We will not broach the question as to how far we might *at present* win over the agricultural population, i.e. to what extent we might get them involved in positive social-revolutionary activity. For us, the question is *the extent to which they hinder the social revolution*, i.e. whether the industrial proletariat can achieve the social revolution with this kind of agricultural population.

Firstly, the reactionary nature of the peasantry in general. The peasant is impelled to political action only with great difficulty. This is a fact to be borne in mind not only by revolutionaries but also by reactionaries. Politically, the peasant is *passive*. Whoever wants to study the political character of the peasantry must go to *China* or to *Russia*. Those gentlemen who, in connection with the "conquest" of Kiaochow,¹³ rejoiced in the political apathy of the Chinese peasant who reacted to the political change-over with complete indifference, might draw a lesson from it with regard to the state of affairs within Germany. It is this unshakeable calm, this political detachment of the peasantry which underpins the myth of the peasant as pillar of the political establishment by which he is governed. To the extent that the West European peasant is undoubtedly much more active, he reveals (1) how much the influence of capitalist commodity production, railways, and towns has changed the economic character of the rural population, and (2) how much it is also affected morally by the general cultural influence of capitalist development. Whenever, in the course of this century, the European peasantry took political action, it always did so as *an oppositional force*. It allowed itself to be made a fool of by adventurers and charlatans, from Napoléon le Petit down to Boulanger and Shlwardt [*sic*],¹⁴ but that was precisely its way of protesting against the existing social order. At the moment, this oppositional character is clearly evident both in the anti-Semites and in the *farmers' union*, although the latter includes only those social strata we counted as capitalist large-scale landowners. So how will the millions of small peasant farmers react once they have been jolted into political activity? At the recent Conservative Party conference, both the "government" and agrarian wings voiced profound critical indignation at those who were whipping up the small farmers against the big landowners, and with good cause.

It is well-known that the Junkers use the economic pressure which they are now able to exert to force the rural population into the voting booths. Nonetheless, the extent of political apathy among the latter is shown by the number of votes on which the Conservatives are elected. We notice that only five out of sixty-eight Conservative deputies in the present Reichstag were elected with a narrow absolute majority of those entitled to vote; eleven attracted 40–50 per cent; twenty-six a mere 40–45 per cent; twenty-one only 34–40 per cent (i.e. a third or at most two-fifths); three only 31–35 per cent; and the last two just over 25 per cent, i.e. just over a quarter of the electorate! That is why the Conservatives support *compulsory voting*. So when the *social revolution* appropriates the big landowners and

thus removes the economic pressure which they exert on the peasantry, are we to suppose that this will lead to a *strengthening* of conservative forces? Does anyone really believe that the small-holder will throw himself into the fray because the "state" takes land away from the big landowner? The peasants are mainly concerned with *their own interests*, and the question is the extent to which *these interests* are going to be threatened or damaged by the social revolution.

At this point, we would like to pick up the analogy with the great bourgeois revolution which Eduard Bernstein cites. How did things stand with the French peasantry in 1789? Isolated, oppressed, ignorant, without newspapers, and unable to read them even if they had been available, they produced no significant political action before the Revolution. The Revolution was made in *Paris*. Only then did the peasantry bestir themselves, for despite their limitations they saw at once that the moment had come to rid themselves of their aristocratic oppressors. But the countless peasant uprisings which followed the storming of the Bastille would certainly have been suppressed as before by military force, had not the *Revolution* already grasped the reins of power and had not the "dictatorship" of the third estate, the bourgeoisie, already been established. When the bourgeoisie seized political power, they understood perfectly well that they needed to secure the sympathies of the peasantry. How did they do this? By the decrees of the famous night of 4 August, which annihilated feudal impositions and privileges by confiscating the estates of the church and of the *émigrés*. Were Bernstein to glance through the well-known essay by our friend *Kautsky* on the class conflicts of 1789,¹⁵ he would see what effects all this produced and what other material factors came into play to turn the peasants into supporters of the bourgeois revolution. But he makes no attempt to deny these effects where the French Revolution is concerned. What he cannot understand is that the *social revolution* can also engender material interests which would win it the support of the peasantry.

Let us see what shape things would take. We all know what the peasant needs. His *mortgage payments* weigh more heavily on him than tithes did on the pre-Revolutionary French peasant. The *area of land he cultivates* is *too small* for him to operate a rational system of farming which might give him an adequate livelihood. Even if he could use machinery, he has *no money* to buy it, no money to buy fertiliser (which is expensive), no resources to maintain farm buildings (let alone enlarge them), and no food for his cattle. All too often he has not enough food for himself and his family. And since he

himself occupies a patch of land which is much too small, there is no room for his *descendants*, who are forced to emigrate unless they can find a place in the town or in a factory. Disregarding the broadly legal and fiscal side of things, we can soon summarise what has been done to date to help the peasants: *credit has been made cheaper*, *purchasing and marketing co-operatives* have been set up, and certain agricultural *specialities* and *by-products* have been developed, e.g. horticulture, milk production, and cheese-making. And that, indeed, is all that *can* be done for the peasantry on the basis of *private property* and *mass production*. However, even these measures have proved a miserable fiasco. And why? Because even a low rate of interest is a heavy burden if the debt is large, because the misfortunes of the peasant have less to do with his inability to incur new debts than with his inability to service the old ones, because any number of noughts will never make a one, because even the lowest purchase price has to be *paid*, because the profits of the co-operatives are distributed among too many members who contribute so little (because that is all they *can* contribute) that their dividends are negligible – even discounting the problems which such organisations have to contend with – and finally because the economy of any people that has progressed beyond *nomadism* is based on *cereal production*.

So what about the *social revolution*? The first thing it will be able to offer the peasants is *mortgage relief*. If the ownership of land is to be transferred to *society*, then the relationship between *mortgagers* and *mortgagees* must also be controlled. If there is no *privately owned land*, there can be no *private debts* attached to the land. The way this debt is discharged will depend very much on the *political circumstances* under which the social transformation takes place. But whatever the circumstances we can exclude one way of discharging the debt, viz. that capitalist invention whereby the debtor maintains his interest payments while the creditor is *guaranteed the receipt of his interest* by the state – in other words, the transfer of the mortgage debt to the state. The most that our friends the mortgagees can ask is that the state *pay* the debt, not that it should *pay interest* on it. And it is to the benefit of these financial people themselves that the debt should *not be paid off all at once*, because, even if it were pure gold, such a large mass of capital injected into the market all at once would cause a heavy fall in the value of money and hence of the capital owned by the mortgagees. A social-revolutionary government will, however, *amortise* the land debt for an appropriate length of time, so that society is not inconvenienced on account of these gentlemen of means. So the peasant will get a *genuine reduction in the*

burden of interest. In addition to liberating him from his eternal slavery to debt, the arrangement will give him money, and it will have to remain in force for some considerable time.

The aforementioned *socialisation of the land* is the greatest of the horrors which are supposed to frighten the peasant into bitter opposition to socialism. But those who believe this have probably never tried to envisage what this socialisation involves in *practice*. The notion it normally evokes is that of *taking something away*, as if we were proposing to remove the soil from under the peasant's feet, pack it up, and cart it away. How? Where to? Who is to do it? Do people really believe that anyone intends to chase the peasants away and put a "director of industry" on the land? That is the same nonsense as the myth of "*sharing*." The *socialisation of the land* is first and foremost a *legal form* which will have the following consequences:

- (1) No private person may buy or sell land, i.e. a ban similar to that currently operating with entailed estates.
- (2) Society has the ultimate right to dispose of all land. This right is already acknowledged in principle in the *compulsory expropriation* of land for the building of railways, etc.

And who is "society"? Not the assembled masses but their various *organisations*, from the central government down to the municipality. So we have the municipality; beyond that the district; beyond the district the province; and beyond the province the central government of the country. But as we move further along the network of centralisation, the connection with actual agricultural operations becomes more tenuous, and society's involvement is increasingly confined to general matters. In fact, it is the *municipality* which has the direct relationship with arable land and which will have to administer its use. But who constitutes the municipality in rural areas? The *peasants* and the *agricultural workers*. So, in practice, the socialisation of the land means first and foremost that the municipalities will have authority over all the land in their vicinity, including the outlying farms and the seats of the large estate-owners. Assuming democratic voting rights in municipal elections, we need hardly discuss what position large urban communities will adopt on this issue with respect to our friends the landowners, and the great French Revolution provides an example of how the rural municipalities will deal with the owners of large estates. In the municipal council, the sole lawful owner of all the land, the vote of the estate-owner will count for no more than that of the lowliest farm-hand. It is obvious that, under these circumstances, the noble gentleman will have to forgo his

easy income from rent. What terms the peasant community will make with him in this connection will depend largely on the political situation. If these gentlemen, like their fellow-aristocrats during the French Revolution, flee the country full of hatred, fear, and plans for revenge, and if they intrigue against their country in foreign courts and raise armies which plunge it into war, then that will be the worse for them but perhaps best for the land. Their estates will be confiscated, rather as (to take a modern example) the Guelph fortune was confiscated.¹⁶ But these are matters about which we need not speculate at such an early stage as this. The municipality will certainly arrange matters so that *its own interests* do not suffer. The socialisation of the land expropriates the *large estate-owners* and to that extent increases the area of agricultural land controlled by *the peasant farming community*. Of course, this tells us nothing about the *individual peasant* – but for the moment let us take note of the point.

Furthermore, the social revolution will make *agricultural machinery* available to the peasant farming community. For a socialist administration, the main consideration is not (as it is at present) the individual peasant's ability to pay, but the fact that the use of machinery leads either to an increase in agricultural production as such or to a saving of labour power which can be employed elsewhere and thus increase the sum total of the social product. If this calculation is correct, society as a whole profits by the deal. It becomes richer and has more resources to meet its diverse needs. So a socialist administration will have the machines manufactured in its factories and will deliver them to the peasant farming communities. We get a rough idea of what can be achieved in this field if we look at what the *present* state spends on *cannon, armour-plated warships*, etc. For the same reasons, a socialist government will take responsibility for *providing fertiliser*; and it will do so from two sources: firstly, by buying mineral fertiliser from abroad and, secondly, by rational use of waste from the towns. The question of how *industry* and *agriculture* will come to terms with one another falls under the heading of the *organisation of the social exchange process*, which must evolve as a consequence of the social revolution. But we cannot go into that here. We are concerned only with the *economic consequences* which necessarily follow from a specific *legislative measure* which we propose to take, i.e. the *socialisation of the means of production*.

The abolition of debts, or at least the removal of the interest burden, an increase in the agricultural land controlled by the municipality, all the mechanical equipment required, provision of fertilisers –

that is what the *social revolution* offers the rural working population. Against this we have the “*anticollectivist peasant mentality*” and the peasant’s attachment to the plot of land which he owns privately and cultivates as he pleases. This last will indeed come to an end. The individual peasant farmer will have to conform to the instructions of the municipality or the co-operative. And, what is more, where *cereal production* is concerned there will have to be a comprehensive *national plan*. This is unavoidable. The great economic damage done by small-scale farming lies precisely in the fact that, thanks to the desire for independence, each one of these millions of smallholdings contributes to an economic mosaic in which neither the natural nor the technical conditions of production can be taken into account. So the conditions of soil, water-supply, and climate will be scientifically examined, a *national plan for agriculture* will be established. Geographical boundaries will be drawn for the cultivation of individual crops, crop rotations will be determined, as will the areas where steam-ploughs are to be used, and irrigation and drainage schemes will be set up by the general *state* administration. All this will be based, not on caprice, but on economic or productive necessity. If small-scale farming were still viable (as many believe), then there really would be no problem and the socialisation of the land would not affect peasant farming in the slightest. However, this is not the case. So what conclusion do we draw? That the centralisation of agriculture, together with the general economic measures we have described, will lead to a gigantic *increase in the productivity* of agricultural labour. And who will be the main beneficiary of this prosperity? The tiller of the soil himself, the *peasant farmer*. And against these *immense material advantages* which socialist society bestows on the peasant farmer nothing stands except his *idealisation of private property*. Is it so difficult to determine which way the decision will finally go? And those who think that peasant farmers can be organised into co-operatives *within capitalist society* would display an almost idiotic inconsistency if they tried to deny that, in this area, the social revolution would achieve successes right across the board, for, as we have explained, the social revolution will bring economic forces of enormous significance to bear in support of the formation of agricultural co-operatives.

We do not deny that there are problems, but they lie elsewhere. The greatest problem lies in the *relative over-population in agriculture*. It is not that the soil can no longer feed the rural population, but that there are, in fact, more people on the land than are needed as a *labour force* to do the agricultural work – despite the fact that

the Junkers complain of the shortage of labour. Speaking practically, when we socialise the land and introduce centralised agriculture, part of the agricultural population will be rendered redundant. What is the solution? Well, this surplus population already exists. Its members are crowding into factories, depressing wages, slaving in cottage industries, burdening their families, or emigrating. In a socialist society, they can simply be transferred to *industry*, where labour will always be needed – for instance to make the many machines with which agriculture is to be equipped. Furthermore, it will be possible to accommodate much more labour within agriculture than can be envisaged at present, for the following reasons: (1) Cereal production will be not only centralised but also intensified. (2) The area under cultivation will be extended. The general shortage of bread in Europe provides an effective incentive for both these objectives. (3) Cattle breeding, milk and vegetable production, horticulture, and fruit production will increase with the growing affluence of the population.

Of course, everyone realises that this is a very complicated process. But then we did not set out to prove that a new social order can be put together as easily as a paper decoration. Our aim was to show that the *political foundations* must first be laid for this whole massive development, and that it is for us to do this. We must fight for the *social revolution* – the overthrow of the capitalist state and the socialisation of the means of production – if a socialist development of agriculture is to take place. There will be any amount of friction and conflict, but the *social differentiation* of the agricultural population and its position in relation to the whole guarantee that these struggles must inevitably lead to the predetermined goal. Against roughly 300,000 large-scale landowners, we have a combined force of smallholders and agricultural labourers numbering 7,200,000. The outcome of the first battle, against large-scale landownership, is therefore beyond doubt. The 2,260,000 smallholders have a material interest in the social revolution, although tradition, narrowness of outlook, and individual conflicts of interest in administration, in determining the area to be cultivated, etc. will put many obstacles in the way of this development. However, behind these 2.2 million independent smallholders there stand 5,600,000 *agricultural labourers*, and these constitute the social-revolutionary army of agriculture. So, in agriculture itself we have an overwhelming social-revolutionary majority, which will, however, be unevenly distributed over the country as a whole. We should add that rural communities are already intermingled with the *industrial population*, which will also have a say, and that behind all this we have the great industrial ma-

jority concentrated in the towns and in possession of political power, the railways, the means of industrial production, and the army.

We must now sum up our investigations into the social-revolutionary army.¹⁷

Notes

- (i) The limited amount of space in a newspaper and the limited time available to the author for theoretical work inevitably mean that our disputations with E. Bernstein will be frequently interrupted. For the same reasons, repetition will be unavoidable, since many threads already introduced into the discussion will be taken up again and developed further.
- (ii) Since, on Bernstein's own account, goal and direction are inseparably linked, any movement which "bears its goal within itself" must also bear "its direction within itself." How does Bernstein envisage a movement which has swallowed its own direction? The notion smacks of primeval chaos and is completely at odds with modern physics.

Revisionism Defended

KONRAD SCHMIDT

Final Goal and Movement

Vorwärts, 20 February 1898

In his articles "The Struggle of Social Democracy and the Social Revolution," Bernstein opposes that whimsical socialist Romantic, Belfort Bax, by adopting much the same position as on several previous occasions, notably in his interesting series of articles "Problems of Socialism," which we reviewed in these columns at the time.¹ His latest articles, like the previous ones, would probably also have passed without comment in the bourgeois press and provoked little discussion even within the party, if Bernstein had not, in the heat of argument, let slip the remark that he had extraordinarily little feeling for, or interest in, what is usually called "the final goal of socialism." This goal, whatever it may be, was nothing to him, but the movement was everything. And by movement he meant the general movement of society, i.e. social progress as well as the political and economic agitation and organisation designed to bring about this progress.² Torn thus from its context, this pronouncement could be interpreted as a direct repudiation of the very principle of socialism and as a relapse into narrowly bourgeois ideas of reform. But only if the words are taken out of context. If we recall the general position which Bernstein has, for some time now, consistently maintained in this and other articles, then it is clear that his words could never have had any other meaning than the one he attaches to them in his subsequent statement in *Vorwärts*,³ viz. that they are directed, not against the final general goal of Social Democracy or against the emancipation of the working class from the fetters of the capitalist economy, but against utopian attempts to predetermine dogmatically the institutions of the future state in which this emancipation is envisaged as having been accomplished. The illusion that there is a conflict of principle thus vanishes. The "movement" which "is everything" for

Bernstein is the “movement” which incorporates as a vitalising and energising principle that necessary and general “final goal,” the emancipation of the working class. It is a “movement,” not in the bourgeois and philanthropic sense, but in the proletarian and socialist sense.

What is expressed in Bernstein’s remarks – which incidentally do not stand alone but are supported by a strong current of opinion within the party – is not a conflict with socialism but a conflict within it. It is a conflict which stems, not from chance circumstances and personal relationships, but from the very nature of socialist thinking and from the present stage of development of the party and of social conditions. The more firmly we grasp the actual state of affairs, the foundations from which the conflict grows, the less possible it is for these differences of view to threaten the solid structure of the party – as the bourgeois parties hope they will. Indeed, all such disputes are really about the question of how the *relationship* between *the movement* and *the final goal* – the two moments united in socialist thinking – can be defined *more precisely*, and this question must, of necessity, accompany the development of socialism from one stage to the next. The very fact that social reality is constantly changing precludes any possibility of a universally valid solution which could serve as a *principle binding upon the party*.

On the other hand, no matter how we define the relationship of final goal to the movement in its various phases, the essence of modern socialism lies in the *connection* between the working-class movement and a final goal *beyond* bourgeois-capitalist society. Modern socialism found itself faced, firstly, with a spontaneous working-class movement which had arisen as a reaction to unrestricted capitalist exploitation and, secondly, with the conception of collectively organised production and distribution of goods, which had arisen outside the mainstream of practical life, from criticism of the irrationality of bourgeois property. What socialism achieved was the combination and mutual interaction of both these moments, an interaction which stripped the actual working-class movement of its native limitations and the socialist idea of its utopian character. The materialist conception of history, which examined social formations in the process of development and historical phenomena in relation to economic conditions and class conflicts and struggles, provided the conceptual means of achieving this reconstructive combination. “The Communists,” as the Marx/Engels *Manifesto* declared, “do not form a separate party opposed to other working-class parties,” and “they do not set up any sectarian principles of their own, by which to

shape and mould the proletarian movement." Rather, they differ from "the great mass of the proletariat only in their insight into the course, the conditions and the general outcome of the proletarian movement."⁴ The Communists have gained this insight from the fragmentation of the capitalist social system and from the class role it allots to the proletariat. Beneath the particular conflicts of the day they see the underlying tendency which links each single incident and determines the overall character of the movement, a tendency which, by the very nature of capitalist society, is imposed on the proletariat in their struggle for liberation. Since the bondage of the workers is founded on capitalist private ownership of the means of production, the tendency, the ultimate goal towards which all interim stages of the liberation struggle are directed, must be the elimination of this kind of private ownership, the socialisation of the means of production, and the control of production by society. The class struggle against capitalism is, by its very nature, also a struggle for the progressive socialisation of society. Reference to this final goal – which is brought nearer by the concentration of industrial enterprises and the erosion of the artisan class – is intrinsic to the movement. By opening this perspective on the proletarian struggle, modern socialism reveals both the tendencies of the struggle and through them its truly great significance in world history. It produces the most powerful transformation of thinking that has ever taken place in the minds of humanity and thus attacks at the very root the benighted narrowness of mind which looks up in pious faith to the *status quo*. In the far-distant future a golden light shines, guiding and inspiring us.

However, *The Communist Manifesto*, in which this modern socialism found its earliest and classic expression, not only emphasises the broad tendency of the workers' movement which points beyond capitalism to that unforgettable vision of the future; it also seeks to define *in detail* the relation of the workers' movement to the final goal and the path which the development towards that goal can be expected to take. But here a general understanding of the nature of capitalist society and of the way it determines the proletarian struggle for liberation is no longer sufficient. Clearly, any attempt at a *more detailed* definition will be crucially influenced by the specific political and social conditions of the time, and these change as capitalist society itself passes through various stages of development. The view of the probable course of the movement which Marx and Engels formulated in the *Manifesto* bears clear traces of such influence. Development is envisaged as proceeding by way of breakdown and catastrophe. Thanks to its inherent contradictions, capitalist society is

grinding to a complete halt. The laws of production and exchange obtaining within it exclude any possibility of economic improvement for the working class within the capitalist system. Whereas, for instance, the serf in medieval society raised himself to membership of the commune within serfdom, "the modern worker, instead of rising with the progress of industry, sinks deeper and deeper below the conditions of his own class. He becomes a pauper." Precisely this point, "that the bourgeoisie are incapable of assuring their slaves a living even within slavery," that they are obliged to "support him as a pauper, instead of being supported by him," demonstrates most graphically that the bourgeoisie are no longer capable of governing society. The trade crises which periodically paralyse the whole of industry prove that the "forces of production" have already outgrown "the bourgeois conditions of ownership" within which production takes place and that capitalism, like feudalism before it, has become an obstacle to the wealth-generating power of labour. The only salvation is for the workers' revolution, envisaged as a *violent* uprising of the class, to achieve democracy and, within democracy, to seize political power (dictatorship) in order, by means of "despotic intervention in the rights of private ownership and in bourgeois conditions of production," to attain its goal, "the concentration of all instruments of production in the hands of the state, i.e. of the proletariat organised as the ruling class."⁵

Here we have the clearest and most consistent formulation of the theory of collapse which Bernstein is now challenging.

Meanwhile, although the subsequent fifty years of social development have greatly expanded both the workers' movement and socialist thinking within it, they have certainly not confirmed the prognosis given for the course of the movement and the realisation of its final goal. Catastrophes have not materialised. Capitalism has evinced an unforeseen ability to adapt to all manner of circumstances. Under its sway, the forces of production have developed on a scale which dwarfs that of pre-1848 England. Yet the trade crises – which Marx and Engels interpreted as a sign that the forces of production had even then outgrown the limits of bourgeois-capitalist industry and that this form of production confined and restrained them – have diminished in intensity and scope. And however appallingly vast masses of the proletariat may suffer today under the most shameful exploitation, the prediction that the worker will sink ever deeper as industry develops, that the fate of his class in a capitalist economy is growing *immiseration*, has not been fulfilled. It is precisely in the actual homeland of capitalism, in England, that large sections of the

working population have significantly improved their lot, thanks to the influence of strong trade union organisations. Finally, it has emerged that the conquest of political power by the proletariat can almost certainly not take the form of a dictatorship. The system that prevails in most major industrial countries is democracy, a form of government which removes the preconditions for an armed uprising by an exploited majority. Assuming that normal development continues, the conquest of political power thus becomes identical with the achievement of a parliamentary majority, such as to have a decisive influence on government. But with previous experience in mind, can we foresee a time when this majority will be sufficiently large and well established to set up a true "dictatorship," i.e. to rule entirely without regard to the interests of other classes, by "despotic interventions," without fear of oppositional movements capable of threatening it? Not to mention the danger that excessively drastic and sudden interventions in the economy can produce serious crises of production and hence massive unemployment. Economic development to date has not produced a sudden catastrophe which sharply divides the line of development into "before" and "after," and it is similarly unlikely that the conquest and exercise of political power will be different in character. It is the nature of social tendencies that, however tenaciously they persist, they always meet conditions and tendencies which work against them; and therefore, instead of sweeping unchecked along their prescribed course, their mode of progression is strangely tortuous and relatively slow. Even the accumulation of capital — on which a socialist reconstruction of society depends, as being one of its essential preconditions — is not taking place at the rapid rate which might have been expected from the general state of technology and competition.

It is thus from the heart of the materialist conception of history itself—which takes a clear and unprejudiced assessment of the socio-economic situation, in its constant liability to change, as the theoretical basis for the workers' movement, and wants no truck with any kind of utopia — that the question necessarily arises: what does this course of development (which could not, of course, have been foreseen in *The Communist Manifesto*) signify for the movement and its final goal? If it turns out to be possible to improve the economic condition of the workers within the capitalist social order — and after all any strong union movement and to some extent the political workers' movement starts from that assumption nowadays — and if, furthermore, capitalism is not going to collapse in a major catastrophe in the foreseeable future, will not the actual movement depart

from that great final goal, from what Socialists regard as its inherent tendency to break down the barriers of capitalism? Is there not a danger that, in a sense different from the one Bernstein intended, the movement will become everything and the final goal nothing? And if, like Bernstein, we speak of there being "more socialism in a good factory act than in the transfer of a whole group of factories to state ownership,"⁶ are we not already setting social reform of the bourgeois kind above the socialist principle which proclaims socialisation – i.e. the democratic transfer of the means of production to state ownership – as the objective in light of which all social reform seems utterly inadequate?

It takes little reflection to dispel the illusion that the movement might lose sight of its final goal in this way, and to realise that the only thing that has changed is the manner in which the relationship between the movement and final goal is *more precisely* determined. As long as the complicated mechanism of the capitalist economy continues to function, the working class, striving for emancipation, is obliged to fight for social reforms, both in the political arena and through the unions. But within a capitalist framework social reforms will never produce permanent results which could satisfy this class, once it is roused and on the march. Every step taken along this road points to a further stage and leads to further struggles.

But what is the *objective* we seek to achieve in this great development to which the immediate future seems to belong? Not the abolition of capitalist private property, nor the definitive socialisation of production, but permanent and ever more extensive social control over the conditions of production and reduction of the sphere within which the anarchy of competition, and therewith capitalist private property, can proceed as it pleases. As soon as the process has got beyond its present feeble beginnings this essential aspect of its nature will inevitably become evident. As government legislation, hand in hand with the trade union organisations, imposes absolutely upon the capitalist class the conditions under which it may employ labour power, and as unionism increases its influence over the regulation of production itself, the basic nature of capitalist property must necessarily change. By limiting his rights, this process tends to reduce the owner of capital more and more to the role of administrator, and it does this by confining the practices whereby he exploits the worker within increasingly narrow limits, thus progressively forcing capital to serve society, i.e. the rising working class. And the tendency of this tendency? What else can it be but to convert into actual ownership, without disrupting the social process of production (which would

inevitably occur if direct expropriations were ordered and which would hit the working class hardest of all), the overall ownership which society has already acquired by constantly expanding its control over production, to take the direction and administration of his business away from the capitalist, whose resistance is already weakened by his property's depreciating value to himself; that is, to make the transition from social control of production to genuine socialisation of the means of production? At what other stage in the development suggested by the idea of improving the economic condition of the working class within capitalism could a proletariat, which had risen through politics and the trade unions, call a halt and lose the impetus it receives from the tendency dictated to it by its conditions? Either way, whether by catastrophe and revolution or by gradual progress and reform, the final goal inherent in the movement and the true tendency of this movement remain one and the same. Whatever shape the development of capitalist society may assume, it can never escape the enemy it dreads. C.S.

EDUARD BERNSTEIN

Critical Interlude⁽ⁱ⁾

Neue Zeit, 1 March 1898

My article "The Theory of Collapse and Colonial Policy" (*Neue Zeit*, no. 18) has provoked discussions in the press which lead me to think that I ought to take the matter up again.

The non- or anti-Social Democratic press need not detain me for long. A number of papers hostile to socialism have tendentiously distorted my comments to make them seem a complete repudiation of the basic views maintained by Social Democracy.⁷ They can have their fun while it lasts.

Other papers, such as the *Frankfurter Zeitung* and the Berlin *Volkszeitung*, etc., which are more objective in their approach to Social Democracy, have faithfully quoted my article and, without encouraging their readers to cherish illusions about a "split in Social Democracy," have drawn more or less weighty conclusions as to the modification of party tactics which my article entails (insofar as it finds support). It is in no way my purpose to deny the intimate mutual relationship between tactics and their theoretical underpinnings; it is only the implications which can be attached to my comments on this point that I need to discuss with these journals.

But I can be excused even from this since I have to discuss the same topic with the literary organs of my own party. It will thus

automatically become clear where I agree or disagree with the conclusions of other journals.

I will, therefore, confine myself to the criticisms which my remarks have encountered in the Social Democratic party press.

* * *

The criticisms levelled at my article in the socialist papers (those, at least, which have come to my notice) can be divided into three groups. The first group of critics finds nothing dangerous in principle in my article, but on the contrary considers it perfectly in order that the theoretical foundations and presuppositions underlying party activity should, from time to time, be subject to revision. Without going into the content of my conclusions, these critics claim that the form in which I stated them is liable to cause misunderstandings. This is the view taken by, among others, the editors of the central party organ.⁸

There is one passage in particular of my article which has in fact been misunderstood. I have taken account of this criticism to the extent of sending *Vorwärts* an explanation of how I wanted the sentence in question to be understood. I refer to the remark that, for me, what is generally regarded as the final goal of the socialist movement was nothing, but rather that the movement itself was everything.

Here are the essentials of this explanation:

“Does it follow that I refuse to concern myself with the so-called final goal of the socialist movement, or that I deny that this movement has any definite goal whatever? I would be very sorry to have my words so understood. A movement without a goal would drift chaotically, for it would be a movement without direction. No goal, no direction. If the socialist movement is not to drift aimlessly without a compass, it must obviously have a goal towards which it consciously strives. However, this goal is not the realisation of a social plan but the implementation of a social *principle*. To the extent that the tasks of Social Democracy are not dictated by the current exigencies of the workers’ struggle for political and economic emancipation, we can in fact (if we are to avoid a lapse into utopianism) formulate the goal of the socialist movement only as a principle, such as, ‘the implementation of co-operation across the board.’ I know of no phrase which encompasses the whole range of socialist endeavours as this one does, irrespective of whether we are referring to political or to economic demands. It excludes all class domination and class privilege. A man privileged by his class status cannot be a comrade. But although it identifies our goal, it tells us nothing about the ways

and means. These can be determined only by reference to present circumstances and must be related to the current state of the movement. It is for this reason that, given the general goal, our main concern is the movement itself and its progress towards this goal, whereas the various ways of envisaging the goal of this development are of no significance whatsoever. Indeed, history has a habit of drawing a thick line through all such speculations. Those ingenious forecasts of the future which have been fulfilled were of a general nature, and the manner and form in which they were fulfilled were other than those envisaged by their authors. There is value only in being clear about the general course of the movement, and in examining closely the factors which influence it. If we do this, we need have no anxiety about our final goal."

This statement has provoked two replies. Parvus, who has mounted a cannonade of leading articles against me in the *Sächsische Arbeiter-Zeitung*, sees in it an embarrassing attempt to effect a cowardly retreat from the position I originally maintained.⁹ However, what follows will convince him that he need have no fear on that score. The editors of the *Schwäbische Tagwacht*, on the other hand, accuse me of distorting the point at issue. It was "a question, not of what final goal the socialist movement will have attained in five hundred or a thousand years' time, but of the goals specified in the Social Democratic programme, namely the transfer of the means of production to public ownership." Well, my entire investigation is concerned precisely with the problem of the transfer of the means of production to public ownership. It attempts to establish how near the socialist movement is to this goal and how ripe the development of the economy is for its realisation. So how could I have anticipated that, when I spoke of a *final goal* which was of *little interest* to me, anyone would suppose that I meant the very item in which my articles had shown the greatest interest (whatever the outcome of my enquiry)? No indeed, it is not I who am distorting the point at issue. The editors of the *Schwäbische Tagwacht* – misled by the admittedly somewhat careless formulation of my sentences – have read into them something which was not there. As for the "five hundred or a thousand years," they should discuss them with Parvus sometime.

My remarks could not be applied to the "socialisation" of the means of production, if only because this measure is not a final goal but only a means to one. This is why the Social Democratic programme demands merely the socialisation of *capitalist* property and does so, not on the grounds that private ownership of the means of production is unjust *per se*, but because it is only through its social-

isation that "large-scale industry and the ever-increasing productivity of social labour can be changed from a source of misery and oppression for the exploited classes to one of well-being and harmonious development."¹⁰

The latter, not the former, is the aim of the socialist movement. But, for this very reason, the socialisation of the means of production is, from a socialist point of view, worth pursuing only when, and to the extent that, we may reasonably expect it to lead to the fulfilment of this aim. In this sense, I do indeed hold the view that a good factory act can contain more socialism than the nationalisation of a whole group of factories.

It is not due to any "change of skin" that I write this. I have always taken this view. I have expressed it on countless occasions in the *Zürich Sozialdemokrat*. Nor can I claim it as my own intellectual property. It was Karl Marx who established it in *Capital* in the chapter where he describes factory legislation as "that first conscious and methodical reaction of society against the spontaneously developed form of its production process,"¹¹ and, at the end of the same chapter, stresses the great significance of factory legislation for the process of radical change in society.

So much for that point. A second group of socialist critics of my article (*Leipziger Volkszeitung* and *Frankfurter Volksstimme*) finds the main point equally harmless, and even declares that it subscribes to the greater part of what I said. But it has specific objections to individual sentences or to the statistical material. Well, this is a matter for discussion. I shall return below to the statistical material on which the *Frankfurter Volksstimme* casts doubt, while otherwise supporting my article. And the objections of the *Leipziger Volkszeitung*¹² are of a purely formal nature. For example, the *Volkszeitung* reproaches me with having landed myself on a utopian sandbank in my struggles against utopianism, in that I described a society with a strictly communist order as the ultimate goal of the socialist movement. Well, as they say themselves, it is really very easy to "reach an understanding" with me on this point. The author of the article need only read my essay a little more attentively and he will find that I used the offending sentence entirely in a conditional sense, in rebutting the reproach (which seems nonsensical to me without such an interpretation) that I have completely dropped the final goal of socialism from my essays. On the other hand, if the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* thinks that "the abolition of wage-slavery by the proletarian class struggle" adequately defines the final goal of the socialist movement, then I would certainly be the last to describe *this* goal as

something that meant nothing to me. But this is not what is "generally understood as the final goal of socialism."

The *Leipziger Volkszeitung* goes on to say that it cannot completely exonerate me from the charge, levelled at me in other quarters, that my utterances put a spoke in the wheel of the socialist election campaign. In reply to this, I must offer a brief reminiscence. It is almost five years ago that their opponents more or less forced the socialist representatives in the Reichstag into a debate on "the future state."¹³ In the course of this debate, the Socialists expressly endorsed the point with which certain papers – not the *Volkszeitung* – now reproach me, namely that as our understanding increases we "change our skins," that more than any other party, we are a party of self-criticism. Furthermore, the socialist speakers energetically stressed that, although they had entered the debate with pleasure, they were in no doubt whatsoever as to its true purpose, namely, to distract attention from the burning political issues of the day by speechifying about "the final goal." What are the issues in this election? Are we not forever fighting on concrete issues of domestic and foreign policy, of economic and civil rights? And does my article attack a single one of the points which in this regard constitute the Social Democratic programme of action? It is of course open to any Socialist whose opponent in the election uses my article against him to reply that Bernstein was speaking only for himself, and that he is not responsible for what I write. But I would be sorry for any agitator who, in such a case, could find no better reply.

And now for the third group of critics represented by, or grouped around, "Parvus" in the *Sächsische Arbeiter-Zeitung*.

For Parvus, my article would (if I were right) mean the "destruction of socialism," which automatically imposes a duty to destroy the destroyer. And very thoroughly it is carried out! There is much thunder and lightning in the Ammonstrasse.¹⁴ But Jupiter Ammonius Parvus does not command the lightning that slays or the thunder which inspires terror. The longer he spins out his refutation, the more he refutes himself.

His opening is promising enough. He acknowledges that I have the courage of my ignorance and stupidity and assures me of continuing sympathy for my "mental confusion." Wherein does the latter lie? In my statement in *Vorwärts* I said that, insofar as the tasks of socialism are not dictated by the current exigencies of the working-class struggle, we can sensibly express the aim of the socialist movement only in terms of a principle and not in terms of a plan for society. I, the "historical materialist," thereby betake myself into "the misty realm

of ideology." If Parvus had been trying to make historical materialism well and truly ridiculous, he could have chosen no better method. It would be even nicer if historical materialism, instead of being a method of investigation, tried to rule out any use of secondary concepts and any comprehension of social relationships from the standpoint of the rules which govern them. According to ordinary usage, an authoritative rule is a *principle*. In his well-known letter to Konrad Schmidt on historical materialism, Friedrich Engels says that the reflection of economic relations in legal principles, *so long as it is not recognised as such*, forms what we call an ideological outlook.¹⁵ Implicit in this is the idea that as soon as we are clear about the connection between legal principles and economic relations, nothing prevents us from expressing social conditions through the former. But why bring in Engels? A few lines after bewailing the mental confusion which allows me to speak of a principle of co-operation, Parvus himself says that the whole of Social Democratic policy rests on its intention to take political power as soon as possible, in order to "create the *legal foundations* for the development of a socialist society" by placing already socialised industries under conscious social administration. Why create legal foundations if not for the sake of a *legal system*? And what is a legal system so envisaged if not the implementation of a legal *principle*? The socialisation of the means of production thus suddenly emerges, just as I explained above, not as an end but as a means.⁽ⁱⁱ⁾ Thus *The Communist Manifesto* also describes the rise of the proletariat as the ruling class as the "first step" in the workers' revolution, as the "most immediate aim" of the Communists; but the goal of the movement is described as "an association in which the free development of each is the precondition for the free development of all."¹⁶ Association means co-operation, a community based on co-operation or (what amounts to the same thing) on the *principle* of co-operation.

I have cited *The Communist Manifesto* because the programme of action which Parvus asserts against me as the only policy representative of socialism is that of *The Communist Manifesto*. I have sinned against this programme by embarking on an investigation into whether and how far it fits the circumstances.

However, as early as 1872 the *Manifesto* was declared by its authors themselves to be partly out of date; and it was declared to be out of date with explicit emphasis upon, among other things, "*the practical experience gained, first in the February Revolution, and then, still more, in the Paris Commune.*"¹⁷ They do not say which practical experiences of the February Revolution are meant, but

those of the Commune are explicitly specified as *negating* part of the programme. "One thing especially," we read, "was proved by the Commune, *viz.*, that 'the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made State machinery, and wield it for its own purposes.'" ¹⁸ Although the amendment on this point refers chiefly to the political form of the movement (which would, however, necessarily also affect the character of economic measures), the authors of *The Communist Manifesto* have also written all kinds of things, and actual developments have produced all kinds of things, which undermine the assumptions of the *Manifesto*. Thus the *Manifesto* is still based entirely on the iron law of wages. It knows of workers' associations only in their early, undeveloped, rebellious, and unstable form. It knows the workers only as a class deprived of political rights. It assumes a rapidity of economic development which reality has failed to match and an aggravation of property and income relations which has not in fact materialised. Modern wage-labourers are not the homogeneous mass, uniformly unencumbered by property, family, etc., envisaged in the *Manifesto*. Broad strata have risen from it to achieve petty-bourgeois living conditions. And, on the other hand, the dissolution of the middle classes is proceeding much more slowly than the *Manifesto* thought it could. Marx himself rejected the iron law of wages and acknowledged the regenerating effect of factory legislation upon the condition of the workers. Engels himself admitted that he and Marx had overestimated the rapidity of economic development. None of this killed socialism, nor did anyone cry "overthrow of socialism" when Marx and Engels, in the 1872 Preface to the *Manifesto*, abandoned the quasi-Jacobinism which they had championed in 1847-8. ⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾ In view of these and many other modifications to the assumptions of the *Manifesto*, it is more than extraordinary for someone who claims to stand on the ground of historical materialism to assert that anyone who does not consider the revolutionary action therein outlined to be possible and relevant under all circumstances has completely abandoned the socialism hitherto championed by *Social Democracy*.

Now Parvus does actually deny that "anything significant" has changed in the presuppositions of the *Manifesto*. And he denies especially my assertion that the occupational statistics do not reveal the *rapid and general concentration of industry* which would betoken the imminent collapse of existing society and an easily accomplished transition to a complete socialist society. My approach to these statistics is, he says, "entirely unscientific."

It would certainly have been "an entirely unscientific way of think-

ing," to use Parvus's phrase, if I had ascribed absolute validity to the tables giving statistical summaries. But that is precisely what I did *not* do. On the contrary, I stressed most forcefully the point that the tables are, in many respects, deceptive, that they impute to various categories of industry a stability which does not exist in reality. Moreover, I have *expressly* asserted (*Neue Zeit*, p. 551) that modern medium-sized companies are often to a high degree capitalistic concerns.¹⁹ This, however, has not deterred Parvus from informing me, as if I were completely ignorant of the fact, that an industry with an average of twenty employees per firm, such as the paint and dye-stuffs industry, can be very much a capitalist industry. In the same fashion, he condescends to instruct me that, in trade, the number of employees tells us nothing about the character of the enterprise, when again I have expressly (*Neue Zeit*, p. 552) drawn attention to the fact "that, in trade, firms with more than 10 to 15 employees must be reckoned as large-scale enterprises."²⁰ Then again, from the more detailed statistics, which show the breakdown into particular trades, he picks out those trades which enable him to make particularly crass contrasts: small businesses which are faintly ridiculous are juxtaposed with gigantic concerns in order to make the continuing and undiminished existence of large masses of small and medium-sized firms, which I established, appear as a matter to which only gross ignorance could attribute any significance.^(iv) Conversely, he passes in silence over the large number of small and medium-sized firms, in the industries which process metal, leather, wood, and so on. This kind of polemic would have been very much to the point, if Parvus had been intent on cheap firework displays for the benefit of those ignorant of such things; but his argument proves nothing about the matter itself.

What was my investigation about? Firstly, it was about the crisis question, which we need not deal with here. Secondly, it was about the imminence of a complete socialist transformation of society, i.e. the socialisation of all means of production and distribution.

Socialisation can be accomplished in various ways: as transformation into *state enterprise*, into *municipal enterprise*, or into more or less accountable *co-operative enterprise*. Perhaps even Parvus will not need to be told that state enterprise cannot be expanded at will. And I suppose he will also comprehend that a revolution would by no means be a favourable occasion for the purpose.

At such a time, the state, or the highest body representative of the nation, would have its hands full and more than enough to occupy its mind. It would be completely mad to burden itself with additional

tasks of so complex a nature as the setting up and controlling of comprehensive state production centres on a massive scale — quite apart from the fact that only certain specific branches of production can be run on a national basis.

Then we have the municipality. Part of what has been said of the state applies also to the municipality. Enterprises which do not cater for a regular and generally uniform need of the members of the community are not suitable for municipal enterprise. And even if municipalities were to take up the production of goods for the general market, they could proceed only by stages.

The bulk of industries and businesses would thus be left to be run either by private entrepreneurs or by co-operatives. And it is an open question whether the impulse to form co-operatives would really be as great and strong as earlier Socialists supposed. Apart from consumer co-operatives, which are in a different category, we have very little experience in this matter. It will be said that things are different nowadays, that co-operatives are forced to compete and that anyway workers do not have the means necessary to establish efficient co-operatives. However, competition would have to be reckoned with, at least in the transitional period;^(v) and nowadays financial resources in considerable quantity are often available to workers without being used, to any extent worth mentioning, for the establishment of producers' co-operatives. The capital which the English workers have accumulated in their saving-, welfare-, and trade union associations is estimated at hundreds of millions of marks. If a strong impulse to co-operative work existed, then it could not but assert itself palpably under these circumstances. However, apart from a few exceptions, for the most part decisively influenced by factors which had nothing to do with the idea of co-operation as such, very little of any such impulse has been in evidence. For example, the Lancashire textile workers invested considerable sums of money in the factories of the region, and it is often believed that they thereby obtained votes on the boards of management of these factories. However, when the wage-reduction suggested by the factory-owners during the slack period last summer was being discussed, Mawdsley, the secretary of the spinners' union, wrote with a certain satisfaction to the democratic papers that the workers had ventured on the risky business of investing their money in shares only to a small degree and that they had preferred to invest in bonds, which are fairly safe. Undoubtedly! And only Pharisees would blame the workers. But can we then speak of a strong impulse to get rid of the factory-owners and produce co-operatively?^(vi) It will be objected that this is petty-bourgeois ar-

gumentation, that these things must be organised on a large scale and then everything will be all right. But in the first place, these things cannot all be organised on a grand scale overnight,^(vii) and in the second, it is odd to argue that the co-operative spirit should be stronger in enterprises which the worker finds ready-made and perhaps barely comprehends than in those where he really can "produce for himself."

In short, wherever we turn we see that things are far too complicated to be disposed of with the four words: concentration, expropriation, organisation, and association.^(viii) At all events, association or not, there remain a vast number of companies, into the hundreds of thousands, which are run not under public but under separate accountability, and consequently there remains a large amount of *commodity* production, and to that extent the *money* economy persists with all that appertains to it. And that is why I said, and now repeat, that if Social Democracy were to take the helm, with the economic organism structured as it is, it could not at first dispense with capitalism unless it wanted to bring economic life to a complete standstill, thus provoking a reaction which would make Thermidor and 2 December look like child's play. But could Social Democracy provide capitalism with the security it needs to carry out its function? Could it imbue the business world with *confidence* in the regular course of business – security of property, orderly administration of justice, etc.? Not if it came to power in the circumstances assumed by the theory of collapse. Parvus talks, for example, of all the things "we" would do in such a case for the rural population, of how "we" would, among other things, help them pay off their land debts and would make the peasants happy as never before with our decrees on the management of the economy.²¹ But, my dear Parvus, it does not depend on "us." For instance, you want the state to take over interest payments and the paying-off of mortgages. You are being very kind to the present mortgage creditors, but what if the rural population refuses to pay any interest at all? Citizen Bax, for example, who will approve of so much in your article, would forthwith put himself at the head of the peasants like a second Wat Tyler and string you up without mercy. Pay interest? The first act of the revolution must rather be to declare *all* contracts void. But let us leave Bax aside. If revolutions call forth all the powers slumbering in the depths of society, they also call forth the fools, and so far, unfortunately, the world is still such that fools have a pretty good chance. Who was it, after February 1848, who determined the most fateful actions of the masses in Paris? Not the acknowledged spokesmen and thinkers

of socialism. Not Pierre Leroux and not Lamennais, not Cabet and not Proudhon, not Louis Blanc and not Blanqui. On 15 May it was the innately unstable Huber, and on 23 June it was that versifier Pujol from whom the masses took their watchword.²² Who was dominant in the Commune? "It is a bad sign that the Parisians are supporting *Boulangier*," wrote Friedrich Engels in 1889 in a private letter which I have before me.²³ And who are they supporting nowadays? The Drumont–Rochefort fraternity.²⁴ In Germany, we have a splendid workers' movement which has made uninterrupted progress from one stage to the next. Why should I want it to attain a position in the near future, which, as past experience and empirical investigation of the circumstances testify, it could not maintain? I will not discuss the destruction which would accompany such a development; even the narrowest interests of Social Democracy speak against any irresponsible handling of the question here. A defeat would mean much more than a temporary setback. All our historical materialism cannot disguise the fact that it is *human beings* who make history, that human beings have *minds*, and that the disposition of these minds is not so mechanical a matter as to be governed purely by economic circumstances. Why do workers in exactly the same class situation often behave in diametrically opposite ways? Their actions are influenced by historical memories and traditions as well as by all sorts of other ideological factors. So major defeats can, for decades, have a demoralising and disruptive effect on the vanquished class.

At any time it can become necessary for the working classes to resort to extreme measures in the struggle for their rights. If the blindness of the ruling authorities in Germany were to drive them to this point, then the German workers would naturally not make their decision dependent on considerations such as those above, but would do whatever self-respect and self-affirmation required of them. In such cases, as Engels has shown, the ruling classes hold more trumps today than they did in earlier times, but they do not hold all the trumps. The working class needs democracy as a precondition for its economic emancipation, and even in defeat it would inflict serious wounds upon its opponents.

But this is not the question that exercises me. My topic was, and is, that of the socialist transformation of the basis of social existence, the socialisation of production and exchange. And I maintain that nowadays Social Democracy can do more in this field as an opposition party than it could if it suddenly gained control through some catastrophe. As a social opposition party it is a more effective driving force in economic development than any known to history. But as a

government it would, given the present structure of society, probably be forced to desert its proper course and act as a restraining rather than a revolutionising force. In such situations, it is a matter not of what the parties want but of what circumstances force them to do. When all trade has come to a standstill and all commerce has ceased, people do not ask whether something is socialist but whether it will help them get work and food.

I am not a formalist, and when Parvus objects that, in rejecting the idea of bringing Social Democracy to power in the near future by a catastrophe, I am abandoning "the fundamental starting-point for all party activity,"²⁵ I shall not defend myself by saying that there is nothing about that in the party programme. It is the spirit, not the letter, that counts. But I dispute that the principles maintained by the party force us to the conclusions which Parvus draws from them.

In Amsterdam in 1872, Marx himself stated that in countries such as England and the United States, it was possible to accomplish a socialist transformation by legal means; and on another occasion he remarked apropos of the land question in England that the cheapest solution would probably be to buy the landowners out.²⁶ The legal solution thus seemed to him less costly a method than forcible expropriation. Now I am – and in this I believe I have the great mass of Social Democrats behind me – of the opinion that since we are concerned to make recourse to catastrophe *unnecessary*, it is our duty to take effective action to this end. The party's whole approach to legislative issues is governed by this idea. With regard to reforms, we ask, not whether they will hasten the catastrophe which could bring us to power, but whether they further the development of the working class, whether they contribute to general progress.

There has never yet in history been a radical change of such widespread significance as that which Social Democracy strives to achieve. All the more unlikely that it could be accomplished by a catastrophe. Such a change demands long and thorough work. And let it not be thought that, because everyday work is concerned with little things, it is of less value than large-scale campaigns. It is precisely the little things which are often of the greatest significance. In the modern working-class movement, what matters is not the sensational battles but the ground gained piecemeal by hard, unremitting struggle.

It is, after all, absurd to be arguing, fifty years later, against propositions from *The Communist Manifesto* – propositions appropriate to social and political circumstances quite other than those which face us today. One need not be an advocate of the *status quo* to

recognise the significant progress achieved in the civic status of the worker since the *Manifesto* was written.

I have been accused of losing contact with the masses. Hence, allegedly, my pessimism. But, firstly, I am not at all pessimistic, and, secondly, what does contact with the masses mean? The most pessimistic utterances about the working class that I know of come from people situated right at the heart of the workers' movement.^(ix) And then we have the outbursts of those individuals who, possessed by socialist catastrophitis, see the great crash just around the corner several times a year.

I too once suffered from this interesting disease, but I recovered from it long ago. I am convinced that the socialist movement can advance without the aid of crises. I am further convinced that bourgeois society is still capable of considerable expansion, and that production and trade within this society can undergo a good many changes of form before it finally "collapses."^(x)

Meanwhile, no-one can predetermine the future. We can only direct our struggle in response to what we see. The party devises its programme from its analysis of present developments and their general trends, and then pursues it with all possible vigour. It fights, not under the illusion that it can gain political power overnight, but in an effort to ensure for the working class an increasingly strong influence on legislation and on the whole of public life, and to win constant improvements in working-class conditions of existence. It is absurd to regard the struggle for political power merely as a struggle to achieve complete and exclusive domination in the state. Before we reach that point, we have many stages to traverse. It was no less a figure than Friedrich Engels who stated that "we also accept payment in instalments."²⁷

* * *

Parvus has also objected that when I opposed the rejection on principle of colonial policy, I was in fact defending colonial policy.²⁸ What logic! I opposed the view that we must resist all colonial policy because it delays the collapse of existing society, just as I opposed resistance *on principle* to any expansion of the market, on the grounds that it was utopian. This does not mean that I am defending anything at all. I merely acknowledge that there can be cases in which Social Democracy has no reason to oppose efforts to open up new markets. I demand an objective critique of colonial policy and one which is not based on utopian concepts.

At the beginning of February, a debate on the seizure of Kiaochow

Bay took place in the German Reichstag.²⁹ Bebel and Schoenlank spoke on behalf of the Social Democrats. They criticised the circumstances in which the bay was acquired and the publicity for naval chauvinism associated with the action; they questioned whether the commercial value of the bay was worth the cost of acquiring it; and, in view of an economic policy which pushed up exports at the expense of home consumption, they declared themselves obliged to reject the method of gaining this acquisition. But we search their speeches in vain for a protest *on principle* against any expansion of the market. Yet the *Sächsische Arbeiter-Zeitung* declared itself highly satisfied with them. So things can be done this way!

ADLER to KAUTSKY (extract)

Vienna, 4 April 1898³⁰

[. . .] I heard from Luise [Kautsky] that you see Ede's attitude almost as a betrayal and have taken offence. I don't see the point of that. I'm thankful to him for every jolt he gives me and have learned an awful lot as a result of them. He's very far from being correct on everything – his occupational statistics are unbelievably inaccurate and he is often unwise in matters of tactics. Slogan-shooting as pursued by you two is very, very useful, but there should be a *closed season* in this as in other kinds of hunting. For example, the thing about child labour was very badly timed in tactical terms. But it is a good thing that the vogue for catastrophe tactics should be displaced by an opposite trend; we're already seeing changes to something shrewder than before. Look, it's like this: this year I've given ten lectures on the party programme,³¹ and one sharp comrade said to me: "Why, you're talking *against* the party programme, not *about* it." There were intelligent people there, you see, and as I talked I got obsessed with showing them that some of our slogans were generalisations and that things aren't actually as simple as pie. They looked rather surprised, but it did me and them a power of good, of course, and none of us are worse Social Democrats as a result [. . .]

KAUTSKY to ADLER (extract)

Berlin-Friedenau, 9 April 1898³²

[. . .] I don't want you to misunderstand my assessment of Ede. There is no question of apostasy in the sense of his going over to the enemy. But Ede has become awfully sceptical, more so than his articles suggest, and he would prefer to stop writing for us altogether, vacillating as he continually does between his theoretical conscience

and his duty to the party. He's hatching the most bizarre plans to make a non-literary living for himself, and in this sense I'm afraid we shall lose him, if he stays in his present milieu.

If he's going to end up entrenched in opposition to the whole party, just out of perfectly understandable opposition to the SDF, then we must try to get him away from London. He needs to renew his contacts with the party. He may not perhaps think any differently from the way he does now, but he will express it differently. He used to be remarkable precisely for his tact, but he has lost all sense of how one phrases the exposure of an illusion to ensure that it is accepted by our people and not regarded as a concession by our opponents. I enjoy reading what he writes, and I always learn something from it, but I know all too many people whom he has confused rather than enlightened.

I'm urging him to go to Zürich, and I'd like to hand over the editing of *Neue Zeit* to him, for six months provisionally. It has now emerged that the journal can be edited from a distance, and he will be very much in his element as editor. At the moment, the job of dispensing justice would suit him better than that of literary championship. That would give me time for writing, and I look forward to it. There are so many points to be dealt with, so many attacks to fend off, and I've nobody now who would do it in the way I would like to see it done. Ede does nothing but criticise the party, and Mehring is too brusque. So I feel the urge to have a say myself for once. But the plan is still just a plan, so please don't mention it elsewhere. However, I would like to hear what you think [. . .]

ROSA LUXEBURG to JOGICHES (extract)

Berlin, 2 July 1898³³

[. . .] Now, the most important bit: Bern[stein]. I have got a new conception of the whole, but it doesn't help much because once again I come up against these terrible difficulties. Two points are particularly difficult: (1) the point about crises, (2) proof positive that capitalism must come a cropper, which in my view is *inevitable*, and that is neither more nor less than a new kind of short proof of scientific socialism. Help, for God's sake, on both these points! And I must work *fast*, (1) because all our work will be for nothing, if someone else gets in first, (2) most of the time must be left for finishing and polishing. On the whole, we have got the work well in hand. After all, the pieces that I have written in Zürich are of the same dough that we are using (yet unbaked, of course); if only I knew what I

ought to write, the form would soon appear of its own accord, as it should; I already feel it. I am so set on this article that I would give half my life for it [. . .]

Notes

- (i) I interrupt the series already begun, "The Struggle of Social Democracy," in order to reply to certain remarks occasioned by my article on the theory of collapse. E.B.

In addition to numerous comments both in the bourgeois and in the party press, this article provoked a number of submissions to our journal polemicising against Bernstein. We feel unable to print them, since all were based on misconceptions. A new line of thought developed polemically and, moreover, confined within the narrow bounds of an article can hardly avoid the fate of being misunderstood. It therefore seems to us that a discussion of Bernstein's ideas will be useful only when he has finished the series of articles which he has begun, and we ask our contributors kindly to postpone until then any further submissions on this matter. Meanwhile, we intend to open these columns only to Bax, who has told us he intends to send us a rebuttal, in the hope of dealing thereby with Bax's own peculiar standpoint.

- (ii) "The socialisation of the land is first and foremost a *legal form*." What confused mind groping in the "fog of ideology" can have written that, and even deliberately underlined the words "legal form"? None other than Parvus in the fifth of the articles directed against me. This Jupiter seems not at all averse to "metamorphoses" himself. But what can I say when he, so indignant at not finding an original idea in my article, cannot manage to be original even in his title? "Eduard Bernstein's Overthrow of Socialism." He might at least have said "Undermining."³⁴
- (iii) In *The Class Struggles of 1848*, the Blanquists are still described as *the* proletarian party of France at the time. I have shown elsewhere how inappropriate this description was for the highly diverse group which gathered around Blanqui in 1848 and forced him to take part in actions which he himself recognised as futile.
- (iv) Among other things, in connection with the transport system, he charges me with forgetting the railways and citing the cab-drivers to prove "the impossibility of the social revolution." I will not waste time on the tone of such polemics. Objectively speaking, this example merely reminded me of the sages who prophesied that the introduction of railways would ruin the waggoners. I did not mention the railways if only because there has never been any serious dispute about their suitability for socialisation. (Even in the England of the Manchester school, legislation as early as 1844 ensured that the railways revert to the state.) And between the railways and the cab-drivers there are car-

riage and haulage businesses of every kind, from highly capitalistic to very petty bourgeois concerns, whose numbers have been increased rather than decreased by the railways. But even in transport, which is, for obvious reasons, most suitable for socialisation, there are highly capitalistic companies which could perhaps not be socialised without further ado. On the contrary, here too the transition to state or municipal enterprise is possible only by degrees.

- (v) Co-operatives with a monopoly would, for many reasons, be the greater evil.
- (vi) As the *Daily Chronicle* reported a few days ago, the only spinning and weaving co-operative in Lancashire, "The Burnley Self-help Cotton Spinning and Manufacturing Society," is about to go into liquidation. Lack of capital is certainly not the cause. At last reckoning, they had 152,000 marks basic capital and 280,000 marks investment capital. The great co-operative society of Burnley was behind them, and most of their customers were co-operative societies.
- (vii) Because Germany's one hundred thousand hand-loom weavers have not yet starved, Social Democracy must, according to me, "obviously keep its hands off the large spinning and weaving mills." So scoffs Parvus. "Obviously" he thinks that he has thereby dealt me a devastating blow. All the remark shows is that he has not the faintest idea of what an enormous task the socialisation of even the large spinning and weaving mills would be. Even spinning, the most elementary branch of the textile industry, is highly diversified. And then the weaving – to say nothing of the industries which process the cloth. The presence of one hundred thousand hand-loom weavers "who have not yet starved" would at least not ease the problem in the social revolution as depicted by Parvus.
- (viii) Parvus has amazing methods of reckoning. Industrial groups which do not suit his purpose are declared bankrupt; then they disappear and the "social-revolutionary core" is increased by the corresponding number of heads. No crisis could wreak such havoc among small and medium-sized companies, no crop failure could "ruin" more peasants, than our Jupiter Ammonius with his thunderbolt. But the god is just and does not spare the capitalist class either. For him, 80,000 capitalist companies mean 80,000 supporters of capitalism. The existence of joint-stock and other capitalist companies in industry and of whole groups of interested parties behind many big enterprises, even if they are nominally under a single name, does not trouble him. Were I to copy his style, I would say he was ignorant. Eighty thousand industrialists make up the entire capitalist force, which is opposed by six million wage-labourers as the "social-revolutionary core" supported by the majority of small industrialists, some of whom are themselves enthusiastic revolutionaries while others are "no hindrance to us," since "what we are doing can only benefit them." Parvus prefaces these miscalculations, in all seriousness, with a lecture on political strategy. In-

deed, this lecture shows how a social revolution can be “strategically” accomplished in the twinkling of an eye — on paper. (In an article published after the one mentioned,³⁵ Parvus makes up for these deficiencies and calculates a capitalist army of 416,000 with 1,200,000 allies, as opposed to fifteen million wage-labourers and artisans in solidarity with them, plus four million small people “ruined” by capitalism or independent of it. Even admitting the accuracy of the figures, they are irrelevant to our investigation. It is a matter, not of how big the “revolutionary” army is, but of whether we can do without the captains of industry, to use Carlyle’s phrase.)

- (ix) Even Mr Bax has a very low opinion of the people’s powers of judgment, as his speech against the popular ballot on war at the London International Congress has shown. However, this opinion does not deter him from wanting to bring this people, whom he deems incapable of judgment, to power as swiftly as possible through the revolution.
- (x) Thus, for example, big department stores have not so much absorbed small and medium-sized businesses as influenced their *methods*.

Problems of Socialism

Second Series

EDUARD BERNSTEIN

2. The Realistic and the Ideological Moments in Socialism

Neue Zeit, nos. 34 and 39, 1898⁽ⁱ⁾

According to his publisher, Werdet, Balzac once interrupted the author Jules Sandeau, who was talking about one of his sisters, by saying: "Quite right, my friend, but *let us return to reality; let us talk about Eugénie Grandet*" (the heroine of one of Balzac's novels). To the author of the *Comédie Humaine*, to the realist among realists, to the father of modern naturalism and verism, the fictional characters he created were living people. He spoke of them as such on many and various occasions; for him, the creatures of his imagination were "reality."

This paradoxical treatment of things is common enough, though the contradiction is not always so blatant. And no profound psychology is required to explain it. Philosophers and psychologists have analysed the emotions on which it is based from every conceivable angle. If a man's mind is intensively preoccupied with something, even if it is purely imaginary and he is aware of the fact, it increasingly takes on the characteristics of reality until finally he begins to lose his sense of the difference between what exists only in his imagination and what is actually real. It may even be that he finds reality becoming to some extent merely conceptual, while the imaginary acquires all the attributes of reality in his thoughts and feelings. It is a state of mind which Goethe described thus: "What I possess I see as from afar / and what had vanished now is real and near."¹ However, it is by no means only poets, novelists, and artists – in short, people with a rich imaginative life – in whom we find a tendency to treat the imaginary as though it were real. No-one is completely free of it, and often those who most fancy themselves above it are most liable to it. However strong we think we are as realists or materialists, close self-examination will show time and again that we argue just like any

other "Idealist" as soon as we turn from banal and mundane matters to the profounder problems of life. Here we always reach a point at which we are no longer dealing with empirical, perceptible, demonstrable facts but only with the deductions of our reason, with "ideas," behind which we can more or less plausibly conjecture a reality without being able to prove it. All materialism is ultimately restricted in this way, and those who deny it are closer to the spiritualist way of thinking than those who acknowledge it, because just by denying it they show that deductions, ideas, and mental images are, for them, objective facts. Kant, the transcendental Idealist, was actually a much more rigorous realist than many adherents of the so-called materialism of natural science. He demanded that the world of empirical experience be given its full due, and he did not introduce the concept of a "thing in itself" lying beyond our perceptions – that had been done in different terms long before – rather, he *defined* it. The dividing line which he drew still stands in principle today, for the criticisms levelled at it so far have affected only secondary issues or erroneous interpretations of the theory. Even the great advances achieved in chemistry and physics since Kant's time have only deferred the problem of matter, leaving its actual solution outside the realm of practical experience. Physicists and chemists know more nowadays about the "atom," but they do not maintain that what they currently term the "atom" really is *a-tomon*, i.e. indivisible. Its indivisibility, like its corporality, is assumed because it offers the most satisfactory explanation of known physical and chemical processes. But another explanation is possible, as is demonstrated by the fact that some eminent scientists support the kinetic theory, according to which atoms are merely spatially distinct focal points for groups of interacting forces. Furthermore, nothing rules out the possibility that the atoms of most elements may dissolve into the atoms of a lighter element or simply of the lightest of them, hydrogen, and ultimately into the atoms of the so-called cosmic ether. Of the latter, we have virtually no positive knowledge. Its existence is an assumption physicists make on the basis of the law of causality – a law of logic whose objective validity is no more demonstrable than the objective validity of space and time, but which is just as indisputable and which is an essential presupposition of the scientific view of things, even, so to speak, an imperative of practical reason.

In short, pure or absolute materialism is just as spiritualistic as pure or absolute Idealism. Both simply posit the identity of thought and being, albeit from different starting-points. Ultimately, they differ only in their mode of expression. More recent materialists, how-

ever, have based themselves on Kant as firmly as most of the more eminent modern natural scientists.⁽ⁱⁱ⁾ The fact that the latter usually avoid calling themselves materialists may, in some cases, be a concession to current prejudice. But otherwise we must accept that it is, or was, genuine scientific scruple which prevented them from assuming a name which is, rightly or wrongly, associated with the idea of an unqualified cult of matter. No similar prejudice is attached to the concept "force," yet modern physicists have rejected it as inadequate and have replaced it with the concept of energy. The more precise definition of concepts makes new terminology inevitable. Nothing is more dubious or more liable to cause misunderstanding than the attempt to preserve old terms by giving them a new meaning. After all, many cling to the word "materialism" solely because they wish to distinguish themselves as sharply as possible from the revealed religions. On the other hand, the expression "agnosticism" (from *agnostos*, unknown), common in England since Huxley,² denotes a general way of thinking rather than a precise theoretical conviction. Every scientist is, as a scientist, an agnostic; i.e. he accepts that the ultimate ground of things is unknown. The expression "monism," which was (unless we are much mistaken) first used in modern times by Haeckel,³ is free both of the vagueness and of the misleading interpretations which adhere to the word "materialism," and is to that extent superior to both, especially since systematic thinking, which is not in this regard contradicted by empirical knowledge, obliges us to attribute unity of spatial extent *and* life ("soul") to the ultimate substance of the world, whether we call it matter or something else. (See Stern's article, "Economic and Scientific Materialism," *Neue Zeit*, xv, 2, pp. 301ff.) Without this assumption, it would be impossible to envisage the generation of consciousness as anything other than the result of supranatural intervention.

However, let us turn to socialism. No-one denies that, as a doctrine, socialism was originally pure ideology. That is to say, whatever external factors induced individuals to propagate socialist images and theories and impelled the masses to strive for socialist reorganisation, the motivation was always purely ideological. It was Christianity, justice, equality, or some other "idea" that was invoked to support these changes.

In what respect has this been changed by the doctrinal system of modern socialism, by which we mean the doctrine based on historical materialism as expounded by Marx and Engels? Has this doctrine put an end to ideology in socialism? Many will be inclined to say that it has, and they will not lack texts to cite in their support.

In the introduction to his *Anti-Dühring*, Engels wrote that, with the discovery "that *all* past history was the history of class struggles," that these class struggles were rooted in the *economic* conditions of the time, and that "the economic structure of society always furnishes the real basis starting from which we can alone work out the ultimate explanation of the whole superstructure of juridical and political institutions as well as of the religious, philosophical and other ideas – with this discovery, "*idealism was driven from its last refuge, the philosophy of history*; now a materialist treatment of history was propounded and, a method found of explaining a man's 'knowing' by his 'being,' instead of, as heretofore, his 'being' by his 'knowing' " (*Herrn Eugen Dührings Umwälzung*, 3rd ed., p. 12).⁴ Although this statement can be interpreted as referring simply to the *explanation* of historical processes, both Marx and Engels frequently attacked all preconceived ideas about the construction of socialist society, all derivations of socialist demands from legal or moral considerations, and all acknowledgments of unchanging moral principles. Apart from various passages from *The Communist Manifesto*, etc., the following statement from Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Programme* is particularly worth mentioning: "I have dealt more at length with the 'undiminished proceeds of labour,' on the one hand, and with 'equal right' and 'fair distribution,' on the other, in order to show what a crime it is . . . to pervert the realistic outlook, which it cost so much effort to instil into the party but which has now taken root in it, by means of ideological nonsense about right and other trash so common among the democrats and French socialists."⁵

It would seem that ideology could not be more bluntly rejected. The only question is whether Marxism has in fact accomplished, and could accomplish, what seems to be assumed in this passage.

To begin with, it is clear – and no-one knew it better than Marx – that, apart from purely intuitive reflex behaviour, man does nothing that has not previously passed through his mind as an idea. The difference between the worst architect and the best bee, Marx writes in *Capital*, is the fact that the former completes the house in his head before he begins building.⁶ What holds for the architect (the case of the bee is perhaps debatable) holds without reservation for all human actions which look to the more or less distant future. They are, according to circumstances, the execution of plans, intentions, *ideas*. Needless to say, ideas can be based on foundations of very different kinds. They can be rooted in low impulses or in noble motives far removed from self-interest. They can be grounded in either imaginary or in real circumstances. But wherever the mind determines our

behaviour we have an idea or a series of ideas. "The inconsistency (of traditional materialism) does not lie in the fact that *ideal* driving forces are recognized, but in the investigation not being carried further back behind these into their motive causes." Thus Friedrich Engels in his treatise on Ludwig Feuerbach. Elsewhere in the same treatise, Engels goes still further. "The influences of the external world upon man," he writes, "express themselves in his brain, are reflected therein as feelings, thoughts, impulses, volitions — in short, as 'ideal tendencies,' and in this form become 'ideal powers.' If, then, a man is to be deemed an idealist because he follows 'ideal tendencies' and admits that 'ideal powers' have an influence over him, then every person who is at all normally developed is a born idealist and how, in that case, can there still be any materialists?" (*Neue Zeit*, 1886, p. 156).⁷

This is not the place to pursue that question. Let us rather confine ourselves to the fact that, in that passage, it is regarded as entirely normal to admit that "ideal powers" influence one's actions. The criterion for distinguishing between the admissible and the inadmissible influence of ideal tendencies lies further back, in these ideal tendencies themselves.

What are the "ideal powers" which historical materialism acknowledges as legitimate driving forces of the socialist movement?

The first and obvious one is *interest*. Admittedly it may, at first glance, seem somewhat of a conceptual sleight of hand to describe interest as an ideal factor. But, firstly, if interest is to be a motive for taking part in a movement, it must be a *known* interest. The individual must have an "idea" of his interest in order to decide on a corresponding action. And, secondly, we are talking of an indirect interest, one that is not related merely to the individual's ego. It is an interest which transcends even vocational boundaries. It is *class* interest, and in several respects its furtherance requires, occasionally at least, the sacrifice of personal advantage.⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾ Thus the interest which Marxist socialism presupposes is, from the outset, furnished with a social or ethical element, and to that extent it is not only a *rational* but also a *moral* interest, so that ideality in the moral sense of the term is inherent in it.

We have already touched upon the second "ideal power" by which socialism is governed. It is *knowledge*. Its "ideal" nature is obvious, but here again it is a matter, not just of a general *capacity* for knowledge, but of a quite *specific* body of knowledge, the acceptance of *specific* "ideas" of the state, society, economics, and history. In this sense, we talk of "proletarian" ideas. And the way this is sometimes

presented in our literature suggests that these ideas are not merely accepted by a large section of the workers of all civilised countries but were actually first *produced* by the intelligence of the modern working class. But this is at best a metaphor, an ideological inversion of the actual process. The history of socialist theory, from Baboeuf [*sic*] to Marx and Lassalle, records only two working-class men of major creative ability: Proudhon and Weitling. In *The Communist Manifesto*, the first is listed among the "bourgeois Socialists," and the second is nowadays nothing but a historical curiosity. Saint-Simon, Fourier, and Owen, whom Engels mentions as socialist forefathers of the theory worked out by Marx and himself, were no more working class in origin than Marx and Engels themselves. However inherently insignificant this may be, it must nonetheless be emphasised, because the metaphorical term mentioned above is usually associated with a seriously misleading use of the word 'science' in connection with modern socialism. The term "scientific socialism" is used in a manner implying that the science in question is something complete or finished. But in fact the expression (with or without the qualification) contains a *postulate*. Every science is, *qua* science, necessarily "agnostic." Unless, like certain subdivisions of philology, it has a precisely delimited subject-matter, its results can never be regarded as final. This is why Engels, at the end of the second part of his work, *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*, presents socialism as "a science which must now be worked out in all its details and relations."⁸

This point is often overlooked. And so is the fact that every science, *qua* science, requires a high degree of intellectual impartiality. I say "a high degree" deliberately, because complete impartiality is impossible, and the social sciences are least of all capable of being conducted in a manner devoid of prejudice. But they do require demonstrations of fact, free of preconceived judgments — a point which Marx stressed in the preface to his *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*,⁹ where he remarked that at the entrance to science the demand must be made:

Qui si convien lasciar [*sic*] ogni sospetto
Ogni viltà convien che qui sia morta.^(iv)

But are at least the "proletarian ideas" themselves, i.e. the socialist conception of the state, society, economics, and history, free of ideology? By no means. Although their orientation is realistic, i.e. in the first instance directed towards the material factors in the development of human society, they are nevertheless thought-reflexes, conclusions erected on mental syntheses of mediated facts and therefore inevitably coloured by ideology. If the debate on historical materialism,

which took place in the columns of this journal and elsewhere,¹⁰ clarified anything, then it clarified the fact that, as Kautsky demonstrated in his article "What Can and Should the Materialist Conception of History Accomplish?"¹¹ the complexity of the phenomena to be explained makes it virtually impossible for the individual to comprehend all their facets.^(v) No human being is able to conceive a completely accurate picture of the external world. And similarly, it is impossible for any social theory to embrace all the details of social life. In every synthesis, something is necessarily left out. We investigate what factors determine social life *in the last instance*, knowing that, within the folds of this "in the last instance," a great many modifications may lurk, though admittedly "the last instance" is not always given due weight.

However, let us proceed. Marxist theory sees in the modern industrial worker the true, potential vehicle of socialism. His economic condition, his position in the factory where machinery abolishes all the old distinctions of craft and increasingly reduces all workers to the same level, are seen as begetting in him (so to speak) those attitudes and aspirations which, taken together, constitute socialism. In the broad historical sense, this is undeniably correct. The signs of it, the tendencies in this sense, can be traced everywhere. And yet the picture which, according to this reasoning, we ought to have before us bears little relationship to reality. In nearly every country, it is not the workers in the most advanced industries but those in the relatively backward, subordinate, or intermediate industries who for a long time have constituted the hard core, the active element in the socialist movement. Cigar-makers, carpenters, cobblers, tailors, master-craftsmen, and cottage workers in the textile industry, bookbinders, etc. have for decades been the basis of the Social Democratic movement in Germany. This was sometimes attributed to intellectual deprivation and sometimes to the oppressed condition of the factory worker. But in England today, the factory worker is in no way politically dependent, and he is materially no worse off than workers in the small and medium-sized industries. Yet even here it is the latter who almost invariably furnish the core units of socialism. Quite simply, there are additional circumstances which are not immediately obvious, so-called intangible influences, which affect the attitudes of the workers. Thus, for instance, the "levelling" of workers in the modern factory has by no means occurred to the extent originally predicted. On the contrary, it is precisely in the most advanced manufacturing industries that we frequently find a whole hierarchy of differentiated workers and, in consequence, only a moderate sense of solidarity between the various subdivisions.

II^(vi)

The life of the worker is not confined to the factory or workshop, and to the extent that this is so his attitudes are influenced by the circumstances in which he lives outside the factory. In this sense, it is reasonable, and consistent with the basic thrust of historical materialism, to say that in England the *shorter working day* together with the improvement in the *cottage accommodation* system (so widespread in this country) is a powerful counterweight to any sense of collectivism. Conversations with English workers have provided me with many examples of this. One of the many "imponderable" but nonetheless powerful influences on the party loyalties and social attitudes of British workers is the extraordinary degree to which *sport* has spread and become popularised in England. Elsewhere, only certain social classes go to the races, but in England the racing public extends to all classes of the population. However, keeping racehorses is still the privilege of the rich, and apart from those who have professional or other business interests at stake, it is mainly the fun of betting, the attraction of games of chance, which maintains the interest in racing. It might therefore be seen as a misuse of the word "democracy" to apply it in this context. But it can be applied without reservation to *cricket* and even more to *football*. Both are national and democratic in character, and their manifestations are such as to relegate class conflicts and party divisions to the background. The great annual championships in these sports attract vast hordes of people from all classes, and they are perhaps most widely supported precisely in the industrial Midlands of England, where they have been compared to the Olympic Games on account of their broad popular following.^(vii)

Not even the markedly aristocratic character of the old provincial universities of Oxford and Cambridge prevents half of England each spring from following the reports on the daily training sessions of the students selected to compete in the boat race between the two universities, or from waiting with eager anticipation to see whether light blue or dark blue will carry the day. How many German workers would take an interest in a boat race between, say, eleven [*sic!*] students from Leipzig and eleven from Berlin? Apart from local residents, only those who are themselves rowing enthusiasts. In England, there are no such restrictions. And this general interest in sport, as evinced in extensive press coverage of sporting events, takes much of the sting out of differences in other areas.

Just as the Englishman's highly developed appreciation of sport is

a characteristic handed down historically from one generation to the next, so there is a whole set of historical influences which tone down or, if you prefer, "distort" the influence of the relations of production on the thought and actions of the worker. These include the history of the political development of the country, the nature and history of its political parties and also, to a large extent, of its religious bodies.

The actual worker, therefore, always needs a certain length of time and a certain power of abstraction before he can accustom himself fully to the attitudes of the proletariat posited by theory, for the latter is an abstraction free of all the local and national peculiarities and historical influences to which the actual worker is exposed. He falls in with this way of thinking more readily than members of other social classes because it corresponds to his class situation. However, it is not simply a product of the conditions in which he lives. It is derived from a *synthesis* of those peculiarities of his class situation, and *only of those peculiarities*, which are *common* to the workers of all the various civilised nations of our time. The ideas of state, society, political parties, etc. derived from this proletarian way of thinking are, therefore, inevitably different in many respects from the ideas entertained on such matters by workers uninfluenced by theory. Thus, what we call "the proletarian standpoint" is, so far as the proletarian himself is concerned, first and foremost an ideology.

Let us take a concrete example. It would seem that the natural proletarian view of things nowadays would be to see the wage-labourer as being exploited by the employer. In fact, however, a fairly lengthy process of development had to take place before the workers themselves saw things in that light. At first, the industrial worker saw himself as being exploited only when he was required to do extra work for the normal wage or when he was paid less than usual for the normal amount of work. As long as his wage is high enough to allow him to live decently according to the traditional expectations of his class, he does not really care how it is related to the price of the product of his labour; and, so far as he is concerned, the increasing wealth of his employer is quite legitimate.^(viii) His sense of justice is not offended by it, even if he regards the unequal distribution of wealth as unfair. The *general* divide between rich and poor makes a stronger impression on his sensibilities than does the specific division between employer and wage-labourer.

This brings us to the third ideological factor to be considered in connection with socialism, namely *moral consciousness* or the *concept of justice*. Here we get to the heart of the matter, for, while

nobody denies in principle the importance of *interest* as a motive and *knowledge* as a guide, there are, in modern socialist literature, sharply conflicting claims as to the importance of *moral consciousness* in the struggle of Social Democracy.

For example, *The Communist Manifesto* and other works written by Marx and Engels at that time seem to take a markedly negative attitude on the subject – one might almost say, as negative as that of Stirner, except that his “Ego” is replaced by “the proletarian class or party.”¹² One could, with no great violence to logic, derive from various passages in the *Manifesto*, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, etc. the kind of practical conclusions later drawn by Bakunin. But in their later works as well, Marx and Engels avoid any direct appeal to ethical motives. For this reason, Professor Werner Sombart identified its “anti-ethical tendency” as the distinctive characteristic of Marxist socialism.¹³ The expression is, in my view, unfortunate (for the term “anti-ethical” conveys, first and foremost, the idea that ethics as such are to be done away with), but it is perfectly accurate in the sense in which Sombart uses it, namely to denote the reverse of deriving socialism from ethical principles. Nothing in Marxist theory is derived from ethics.

On the contrary. Time and again, ethics are mentioned only for the explicit purpose of pointing out their inadequacy. In *Capital* the buying and selling of labour power as a commodity, in which the worker brings ‘his’ own hide to market,” is described as an act governed by “Freedom, Equality, Property, and Bentham.”^(ix) And the circumstance that labour power can produce more than the cost of its maintenance (to the buyer) is said to be “a piece of good luck for the buyer, but *by no means an injustice towards the seller*”¹⁴ (vol. I, 2nd ed., pp. 162 and 182). In his *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, Marx criticises the demand for “a fair distribution of the proceeds of labour” by asking whether the present distribution of the proceeds of labour is not “the only ‘fair’ distribution on the basis of the present-day mode of production?”¹⁵ And in his preface to the German edition of *The Poverty of Philosophy*, Engels states that to derive communist demands from the fact that the worker’s wage does not correspond to the value of the work he does is, *formally, incorrect in economic terms* because it is “simply an application of morality to economics.”¹⁶ Even more pointed criticisms along the same lines can be found in his *Anti-Dühring* and in his treatise on the housing question.¹⁷

Now, Marxist practice would appear to be in complete contradiction to this hostile stance adopted by theory. *Capital* is undeniably

riddled with pronouncements based on moral judgments. The very description of the wage-relation as one of exploitation assumes a moral judgment, since the concept of exploitation, when applied to descriptions of relations between human beings, always implies the stigma of unjust appropriation and unfair advantage. And in accepted popularisations, surplus value is simply branded as fraud, theft, and robbery. The capitalist employer, even when he is a "fair"¹⁸ employer, is presented as the appropriator of surplus value which does not belong to him; and the worker, even when he belongs to the best-paid section of his class, is presented as having been denied part of his due. Admittedly, there are occasional riders to the effect that the capitalist is not personally to blame for this appropriation but is merely doing what he is entitled to do under conditions which he did not create; but this very apology implies that the appropriation of surplus value is fundamentally an injustice. Moreover, the economic objectivity of the theory of surplus value will bear scrutiny only in the context of abstract enquiry. As soon as its application is at issue, it reveals itself at once as a moral problem, and most people usually treat it as such.^(x) On this point, Engels remarked (just after the passage quoted earlier from his preface to *The Poverty of Philosophy*): "If the moral consciousness of the mass declares an economic fact to be unjust, as it has done in the case of slavery and serf labour, that is a proof that the fact itself has been outlived, that other economic facts have made their appearance, owing to which the former has become unbearable and untenable" (1st ed., p. xi). This statement gives the moral judgment of the masses a degree of validity in the historical justification of economic facts which might well satisfy those who subscribe to Idealist theories. But in fact this moral judgment is accorded only the function of a measuring-stick with no motivating power of its own.

If we examine the matter more closely, and ask ourselves *why* so many people nowadays regard the economic fact of the capitalist's appropriation of surplus value as an injustice, we come upon a further concession to Idealism or ideology.

The fact of surplus value is not immediately apparent to the masses. Indeed, the mechanism of the capitalist economy conceals it from them. Socialist writers in the age of manufacturing and earlier were able to posit theories that led to the theory of surplus value only because of the simplicity and transparency of the economic mechanisms of their time. In modern times, it was primarily bourgeois economists whose investigations into the value of commodities led them to the value of labour as a commodity, and thus paved the way

for the notion that the worker's wage is different from, and always less than, the value of the work he does. The fact of *surplus labour*, however, has always been familiar to the worker. Though he did not object to it in principle, he did so often enough in a practical and limited fashion; i.e. he rebelled, not *against the fact* of surplus labour, but only against the *extent* of it. The mere fact of surplus labour provides no incentive to try to change the mode of production. It is quite otherwise with surplus value. If the worker learns that he never receives in pay the value of the work he does, then his natural sense of justice is directly challenged, because the concept of *value* includes a *moral* element, a *concept of equality and justice*. Here we have the most immediate explanation of the revulsion of feeling against surplus value. This revulsion could, of course, be the expression or product of the obsolescence of the wage-labour system, but this is not necessarily so. Sixty years ago, it was quite simply hypothetical or, if you prefer, premature to think of this system as obsolete, and yet the desire for its abolition was very strong among English workers. The degree to which the consciousness of the masses displays symptoms of the economic development depends on the circumstances. Moral concepts are more durable than economic developments, and precisely because they are more conservative, they are to some extent independent of such developments. This holds, among other things, for the concept of justice – more so than Marx and Engels admit.^(xi)

Even today, justice is a powerful motivating force in the socialist movement. Indeed, no action on the part of the masses can have a lasting effect without a moral impetus. It is often observed that the most active elements in the socialist movement are always recruited from those sections of the work-force and other classes of the population which, to use a colloquial phrase, “don't need it,” i.e. from people who would be worse off if existing social income were equally distributed in accordance with the well-known formula. What draws them to socialism is the aspiration towards a more practical and a more equitable social order; and closer examination shows that, in nine cases out of ten, it is the *more equitable* social order that comes first. There is no need to idealise this impulse. Even envy can often motivate demands for justice. But, whether it stems from base or lofty motives, it remains an ideological factor.

Of course, if we limit ourselves to the bare essentials of the programme – conquest of political power by the proletariat organised as a class, expropriation of the capitalists, socialisation of the means of production and of production itself – we might suppose that all ideo-

logical considerations had been disposed of. These are, after all, very real and concrete items. But practice shows that, however realistic a view of the matter we take, a goodly portion of ideology still remains.

Let us take "the proletariat organised as a class." Just think how much ideology is required for workers to see themselves as proletarians! And how many workers, even today, are far from thinking of themselves in this way – and not just from ignorance! In the advanced countries particularly, the number of such workers is extraordinarily high. It is by no means easy to give precise definition to the concept "proletariat." The category of wage-labourers covers extreme variations in income and living conditions. One can, of course, abstract certain demands and interests that are common to workers of all grades, but this does not mean that the desire to have these demands and interests represented will be expressed with equal force and intensity throughout. The proletariat as the sum total of wage-labourers is a reality; the proletariat as a class acting with a common purpose and outlook is largely a figment of the imagination, even in Germany.

And this is the proletariat which is to spearhead the socialisation of the means of production. Those who do not subscribe to the naive view of the matter expressed in the French song:

Labourer, take the machine,
Ploughman, take the land¹⁹

will doubtlessly remind themselves that this socialisation will of necessity be a long process, because the industries concerned differ widely in the degree to which they are ready or suitable for it. To assume that all capitalists will be expropriated at a stroke, so to speak, is to assume that in the same instant all workers will cease to be proletarians in the theoretical sense, and thus risk losing the moral impetus produced by the specific opposition between themselves and the capitalists. Instead of simplifying the problem of socialising production, this would make it infinitely more difficult. But practical necessity will simply not permit it, and one of the things which will prevent it is the struggle in which Social Democracy is currently engaged.

Human history has long since ceased to proceed by the simple method of pushing all developmental tendencies to their extreme practicable limits. This point can be illustrated by an example discussed in a different context in an earlier article in this series: the question of *child labour*.²⁰

Two generations ago, there were virtually no restrictions on child labour. The number of children employed in factories was growing

apace, and since the employment of women was increasing with equal rapidity, it looked as though the entire family would be conscripted for factory work throughout the working-class world. If this development had continued unchecked, the inevitable outcome would have been the complete disappearance of the old type of family and the formation of a new one, i.e. a new type of cohabitation of the sexes. Following Robert Owen, Marx argued along these lines. In his *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, he declared himself against the demand for a general ban on child labour and drew attention to the revolutionary significance of the early involvement of children in production.²¹ But since then, the socialist parties, together with bourgeois philanthropists and educationalists, have tirelessly campaigned for an increase in the minimum age for the employment of children; and in most countries they have succeeded in closing the factories to children under thirteen or fourteen years of age. Indeed, the aim today is to raise this age-limit to fifteen or sixteen. Now, it is clear that this has restored the child to the *family* in the traditional sense, and that this in turn has restored *the family itself* for the foreseeable future. The shorter working day, for which workers everywhere are campaigning both inside and outside parliament, will have the same effect. In short, whereas the "natural" tendency of capitalism is to revolutionise the family, even the revolutionary labour parties, driven by immediate necessity, are fighting for measures which will counteract this revolution. Whatever the shape of things to come, in this connection (there are other factors which, despite everything, tend to weaken traditional family life), social relations will certainly not reach the critical point which, in its time, Marxist theory predicted and (quite rightly) assumed.

That is just an example; but we need only look with open eyes at the facts of social life to find many phenomena which counteract theoretical assumptions in much the same manner, without, however, invalidating the basic propositions of theory. Theory cannot foresee everything. It can only identify tendencies. Practice, however, never allows the untrammelled realisation of tendencies to the last dot on the last *i*; and it is thus unlikely to permit the occurrence of universal expropriation. Such a development is unlikely, particularly in modern society with its extremely complicated democratic and democratising system of interrelations. Either the rulers themselves provoke a catastrophe by their obstinate resistance to reasonable demands, in which case the catastrophe occurs too early to accomplish much more than political changes; or they have the sense to give way at the right time

on each occasion, in which case the development of things itself militates against sudden and total revolutions.

Any theory of future developments, however materialist it may be, is therefore necessarily tinged with ideology. Indeed, this is the case precisely when it confines itself exclusively to tangible economic phenomena; for intellectual trends, moral attitudes, etc. are definitely real, even though they exist only in people's minds. Marxist socialism is not differentiated from other socialist theories by being completely free of ideology. That would be impossible for any doctrine concerned with the future. Without ideology, no far-sighted attempt at reform can exist. Marxism has ceased to derive the basis of socialist theory from preconceived ideas and has thus abandoned arbitrary construction; instead it has established the basis of socialist theory on the solid ground of a realist view of history which, in all its essentials, remains unchallenged. Its founders never claimed to have drawn, in every particular, the only permissible inferences; nor did they claim eternal and unqualified validity for their conclusions. It is only natural that, in resisting the then-common tendency to overrate moral attitudes, they should have been drawn into underrating them. In fact, in many cases (though not all) and over a wide (though not unlimited) field, morality is an effective, creative force. There are countless instances to prove that the morality of an advanced civil society is by no means identical with the morality of the bourgeoisie, as the literature describes it. Anyone not still dreaming of a sudden leap into a perfect communist society will thus regard the further development of ideas in ethics and law as being, like the implementation of economic reforms, something which cannot simply be left to the future.

KAUTSKY to ADLER (extract)²²

4 August 1898

[. . .] August [Bebel] said in his letter that you're coming to Zürich. I'm curious to see what your impression of Ede will be. You never know where you are with him. He wrote to August saying he was quite willing to move to Switzerland, and to me saying he couldn't make his mind up to it, and would I let him know whether I was making his continuation at *Neue Zeit* conditional upon it.

He has sent me an article on the theory of value which annoyed me even more than his antirevolutionary article,²³ because it shows an incredible regression in theory. He discusses in all seriousness

whether value is determined by wages, and this he describes as a development beyond hidebound Marxist dogma. I fear that in the long run we shall not be able to go on working together, but I'll do my best for as long as humanly possible.

Notes

- (i) This continuation of the series, "Problems of Socialism," is at the same time a sequel to the article, "The Struggle of Social Democracy and the Social Revolution." The basic point of that essay, the rejection of the catastrophe theory, was originally meant to be discussed at the end of the series, and it is only because of external factors that it has been brought forward and published independently.

In recent years, the theme of the present article has frequently been discussed from different points of view by friend and foe alike. In this connection, I draw particular attention to the thoughtful and substantial essays by Antonio Labriola, published in Paris by V. Giard and E. Brière under the title "Essais sur la conception matérialiste de l'histoire," and also to several essays by G. Sorel, B. Croce, and others, reprinted in *Devenir Social*, and finally to the essay by Dr. Chr. Schitlowsky (Berne), "On the History and Critique of Marxism," which appeared several years ago in Bernerstorfer's *Deutsche Worte* (XV, nos. 4 and 7/8).

In the latter, the author wrote, among other things, that he thought the time was "ripe for an application of epistemology to the philosophy of history" in order to "consider the limits to our philosophico-historical understanding." I do not know whether Mr Bax knew of this article when he wrote his famous essay in the *Vienna Zeit*, which led to his controversy with Kautsky; but the Bax-Kautsky polemic, and especially Kautsky's article, "What Can and Should the Materialist Conception of History Accomplish?," may be regarded as contributions to that debate. However, the present article is not so intended. My purpose is simply to pursue the question indicated in the title: how far is modern socialism realistic and how far is it ideological? And the stimulus for it came from the criticisms provoked by my remarks on "the final goal of socialism." The fact that my article does nonetheless touch on epistemological matters arose from the purely practical need to define the concept of "ideology"; but this was not done as a reply to Schitlowsky's question, nor even with knowledge of it. I did not read his stimulating essay until my article was nearly finished. As a layman in epistemology, I can contribute no more than a layman's thoughts on the subject. On the other hand, I do owe a direct debt to an article on Kant by Konrad Schmidt.²⁴ In my view, "back to Kant" applies, to some extent, to socialist theory.

If, at various points, my article tends to indulge in broad

generalisations, even commonplaces, this is because I am doing my best to eliminate all misunderstandings at the outset. For the rest, I resume my treatment of "Problems of Socialism" conscious of the fact that Professor Masaryk is right when, in his article in the *Vienna Zeit*, "The Scientific and Philosophical Crisis in Present-day Marxism," he says: "This crisis can give great strength to socialism. As for all parties of social reform, the life-blood of socialism is the manifest imperfection of the present social order. While this imperfection persists, the militant party of socialism, Social Democracy, has nothing to fear from internal criticism of its theory."²⁵

- (ii) With regard to the first, see e.g. W. Strecker, *Welt und Menschheit* pp. 14 and 15, which seems to be a polemic against Kant, but in fact the line of argument is entirely Kantian, as is the confession: "We believe in the atom." Among the scientists, we might mention Benjamin Vetter, a zoologist and for many years the noted editor of *Kosmos*. On pp. 32 and 146 of his book, *Die moderne Weltanschauung und der Mensch*, he openly declares himself a Kantian: "Force, substance, space and time, infinite divisibility, the transmission of motion, etc. are all . . . to some extent arbitrary signs and expressions, forced upon us by the distinctive nature of our thought and perception. We carry out calculations with them and, by means of them, we can at least arrive at an excellent understanding with our own kind, without having grasped, or ever being able to grasp, their actual basic significance."
- (iii) "Well before farm labourers come forward as a class with their own demands and the strength to vindicate them, the vast majority of them will have to cease regarding themselves as 'unique,' 'their own,' or, indeed, as 'the one Ego.' The knight-errant of uniqueness or oneness [*Eigenheit*] . . . presents himself, when the moment comes, as a political or economic blackleg" ("The Social Doctrine of Anarchy: Stirner," *Neue Zeit*, x, 1, pp. 427-8).
- (iv) "Here must all distrust be left;
All cowardice must here be dead."²⁶

Socialism as a science has tasks different from those of Social Democracy as a militant party. The latter, as defender of specific interests, may, within certain limits, be dogmatic and even intolerant. Its decisions on matters concerning action are binding until the party itself cancels or changes them. The same goes for the statements in its programme which define its character and aims. But its scientific pre-suppositions can, of course, claim only limited validity, for scientific research should aim to scout ahead of the party, not straggle along in its rear. This does not, of course, imply special status for those who are specifically occupied in scientific research. In the sense expounded here, anyone who investigates the theoretical foundations of the movement counts as a researcher.

- (v) *Neue Zeit*, xv, 1, p. 234. I cannot refrain from observing that recently, after all these discussions, Mr Belfort Bax has again managed to say

that "Karl Kautsky and Franz Mehring . . . assert that *all* historical products of human thought, will, and action are *exclusively* attributable to economic conditions, i.e. to the modes of production and exchange as their *sole* basic cause" (*Sozialistische Monatshefte*, III, p. 640). Mr Bax is rather like the famous Swabian who, having eaten liver, would admit to anything but never that there was such a thing as lamb's liver.²⁷

Under the circumstances, I am happy to let him have the last word in the controversy.²⁸ I cannot expect readers of *Neue Zeit* to read a discussion consisting entirely of corrections, for most of Bax's objections do not apply to what I said. However, in case he should think I am avoiding him, I declare myself ready to answer, retrospectively if necessary, any point which he cares to raise.

Just a word or two on the personal aspects of this conflict. I was not reproaching Bax with his membership of the National Liberal Club; I merely thought it incompatible with the revolutionary socialism which he professes. I know that much can be learned in the club; but most of it can be read in the papers the following day and the rest is ephemeral and trivial gossip hardly worth knowing. On matters that concern me, I can be as well or better informed elsewhere. Nothing brought that home to me more sharply than the dispatches sent from the National Liberal Club to the Continental newspapers.

I charged him with restrained anti-Semitism because, during an earlier controversy with me, Bax brought Jewishness into the debate for no good reason and in a manner that indicated anti-Semitism.²⁹ When he did it a second time, it inevitably struck me as an unworthy attempt to make capital out of the fact that I am Jewish in origin. Those who know me well are aware that I am not sensitive on this point, but in present circumstances³⁰ I feel it categorically imperative to be "philo-Semitic" in the face of all anti-Semitism. If Bax accepts this, so much the better. But from someone who is prepared to place the case of Mrs Montague — a woman who, with no evil intent, punished her children foolishly and thus caused the death of one of them, though she had otherwise brought them up conscientiously — on a level with the atrocities and tyrannies of the Moroccan pashas, we may expect almost anything.

I feel even less obliged to continue the polemic with Parvus, of the *Sächsische Arbeiter-Zeitung*, than I do with Mr Bax. There are methods of literary combat which disarm any opponent. Parvus has them at his disposal and must use them as he pleases.

- (vi) See *Neue Zeit*, no. 34. An accident to the manuscript caused some delay in publication. Ed.
- (vii) Recently, of course, cycling has joined cricket and football, and it has much the same effect. But the bicycle, which has become universally popular, seems to have a rather special socio-political influence. The degree to which it has brought town and country together is much

appreciated, not least by itinerant socialist agitators. In England, where the depopulation of the countryside was proceeding apace, inns and other businesses catering for cyclists are springing up and multiplying all over the country, thus providing all kinds of new means of livelihood in the countryside. The probability that automobiles will become more numerous, and cheaper, will further encourage this development.

- (viii) In England, where workers are not much given to abstract thought, and the notion of "a fair day's wage for a fair day's work" is more deeply entrenched than the idea of "a right to the full product of labour," a capitalist known to be a "fair employer" is still a popular parliamentary candidate among the workers in industrial areas – even if he is opposed by a union representative, as the recent election in Barnsley (Yorkshire) demonstrated.³¹
- (ix) "Bentham" here means the view that *self-interest* rationally practised is the most effective means of advancing the common good, the *general interest*, as expounded by the English legal philosopher Bentham. It is characteristic of Bentham that, as [John] Stuart Mill tells us, he combined his philosophy of egoism with an extraordinarily strong moral sensibility and a childlike disposition. This accords with Robert Owen's account of his meeting with Bentham.³²
- (x) This, incidentally, applies to the whole labour theory of value. For example, socialist supporters of the theory tackle the critique advanced by exponents of the utility (marginal utility) theory of value entirely in moral terms; i.e. it is rejected with an otherwise unmotivated expenditure of moral indignation. They see it only as an attempt to obscure the moral dubiousness of surplus value. Conversely, many supporters of the existing social order criticise the labour theory of value simply on the grounds that it compromises surplus value. This is evident from the fact that they pay no attention at all to the truly puzzling part of the theory and immerse themselves in observations on the functions of worker and capitalist and on the usefulness of these functions.
- (xi) Against Marx's statement that the present distribution of products is "the only 'just' distribution on the basis of the present mode of production," Ph. Lotmar, in his most illuminating study of justice, remarks that, by "just," Marx simply means "legitimate" or "in accordance with the law."³³ But from the standpoint of the Aristotelian view of justice as proportional equality, which Lotmar accepts, the distribution could still be unjust. Benedetto Croce, in his article "An Interpretation and Critique of Certain Marxist Concepts" (*Devenir Social*, February and March, 1898), states that, however correctly Marxism explains the conditions for the development of morality, its detailed treatment of moral problems is on several counts contestable. Marx and Engels, he says, "were not moral philosophers and expended very little of their powerful intelligences on such matters . . . Indeed, although it is certainly possible to write a theory of knowledge according to Marx, it would in my estimation be an absolutely hopeless un-

dertaking to write a Marxist account of the principles of ethics" (*Devenir Social*, pp. 246–7). One can readily see what he means. Marx and Engels always treated moral problems polemically, criticising the views of opponents, and their treatment of moral issues is therefore predominantly negative; it is an analysis of what is *not* moral. Given this purely polemical treatment of the subject, it was inevitable that they should occasionally overshoot the mark. Never the less, Engels admitted, in *Anti-Dühring*, that the development of society had been accompanied by moral progress.³⁴ This implies an admission that, in our view of things, there does exist a moral standard independent of historical circumstances. And Marx included in the rules of the International the principle that its members should observe "truth, justice, and morality" in their dealings with one another and with their fellow human beings.³⁵

Having mentioned Croce's essay, I must draw attention to the excellent analysis in which Croce, in agreement with Antonio Labriola, attacks the misuse of the term "science" in connection with socialism. To counteract this abuse, Labriola suggests that the term "scientific socialism" be replaced by "critical communism."³⁶ My remarks on this point in the first part of this article were in print before I had seen the conclusion of Croce's essay. Otherwise I would have confined myself to summarising his remarks on the subject.

Social Reform or Revolution? Rosa Luxemburg's Intervention

ROSA LUXEMBURG The Method

Leipziger Volkszeitung, 21 September 1898

If theories are reflected images of the external world in the human brain, then, in view of the theory recently propounded by Eduard Bernstein and Konrad Schmidt,¹ we must surely add that these images are sometimes upside-down. A theory of the introduction of socialism by social reform, in the era of Stumm-Posadowsky?² Of trade union control over production, after the defeat of the English engineers?³ Of a Social Democratic majority in parliament, after constitutional revision in Saxony and attacks on universal suffrage for Reichstag elections?⁴ However, in our opinion the crucial point of Bernstein's exposition lies not in his views on the practical tasks facing Social Democracy but in what he says about the course of objective development of capitalist society – though the two are admittedly closely connected.

According to Bernstein, a general collapse of capitalism becomes less likely as its development proceeds, partly because the capitalist system becomes ever more adaptable and partly because production becomes increasingly differentiated. In his view, the adaptability of capitalism can be discerned, firstly, in the disappearance of general *crises* thanks to the development of the credit system, employers' organisations, communications and information services; secondly, in the resilience of the middle class resulting from continuing differentiation in the various sectors of production and the elevation of large sections of the proletariat into the middle class; and, thirdly and lastly, in the improved economic and political situation of the proletariat which results from the trade union struggle.

The general implication which this suggests for the practical struggle is that Social Democracy should direct its efforts, not towards acquiring political power, but towards improving the situation of the

working class and establishing socialism, not by way of a social and political crisis, but through the gradual extension of social control and the progressive implementation of the principle of co-operation.

Bernstein himself sees nothing new in these ideas. On the contrary, he believes them to be in accord with certain pronouncements by Marx and Engels as well as with the general direction in which Social Democracy has so far been moving. However, we believe that a closer look at the substance of his views make it difficult to deny that they are, in fact, fundamentally in contradiction with the thinking of scientific socialism.

If Bernstein's revision amounted only to claiming that the course of capitalist development is much slower than is usually supposed, it would in fact simply mean *postponing* the seizure of political power by the proletariat, as this is normally understood; and the only practical consequence would be that the struggle would proceed at a steadier pace.

But this is not the case. What Bernstein questions is not the speed at which capitalist society develops but the very direction of that development and, hence, the transition to a socialist order of society.

Up to now socialist theory has assumed that the point of departure for the socialist revolution would be a general and catastrophic crisis. In this assumption there are, we think, two elements to be distinguished: the fundamental idea latent within it, and its outward form. The idea consists in the assumption that the capitalist order would itself be the point of departure for the socialist revolution.⁵ But in rejecting it Bernstein rejects not only the particular *form* in which the downfall of capitalism will occur, but the very downfall itself. He says explicitly: "One might object that the collapse of present-day society means not just a general trade crisis of unprecedented severity but a total collapse of the capitalist system under the weight of its own contradictions." To which he replies: "As society develops, anything resembling a simultaneous and total collapse of the present system of production becomes less likely rather than more, because this development increases simultaneously both the adaptability of industry and its differentiation."⁶

But then the important question arises: why and how are we ever to attain the final goal for which we are working? From the standpoint of scientific socialism, the historical necessity of the socialist revolution is manifest above all in the extreme anarchy of the capitalist system, by which it is driven into a cul-de-sac with no escape. But if we assume with Bernstein that the development of capitalism is not pushing it towards its own downfall, then socialism ceases to be *ob-*

actively necessary. And that leaves us with only the two other products of the capitalist system on which to build a scientific foundation for socialism: the socialised process of production and the class-consciousness of the proletariat. Bernstein has this in mind when he says that, with the elimination of the theory of collapse, "the socialist way of thinking loses none of its persuasive force thereby. For, on closer inspection, what are all these factors we have listed which tend to eliminate or modify the old type of crisis? They are all things which are both the prerequisites and to some extent the beginnings of the socialisation of production and exchange."⁷

However, it takes very little reflection to see that this too is a false conclusion. Wherein lies the importance of the phenomena Bernstein cites as capitalism's means of adaptation: cartels, credit, improved communications, the elevation of the working class, etc.? Obviously in the fact that they remove or at least alleviate the internal contradictions of the capitalist economy and prevent their further development and intensification. Thus the elimination of crises means the abolition of the contradiction between production and exchange on a capitalist basis. Thus the improvement in the condition of the working class, and the elevation of part of it into the middle classes, takes the edge off the contradiction between capital and labour. So if the cartels, the credit system, the unions, etc. abolish the contradictions of capitalism, if in other words they save the capitalist system from destruction, if they actually preserve it – which is, after all, why Bernstein calls them "means of adaptation"⁸ – how can they at the same time be "the prerequisites and to some extent the beginnings" of socialism? Obviously only in the sense that they bring the social nature of production more sharply into focus. But, then, to the extent that they preserve socialised production in its *capitalist form*, they make the transition to its socialist form unnecessary. That is why they can be the beginnings and prerequisites of the socialist order only in the conceptual sense, not in the historical sense; i.e. they are phenomena which, in the light of our conception of socialism, we *know* to be related to socialism, but which, in fact, not only do not bring about the socialist revolution but actually render it unnecessary. That leaves us with just the class-consciousness of the proletariat as a foundation for socialism. But it too, according to this view, is not the simple mental reflex of the ever-sharpening contradictions of capitalism and its imminent collapse (which is, in any case, prevented by the means of adaptation); it is rather a mere ideal whose force of persuasion depends upon its own imagined perfections.

In a word, what we have here is the construction of a socialist

programme on the basis of "pure knowledge," which means, in simple terms, on an Idealist basis, while objective necessity, that is, the construction of socialism on the basis of the material development of society, falls by the wayside. Bernstein's theory faces an Either-Or. Either the socialist transformation is, as before, the result of the objective contradictions of the capitalist order; in which case the contradictions will develop as the order itself develops, and, at some stage, some form of collapse will occur. But that means that the "means of adaptation" are ineffective and the theory of collapse is correct. Or the "means of adaptation" really are capable of preventing the breakdown of the capitalist system; that is, they enable capitalism to survive, which means that they abolish its contradictions. But in that case, *socialism* ceases to be a historical necessity and becomes anything you please – except the result of the material development of society. To put the dilemma differently: either Bernstein is right about the course of capitalist development, in which case the socialist transformation of society becomes utopian. Or socialism is not utopian, in which case the theory of the "means of adaptation" must be invalid. *Das ist die Frage*, that is the question.

ROSA LUXEMBURG

The Adaptation of Capitalism

Leipziger Volkszeitung, 22 and 23 September 1898

I

According to Bernstein, the most important means by which the capitalist economy adapts itself are the credit system, improved communications, and the employers' organisations.

We begin with *credit*. Credit has many different functions in the capitalist economy, but the most important of them are, of course, to increase the scope for the expansion of the forces of production and to help and facilitate exchange. Where the inherent tendency of capitalist production to expand without limit is blocked by the barriers of private property (i.e. the restricted dimensions of private capital), credit appears as a means of surmounting these barriers in a capitalist fashion. Through joint stock companies, it combines many private capitals into one, and by industrial credit, it enables any given capitalist to draw on the capital of others. Furthermore, as commercial credit, it speeds up the exchange of commodities and therefore also the flow of capital back into production and hence the whole cycle of the productive process. It is easy to overlook the effect which these two major functions of credit have on the formation of crises. If it is

true that crises arise from the contradiction between the capacity, and tendency, of production to expand and the limited capacity of the market to absorb the products, then, in view of what was said above, credit is precisely the means whereby this contradiction is brought to a head as often as is possible. In particular, it vastly increases the rate at which production expands, and it provides the inner driving force which constantly pushes production beyond the limits imposed by the market. But credit cuts both ways. Having brought about over-production (as a factor in the productive process), it then, in the subsequent crisis, assumes its character as a means of circulation and demolishes all the more thoroughly the very forces of production it helped to create. At the first sign of a slump, credit melts away. It abandons exchange just when it is most needed, it proves ineffective and pointless even where it is available, and, during the crisis, it reduces the consumer market to a minimum.

Besides these two important consequences, credit affects the formation of crises in many other ways. It not only provides the means whereby a capitalist can acquire control over the capital of others, it also gives him an incentive to make bold and reckless use of their property; i.e. it encourages foolhardy speculation. Not only is credit a treacherous instrument of circulation which serves to aggravate the crisis, it also helps to bring on and extend the crisis by turning the whole of circulation into an extremely complex and artificial mechanism with a minimum of money as its real foundation, thus rendering it liable to disruption at the slightest provocation.

So credit, far from being a means of preventing or even alleviating crises, is on the contrary a particularly powerful factor in their formation. And it could not possibly be otherwise. Put in very general terms, the specific function of credit is none other than to remove the last vestiges of stability from the capitalist system and to introduce everywhere the greatest possible elasticity, making all capitalist forces in the highest degree flexible, relative, and sensitive. It is clear that this can only facilitate and aggravate crises, which are nothing but periodic collisions of the conflicting forces in the capitalist economy.

However, this leads us to another question. How is it possible for credit to appear as a "means of adaptation" of capitalism? In whatever context or form we conceive this "adaptation" by means of credit, its essence can obviously only consist in the smoothing-over of some antagonistic relationship in the capitalist economy, the abolition or alleviation of one of its contradictions, and hence the provision of elbow-room somewhere for one of its fettered forces. But if anything in present-day capitalist economy pushes all its contradic-

tions to their limit, it is precisely credit. Credit aggravates the contradiction between *the mode of production* and *the mode of exchange* by stretching production to the maximum while paralysing exchange at the slightest pretext. It aggravates the contradiction between *the mode of production* and *the mode of appropriation* by separating production from ownership, by converting capital in production into social capital while converting profit into interest on capital, i.e. into a simple title of ownership. It aggravates the contradiction between *property relationships* and *the relationships of production* by forcibly expropriating large numbers of small capitalists and concentrating vast productive forces in the hand of a few. And it aggravates the contradiction between the social and the private character of production by making state intervention in production (joint stock companies) necessary.

In a word, credit reproduces all the main contradictions of the capitalist world. It pushes them to the point of absurdity, it convicts capitalism of its own inadequacies, and it hastens the pace at which capitalism speeds towards its own destruction, the collapse. So the prime means of adaptation for capitalism where credit is concerned must be to *abolish* credit, to make it null and void. In its present form, it is a means not of adaptation but of destruction, and it is of the greatest revolutionary effectiveness. Has not this revolutionary character of credit, which points beyond capitalism itself, even led to socialistic plans for reform and allowed its great representatives to appear as being partly prophets and partly rogues, as Marx put it?⁹

On closer inspection, the second "means of adaptation" of capitalist production, *employers' organisations*, proves equally ephemeral.¹⁰ According to Bernstein, they restrain anarchy and prevent crises by regulating production. This is, of course, true only to the extent that cartels, trusts, etc. become the general and dominant form of production. But that is rendered impossible by the very nature of the cartels themselves. The ultimate economic aim and consequence of employers' organisations is to exclude competition from a certain sector, thus influencing market profit in such a way as to increase the share gained by that branch of industry. Organisations of this kind can increase the rate of profit within one branch of industry only at the expense of another, and they can therefore never become universal. If they were extended to all major branches of industry, they would cancel each other out.

But even within the limits of their practical application, employers' organisations work directly against the elimination of industrial anarchy. Cartels normally achieve increased rates of profit on the home

market by taking capital not needed to satisfy demand at home and using it to produce goods for sale abroad at a much lower rate of profit. The result is intensified competition abroad and increased anarchy on the world market, i.e. exactly the opposite of the result intended. The present situation in the international sugar industry is a case in point.

Finally, taken overall as a manifestation of the capitalist mode of production, employers' organisations can be regarded only as an interim stage, a particular phase of capitalist development. Indeed! In the last analysis, cartels are actually a means by which the capitalist mode of production staves off a fatal fall in the rate of profit in individual branches of industry. And how do the cartels do this? Basically, by taking part of their accumulated capital out of use, which is the same device that is used, in a different form, during crises. Such a remedy resembles the disease as one drop of water resembles another, and it can be regarded as the lesser evil only in the short term. If the market begins to shrink – and this is obviously bound to happen sooner or later – then the forced partial withdrawal of capital will reach such proportions that the remedy itself becomes a disease, and capital, already extensively socialised through the employers' organisation, reverts to being private capital. Increasingly less able to find room for itself on the market, each portion of private capital prefers to try its luck alone. At this point, the employers' organisations inevitably burst like bubbles and make way once more for free competition, in an intensified form.

All in all, cartels, like credit, appear as particular phases of development which ultimately serve only to increase the anarchy of the capitalist world and to express and bring to fruition all its inmanent contradictions. They intensify the contradiction between the mode of production and the mode of exchange by pushing the conflict between producer and consumer to its extreme limit. Furthermore, they intensify the contradiction between the mode of production and the mode of appropriation by confronting the work-force with the superior might of organised capital, thus bringing the antagonism between capital and labour into the sharpest possible focus.

Finally, they intensify the contradiction between the international character of the capitalist world economy and the national character of the capitalist state by bringing in their wake a general tariff war, thus pushing to extremes the antagonism between individual capitalist states. To which we must add the direct and highly revolutionary effect of cartels on the concentration of production, technical progress, etc.

So, in their long-term effect on the capitalist economy, cartels seem to be, not "means of adaptation" which obliterate its contradictions, but actually means created by capitalism itself to increase its own anarchy, bring its internal contradictions to a head, and hasten its own demise.

II

However, if the credit system, cartels, and suchlike do not remove the anarchy of the capitalist economy, how is it that for two decades we have had no general trade crisis? Is this not an indication that the capitalist mode of production has indeed "adapted" itself to the needs of society — at least, in the main — and has thus rendered Marx's analysis obsolete? We believe that the present becalmed state of the world market has a different explanation.

We have got used to regarding the periodic major trade crises which have occurred so far as being the crises of capitalism's old age, as outlined in Marx's analysis. The best confirmation of this model seemed to be the approximately ten-year length of the production cycle. But, in our opinion, this view rests on a misconception. If we take a closer look at the various causes of the major international crises so far, we are forced to conclude that they all express the weakness, not of the capitalist economy's dotage, but of its childhood. For a start, it takes little reflection to show that in 1825, 1836, and 1847, capitalism, being in most countries still in its infancy, could not possibly have produced those periodic collisions between the forces of production and the limits of the market which arise from its advanced maturity and which are outlined in the Marxist model. In fact, the 1825 crisis was the result of the large investments in the construction of roads, canals, and gasworks which took place during the previous decade, chiefly in England, where the crisis itself occurred. The following crisis of 1836–9 was similarly the result of colossal investment in new transport systems. And the crisis of 1847 is known to have been provoked by the feverish building of railways in England (between 1844 and 1847, in just three years, Parliament gave concessions for new railways to the tune of 1½ milliard talers!).

Thus, in all three cases, the crises resulted from *restructuring* the social economy in various forms and from laying new foundations for capitalist development. In 1857, a crisis occurred when the discovery of gold mines suddenly opened up new markets for European industry in America and Australia, and when France, in particular,

followed England's example in the construction of railways (between 1852 and 1856, 1¼ milliard francs' worth of railways were built). Finally, the great crisis of 1873 was, of course, caused directly by restructuring, namely by the first onslaught of large-scale industry in Germany and Austria, following the political events of 1866 and 1871.¹¹

On each occasion, therefore, it was a sudden *expansion* in the capitalist economy's sphere of operation that led to a trade crisis, and not its exhaustion or the restriction of its elbow-room. In view of this, the recurrence of international crises at ten-year intervals must be seen as a purely superficial and fortuitous phenomenon. The Marxist model of crisis formation, as presented by Engels in his *Anti-Dühring* and by Marx in volume III of *Capital*,¹² applies to the crises we have had so far only to the extent that it exposes the *internal mechanism* and underlying *general causes* of all crises. But, as a whole, this model is much more suited to a fully developed capitalist economy in which the world market is presupposed as already given. Only then can crises recur in the mechanical fashion assumed in Marx's analysis, i.e. as a result of the inner movement proper to the processes of production and exchange and without the external impetus of some sudden convulsion in production or market relationships. If we call to mind the present economic situation, we will have to admit that we have not yet reached the state of full capitalist maturity presupposed in Marx's model of periodic crisis formation. The world market is still developing. Germany and Austria entered the phase of actual large-scale industrial production only in the 1870s; Russia not until the 1880s; France is still largely a country of small businesses; the Balkan states have, for the most part, not even shaken off the fetters of a barter economy; and it was not until the 1880s that America, Australia, and Africa entered into an active and regular exchange of goods with Europe. Thus, while the sudden, convulsive opening up of new areas of the capitalist economy, together with the consequent crises or growing pains (so to call them), are now things of the past, we have still not reached the stage of expansion and exhaustion of the world market which would produce significant periodic collisions between the forces of production and the limits of the market, which are the real crises of ageing capitalism. We are at a stage in which crises are no longer a symptom of the rise of capitalism and not yet a symptom of its demise. This transitional period has been marked by generally sluggish business activity which has lasted for about two decades, during which brief boom periods have alternated with long periods of depression.

But the very phenomena which, for the moment, keep crises at bay also prove that we are inexorably approaching the beginning of the end, the time of capitalism's final crisis. Once the world market has more or less reached its limit and can no longer be enlarged by sudden expansions while labour relentlessly increases its productivity, then sooner or later the periodic conflicts between the forces of production and the limits of exchange will begin, and their very recurrence will make them more acute and tempestuous. And if anything is especially designed to bring us closer to this period, to expand and exhaust the world market with equal speed, then it is precisely those phenomena – the credit system and employers' organisations – on which Bernstein relies as capitalism's "means of adaptation." The assumption that capitalism could adapt itself to exchange presupposes one of two things: either the world market can expand without hindrance or end; or, conversely, the forces of production are restricted in their growth so that they do not exceed the limits of the market. The first is a physical impossibility. The second is made impossible by the fact that, in all areas of production, technical revolutions are constantly taking place and daily call forth new forces of production.

Yet another phenomenon, according to Bernstein, contradicts the alleged course of things capitalist: the "virtually steadfast phalanx" of medium-sized companies to which he draws our attention.¹³ He sees in them an indication that the development of big industry has a less revolutionary and less concentrating effect than the "theory of collapse" would lead us to expect. But here too he is the victim of his own misunderstanding. It would indeed be a completely mistaken view of the development of big industry to suppose that it entailed the progressive *disappearance* of medium-sized companies from the face of the earth.

In the general course of capitalist development, there are two respects in which small capitals serve as factors in the technical revolution: they initiate new methods of production in traditional and well-established branches of industry, and they create new branches of production not yet exploited by the big capitalist. The idea that medium-scale capitalist enterprise is proceeding on a straight course of gradual decline is completely false. On the contrary, here as elsewhere the actual course of development is purely dialectical and constantly alternates between extremes. Just like the working class, the capitalist middle class finds itself under the influence of two conflicting tendencies, one which pulls it up and one which pushes it down. The depressive tendency in this case is the steady rise in the

scale of production which periodically outstrips the productive capacity of medium-sized capital and throws it out of the competition. The elevating tendency is the periodic depreciation of the available capital which, from time to time, produces a fall in the scale of production according to the *value* of the necessary minimum capital, and also the breaking of new ground by capitalist production. The conflict between medium-sized companies and big capital should not be envisaged as a regular battle in which the troops of the weaker party are steadily and continuously reduced, but rather as a periodic mowing-down of small capitals, which then shoot up again like weeds, only to be mown down once more by the scythe of big industry. Of the two tendencies, between which the capitalist middle classes are tossed to and fro like a ball, it is (by contrast with the development of the working class) the *depressive* tendency which eventually prevails. However, this is not necessarily expressed in any absolute numerical decline in the number of medium-sized companies. It is expressed, firstly, in the gradual increase in the minimum amount of capital necessary for companies in the old branches of industry and, secondly, in the steady reduction of the time-span during which small capital is able to exploit new branches of industry with a free hand. For the *individual* small capitalist this means a steady reduction in his life-expectancy and an increasingly rapid change from one method of production and investment to another; and for *the class as a whole* it means an increasingly rapid change in its social composition.

Bernstein knows this perfectly well and remarks upon it himself. But what he seems to forget is that it constitutes the very law governing the capitalist development of medium-sized companies. If small capitalists are the pioneers of technical progress, and if technical progress is the vital pulse of the capitalist economy, then it is obvious that small capital is a phenomenon inseparable from capitalist development and that it will disappear only when capitalism itself disappears. The progressive disappearance of medium-sized companies – in the absolute statistical sense with which Bernstein is concerned – would mean, not the revolutionary development of capitalism, as Bernstein thinks, but the exact opposite, namely its decline and fall. “The rate of profit, i.e. the relative growth in capital, is particularly important for all new off-shoots of capital that organise themselves independently. And if capital formation were to fall exclusively into the hands of a few existing big capitals . . . the animating fire of production would be totally extinguished. *It would die out.*”¹⁴

Bernstein’s “means of adaptation” therefore do not work, and the

phenomena which he interprets as symptoms of this adaptation must be attributed to other causes.

ROSA LUXEMBURG

The Introduction of Socialism through Social Reforms

Leipziger Volkszeitung, 24 and 26 September 1898

I

Bernstein rejects the "theory of collapse" as indicating the way a socialist society will be achieved. So how do we reach this goal from the standpoint of the "theory of the adaptation of capitalism"? Bernstein has only hinted at an answer. But an attempt to deal with the question in greater detail, along *Bernstein's* lines, has been made by *Konrad Schmidt*.⁽ⁱ⁾ According to Schmidt, the struggle "for social reforms, both in the political arena and through the unions," will bring about "ever-expanding social control over the conditions of production," and "by limiting his rights" legislation will "reduce the owner of capital more and more to the role of administrator" until finally "the capitalist, who has seen his property lose more and more of its value," is relieved of "the direction and administration of his business" and the socialised enterprise is at last introduced.¹⁵

So the means by which socialism is to be gradually introduced are the unions, social reforms, and (Bernstein adds) the political democratisation of the state.

To begin with the unions, their most important function was best described by Bernstein himself, seven years ago in *Neue Zeit*.¹⁶ It is the means whereby the workers actualise the capitalist law of wages, i.e. the sale of their labour power at current market prices. The unions serve the proletariat by exploiting, to its advantage, the market conditions which prevail at any given moment. However, these conditions themselves – i.e. the demand for labour power as determined by the state of production, the supply of labour power as provided by proletarianisation and natural reproduction, and, finally, the productivity of labour at any given time – all lie outside the sphere of trade union influence. The unions, therefore, cannot subvert the law of wages. They can, at best, keep capitalist exploitation within the current "normal" bounds, but they cannot abolish exploitation itself, not even by stages.

Konrad Schmidt does indeed call the present trade union movement "feeble beginnings," and he looks forward to a future in which

“unionism increases its influence over the regulation of production itself.”¹⁷ But the regulation of production can mean only two things: intervention on the technical side of the production process and, secondly, determination of the actual volume of production. What kind of influence can the unions have in these two areas? It is clear that, where the techniques of production are concerned, the interests of the individual capitalist coincide absolutely with the progress and development of the capitalist economy. It is his own need which spurs him on to make technical improvements. The position of the individual worker, however, is precisely the opposite. Any technical upheaval is contrary to the interests of the workers directly affected by it, and by reducing the value of their labour power, it makes their immediate condition worse than it was. Insofar as it is possible for the union to intervene on the technical side of production, it can do so only by acting for a particular group of workers with a direct interest in the matter, which means resisting innovations. In that case, however, the union does not act in the interest of the working class as a whole and its emancipation (which coincides with technical progress, i.e. with the interest of the individual capitalist); on the contrary, it acts in a reactionary fashion. And in fact we find attempts to influence the technical side of production, not in the future where Konrad Schmidt looks for it, but in the past of the trade union movement. Such attempts are characteristic of the older phase of English trade unionism (up to the 1860s), during which it was still bound by medieval guild traditions and sustained by the old-fashioned principle of “the right to a trade.”⁽ⁱⁱ⁾ The attempt of the unions to determine the volume of production and the price of goods is, by contrast, a new phenomenon. We have witnessed such attempts only very recently and, once again, only in England.⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾ In character and tendency, these efforts are on a par with those mentioned above. What does the active role of the unions in determining the volume and cost of production necessarily come down to? It comes down to a cartel of workers and employers against the consumer, and one that employs sanctions against its business competitors which are every bit as bad as those used by the regular employers’ organisations. Basically, this has ceased to be a conflict between labour and capital and has become a united campaign by capital and the work-force against society, insofar as it consists of consumers. Judged by its social value, this is a reactionary undertaking which can never constitute a stage in the proletariat’s struggle for emancipation because it is the direct opposite of a class struggle. And as to its practical value, it is a utopia which, as brief reflection shows, can never be extended to

those major branches of industry which produce for the world market.

The activity of the trade unions is thus confined mainly to the struggle for higher wages and a shorter working day, i.e. to nothing more than the regulation of capitalist exploitation according to market relationships. In the nature of the case, they cannot affect the process of production. We can even say that the entire drift of trade union development moves in a direction opposite to that assumed by Konrad Schmidt, namely towards the complete detachment of the labour market from any direct connection with the rest of the market. The strongest indication of this is the fact that even attempts to establish, at least *passively*, a direct connection between labour contracts and the general state of production by means of a sliding wage-scale have been overtaken by events; and the English trade unions have increasingly turned elsewhere.^(iv)

But, even within its actual sphere of influence, the trade union movement is not, as the theory of the adaptation of capitalism assumes, heading for unlimited expansion. Quite the contrary! Taking a long view of social development, we have to face the fact that, on the whole, we are moving, not towards a time of great prosperity for the trade union movement, but towards its decline. Once industrial development has reached its zenith and capitalism begins its "downward slide" on the world market, then the struggle of the trade unions becomes twice as difficult. To begin with, the objective conditions in the market for labour power will deteriorate, because the demand will increase more slowly and the supply more rapidly than is now the case. Secondly, capital itself will make up for its losses on the world market by clawing back the portion of the product due to the worker. After all, reducing wages is one of the most important methods of delaying the fall in the rate of profit!^(v) In England we can already see what the beginning of this second stage of the trade union movement will look like. Inexorably the movement will be reduced to defending gains already made, and even this will become increasingly difficult. The other side, the correlative, of this general course of events must be the upsurge of the *political* and socialist class struggle.

Konrad Schmidt makes the same mistake of inverting his historical perspective in connection with *social reform*, which, he thinks, "hand in hand with the trade union organisations, imposes absolutely upon the capitalist class the conditions under which it may employ labour power."¹⁸ In accordance with this concept of social reform, Bernstein calls the Factory Acts a part of "social control" and therefore –

a part of socialism.¹⁹ Wherever Konrad Schmidt discusses workers' protection by the state, he too talks of "social control." And having thus blithely transformed the state into society, he confidently adds, "i.e. the rising working class."²⁰ By means of this operation, the inoffensive measures for workers' protection decreed by the German Bundesrat²¹ are transformed into measures taken by the German proletariat for the initiation of socialism.

The mystification is obvious. Quite simply, the present state is not "society" meaning thereby "the rising working class." It is the representative of *capitalist* society, which is to say that it is a class state. For this reason, the social reform he conjures with is not a manifestation of "social control," i.e. a society of free workers controlling its own labour process, but the *class organisation of capital controlling capital's process of production*. And it is here, i.e. in the interests of capital, that social reform meets its natural limits. Of course, here too Bernstein and Konrad Schmidt see only "feeble beginnings" and expect the future to bring an endless series of social reforms in favour of the working class. But this is to commit a mistake similar to that of assuming a constantly growing trade union movement.

II

The idea of introducing socialism gradually by social reform presupposes, *and this is the crucial point*, a certain objective development of capitalist *property* and of the capitalist *state*. As to the first, the model of future development assumed by Konrad Schmidt states that "this process tends to reduce the owner of capital more and more to the role of administrator" and it does so "by limiting his rights."²² Faced with the alleged impossibility of expropriating the means of production instantaneously, Konrad Schmidt concocts a theory of *gradual expropriation*. As a necessary precondition for this theory, he stipulates a distinction of property rights into "superior property," which he attributes to "society" and wants to see extended, and the right of use, which, in the hands of the capitalist, will gradually be reduced to mere administration. Now, if this is a harmless play on words with no serious import, then the theory of gradual expropriation is left with no defence at all. If, on the other hand, it is seriously intended as a model of how the law develops, then the theory is completely false. This distinction between the various kinds of entitlement inherent in the right of property, on which Konrad Schmidt relies to save his theory of the "gradual expropriation" of capital, is characteristic of feudal society based on a barter economy,

in which the product is distributed between the various social classes *in natura* and on the basis of personal relationships. The division of property into various segments was, in this case, the predetermined way in which the distribution of social wealth was organised. With the transition to commodity production and the dissolution of all personal bonds between the individual participants in the process of production, the relationship between men and things, i.e. private property, was reciprocally reinforced. Because distribution now takes place through *exchange* rather than through personal relationships, the various claims to share in the wealth of society are assessed, not as discrete property rights in a common object, but according to the *value* which everyone brings to market. The first great change in legal relationships, which accompanied the rise of commodity production in the urban communities of the Middle Ages, was indeed the development of absolute, exclusive private property within the womb of feudal legal relationships with their divided property rights. But this development continues in capitalist production. The more the process of production becomes socialised, the more the process of distribution comes to depend purely on exchange, and the more unassailable and exclusive private property becomes. As long as the capitalist runs his factory himself, distribution is to some extent linked to personal participation in the process of production. But as personal management on the part of the manufacturer becomes superfluous (as is totally the case in joint stock companies), the ownership of capital as an entitlement in the distribution of wealth is completely severed from any personal connection with production and appears in its purest, most exclusive form. The capitalist right of property reaches its full maturity in capital held as shares or industrial credit.

Konrad Schmidt's model of historical development "from owner to mere manager" thus seems to be the converse of the way things actually develop, which is, by contrast, from owner and manager to mere owner. Like Goethe, Konrad Schmidt finds that

What he owns he sees as from afar
And what had vanished now is real and near.²³

And just as his historical model moves backward, economically, from the modern joint stock company to the factory-based manufacturing company, or even to the artisan's workshop, so in legal terms he tries to fit the capitalist world back into the shell of the feudal barter economy.

Seen from this angle, "social control" also appears in a different light from the one in which Konrad Schmidt views it. What functions today as 'social control' – workers' protection, supervision of joint

stock companies, etc. – has, in fact, nothing whatever to do with a share in property rights, with “superior property.” Its effect is not to *reduce* capitalist property but, on the contrary, to *protect* it. Or, in economic terms, it is not an *interference* with capitalist exploitation but a *normalisation* and systematisation of it. And when Bernstein raises the question as to whether there is more or less socialism contained in a Factory Act, we can assure him that even the best Factory Act contains neither more nor less socialism than municipal ordinances for the cleaning of streets and lighting of gas lamps – which, of course, also count as “social control.”

The second presupposition for the gradual introduction of socialism is, according to Bernstein and Konrad Schmidt, the development of state into society. It is already an established commonplace that the present state is a class state. But in our view this, like everything else connected with capitalist society, should be understood not as having fixed and absolute validity but as forming part of a fluid process of development.²⁴

ROSA LUXEMBURG

Tariff Policy and Militarism

Leipziger Volkszeitung, 27 September 1898

With the political victory of the bourgeoisie, the state became a capitalist state. Of course, capitalist development itself produces substantial changes in the nature of the state, continually widening its sphere of action and constantly giving it new functions, notably in economic life, thus making its intervention and control ever more urgently required. In this respect, the future amalgamation of state and society, in which the functions of the state (so to speak) revert to society, is already in train. We can, in this sense, speak of the capitalist state evolving into society, and this is no doubt what Marx had in mind when he said that workers’ protection is the first conscious intervention of “society” in its social life-process, a proposition to which Bernstein refers.²⁵

In other respects, however, this same capitalist development produces quite another change in the nature of the state. To begin with, the present state is the organisation of the ruling capitalist class. When, in the interest of social development, it takes over certain functions of general interest, it does so only because, and to the extent that, these interests and social development broadly coincide with the interests of the ruling class. Workers’ protection, for instance, is as much in the direct interests of the capitalists as a class as

it is in the interests of society as a whole. However, this harmony will only last until capitalist development has reached a certain point. Once this happens, the interests of the bourgeoisie as a class and those of economic evolution (even in the capitalist sense) begin to diverge. We believe that this phase has already begun, and it manifests itself in the two most significant phenomena of social life today: *tariff policy* and *militarism*. Both of these – tariff policy and militarism – have played their vital and therefore progressive and revolutionary part in the history of capitalism. Without protective tariffs, the growth of large-scale industry in particular countries would have been impossible. Today, however, the situation is different. In all major countries, and particularly in those that are most active in operating a tariff policy, capitalist production has reached roughly the same average level. From the standpoint of capitalist *development*, it is nowadays a matter of complete indifference whether Germany exports more goods to England or England to Germany. From this point of view, the Moor has done his work and can go.²⁶ Indeed, he should go. Given the present mutual interdependence of the various branches of industry, protective tariffs on certain commodities cannot but raise the cost of producing other commodities within the country, thus yet again paralysing industry. But from the standpoint of the interests of the *capitalist class*, it is quite otherwise. Industry may not need protective tariffs for its *development*, but industrialists need them to protect their *markets*. This means that tariffs no longer serve as a means of protecting a developing capitalist industry against a fully mature one but become a weapon used by one national group of capitalists against another. Furthermore, tariffs are no longer necessary as a means of protecting industry so that it can create and dominate a home market. They are, however, an indispensable instrument for the cartelisation of industry, i.e. for use in the battle between capitalist producers and consuming society. And, finally, the specific character of present tariff policy is vividly underlined by the fact that it is agriculture and not industry that plays the decisive part in it; in other words, tariff policy has actually become a means of *recasting feudal interests in a capitalist mould and finding an outlet for them*.

Militarism has followed a similar course. If we look at history, not as it could or should have been, but as it actually was, we invariably find that war was an indispensable factor in the development of capitalism. The United States of America, Germany, Italy, the Balkan states, Russia, and Poland all owe the conditions or the impetus for their capitalist development to wars, regardless of whether they re-

sulted in victory or defeat. From the point of view of capitalism, as long as there were still countries whose internal divisions or primitive economic isolation had to be overcome, militarism played a revolutionary role. Here, too, the situation is different today. There are no more countries for militarism to open up for capitalism. China is currently the theatre of menacing conflicts, but this is, clearly, not just a matter of opening up China for European capitalism, but of already existing *European* conflicts which, transplanted to China, have erupted on Chinese soil. Nowadays armed confrontation, whether in Europe or elsewhere, is a matter, not of capitalist countries confronting barter-economy countries, but of states driven into conflict precisely because they are equally advanced in terms of capitalist development. In these circumstances, the conflict, should it come to a head, can have nothing but dire consequences for the development of capitalism, because this time it will cause the most profound disruption and upheaval in the economic life of every capitalist country, and it will do so to no purpose whatsoever. However, from the standpoint of the *capitalist class*, things look very different. For the capitalist class, militarism has become indispensable on three counts: firstly, as a means of maintaining "national" interests against other national groups; secondly, as a most important form of investment for both finance capital and industrial capital; and thirdly, as an instrument for maintaining class dominance over the working population at home. All these interests have nothing in common with the development of the capitalist world economy as such. What is more, the specific character of present-day militarism is best demonstrated, firstly, by its general growth throughout the world in a competition that is, so to speak, driven by its own internal mechanism, a phenomenon completely unknown only a few decades ago; and, secondly, by the fatal inevitability of the impending explosion coupled with complete uncertainty as to its cause, the states involved, the objects of contention or any other details. From being a motor of capitalist development, militarism too has become a capitalist disease.

In this schism between social development and the prevailing class interest, the state is on the side of the latter. In its policies it stands, like the bourgeoisie, in *opposition* to social development; it thus comes to *lose* its character as the representative of society as a whole, and, to that extent, it becomes an unalloyed *class state*. Or to put it more accurately, these two characteristics separate and develop into a full-blown contradiction *within* the nature [*Wesen*] of the state. In fact, this contradiction grows sharper by the day. On the one hand,

state functions of a universal character, its intervention in and "control" over social life, increase; but, on the other, its class character increasingly compels the state to shift the emphasis of its activity and its means of power into areas which serve only the class interests of the bourgeoisie and are of a purely negative significance for society: militarism, tariff policy, and colonial policy. Furthermore, this means that the class character of the state increasingly permeates and dominates also its "social control" (witness the way workers' protection is handled in all countries except England).

This change in the nature of the state does not contradict but, rather, completely accords with the development of democracy in which Bernstein also sees the means of introducing socialism by stages.

As Konrad Schmidt explains, the achievement of a Social Democratic majority in parliament is nothing other than the direct route to the gradual socialisation of society. Now, democratic forms of political life are undoubtedly a phenomenon which expresses most clearly the development of the state into society and which, to that extent, constitutes a step towards the social revolution. However, the aforementioned schism in the nature of the capitalist state stands out all the more clearly in a modern democracy. It is indeed its form which enables democracy to express, within the organisation of the state, the interests of society as a whole. On the other hand, it is still a capitalist society, i.e. a society in which *capitalist* interests predominate, to which democracy thus gives expression. Institutions which are democratic in form thus become, in their content, the tools of the dominant class interest. This manifests itself tangibly in the fact that as soon as democracy shows a tendency to renounce its class character and become an instrument of the real interests of the people, the bourgeoisie and its political representatives abandon democratic forms. The idea of a Social Democratic majority in parliament seems, therefore, to be a calculation which only takes account of the formal aspect of democracy and completely disregards its actual content. And taken as a whole, democracy is not, as Bernstein assumes, a directly socialist element which percolates into capitalist society, but on the contrary a specifically capitalist device for developing the antagonisms of capitalism to their full extent and maturity.

In view of this objective development of the state, Bernstein's and Konrad Schmidt's notion of increasing "social control" as a direct means to realise socialism becomes a mere phrase, daily more at odds with reality.

The theory of the piecemeal introduction of socialism amounts to

the gradual reform of capitalist property and the capitalist state, moving them towards a socialist order of society. However, objective processes in present-day society are moving both of these in precisely the opposite direction. The process of production is becoming increasingly socialised, and state intervention, the control of the state over this productive process, is becoming more and more extensive. But at the same time, capitalist private property is becoming more exclusive and unassailable, and state control is becoming increasingly penetrated by exclusive class interests. Since, therefore, both the state and property relationships, i.e. both the *political* and the *legal* organisation of capitalism, are becoming more *capitalist* and not more socialist as they develop, they present the theory of the gradual introduction of socialism with two insuperable difficulties.

Fourier's idea of changing all the earth's seawater into lemonade overnight by means of a system of phalansteries was very fanciful.²⁷ But Bernstein's idea of converting the bitter sea of capitalism into a sweet ocean of socialism by adding bottlefuls of social-reformist lemonade is not a whit less fanciful. It is merely in worse taste.

The relationships of production in capitalist society are getting ever closer to those of socialist society. On the other hand, the political and legal relationships are building an ever-higher wall between capitalist and socialist society. The development of social reforms and of democracy do not breach this wall but, on the contrary, make it stronger and higher. It can be demolished only by the hammer blow of revolution, i.e. the seizure of political power by the proletariat.

ROSA LUXEMBURG
Practical Consequences and General Character
of the Theory
Leipziger Volkszeitung, 28 September 1898

In the first part we tried to show that Bernstein's theory removes the socialist programme from its material base and puts it on an Idealist basis. This applies to its theoretical foundation. But what does the theory look like if we translate it into practice? Firstly, the form of it does not differ in the slightest from the practice so far followed in the Social Democratic struggle. Trade union activity, the struggle for social reform, and the democratisation of political institutions, these are precisely what make up the content of Social Democratic party activity. The difference therefore lies not in the *what* but in the *how*. As things stand at the moment, the trade union and parliamentary

struggles are regarded as a means of gradually leading the proletariat towards, and training it for, the seizure of political power. But, according to Bernstein and Konrad Schmidt,²⁸ it is both pointless and impossible to take political power, so these activities should be carried on only with a view to immediate results, i.e. the improvement of the workers' material condition, the gradual restriction of capitalist exploitation, and the expansion of social control. Setting aside the aim of immediately improving the material condition of the workers (since it is common both to Bernstein's view and to the one generally held in the party), the entire difference may be summarised thus: according to the current view, the socialist significance of political and trade union activity lies in the fact that it prepares the proletariat to carry out the socialist revolution, of which it is the *subjective* factor. But according to Bernstein, its significance lies in the fact that political and trade union activity itself progressively restricts capitalist exploitation and, by degrees, eliminates the capitalist features from capitalist society and imprints socialist characteristics upon it; in short, it brings about the socialist revolution in the *objective* sense. Indeed, examined more closely, the two views are exact opposites. In the accepted party view, it is through political and trade union activity that the proletariat is brought to realise that such activity cannot possibly bring about a fundamental improvement in their situation and that it is therefore imperative that they should, once and for all, take over the means of political power. But Bernstein's view begins by presupposing the impossibility of taking political power and thus leaves the socialist order to be introduced purely by political and trade union activity.

So, in Bernstein's view, the socialist character of parliamentary and trade union activity consists in the belief that they have a gradual socialising effect on the capitalist economy. However, such an effect is, as we have tried to show, purely imaginary. The property system and the political institutions of capitalism are developing in a contrary direction. But, ultimately, this means that the practical daily activity of Social Democracy loses all connection with socialism. The main socialist significance of political and trade union activity consists in the fact that it socialises the *awareness*, the consciousness of the working class. If it is conceived as a means for the direct socialisation of the capitalist economy, it will not only fail to have its supposed effect, it will also forfeit its other and only possible social significance: it will cease to be a means of preparing the working class for the proletarian revolution.

Eduard Bernstein and Konrad Schmidt are therefore suffering from

a complete misconception when they console themselves by suggesting that the labour movement will not lose track of the final goal by confining its activity to social reform and the trade unions, because each step along this road leads to the next and the goal of socialism is thus immanent as a tendency within the movement itself. This is, indeed, perfectly true of the present tactics of German Social Democracy, in which a conscious and determined struggle for political power *takes precedence* and serves as the guiding light for social reform and trade union activity. But if the movement is detached from this struggle and social reform is set up as an end in itself, then not only is the final goal of socialism not achieved but the very opposite happens. Konrad Schmidt relies, quite simply, on a sort of mechanical movement which, once started, cannot stop by itself, and he does so on the basis of the simple notion that appetite grows with eating and the working class can never be content with reforms until the socialist revolution is complete. The latter presupposition is indeed correct, and the warrant for this is the very inadequacy of capitalist social reforms. But the conclusion he draws would be true only if it were possible to construct an unbroken chain of successive and constantly expanding social reforms leading directly from the present to a socialist order of things. But that is a fantasy. In the nature of the case, the chain is soon broken, and, from that point onwards, the movement could take any one of many paths.

The most immediate likely result of this is a tactical shift towards making the practical results of the struggle, i.e. social reforms, possible. As soon as immediate practical results become the main aim, the harsh and implacable class standpoint, which makes no sense except in connection with a struggle to seize political power, becomes more and more of a negative influence. The next step is, therefore, a compensation policy and a conciliatory approach of statesmanlike shrewdness.²⁹ But, even so, the movement cannot remain poised in permanent equilibrium. Since social reform is and always will be a hollow promise in the capitalist world, the next logical step is to be disillusioned with social reform itself, i.e. the safe haven in which Schmoller & Co. have dropped anchor.³⁰ They too ventured on the waters of social reform, and "Scanned the micro- and the macrocosm / But in the end let all go by / Whichever way God willed it."³¹ Socialism, then, is definitely not a tendency inherent in the daily struggle of the working class. It is inherent only in the ever-intensifying objective contradictions of the capitalist economy and in the subjective recognition by the working class that the abolition of these contradictions by means of a social revolution is an absolute necessity. If

one denies the one and rejects the other, as Bernstein and Konrad Schmidt do,³² then the movement is first reduced to simple trade unionism and social reform, and finally its own force of gravity brings it directly down to a rejection of the class standpoint.

These consequences are equally evident if we look at Bernstein's theory from another angle and ask: what is the general nature of this conception? It is clear that Bernstein's position is not based on capitalist relationships and that he does not, like the bourgeois economists, deny the contradictions in capitalism. Rather, his theory, like that of Marx, presupposes the existence of these contradictions. But, then, the crucial point of his remarks as a whole and the basic difference between his view and the standard Social Democratic position is that his theory is not based on the *abolition* of these contradictions by means of their own logical development.

His theory lies halfway between the two extremes. He does not want to see the contradictions mature to the point where they are *abolished* in a sudden revolutionary change, but seeks to mitigate these contradictions, to *blunt their impact*. Thus, according to him, employers' organisations and the cessation of crises lessen the contradiction between production and exchange; improvement in the situation of the proletariat and the continued existence of the middle class reduce the contradiction between capital and labour; and the growth of social control and democracy lessens the contradiction between society and the class state.

Normal Social Democratic tactics do not, of course, consist of *waiting* for the development of capitalist contradictions to reach its peak before its transformation. On the contrary, the essence of any revolutionary tactics whatsoever is to rely only on the given *direction* of the development, but then to push its consequences to the limit by means of political action. We anticipate these consequences; we, as it were, forestall further objective development, and *at all times* we stand on the ground of fully developed contradictions. Thus Social Democracy combats, for instance, tariffs and militarism, even while they still have a revolutionary role to play in the development of capitalism. But Bernstein's tactics are based, not on developing and intensifying the contradictions of capitalism, but on softening their impact. He found the aptest term for it himself when he spoke of the "adaptation" of the capitalist economy. When could such a conception ever be true? All the contradictions in contemporary society are the straightforward consequences of the capitalist mode of production. If we assume that this mode of production will continue to develop in the same direction as it has until now, then it follows necessarily that all its consequences

will also continue to develop and that its contradictions will be, not lessened, but intensified and brought to a head. Any lessening of the contradictions depends on the opposite assumption, namely, that the development of the capitalist mode of production will be blocked. In short, the most general presupposition of Bernstein's theory is a *stagnation in the development of capitalism*.³³

His theory thus condemns itself, and, indeed, on two counts. In the first place, it betrays its *utopian* nature where the final goal of socialism is concerned. It is clear from the start that, if capitalist development gets bogged down, it cannot lead to a socialist revolution; and this confirms our account of the practical consequences of the theory. Secondly, it betrays its *reactionary* character with regard to the rapid development of capitalism which is actually taking place. So, in view of this actual development of capitalism, we must ask ourselves: how are we to explain or, rather, characterise Bernstein's approach?

In the first part, we tried to show that the economic presuppositions on which Bernstein bases his analysis of present social relations, i.e. his theory of capitalist "adaptation," do not hold water. We saw that neither the credit system nor cartels can be taken as "means of adaptation" for the capitalist economy, and that neither the absence of crises nor the persistence of the middle class can be seen as a sign that capitalism is adapting itself. But, apart from being wrong, all the above-mentioned details of the theory of adaptation have a further basic characteristic in common. This theory views all the economic phenomena with which it deals, not as organically integrated into the development of capitalism as a whole or as parts of the whole economic mechanism, but as detached from this context, as existing independently, as *disiecta membra* (disjointed parts) of a lifeless machine. The notion of the adaptive effect of *credit* is a case in point. If credit is seen as an indigenous higher form of exchange, and as related to all the contradictions inherent in capitalist exchange, then it cannot possibly be seen as some kind of mechanical "means of adaptation" existing as it were outside the process of exchange, any more than money, commodities, and capital are "means of adaptation" for capitalism. But credit is not one whit less than money, commodities, and capital an organic part of the capitalist economy at a certain stage in its development; and, again like them, it is, at this stage, not only an essential part of the capitalist economy's mechanism but inasmuch as it perpetuates and intensifies the inner contradictions of that economy, it is also an instrument of its destruction.

Exactly the same holds for cartels and for advanced systems of transport and communication.

Furthermore, the same mechanistic and undialectical view of things underlies the way Bernstein takes the absence of crises as signifying the "adaptation" of the capitalist economy. For him, crises are simply disruptions in the economic mechanism, and if they are absent, then obviously the mechanism can function smoothly. In fact, however, crises are not properly speaking "disruptions," or rather, they are disruptions without which the capitalist economy as a whole could not function. If, to put it briefly, it is a fact that, on the basis of capitalism, crises are the only possible, and therefore the perfectly normal, method of periodically resolving the conflict between the unlimited expansion of productive forces and the narrow limits of demand, then it also follows that crises are organic phenomena inseparable from the capitalist economy as a whole.

Indeed, an "undisrupted" advance of capitalist production would present greater perils than the crises themselves. For it is the steady decline in the rate of profit, deriving not from the contradiction between production and exchange but from the development of the productivity of labour itself, which has the extremely dangerous tendency to make production impossible for small or medium-sized capital and thus to restrict new growth and hence the extension of capital investment. The other consequence of the same process is nothing other than crises. Crises periodically *depreciate* capital, reduce the cost of the means of production, and paralyse a part of the capital in circulation; and by so doing they simultaneously increase profits and make room for new investment and thus for new progress in production. They can therefore be seen as a means of constantly raking and fanning the fire of capitalist development. If crises ceased to exist altogether, and not just (as we are assuming) at a particular phase in the development of the world market, then the capitalist economy would not, as Bernstein thinks, flourish like the green bay tree but be driven directly into the mire. The mechanistic approach which characterises the whole theory of adaptation leads Bernstein to disregard both the positive significance of crises and the decentralising tendency of capital, which means, among other things, that he sees the constant revival of small capital as a sign that capitalism has come to a standstill and not in fact as the normal course of capitalist development.

There is, of course, one position from which all these phenomena do indeed appear as the adaptation theory depicts them; it is the position of the *individual* capitalist who sees the facts of economic life refracted by the laws of competition. The individual capitalist

does, in fact, see each organic part of the economic whole as a self-contained and independent entity. Moreover, he sees them only as they affect him, the individual capitalist, and he therefore regards them as mere "disruptions" or mere "means of adaptation." For the individual capitalist, crises are indeed mere disruptions, and their absence gives him a new lease of life. Similarly, he sees credit as a means of "adapting" his inadequate forces of production to the demands of the market, and, for him, membership of a cartel really does abolish the anarchy of production.

In short, Bernstein's theory of adaptation is nothing but a theoretical generalisation from the attitude of the individual capitalist. And what else is the expression of this attitude in theoretical terms but the essential characteristic of bourgeois vulgar economics? All the economic errors of this school are based on this same misconception, namely that of mistaking the phenomena of competition as seen by the individual capitalist for phenomena of the capitalist economy as a whole. And just as Bernstein sees credit, so vulgar economics sees, e.g., *money* as an ingenious "means of adaptation" to the demands of exchange. It too seeks the antidotes to the evils of capitalism *in* the phenomena of capitalism itself. It too agrees with Bernstein and Konrad Schmidt³⁴ in believing that it is *possible* to regulate the capitalist economy. And, again like Bernstein's theory, it ends by *softening* the contradictions and papering over the cracks in capitalism; that is, to put it differently, it ends up treating things in a reactionary rather than a revolutionary way, and it is therefore utopian.

Bernstein's theory as a whole can thus be summed up as follows: it is *a theory of socialist stagnation based, in the manner of vulgar economics, on a theory of capitalist stagnation.*

Notes

- (i) *Vorwärts*, 20 February 1898, Literary Review. We feel justified in considering Schmidt's remarks along with Bernstein's because Bernstein has made no attempt whatsoever to disavow the commentary on his views in *Vorwärts*.
- (ii) Webb, *Theorie und Praxis der Gewerkschaften*, vol. 2, pp. 100ff.³⁵
- (iii) *Ibid.*, pp. 115ff.³⁶
- (iv) *Ibid.*, p. 115.
- (v) K. Marx, *Das Kapital*, vol. 3, 1, p. 216.³⁷

The Party Conference at Stuttgart

The Debate on the Press

Second Day of the Conference: Morning Session¹

[. . .] Frau ZETKIN: I will begin by saying that I speak as a party comrade, not as a member of the “oppressed sex.” Earlier,² Comrade Gradnauer cast himself in the role of official arbitrator, or something like it, and complained that our passion for discussion had cooled somewhat since the lapse of the Antisocialist Laws. But he ended by complaining that there was too much discussion and by praising the press for not following up every line suggested. My own view, on the contrary, is that our press ought to do far more than it has done so far to discuss questions of principle and tactics. It is no misfortune that conflicting opinions arise; nobody will see it as a sign of decadence, but as evidence of the party’s vigour and growth. The only cause for concern is that efforts are being made to minimise these differences of opinion; they are not being aired in public sufficiently, and it is suggested that they can be attributed simply to differences of temperament and varying degrees of orthodoxy in the use of certain words. Problems have emerged which merited more thorough discussion in our press – most notably, the question raised by Bernstein about the final goal. Bernstein undoubtedly deserves great credit for having touched on a series of problems which needed thorough scientific investigation. But he also made his famous remark devaluing our final goal: the goal is nothing to me, the movement is everything.³ And that on the very eve of the election campaign. The fact that he can publish such an article just at the moment when we are preparing to embark on an election campaign shows how far Bernstein has lost touch with party life in Germany. According to him, trade union and legislative control will so restrict capitalist property that one fine day the capitalist himself will lose interest in owning anything because his property will have become, as it were, no more than a legal fiction. We cannot treat this idea with indiffer-

ence, for if we share Bernstein's view, we ought to concentrate, not on winning political power in capitalist society, but on achieving those individual small-scale social reforms which, in Bernstein's view, prepare the way for socialist society. In this fashion, we get a little bit of our future socialist state here and another little bit there, and we need only, as it were, stitch the whole thing together. I am astonished that this completely and fundamentally new approach has not yet been discussed at any length in *Neue Zeit* itself, and that this unorthodox view could be published without at the very least an editorial footnote by way of comment; many people have come to believe that Bernstein's article represents the views of the editors and of the party as a whole.

Furthermore, I should like to complain that our central party organ has not adequately discussed the problems raised. It used to be said that it was all Comrade Liebknecht's fault. But during the four months that he was imprisoned in Charlottenburg he cannot possibly have prevented *Vorwärts* from taking a stand.⁴ And what happened? The position of *Vorwärts* was to have no position at all. Then we had that article on Kiaochow, in which *Vorwärts* made no mention of our basic position on colonial policy but instead contrived to produce the cheap and would-be witty remark that the German working class need not feel obliged to protect the interests of the Manchu dynasty.⁵ Furthermore, Comrade Heine's views have not been debated in *Vorwärts* as they should have been. For what Heine had to say was not in fact a new tactic but the policy recommended in 1891 with the motto: for good will, there is an open hand! When has the government ever extended an open hand to us? An iron fist is what it has offered! Heine emphasises practical activity. Have we who are described as radical no practical achievements to show? Long before Heine joined the party, Schoenlank achieved substantial practical reforms, not only by means of his articles, but also by his extremely valuable work on the mercury mirror-backing workers in Fürth and their situation.⁶ Heine believes that practical achievements can sometimes be attained by means of compromise, but we want to push through our demands by fighting against the capitalist state. This is not to say that we would refuse a part-payment, however small, provided that it accords with our demands. We know that we can only achieve our demands piecemeal, but we also know that we will not get these piecemeal concessions from above through the sympathetic understanding of the government, but by fighting up from below. And if we are told that these are the tactics of sloganising, my answer is this: there are those here who have declared war on revolutionary

sloganising, but they themselves make the fullest possible use of opportunist sloganising. The party press should respond to these tendencies more forcefully than it has done so far. And that applies especially to *Vorwärts*, which has shied away in embarrassment from a whole series of important party issues. For us, there can be no question of keeping quiet; we must clarify the issues and discuss all the opinions expressed. Only thus will we continue to advance. (Applause)

STADTHAGEN:⁷ I assume that the comrades whose activity is under attack are acting in good faith, and I know that the editors of *Vorwärts* are trying to do their best. That, however, cannot prevent me from criticising the activities of *Vorwärts* as being unsuited both to Berlin and to the party. Criticising *Vorwärts* is awkward, because sometimes one is referring to its role as central party organ and sometimes to its role as a local newspaper. I do not wish to attack any particular individual, but when comrades are forever saying that their opponents should not throw slogans around, I am tempted to ask what they think they are throwing around themselves. Fortunately, the party still has the stomach to digest your slogans. A note has been struck which should not normally be struck among comrades, even if the speaker does happen to be female. I gladly accept Comrade Fendrich's accusation that everything I say is commonplace.⁸ I only wish that he could so accustom himself to the alleged commonplaces of Comrade Luxemburg that they did actually become commonplace to him and his readers. The salient point is that we do not write newspapers for the benefit of those who stand solidly within the party. We must lay special emphasis on agitational impact, and in this respect the central organ falls short. Yesterday I said, as a joke, that we make the most impressive progress where we have no party press; and one comrade took me seriously.⁹ But it so happens that in East Prussia, part of Brandenburg, and Upper Silesia, where we have achieved major successes, our press has only a very small circulation. In Mecklenburg, however, our press is very active. We certainly do not need to publish our programme every day, but in commenting on concrete events we ought to take every opportunity to draw attention to our aims. Yet in my article on the shortage of labour, *Vorwärts* deleted my comment that the shortage of labour can be definitively eliminated only in a socialist community. It is precisely such reminders of our aims in connection with topical issues which can bring fresh ranks of the proletariat within our reach. Why has *Vorwärts* waited so long to publish detailed articles on the right of combination and workers' protection? That would be much more

valuable than an article on some aspect of foreign policy. Issues which concern the worker and are most closely bound up with his economic conditions should be given more prominence.

Vorwärts has also been unsatisfactory in the matter of state elections. We may be for or against participation, but we must demand that the issue be honestly discussed. When, for example, an article of 17 September states that even the Prussian state assembly may accept the Prison Bill,¹⁰ that is either ignorance or demagoguery.

SINGER:¹¹ I must register a protest against the accusation of demagoguery which the speaker levelled at comrades who cannot defend themselves here.

STADTHAGEN: Then that leaves us with the first alternative. *Vorwärts* must become an organ which is effective in agitation. We must revolutionise the minds of those who are not yet on our side. I cannot agree with Comrade Zetkin that it was a mistake for *Vorwärts* not to discuss Bernstein's articles just before the election. It was right for the editors to put such questions aside before the election. But we must ensure that the central party organ becomes a recruiting organ which will turn the uncommitted into Socialists.

With the agreement of the conference, Singer then invited Comrade Parvus to speak, although he had no mandate.

PARVUS: The *Sächsische Arbeiter-Zeitung*, and my own part in it, were brought into the debate before we reached "The Press" on the agenda,¹² so keen was the urge to hold an inquisition – and the keenest were those who protested most against turning this meeting into a witch-hunt. Gradnauer, himself a former editor of the *Sächsische Arbeiter-Zeitung*, made the strongest attack upon it. It is not clear to me how he views party discussions. First he says that discussions within the party are absolutely vital, and even attributes the unsatisfactory result of the Reichstag elections to the relative lack of them; then he says that party discussions are damaging. Party discussions are inevitable wherever there are differences of opinion. I share his regret that they are often personal and acrimonious in character, but I doubt whether any party which takes things seriously can avoid the occasional use of expressions which those who are attacked find unpleasant, especially if they feel themselves to be the weaker side. It is remarkable that the very people who have put themselves forward as champions of politeness in party literature are those whose temperament sometimes leads them to display a very different sort of behaviour: Auer, for example. A party discussion should be avoided only if someone picks a quarrel without objective cause. But it still needs to be proved that this was the case with the *Sächsische Arbeiter-*

Zeitung. Heine has not made it quite clear why he departs from the accepted view. His remarks on the *do ut des* policy (give and it shall be given unto you) sound harmless, but only because at the moment it is quite unthinkable that the government will co-operate and the policy inevitably seems utopian. However, this brutal attitude on the part of the government is not evident in all capitalist states. In England we find a different tactic adopted. But at the very moment when Germany also begins to realise that the Social Democratic movement cannot be fought with punitive measures, that we are dealing with a product of economic development, then Heine's idea becomes dangerous. At a certain stage of development, a parliamentary accommodation with Social Democracy will be sought, and then the ideas which Heine now advances with such diffidence become practicable. We must learn from experience, from England and from France with its possibilism, and strangle such notions at birth. I was certainly not trying to recommend any new tactic. Vollmar says: look how nicely the party has muddled through to its present strength! He has forgotten that the tactics he suggested in 1891 were rejected by the party by a large majority.¹³ So the party has muddled through in defiance of Vollmar's tactics, and so it should continue to do in the future. Vollmar has raised the spectre of Blanquism.¹⁴ But this is something we have long since left behind us. We know perfectly well that practical work must be done. While the party was small, it had no opportunity to engage in practical politics on a large scale and concentrated on matters of dogma. However, as it grew in power and numbers the opportunity for practical work also grew, but it also became all the more difficult to co-ordinate and direct this highly complex political activity in accordance with the principles of our social revolutionary programme. How shall we overcome these difficulties? By constantly being clear about the situation in which we find ourselves, the tasks we have to perform, and the goal we have set ourselves. And that can only be done through party discussions. In 1890 the party, rightly recognising the difficulty of its tasks, paid greater attention to its press and made *Vorwärts* the central party organ while *Neue Zeit*, as the party's scientific review, became a weekly publication intended to provide a theoretical summing-up of the party's tasks and aims. And where are we now? Everyone complains that *Vorwärts* is not a leading organ. And in the party's scientific journal, one of the principal editors has placed himself in direct opposition to the fundamental principles of scientific socialism and, moreover, of the party programme itself. And not one of the editorial board protests. I certainly do not think that the party is threatened

by greater dangers now than in the past. On the contrary. The movement has steadily matured in theoretical matters, but that does not remove the need for us to criticise incessantly and to see to it that we keep to the road which has so far led us from victory to victory. It is with this in mind that I urge you not to allow party discussions to lapse, and to ensure that we have a leading organ and a scientific review which will see to it that our principles and our programme are adhered to. Our programme is not incidental, a mere scrap of paper; it is the outcome of a century of history of the proletarian class struggle, and this outcome is a *political fact* which cannot be blotted out or talked out of existence.

Further discussion was suspended [. . .]

Afternoon Session

3.15 P.M. SINGER in the Chair.

The discussion on the press was resumed.

ROSA LUXEMBURG: Vollmar has bitterly reproached me with trying to teach old veterans a lesson when I am a young recruit to the movement.¹⁵ That is not the case. It would not be necessary, since I am firmly convinced that the veterans stand on the same ground as I do. It is not a matter of teaching anyone a lesson but rather of giving clear and unambiguous expression to a particular tactic. I know quite well that I still have to win my spurs in the German movement, but I intend to do so on the left wing of the party where they fight the enemy, and not on the right where they compromise with him. (Objection) When Vollmar answers my factual observations by saying: "You greenhorn, I could be your grandfather!" then I know that his logical reasoning is on its last legs. (Laughter) In fact, in the course of his comments he made a number of remarks which from a veteran are, to say the least, surprising. To his devastating quotation from Marx on workers' protection, I reply with Marx's other statement that the introduction of workers' protection in England virtually meant the salvation of bourgeois society itself.¹⁶ Vollmar also asserted that it was wrong not to treat the trade union movement as socialist and cited the [English] trade unions. Well, has Vollmar never heard of the difference between old and new trade unionism? Does he not know that the old trade unionists espouse the ossified bourgeois point of view? Does he not know that it was Engels, no less, who expressed the hope that the socialist movement would now make progress in England, because England had ceased to dominate the world market and the trade union movement would therefore

have to change course.¹⁷ Vollmar summoned up the bogey of Blanquism. But does he not know the difference between Blanquism and Social Democracy? Does he not know that the Blanquists see a handful of emissaries taking over political power in the name of the working class, whereas for Social Democrats it is the working class itself which does this? That is a distinction which no veteran of the Social Democratic movement should forget. And thirdly he has credited me with an obsessive enthusiasm for violent methods. Neither my comments nor my articles against Bernstein in the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* have given him the slightest cause to do so. I hold quite the contrary view. I say that the only violent method which will bring us victory is the socialist enlightenment of the working class in the day-to-day struggle. One could pay my views no greater compliment than to say that they are completely self-evident. Of course what I said was self-evident to any Social Democrat, but not self-evident to everyone at this conference. (Oh!) For example, not to Heine with his compensation policy. How can this policy be made compatible with the seizure of political power? We demand the reinforcement of popular rights and democratic liberties. The capitalist state demands the reinforcement of its instruments of force and its cannon. Even assuming the most favourable outcome, that the exchange is honestly made and kept to by both sides, what we stand to gain exists only on paper. Even Börne remarked that he would not advise anyone to take out a mortgage on a German constitution, since all German constitutions are part of the removable furniture.¹⁸ If constitutional liberties are to have lasting value they must be gained by fighting, not by agreement. On the other hand, what the capitalist state stands to gain from us has a solid, brutal reality. The cannon and the soldiers which we concede alter the actual material balance of power to our detriment. It was none other than Lassalle who said: "The true constitution of a country consists not in its written constitution but in the actual balance of power."¹⁹ The inevitable result of compensation policy is thus that on paper we alter the balance of power in our favour while, in reality, altering it in favour of our opponents, so that basically we weaken our own position and strengthen the opposition. I wonder whether anyone who suggests such a thing can be said to be making serious efforts to gain political power. I believe that the indignation with which Comrade Fendrich stressed the self-evidence of this goal was addressed to me by mistake; it was basically aimed at Heine.²⁰ It was merely the expression of the sharp antagonism which Heine created between himself and the proletarian conscience

of our party when he dared to speak of a policy of making concessions to the capitalist state.

Then we have Konrad Schmidt's observation that the anarchy of capitalist rule can be eliminated by trade union activity and the like.²¹ If anything justifies the point in our programme concerning the necessity of gaining political power, then it is the conviction that there is no cure for capitalist anarchy in the herb garden of capitalist society. Anarchy is growing daily greater, as are the dreadful sufferings of the working class, the insecurity of their existence, exploitation, and the gulf between rich and poor. Can anyone who wants to bring about a solution by capitalist means be said to be convinced of the need for the working class to seize political power? Here too, then, Fendrich and Vollmar are indignant not at me but at Konrad Schmidt. And then we have the well-known remark in *Neue Zeit*: "The final goal, whatever it be, is nothing to me, the movement is everything."²² Nobody who says that stands for the necessity of seizing political power. So you see, a good many party comrades do not stand for the final goal of our movement. That is why it is vital to say so clearly and unambiguously. If ever it was necessary, it is necessary now. The forces of reaction are raining blows upon our heads. The Kaiser's most recent speech²³ must be answered in this debate. We must say clearly and firmly, like old Cato: "I am furthermore of the opinion that this state must be destroyed." The seizure of political power is still our final goal, and our final goal is still the heart and soul of our activity. The working class must not adopt the decadent position of the philosopher: "the final goal is nothing to me, the movement is everything." On the contrary: the movement for its own sake without regard to the final goal, the movement as an end in itself, is nothing to me, the final goal is everything. (Applause)

THIELE (Halle): [. . .]²⁴

FROHME²⁵ The behaviour of Comrade Luxemburg and Comrade Parvus make it quite clear what kind of element, what kind of mind, we have to deal with here. I would like to exempt Frau Zetkin. She is certainly motivated by the noblest intentions, although she has allowed herself to be carried down the wrong road. I do not allow this mitigating circumstance in the cases of Comrade Parvus and Comrade Luxemburg. Their performance has left me with the impression that their sole concern was to put on a bit of a firework display . . .

SINGER: I must protect comrades against the implication that their remarks are intended as a theatrical spectacle, or to create an illusion. Such insinuations should not be made.

FROHME: When I recall the outrageous manner in which Parvus has railed and railed for weeks, indeed for months, against our best, most respected, and most reasonable men, I think I must be forgiven for offending against parliamentary procedure. Parvus said that he felt a witch-hunt was being conducted here. He is the very worst witch-hunter of them all. In the *Sächsische Arbeiter-Zeitung* he has conducted himself in a fashion that is contrary to the function of the party press, and the conference ought to take a strong stand against it. Some party papers have described his behaviour as undisciplined and criminal. I agree with them entirely. Did he not say that Auer and Heine wanted to replace our present tactics with opportunism and political horse-trading?²⁶ Our tactics have remained the same. They have made us great. Political power is not won by radical-sounding phrases and by hanging out the red rag. (Hear, hear!) Our tactics must be aimed at helping the economically deprived. Comrade Luxemburg spoke of a left wing which fights and a right wing which trades with the enemy. Where is there even the tiniest sign of such trading? Luxemburg speaks like a goddess from the clouds and hurls compelling phrases about, without making the slightest attempt at proof. I would love to see whether Parvus and Luxemburg could win one single constituency with the theories they have put forward today; and after all, that is rather important in gaining political power. The pair of them are quite welcome to sit at their desks and expound and elucidate scientific principles. It is we who have to fight and who have to answer to present and future generations who should be left to determine our tactics! (Applause)

GRADNAUER:²⁷ Yesterday, Comrade Bebel remarked that *Vorwärts* had been too confident before the election.²⁸ There is some truth in this, but, in reply, let me remind him that *Vorwärts* did issue frequent and emphatic warnings to our comrades that they should not be too sure of victory. And why did Bebel not give us some indication of his feelings? He knows how anxious the editors of *Vorwärts* are to follow his advice. I was very surprised by Comrade Zetkin's attack, albeit for a superficial reason. She is a member of the party leadership and, in this capacity, comes to Berlin several times a year, which gives her the opportunity to comment on faults which come to her notice and to suggest ways and means of dealing with them. As far as I know she has not done so, and I would almost call this a sin of omission. It is possible that the faults would already have been remedied, or at least agreement reached, if she had voiced her criticisms in a smaller forum. She went on to say that the shortcomings of *Vorwärts* used to be laid at Liebknecht's door but that, when

he was absent, *Vorwärts* lost direction completely. Well, I have never shared the view that Liebknecht was to blame for the ills of *Vorwärts*. It is silly to take such a view, but it is equally silly to attack any other particular individual in this manner. These weaknesses derive not from individuals but from deeper causes, from a host of difficulties which afflict the central party organ. On the one hand, *Vorwärts* has been criticised for being insufficiently active in agitation. Well, respected comrades, I freely admit that, in this regard, there is much room for improvement. I believe that here and there many of the articles in *Vorwärts* could be written rather differently. But it is wrong, in my view, to generalise from this as Comrade Stadthagen has done. In *Vorwärts* we have, after all, the excellent agitatory articles by Liebknecht, unsurpassed in the entire party press. Stadthagen should tell us if he knows anyone who can write in a more gripping style. Not all of us are Liebknechts! The same holds for the accusation that we have underemphasised the final goal. I disagree emphatically. We have taken every possible opportunity of drawing attention to our final goals, especially in our observations on middle-class movements, bourgeois social reform movements, and also in the election campaign. Stadthagen must produce other evidence than this. What is, in fact, Stadthagen's ideal? How would he like *Vorwärts* to be edited? During the election, Stadthagen himself edited a newspaper which was distributed in certain districts in the province of Brandenburg. Far be it from me to say that this was not a good paper. But if *Vorwärts* had been edited as Stadthagen edited his *Wähler*, we would certainly have had just as many critics. (Interjection: A lot more!) I have asked Stadthagen privately how he would like to see the paper, and he replied that he envisaged it as being much like the Hamburg *Echo*. I have an extraordinarily high opinion of the Hamburg *Echo*. It is an extremely well edited party organ, but it is not in fact so vastly different in language and agitation from *Vorwärts*. All of which leads me to think that Stadthagen's accusations are unfounded.

Comrade Zetkin said that *Vorwärts* had failed to take a position on various issues important to the party. I agree entirely that the central party organ must take a position on important issues, but this is precisely where the greatest difficulty lies. In the provincial press, any individual can, as his personal nature dictates, sit down and write to his heart's content. It does not matter much if he makes the occasional mistake. Not so in the central party organ. The enemy press will seize on every detail and make a big production out of anything. In addition, the paper has a dual role as central party organ and local

party paper. Consider, for instance, the Prussian state elections! It is our duty to live on good terms with our comrades in Berlin. The Berliners, who are seriously disadvantaged by the role of *Vorwärts* as central party organ, took a different line from that of the Hamburg party conference.²⁹ What were we to do? We were obliged to implement the Hamburg decision, and that did not please the comrades in Berlin. In such cases, there is only one thing for us to do and that is to curb our fighting zeal somewhat. I take the opportunity to make another brief digression. Stadthagen has asserted that, in the election campaign, we completely mishandled the right of combination, and he spoke of ignorance and demagogy. The situation was that a notice appeared in *Vorwärts* reproducing passages from speeches in the Upper House by Dr Giese and Freiherr von Stumm who had expressed their intention of using the *lex* Recke to deny the workers the possibility of striking.³⁰ We added the comment that another attempt of this kind might be made. Now Stadthagen is a very resourceful lawyer. He should not underestimate the Prussian deputies so far as to think them incapable of trying to circumvent the industrial regulations of the Reich by using the Prussian state assembly to remove the right of combination.

Comrade Zetkin also accuses us of treating certain issues inadequately, e.g. the problem of Heine. Even the arguments of Comrade Dr Luxemburg have not yet persuaded me that this is a major matter for the party. I still maintain that the problem has been inflated. What is more, the parliamentary party had considered the matter and reached the conclusion that there was no reason to proceed against Heine. (Hear, hear!) A further consideration was that we were on the eve of the Reichstag elections. Should we perhaps have proceeded against Heine and disrupted the entire election campaign in Berlin? The Berlin comrades would have come down on us like a ton of bricks, and quite rightly so. And the same holds for other problems. Mention has occasionally been made of the colonial question, which is also said to be a matter of great importance. Here again the parliamentary party had already pronounced, and established that no conflicts or deviations of principle were involved. It was the same with the Bernstein question. We were supposed to take a stand on it, but it is not as simple as that. When we reported Bernstein's remarks in *Vorwärts* we stated at once that it was not possible for a daily newspaper to deal with them — though we did from the start evince a measure of disapprobation. Where were we to find the resources to involve ourselves, as a daily newspaper, in a polemical exchange of this kind? Our editors, like those of most party papers, are more than

fully occupied with their daily run-of-the-mill work. There are at most one or two papers in Germany whose chief editor is in a position to devote all his energy to scientific questions. If we had wanted to take up cudgels with Parvus we would have had to appoint a special editor to do it. (Laughter) It is not for the daily papers to discuss scientific questions, but for *Neue Zeit*. Criticism of *Vorwärts* is not only a good thing but desirable, if yet further improvements are to be made; and I can only say that the editors of *Vorwärts* will try their best. But we should not make criticisms which fail to appreciate the actual situation. No impartial critic of *Vorwärts* could speak as Comrade Zetkin has done. I admire Comrade Zetkin's temperament, achievements, and literary work, but how would she like it if I were to criticise *Die Gleichheit* in that sort of way? She would not fare well under such treatment. She has not succeeded in creating a major movement of working-class women with her paper. That is not, of course, entirely due to her, but rather to a great variety of circumstances. Nonetheless, some of the blame could be laid at her door, at least if she were to be criticised as she has criticised *Vorwärts*, for she would then have to be told that the doctrinaire leading articles she writes in her paper are pretty much the same from one issue to the next. (Hear, hear!) It would never have occurred to me to make such a remark if Comrade Zetkin had not criticised *Vorwärts* in the way she did. Do please criticise, but do so impartially. Then we can promise you that we will, as far as lies within our power, try to improve and make our central party organ a truly excellent party newspaper. (Enthusiastic applause)

BEBEL: Comrades! My first duty is to speak, not on my own behalf, but on behalf of an absent member who has been attacked on several occasions and who has asked me to read a statement. I refer to *Eduard Bernstein*. He knew that his series of articles would be under attack at this conference, and he therefore asked me to read the following "Statement":

"The views I expressed in the series 'Problems of Socialism' have recently been discussed in socialist papers and at socialist meetings; and the German Social Democratic Party conference has been asked to state its position with regard to them. In case this happens and the party conference complies with the request, I feel obliged to make the following statement.

"The vote of a meeting, whatever its status, obviously cannot dissuade me from the views I have formed in the course of an investigation into social phenomena. I stated my views in *Neue Zeit*, and I see no reason to depart from them in any important particular.

"It is, however, equally obvious that I cannot be indifferent to a vote of the party conference. It will therefore be understood that I am particularly anxious to defend myself against misrepresentations and erroneous conclusions drawn from my remarks. Since I am prevented from attending the conference myself, I hereby do this in the form of a written communication.

"Certain parties have asserted that the practical implication of my essays would be that we abandon the taking of political power by the politically and economically organised proletariat.

"That is an arbitrary conclusion and I emphatically dispute its accuracy.

"I have opposed the view that we stand on the threshold of an imminent collapse of bourgeois society, and that Social Democracy *should allow its tactics to be determined by, or made dependent upon, the prospect of any such forthcoming major catastrophe. I stand by this view in every particular.*

"Supporters of this catastrophe theory base their view largely on the arguments of *The Communist Manifesto*. They are wrong in every respect.

"The prognosis for the development of modern society outlined in *The Communist Manifesto* was correct insofar as it sketched the general tendencies of this development. It was, however, mistaken in various specific conclusions, notably in its estimate of the *length of time* which this development would require. This latter point has been recognised without reservation by Friedrich Engels, the co-author of the *Manifesto*, in his preface to *The Class Struggles in France*.³¹ But it is obvious that if the development of the economy took very much longer than was originally envisaged, it would also assume *forms* and produce structures which were not, and could not have been, foreseen in *The Communist Manifesto*.

"The intensification of social relations has not in fact occurred as the *Manifesto* depicts it. It is not only useless but extremely foolish to conceal this fact from ourselves. The number of property-owners has grown, not diminished. The enormous increase in social wealth has been accompanied, not by a fall in the number of capitalist magnates, but by an increase in the number of capitalists of all grades. The middle classes are changing in character, but they are not disappearing from the social spectrum.

"The concentration of industrial production has still not taken place with consistently equal intensity and speed across the board. It does admittedly bear out the prophecies of socio-political criticism in a great many branches of production, but in other branches it still

lags behind them. In *agriculture*, the process of concentration is taking place even more slowly. Industrial statistics show an extraordinarily wide and varied range of enterprises. No class of enterprises shows any sign of disappearing from the scale. Significant changes in the internal structure of these industries and in their interrelations cannot conceal this fact.

“Politically, in all the developed countries, we are seeing the privileges of the capitalist bourgeoisie gradually giving way to democratic institutions. Under the influence of these institutions and driven by the growing vitality of the labour movement, a social reaction has set in against the exploitative tendencies of capital. It is as yet timid and tentative, but it is there, and more and more sectors of economic life are coming under its influence. Factory legislation, the democratisation of local government and the expansion of its activities, the removal of legal restrictions on trade unions and co-operative organisations, the consultation of labour organisations in all work contracted by public authorities, all are signs of this stage of development. The fact that Germany still considers the possibility of gagging the unions indicates not its advanced but its *retarded* political development.

“The more the political institutions of modern nations are democratised, the more the necessity and the opportunity for great political catastrophes will be reduced. Anyone who stands by the theory of catastrophe must seize every opportunity to resist and restrict the development I have outlined, as indeed the consistent supporters of this theory once did. But must the proletariat take political power only by means of a political catastrophe? And does this mean the appropriation and use of state power exclusively by the proletariat against the non-proletarian world?

“If anyone wants to say that it does, let me remind him of two things. In 1872, Marx and Engels stated in their preface to the new edition of *The Communist Manifesto* that the Paris Commune in particular had proved that ‘the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes.’³² And in 1895, Friedrich Engels explained in detail, in his preface to *The Class Struggles*, that the time for surprise political attacks, or ‘revolutions carried through by small conscious minorities at the head of unconscious masses’ had now passed and that a large-scale confrontation with the military would be the means of *delaying*, even *reversing* for a while, the steady growth of Social Democracy; in short, that Social Democracy would flourish ‘*far better on legal methods than on illegal methods and overthrow.*’³³ Accordingly, he defines the immediate task of the party as ‘to keep this growth [in

electoral support] going without interruption,' i.e. '*slow propaganda work and parliamentary activity.*'³⁴

"Thus Engels who, as his statistical examples show, nonetheless managed to overestimate somewhat the speed with which things would develop. Shall we be told that, because he wished to avoid a situation in which the steady growth of Social Democracy secured by legal propaganda was interrupted by a political catastrophe, he abandoned the seizure of political power by the working class?

"If no such objection is raised and his remarks are endorsed, then there are no reasonable grounds for offence at the statement that the task of Social Democracy, for a long time to come, will be, not to speculate on the great collapse, but 'to organise the working class politically and educate it for democracy, and to fight for all reforms in the state which are likely to raise the working class and to restructure the state along more democratic lines.'³⁵

"That is what I said in my impugned article and what I still maintain with all that it implies. As regards the matter in question, it amounts to the same thing as Engels's proposition, for democracy means that *at any given time the working class should rule to the extent permitted by its intellectual maturity and the current stage of its economic development.* Incidentally, in the place just mentioned, Engels explicitly refers to the fact that even *The Communist Manifesto* 'proclaimed the winning of . . . democracy as one of the first and most important tasks of the militant proletariat.'³⁶

"In short, Engels is so thoroughly convinced that tactics geared to a catastrophe have had their day that he considers *a revision to abandon them* to be due even in the Latin countries where tradition is much more favourable to them than in Germany. 'If the conditions of war between nations have changed,' he writes, 'no less have those for the war between classes.'³⁷ Have we forgotten this already?

"Nobody ever questioned the necessity for the working class to fight for democracy. The quarrel is about the theory of collapse and the question of whether, given the present economic development of Germany and the degree of maturity of its urban and rural working class, Social Democracy would benefit from a sudden catastrophe. I have answered this question in the negative and I shall continue to do so, because in my view a steady advance offers a more secure guarantee of lasting success than the chances offered by a catastrophe.

"And as I am convinced that important stages in the development of nations cannot be leapt over, I set the greatest possible store by the immediate tasks of Social Democracy, viz. the struggle for the political rights of the worker, the political activity of workers in towns

and municipalities for the interests of their class, as well as the work of organising workers economically. It is in this spirit that, at one point, I penned the statement that the movement was everything to me, that what is *normally* called the final goal of socialism was nothing; and in this spirit I still endorse it today. Even if the word 'normally' had not shown that the proposition was to be understood only conditionally, it was quite obvious that it *could* not express indifference towards the ultimate implementation of socialist principles, but only indifference – or, more correctly, lack of anxiety – as to 'how' things would ultimately take shape. At no time has my interest in the future gone beyond general principles, and detailed depictions of the future were never something I could read through to the end. It is present tasks and those of the immediate future which occupy my thoughts and energies; perspectives beyond that concern me only insofar as they suggest guide-lines for the most effective action in this regard.

"The seizure of political power by the working class and the expropriation of the capitalists are not in themselves final goals but merely the means to achieve certain goals and fulfil certain aspirations. As such they are demands in the programme of Social Democracy, and nobody questions them. The circumstances in which they will be fulfilled cannot be predicted. We can only fight for their realisation. But the taking of political power cannot be achieved without political *rights*, and the most important tactical problem which Social Democracy has to solve at the present is, it seems to me, *the best way to extend the political and industrial rights* of the German working man. Unless a satisfactory answer can be found to this question, stressing the other one is ultimately no more than empty rhetoric.

London, 29 September 1898

Eduard Bernstein"

In view of the comments made upon Bernstein personally and upon his views, I think it was necessary to have this statement read out. I think we can be particularly grateful to Bernstein for having given, in this statement, something like a synopsis of what he has said in an extensive series of articles in *Neue Zeit*. The task of those who will be dealing with this question in the future – and it must be dealt with (Approval) – has thus been made easier. (Enthusiastic applause) I must say at once that I do not share Bernstein's view. There are major points of difference between us. Repeated reading of this statement has given me the impression that Bernstein finds himself profoundly at odds with his own pronouncements. But the conference cannot deal with this, because it is a question, not of tactics, but of

the basic conception of things which we all share. (Enthusiastic approval) And such questions cannot be decided at a party conference. They must be thoroughly discussed, *pro* and *contra*, in the press. My friend Kautsky will no doubt say something later on why *Neue Zeit* has not yet done this. Nor do I wish to involve myself today in the vitally important question of tactics. Both yesterday and today we have heard speeches which had virtually nothing to do with our actual subject. (Laughter) Only Thiele and Gradnauer have kept to the point. However, the others spoke on a question which is indeed particularly important and which must be discussed; but first of all the ground must be prepared. The party conference quite rightly refused to add the question of tactics to the agenda at the last moment. We would have made no progress on it today. In short, I shall not comment on any of the questions that have been raised. Just a few brief remarks. As far as I am concerned, the question of the observations made by Comrade Heine in his first speech has already been dealt with, since, as a member of the parliamentary party, I had the fullest possible opportunity to express my reservations at the meeting which Heine attended at our invitation. As everyone knows, the parliamentary party has issued a statement on the problem, and that is the end of it. I would find myself in dispute with Heine again only if he developed views or committed actions incompatible with my understanding of things. From the time he delivered that speech until the present, that has not happened. For these and similar reasons, I am also not in a position to make any kind of comment on *Vorwärts* and its conduct. As a member of the party leadership, and also in my personal capacity, I have often taken the opportunity to discuss my views with the editors. In these circumstances, it would be utterly tactless of me to embark on a further discussion of the question here. But as regards the polemic against the *Sächsische Arbeiter-Zeitung*, I must frankly tell the former editor of this paper, who is present today,³⁸ that, while I have often been delighted by his opposition to, and criticism of, the party press and indeed the party leadership, I must emphatically condemn the fact that, in most cases, his criticisms employ a tone and manner of expression which make it impossible for the party under attack to engage in calm debate. (Hear, hear!) Given the situation in which we find ourselves, given Bernstein's statement, given the fact that his views are echoed in certain quarters within the party, and given the necessity of dealing with these views, I too can only conclude with the wish that we discuss every aspect of the matter; but let our discussion be objective, and let us not forget that we speak as party comrade to party comrade. (Enthusiastic applause)

KAUTSKY: Several speakers have been accused of having nothing new to say and of thus causing the congress deep disappointment. I am afraid that this accusation will apply to me as well, if you expect me to say anything particularly new. I would find that quite impossible after the great debate we have already had. All the major points of view have already been expounded. I would not have risen to speak at all if my conduct in office had not been attacked, thus leaving my silence open to misinterpretation. Bernstein's articles are the issue at stake. I note with pleasure that nobody has suggested that I should not have published these articles. It has been generally acknowledged that they deal with extremely important problems and have injected into the debate extremely important points of view which are both valuable and vital for the development of our intellectual life. However, the editors of *Neue Zeit* have been accused of publishing these articles without any reply. It was said that a reply was absolutely essential, for valuable though these articles may be as a subject for discussion, they would, by the same token, be disastrous if left unanswered, or if they came in the future to determine the tactics of the party. I can say now that nobody was more surprised than I that these articles gave rise to no discussion in *Neue Zeit*. I had expected that all those who wished to have a crack at Bernstein would do so in *Neue Zeit*. *Neue Zeit* is the party's organ for discussion. I had expected that Comrade Luxemburg in particular would attack Bernstein in *Neue Zeit*. She did not do so. In consequence of all this, much time was lost, and yet more time was lost because others promised me articles against Bernstein which they did not deliver. In the meantime, an article by Plekhanov has appeared,³⁹ and others will follow. I am not so conceited as to think that, once Bernstein had spoken, everything depended on my rushing in to state my position on the matter. I do not believe that the party has suffered damage because I did not do so. However, my silence has been taken as agreement or, as Parvus puts it, perplexity and helplessness.⁴⁰ Well, I need not answer the charge of perplexity and helplessness. But I would like to rebut the view that I refrained from replying because the editors of *Neue Zeit* are in full agreement with Bernstein's views.

It is with great reluctance that I take the floor, for I am obliged to state my disagreement with a man who, for eighteen years, has been one of my closest companions in arms, a man who was in the front line of battle during the party's darkest days and who consequently now lives in exile, a man who has no chance of defending his views at this meeting. But where there are ambiguities to be removed, allowances cannot, of course, be made for such considerations. I shall,

however, do my best to say nothing hurtful and to keep undue bitterness out of the discussion.

You have heard Bebel read Bernstein's statement. I think that the entire conference will have been particularly surprised that Bernstein should feel it necessary to emphasise a number of points as being especially crucial when, in fact, there is no disagreement about them. When he explains that the path of legality is to our advantage at the moment, that legality is destroying not us but our opponents, that our task is to get reforms, democratic and economic, and to organise the proletariat, then we can only wonder what impelled Bernstein to say these things. Is there a single individual in the party who does not share this view? It is quite clear that Bernstein has lost touch with the party. (Approval) I am sorry to say that various speeches and isolated phrases in the press have given Bernstein an entirely false picture of the party. He sees us as Blanquists, speculating on a clash with the armed forces, etc. I do not believe that there is a single member of the party who entertains this idea.

Bernstein goes on to argue that development is not taking place as rapidly as many seem to assume. This too, I believe, is a point which we need not take up with Bernstein. Assumptions about the speed of economic development are a matter of temperament.

I am not among those who minimise our differences. On the contrary, there are very great differences among us, differences of a tactical and theoretical nature, which have been with us since the party was founded and which will certainly become deeper as the party grows and becomes more of a political force. But the question of the speed of development is certainly a matter of instinct, of temperament. However, Bernstein goes further. He seeks to account for the slow rate of development by arguments which I cannot possibly accept. He tells us that the number of property-owners, of capitalists, is growing and that the groundwork on which we have based our views is therefore wrong. If that were so, then the time of our victory would not only be long delayed, we would never reach our goal at all. (Enthusiastic agreement) If the capitalists rather than the unpropertied are on the increase, then we are moving further away from our goal as society develops; it is capitalism, not socialism, which is establishing itself; and we shall never reach our goal. (Enthusiastic applause) However, I do not wish to pursue this point today. It would involve me in a polemic against Bernstein, and I want to avoid that as far as possible, except where it is necessary. I would have to go into occupational and income statistics and the like, and the party conference is not the place for that. But we can be sure of one thing,

that Marx's dictum still holds true today: the growth of capital means the growth of the proletariat.⁴¹

Bernstein says, furthermore, that the future course of history will not develop by way of catastrophes, and that the age of catastrophes is over. He has drawn attention to various pronouncements by Engels which allegedly support this view. I cannot agree with him. I do not remember all his quotations from Engels in sufficient detail to be able to say in what context they originally occurred, but I can recall no pronouncement of Engels's which could be taken to exclude the possibility of catastrophes in the future.

It is not my intention to bore you with a catastrophe theory. I would just like to deal with that aspect of Bernstein's theory of crises which has found an echo in this meeting, namely the problem of catastrophes and political crises. Bernstein takes the view that, from now on, development can take place peacefully – not indeed without conflict, but without major catastrophes. The proletariat is constantly increasing its political rights and its economic power through the trade union movement, its influence in local government, the establishment of co-operatives, etc. In this way, he believes, the socialist mode of production will gradually smother the capitalist mode of production until one day the latter will be completely absorbed into socialist society. This view has been presented as being foolish. But not so! This view of Bernstein's is based on very sound facts. The only thing wrong with it is that, unfortunately for us, these facts are to be found, not in Germany, but in England. (Hear, hear!) At this point, someone will say: yes, quite right! But England is the classic land of the capitalist mode of production; in England we can see what the future holds for us. I do not share this view. England is indeed the classic land of capitalism, but, as regards its political attitude, the laws of its political development, and its political tendencies, England is quite exceptional. In England we find conditions which are not reproduced anywhere else in the world. Thanks to its history and its insular position, England is a major state which has no standing army, no bureaucracy, no peasantry, and a minimal agricultural sector. (The agricultural population accounts for a mere 10 per cent of the total population.) In England, the antagonism between capital and labour is less acute than elsewhere, despite the economic progress thanks to which English capital has already increased to the point where it can no longer be accommodated within the limits of English industry. English capital is invested throughout the world. Relatively speaking, the proportion of capital invested in English industry becomes ever smaller, and so therefore does the

proportion of the bourgeoisie directly interested in exploiting the English workers. By nature human beings tend to be sympathetic, and that is always a factor where their own interests are not threatened. So, where capitalist societies⁴² seek to destroy the trade unions, we find the English bourgeoisie supporting workers on strike. In England, philanthropy is a force unequalled anywhere else. Consequently, it is possible that, in England, the working class will gradually achieve power by peaceful means, without a catastrophe. Marx said as much, more than twenty years ago when he wrote that England was the one country in which a peaceful transition from capitalism to socialism was possible.⁴³ Possible! For catastrophes are not entirely out of the question. We cannot yet know how the English bourgeoisie will react when the working class makes use of its political power (which it has not done so far), or whether it might not rebel against the socialist proletariat. Conditions such as those obtaining in England are found nowhere else in the world. Even in America, which otherwise has so much in common with England, conditions are quite different. Nowhere is the tendency to generate major catastrophes as great as it is in America. America by itself is sufficient to demolish Bernstein's theory. But the same applies here in Europe. Everywhere militarism in its most acute form! Everywhere bureaucracy ruling with absolute power, not only in the monarchies, but also in France! What is more, on the continent of Europe the influence of the large landowners prevails, the bourgeoisie bow to the rule of the military aristocracy and have ceased to be a democratic force. Here there is only one democratic force, and that is the proletariat. We can perhaps still make use of those bits of democracy which have survived from the early youth of the bourgeoisie, but that they should offer the possibility of extending democratic rights is quite out of the question. Only the proletariat itself can do that. (Enthusiastic approval) If Bernstein thinks that we must first achieve democracy and then lead the proletariat step by step to victory, then I must tell him that things are the other way around with us. With us, the victory of democracy depends upon the victory of the proletariat. (Enthusiastic applause) Without the proletariat, we cannot achieve true democracy. I admit that we have an extremely difficult task and that it is difficult for the proletariat to develop without democracy. I admit that the road taken by the English proletariat is the better one and demands fewer victims, and that we can only wish that it were possible for us to take the same road. But the course of history is determined, not by pious hopes, but by facts; and the facts tell us that England's road is closed to us and that the victory of democracy can come about only through the victory of the proletariat.

However, does anyone believe that this victory is possible without a catastrophe? I hope it is, but I do not believe it. (Approval) Both democracy and the proletariat are increasingly being forced onto the defensive. Liberalism has abdicated. Instead of advancing, bourgeois democracy is retreating, and the star of triumphant reaction is rising. It is a Gordian knot that becomes ever more complicated, and I believe it will have to be untied in the same way as the ancient one.⁴⁴ Major catastrophes are in the making absolutely everywhere in Europe. Is Austria not heading for a catastrophe? Is Italy not heading for a bloody catastrophe? And Spain? Is France not preparing for a major conflict between militarism and clericalism, on the one hand, and bourgeois freedom on the other? And what is the talk all about in Germany? Extension of popular rights? Extension of the right of combination? Indeed not! The talk is all about a *coup d'état*, the abolition of the franchise, and about prison. These are the prospects we see before us, and given these prospects the road suggested by Bernstein is out of the question. (Enthusiastic applause) If Bernstein were among us, he would be the first to reject that road. Of that I am firmly convinced.

A hard battle lies before us, and what we chiefly need for this battle is faith in ourselves, confidence of victory. (Tumultuous applause) Not the kind of confidence which might lead us to underestimate the enemy, to provoke him lightly, or to sit with our hands in our laps. No, we must be prepared for great sacrifices, and our confidence can only be of the kind which says: however great the sacrifice, and even though we may suffer defeat at first, the victory must be ours in the end. (Tumultuous applause) Bernstein has been accused of undermining our confidence by his articles, of getting in the way of the embattled proletariat. I do not share this view. If I did, then it would indeed have been a dereliction of duty for me, as editor of a socialist paper, to have accepted Bernstein's articles. But that is not the case. Our faith in ourselves must not be a blind faith. It must not rest on received opinions which we accept uncritically and which are, perhaps, no longer tenable. Our faith in ourselves must rest on its being constantly put to the proof. If Bernstein's articles have actually made one or two people waver in their socialist convictions, that merely shows that such people are no great loss. (Very good!) It shows that their convictions were not very deep-rooted and that they would have taken an early opportunity to turn their backs on us in any case. We can be glad that it has happened now, and not in a catastrophe where we need every man we can get. (Enthusiastic applause) No indeed, Bernstein has not discouraged us; he has forced us to think. (Applause) For that we are grateful to him. But we will

not take our stand on the ground he suggests. We shall take it on the ground which conditions dictate, and then we shall win. (Tumultuous applause and ovation)

HEINE (Berlin): To my great regret I find myself once more drawn into the debate on the press, which does not actually have anything to do with me. Frau Zetkin and Fräulein Luxemburg could not manage to choke back the speeches curtailed by the end of the debate this morning, so they cough them up at me now. (Laughter) I do not intend to repeat what I said this morning. I merely wish to establish that comrades have repeated their false assertions about what I said. I shall say no more, so as not to be accused of having admitted anything. Everyone knows what I said, and I stand by all of it. I know that there are only two ways of establishing the power of the proletariat: either we aim the pistol of parliamentary consent at the heads of the ruling classes, or we aim a real pistol at them. We must renounce the second alternative, as indeed the aged Engels explained shortly before his death.⁴⁵ I agree with him. Which leaves us with the first alternative. Call it political horse-trading, call it what you will; but don't expect me to discard it until you produce a third alternative. As long as the *Sächsische Arbeiter-Zeitung* can suggest no other way but still protests against the one I suggest, it must put up with accusations of Blanquism from Vollmar. It is true that Fräulein Luxemburg has not preached violence, but logic leaves her with no other alternative.

I cannot reply to Kautsky's speech, because I am insufficiently prepared. I will just say that Bernstein's articles did not give me the impression that he was recommending a new tactic which was at odds with the old. Much of what Kautsky has said about the differences between conditions in England and conditions in Germany is assuredly true; but the one conclusion I would draw from it is this: if bourgeois democracy is weak here, and we are forced to create a proletarian democracy with no intermediate stages, then we are doubly obliged to apply any and every means, however unpromising, to gain power for the working class. (Applause) Were parliament ever in a position to aim the pistol of consent effectively at the heads of the ruling classes, it would be treason not to do so out of doctrinaire scruples.

HABERLAND (Barmen) : *Neue Zeit* has touched on various crucial tactical problems but has not completed its discussion of them. The editors should encourage comrades to give their opinions, so that the matter may be brought to a proper conclusion.

A motion to close the debate, opposed by Hoffmann (Bielefeld), was rejected.

SCHMIDT (Essen) registered a complaint against Lütgenau over his conduct in accepting reports for the *Rheinisch-Westfälische Arbeiter-Zeitung*. The supervisory board had taken refuge in silence.

Frau ZETKIN: Comrade Frohme has offered mitigating circumstances for my contribution to the debate. I decline them. I do, however, ask that the respect which has been accorded to my sincere convictions should also be extended to all those who have expressed views in the debate contrary to the views of Heine, Frohme, etc. I too disapproved of the manner in which the *Sächsische Arbeiter-Zeitung* conducted its polemic, especially the form of the attack and the personal elements it contained. But the party organs, *Vorwärts* chief among them, which have constantly emphasised the personal vindictiveness, tactlessness, and clumsiness of the attacks in the *Sächsische Arbeiter-Zeitung*, but have paid no attention to the real core of the matter, have in my view put the discussion on an even lower level. This kind of polemic has done nothing at all to further debate within the party. Comrade Gradnauer has accused me of committing a sin of omission as a member of the party leadership, because I failed to point out the weaknesses of *Vorwärts*. Well, as my fellow-supervisors know, our activity was concerned in the main with supervising business affairs. We discussed *Vorwärts* on two occasions, on both of which – Comrade Gradnauer may rest assured – I spoke very frankly. At the time, however, I held the view now shown to be wrong, namely that Comrade Liebknecht was, as it were, the culprit who started it all, and that it was his editorial activities which were solely responsible for the paper's problems. I no longer hold this view. But since Gradnauer joined the editorial board of *Vorwärts* he seems to think that he has inherited the mantle of Elijah. He has used the shortcomings of *Die Gleichheit* to deny me all right to criticise *Vorwärts*. I would have thought that a fortnightly periodical and a daily paper, a party organ for women and the central organ of the party, should be assessed by different criteria. I have never believed that *Die Gleichheit* could create a great movement of working-class women. That is the job of agitation and organisation. A periodical such as *Die Gleichheit* cannot create a movement at all. It can do only one thing, which is to educate and provide encouragement within the movement; and that is what *Die Gleichheit* has done. *Die Gleichheit* has made it its chief business to maintain clear Social Democratic principles among the women comrades who stand in the

front line of the battle, and to keep them free of the taint of bourgeois feminism; and this *Die Gleichheit* has done. And another thing. Even supposing *Die Gleichheit* was the most miserable rag in the party, I would still have both the right and the competence to criticise the way *Vorwärts* is run. (Laughter) It is professional snobbery to think that nobody has the right to judge a picture unless he is a painter, or music unless he is personally capable of composing *The Ring of the Nibelung*. I am quite well aware of the difficulties which *Vorwärts* faces, but I am nonetheless convinced that *Vorwärts* does not achieve what it could achieve. It is not the leading intellectual paper of the party. It often lags behind with its commentary and its reporting. As the central party organ, it has a duty to be impartial, to give unbiassed commentary on all aspects of party life and expression to all shades of opinion. But it should not be indecisive. However, it is not merely the content of the central party organ which leaves much to be desired; it is the tone as well. Apart from Liebknecht's writing, which glows with the agitational force and enthusiasm of youth despite his silvery hair, it must be plainly said that *Vorwärts* lacks agitational impact. Indeed, apart from Liebknecht's contributions, its political section is concentrated tedium. (Laughter) Having to read *Vorwärts* from cover to cover is hard work – an opinion shared by many, whether they say so or not.

As regards the rest of the debate on the way the press has handled tactics, it would be carrying steel to Bochum (Laughter) to say any more after Kautsky has dealt in such masterly fashion both with the Bernstein saga and with Heine's foolery. We are not here to teach veterans lessons, but to bell the cat. (Laughter) It was our wish that the issues which had been dodged so far should be openly discussed. We wished it to be stated that the majority of delegates, the mass of party members, will have nothing to do with any tactic which requires us to win necessary social reforms, our daily bread in the class struggle, on the principle of "I give to you and you give to me." No indeed! We want to push through the necessary reforms in contemporary society as a fighting, proletarian, and revolutionary party in constant combat with the government and the capitalist state, which has never yet offered the working class an open hand, but only an iron fist! (Applause)

LIEBKNECHT: Comrades! I shall not contradict what my friend Zetkin has said on the ways and means of agitation. I am broadly in agreement with her. But I must reply to some of her other remarks. If she means to say that *Die Gleichheit* can or should be more easily forgiven for making mistakes than *Vorwärts* because *Die Gleichheit*

appears only once a fortnight whereas *Vorwärts* comes out daily, then that is a very weak argument indeed. As a daily paper *Vorwärts* has to be produced in haste, with little time for reflection, and in the heat of battle. Mistakes can easily occur. I do not dispute that *Vorwärts* has made many mistakes, or that it has many faults. But I do expect that consideration be given to what I said a few years ago in Gotha.⁴⁶ *Vorwärts* was then accused of failing to take the lead in matters of dispute. I said at the time that it cannot take the lead. As the central party organ, it must follow current trends; it must avoid adopting a one-sided approach to issues in dispute. *Vorwärts* has two roles: as central organ and as local party paper. And these roles are not easily reconciled. If it was simply a local party paper, it could be run like the Hamburg *Echo*, the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* or the *Sächsische Arbeiter-Zeitung*. It would of course have a centralised editorial board appointed by the party, and it could take an immediate stand on any question which arose. *Vorwärts* must take account of the various strands of opinion in the party and seek to keep in touch with the executive. I hold office as chief editor, appointed by the party. The other editors are appointed by the executive. That is a dualism. Various shades of opinion are represented on the editorial board, as they are in the party as a whole. It is often difficult to reach agreement. I may say that I have had more friction and vexation in the nine years I have been chief editor of *Vorwärts* than in the whole of my previous political career. That is due, not to personalities, but to the unfortunate dual nature of *Vorwärts*, and to the circumstances arising from it, which cannot continue for ever. Some damaging things have occurred, in particular just recently in the matter of participation in the Prussian state elections. The vast majority of our comrades in Berlin are against participation, and this was not sufficiently well brought out in *Vorwärts*. Serious discontent arose as a result, and the idea of separating the functions of the central and local party organs gained new impetus because of it. Until this state of affairs has been properly sorted out, you can make as many changes as you like to the editorial board, but things will never go as smoothly as in a purely local paper. It is only in a local paper that consistency is possible. In *Vorwärts* complete consistency would be possible only if I had the right to appoint all my fellow editors and generally all my colleagues – or if there were consistency within the party on all questions of tactics. But there isn't. It will be for future party conferences to make fundamental changes where *Vorwärts* is concerned.

Now to the debate on tactics. Frau Zetkin thought that she had

managed to bell the cat. She was wrong. The manner in which the debate was conducted yesterday was designed to create an atmosphere quite contrary to the one she wanted. However, when Kautsky put the same arguments on the grounds of principle, and scaled the heights of theory and science, the entire party conference gave him their jubilant support. Kautsky raised the debate on tactics to the appropriate intellectual level. Good form has been breached time and again, rancorous and irritable criticisms have been made, and angry replies exchanged. On the whole I agreed with what Parvus was saying, but not with the unpleasant, pedantic, and uncomradely tone in which he talks down to us. Had his manner been different, a profitable debate with him would have been possible. Witch-hunting has been mentioned. It was not the party conference which mounted a witch-hunt. The conference was simply indignant that witch-hunts were being mounted against the party and reacted accordingly. But it would be foolish to deny that there are grounds for serious criticism, and I therefore regret that the question of tactics was not placed as a separate item on the agenda. That would have produced a coherent debate. (Approval) As it was, we rambled from one subject to another, and, in the end, we did get our debate on tactics. Where the interest and the need exist, they cannot be suppressed; they rise to the surface. From the unanimous applause which greeted Kautsky's speech, I conclude that, despite our differences, we have in essence reached agreement. If Bernstein's arguments were correct, we might as well bury our programme, our entire history, and the whole of Social Democracy. We would cease to be a proletarian party. Bernstein's stay in England has been disastrous for him. A man like Marx had to be in England, pre-eminently the country of classic economic development, in order to study the nature of capitalist society and write *Capital*. But Bernstein has let himself be impressed by the colossal and, at the same time, democratic development of the English bourgeoisie. The difference between conditions here and in England is that England got rid of the Middle Ages some 350 years ago, whereas we still have to grapple with medieval left-overs. Germany does not have the advantage of reforms won by the bourgeoisie, or of a steady course of development. We have followed a zig-zag course. Our bourgeoisie never achieved political power, and our proletariat are not yet strong enough. The German bourgeoisie have abdicated political power, and the Junkers, the praetorian guard of capital, are prepared to provoke a catastrophe at any moment. Under such circumstances, it is madness to imagine that a catastrophe is unlikely.

Look at Italy! Look at the butchery and massacres there!⁴⁷ Look at Hungary and France! And Germany! Who, given the Prison Bill, thinks that there is any certainty of peaceful development here? Who is prepared to say that the time of catastrophes and violent conflicts is past? We really and truly do not wish it, but the spirit which animated Bismarck to the last and made it his dearest wish to tempt and drive the proletariat onto the barricades, still prevails. It is we who are seeking to avoid catastrophes, *but our enemies are planning them!* (Applause) At such times, it is vital to stand firm on both tactics and principle. We must avoid slipping into erroneous ways, or into any but the tried and tested paths. Then there is the Heine affair. I will do no more than touch upon it. I did not hear Heine's speech, but whatever he said it was an individual view, and the parliamentary party has always condemned such initiatives. From the very beginning we have opposed the military budget in its entirety and will continue to do so. But there are other difficult issues before us. Tendencies towards state socialism have emerged, and there are signs of readiness to co-operate with the Junkers on protective tariffs. So we can be grateful to those who have sounded the alarm here today. Theory is easy; practice is hard. There is no disagreement about principle, only about how we *apply* the principle. It is very easy to go too far to the left or the right in matters of practice. It is therefore all the more crucial, and all the more our duty, to take care that we do not wander into side-alleys and byways. The same people who were boasting that they had belled the cat have in my view committed a much more serious error. On the issue of the Prussian state elections, Parvus abandoned the class struggle and urged us to stretch out a hand to assist the Prussian bourgeoisie.⁴⁸ In my eyes, that is a much greater and more dangerous mistake than Heine's cannon speech.

The more the antagonisms intensify in the state and in capitalist society, the more vital it is that we should close our ranks and be *united*. The moment we fudge the dividing line between ourselves and the bourgeois parties, the moment our comrades cannot clearly distinguish what is proletarian and socialist from what is bourgeois liberal or bourgeois democratic, the strength of our party will fade. *The strength of our party is rooted in the proletarian class struggle.* The moment we abandon this, we shall be helpless. It is as with electricity: when the current is cut off, the power disappears. We cease to be Social Democrats if we cease to be a *proletarian* party, the party of the *proletarian class struggle*.

Bernstein has said: "The movement is everything to me, the final

goal is nothing.” That is exceedingly foolish. For what is a movement without a goal? Aimless rambling! (Hear, hear!) Comrade Luxemburg has said the opposite: “The final goal is everything to me, the movement is nothing.” That is also false. How can the final goal be reached without the movement? No indeed! Movement *and* final goal, movement *towards* the final goal, that is the right solution; and the final goal is *the overthrow of capitalist society*. (Tumultuous applause and ovation)

A second motion to close the debate was accepted.

The Summing-up

EDUARD BERNSTEIN

The Conquest of Political Power⁽ⁱ⁾*Vorwärts*, 13 October 1898

As we all know, one of the difficulties which beset the discussion of political issues is that the concepts associated with certain words are often ill defined and always subject to change. We quarrel where there is basically little or no disagreement, merely because certain expressions mean different things to different people. Or, to put it differently, our arguments miss the main point because conflicting interpretations of political terms get in the way of cogent discussion, or persistently deflect us from it.

Such is the case with discussions concerning the conquest of political power by the working class.

For some, this phrase simply means that the working class becomes the ruling class and, in one way or another, wields the powers of government.

This is clearly part of what the phrase means. However, it does not exhaust the concept of political power. If we want to discuss the issue in these terms, it would be better to talk of political rule [*Herrschaft*] rather than political power [*Macht*].

For the concept of political power is much broader. A party or a class can wield power without ruling. The working class and the party which represents it, Social Democracy, is already a considerable political force in Germany, but it does not rule. It wields power directly by virtue of its connection with legislative and administrative bodies and indirectly through the industrial organisations of the workers, through the strength of socialist consciousness, the political cohesion and the solidarity of the masses, and through their energy and readiness for action. The power which Social Democracy has at its disposal nowadays – and which, on closer inspection, it does indirectly bring to bear in no mean fashion – is much greater than its

direct legislative power. This is not in doubt. The only question is whether the strength latent in Social Democracy is yet sufficient for it to take control of the state and carry out its objectives. The answer to this question depends on the circumstances in which it is conceivable that Social Democracy could take control in present-day Germany, and also on the problems which would confront the party in such an eventuality. Since my views on this point are well known, I shall not repeat them.

Instead, let us stay with the issue which nobody disputes, namely the lack of correlation between the legal power which Social Democracy commands in Germany today and the power which it actually possesses by virtue of the number and activity of its supporters in the population at large.

It is natural for any class or political party to try to bring its political rights into line with its real but latent power or, to put it differently, to make its political power match its social significance.

It can achieve this in various ways depending on the political institutions, the configurations and interrelationships of the other parties, and (apart from anything else) the international position of the country in question. It is obvious that methods of combat will change with the circumstances. And on this matter would anyone in his senses demand that German Social Democracy commit itself to one particular course?

That such a view should be ascribed to me puzzles me all the more because I, above all others, have repeatedly and vigorously expatiated upon the folly of being dogmatic on the question of political ways and means. We need only recall my article on "The Strike as a Political Weapon" in *Neue Zeit*, 1894, as well as what I wrote in the same journal in 1896 about the abridgment of franchise in Saxony.¹ The position I expounded then is still my position today.

The same goes for political catastrophes. It never occurred to me to take a dogmatic line and deny the possibility of political catastrophes. Anyone who did that would be a very peculiar politician indeed. Even less would it occur to me to discourage the fullest possible exploitation of such catastrophes in order to achieve specific goals. I cannot understand how anyone could read anything of the sort into my articles. I was opposing one specific theory of catastrophe, namely the view that the breakdown of bourgeois society and a consequent general catastrophe of major proportions are imminent. I believe this view to be misleading and therefore pernicious.

Other catastrophes are certainly not impossible, and it is indeed a good thing to bear them in mind. There are categorical imperatives

binding on political parties. Parties are the champions of specific interests which it is their duty to foster in every possible way. To neglect an opportunity to further this task is always a gross dereliction of duty, for, as often as not, opportunity knocks only once.

While it is therefore right to keep an eye on the repercussions of catastrophes abroad on the internal development of Germany, it would be a mistake to pin very great hopes on them. Some of the catastrophes which are in prospect in other countries are unlikely to have any such repercussions at all. For instance, the involvement of the rest of Europe in the Spanish civil wars has diminished as time has passed; and it is unlikely that, this time, there will be anything like the Hohenzollern bid for the throne.² In any case, the governments of all major European states are, for good reason, so intent on adjusting their differences by diplomatic settlements that the likelihood of serious international complications is getting less and less. It was interesting to observe that, while the London and Paris newspapers were beside themselves at the news of Marchand's presence in Fashoda³ and published articles giving the impression that a clash between France and England was absolutely inevitable, the otherwise sensitive Stock Exchange remained virtually unmoved by all the excitement. We live in an age of compromise and localisation policy, and unless we are much mistaken, this epoch will continue for some time to come, at least in Europe.

However, there are some possible catastrophes which might do Social Democracy more direct harm than good. A major catastrophe in Italy would, in my view, be of this kind. The immediate heir to the House of Savoy is not Social Democracy but *Rome*. And Rome's best ally is the French establishment. The reopening of the Roman question would intensify religious and national conflicts and would, to that extent, remove social and political questions from the agenda.

Finally, as regards the possible collapse of Austria, it is indisputable that its immediate effect on Germany would be to spark off a powerful movement of nationalistic patriotism. Whether Social Democracy gained strength from these events or suffered a temporary setback would depend on its ability to steer a middle course between nationalistic chauvinism and exaggerated cosmopolitanism. Issues would emerge which, though not directly relevant to the class struggle of the workers, would require a positive stand from a major political party such as Social Democracy. If the party were to neglect these matters, it would find that other questions requiring urgent settlement, in which it did have a direct interest, would be settled in a manner unfavourable to itself.

Austrian Social Democracy provides a shining example of what a socialist party can accomplish by astute exploitation of issues which seem secondary to the economic struggle of the workers. In the space of a few years it has transformed itself from a grouping of no political significance into a party which not only counts for something but which actually sets the tone of political life in Austria. It must be said at once that the peculiar relationship between the parties in Austria has helped a great deal. However, favourable circumstances merely served as the terrain on which the victories were won, and by no means all this terrain was well provided with cover. The victories were actually won because there were strategists present who knew how to exploit all the advantages and avoid all the pitfalls of the terrain, and because the Austrian movement was led by people who (it is fair to say) are masters of that opportunism which distinguishes the true commander from the bungling experimentalist. They knew just the right moment to take extra-parliamentary action, just as they proved themselves extraordinarily adept tacticians within parliament. They knew how to speak in a vigorous and inspiring fashion, without indulging in pointless and merely provocative threats. And, without concealing the fact that the time of political supremacy is still far away, they have led the workers to a position of power beyond their wildest dreams. Had they been dogmatists, knight-errants of rigid principle, it is very doubtful whether they would have achieved all this and whether the Austrian labour party – possessing advantages unknown elsewhere but also struggling with difficulties unknown elsewhere – would now be in the powerful position it does in fact occupy.

In a similar fashion, the Belgian workers' party has won the franchise and a growing influence in the Belgian parliament by skilful and energetic exploitation of political opportunities.⁴

The danger inherent in the notion of an imminent and total collapse of bourgeois society is that it may cause us to neglect some of those intermediate steps which, whatever else happens, lie on the road to our goal. This can be illustrated by a whole series of examples from the history of the workers' movement throughout the world. The thought of a great and comprehensive objective is certainly uplifting, but a more limited and therefore more accessible objective can inspire the greatest enthusiasm, given the conviction that it must and can be attained. No-one can foresee whether, in the struggle for political rights, a conjuncture of circumstances will bring the working class to power. We can, however, say that, unless its present rights are extended, its political power is unlikely to increase.

It was with words to that effect that I concluded my letter to the Stuttgart Conference, and only if the concluding sentence was overlooked can I conceive how my letter could be read as intending to dictate the path Social Democracy should take to achieve political power, or as preaching tactics derived from contemporary English conditions. Nothing could be further from my intentions. For if I have learned anything in England it is the old homespun truth that what is good for one country is not necessarily good for another. The English are all kinds of things, but they are not doctrinaire about tactics. And that, I believe, is the secret of their greatest political successes.

KARL KAUTSKY

Tactics and Principles

Vorwärts, 13 October 1898

It was quite clear to me, even in Stuttgart, that the proceedings of the conference were not the end but rather the real beginning of the discussion of Bernstein's position. Nonetheless, Bernstein's article "The Conquest of Political Power" surprised me, not least because he clearly wrote it before he had received a full report. Otherwise he would have had no cause to polemicise against the view that catastrophes abroad are likely to have a major effect on the internal circumstances of Germany. There was no mention of this in Stuttgart and none in my statements, which Bernstein has in mind (primarily at least) although he avoids mention of my name.

Nor did I broach the question of the imminent general collapse of bourgeois society, for that would have required a theoretical discussion which would have carried us too far afield. Insofar as I did mention the likelihood of political catastrophes, it was to rebut the points in Bernstein's statement where he says:

Politically, in all the developed countries, we are seeing the privileges of the capitalist bourgeoisie gradually giving way to democratic institutions. Under the influence of these institutions, and driven by the growing vitality of the labour movement, a social reaction has set in against the exploitative tendencies of capital. It is as yet timid and tentative; but it is there, and more and more sectors of economic life are coming under its influence . . . The more the political institutions of modern nations are democratised, the more the necessity and the opportunity for great political catastrophes will be reduced.⁵

This view of Bernstein's, I said, holds for England, but not for America and not for continental Europe, where violent catastrophes are everywhere in the making.

My view is in no way shaken by Bernstein's latest article.

But what Bernstein says about tactics is more important than what he says about catastrophes. I am supposed to have misunderstood him completely when I stated that he recommends or "preaches" English tactics to German Social Democracy. Nothing, he says, could be further from his intentions. He, above all others, has on various occasions vigorously opposed dogmatism on the question of political ways and means, and it is obvious that methods of combat must change with the circumstances.

All this is quite correct. But what was it that Bernstein wanted to demonstrate by his investigations into the problems of socialism? Not, after all, the cheap truth that we must adjust our tactics to conform with present circumstances? Our tactics certainly do not depend solely on the circumstances prevailing at any given moment. They depend just as much on our *principles*, our general conceptions. The fact that many people show a pious reluctance to "commit" themselves, to acknowledge definite principles, suggests that this is not nowadays universally accepted; but Bernstein would be the last to deny the point. If our principles change, so must our tactics. There are specific tactics – or, if you prefer, specific tactical principles – which correspond not only to each particular situation but also to each particular theoretical standpoint. And, for any specific theory which has general validity for a particular society, there is a corresponding set of general tactical principles for that society. Thus, *The Communist Manifesto* was written with Western Europe in mind; Engels wrote his preface to *The Class Struggles in France* with Europe as a whole in mind; Bernstein, in his articles on the problems of socialism and in his Stuttgart statement, speaks of capitalist society in general. To each of these pronouncements corresponds a specific set of tactics for, respectively, the European workers' movement or the international workers' movement as a whole. So if Bernstein is advancing a new theory of social development, different from that of *The Communist Manifesto*, it follows that he is seeking to establish new tactics for Germany and for the other countries in which the capitalist mode of production prevails. Is this not "prescribing the path for German Social Democracy"? This accords with the fact that Bernstein lays special stress on the *revision of tactics* which Engels allegedly called for in his preface to *The Class Struggles in France*. In his Stuttgart statement, Bernstein says, among other things: Engels is so thoroughly convinced that tactics geared to a catastrophe have had their day that he considers a revision to abandon them to be due even

in the Latin countries where tradition is much more favourable to them than in Germany. "If the conditions of war between nations have changed," he writes, "no less have those for the war between classes." Have we forgotten this already?⁶

This appeal to Engels seems to me to be misconceived. For, if Engels thought along the same lines as Bernstein, how comes it that for three years Engels's preface found lively concurrence within the party but met with indifference from the bourgeois press, whereas it was quite the contrary with Bernstein's critical articles?

The reception accorded to Engels's preface stemmed from the fact that its aim was not to criticise the tactics previously adopted by German Social Democracy. On the contrary, it is a *brilliant vindication* of them, and the new tactics that he recommends to the Latin peoples are the *old tactics* which the German workers have employed for three decades.

On the one hand, Bernstein lags behind Engels; on the other, he goes beyond him. He lags behind Engels in that he still thinks it necessary to demonstrate to a German party conference the correctness of Engels's view that the time of insurrectional coups and successful street battles with the military has now passed. But he goes beyond Engels in subjecting *The Communist Manifesto* to criticism of a kind to which Engels never did subject it, and never would have subjected it. That is Bernstein's right, but, in doing this, he champions tactics which are not in accord with those recommended by Engels. Insofar as his position agrees with that of Engels, Bernstein will meet with no opposition from within the party. The opposition begins only at the point where he goes beyond Engels.

Now, it is of course true that Bernstein has not recommended any specific new tactics. However, I see this not as a merit but as the greatest defect of his "revisionist campaign." I must confess that this was one of the reasons why I did not immediately reply to Bernstein's articles in *Neue Zeit*. I was always waiting for something more. His articles seemed to me to be incomplete because they came to no positive conclusion; they undermined the basis of our current tactics, without putting new ones in their place. And I suppose this incompleteness is also the reason why they so often seemed the product of a weary pessimism and scepticism.

His critics must now do what Bernstein himself has failed to do. They must work out the logical implications of his position. And, in this connection, I have become convinced that, just as the only facts which give Bernstein a measure of support in going beyond Engels

originate in England, so also the tactics that become necessary if Bernstein's position is correct are likewise English; i.e. they are the tactics of the English trade unions and the Fabians.

And this view is not disproved simply by Bernstein's declaring that he is not doctrinaire in matters of tactics.

So far, Bernstein has had the misfortune of having to declare every criticism levelled at his latest pronouncements from within the party to be a misunderstanding. I ascribe this partly to the fact that, in going beyond Engels, he omitted to explain the implications of his position clearly and distinctly. But I also ascribe it, in part, to the form in which Bernstein has so far had to put his case. The form was that of occasional polemics against Belfort Bax jumbled together with polemics against certain other party publicists, both named and unnamed. However suitable the polemical form may be for achieving clarity and eliminating misunderstandings when we are discussing theories which have already been expounded methodically, this form inevitably becomes a breeding-ground for misunderstandings when we are dealing with a standpoint which has never been properly explained. And it is particularly awkward if the defender of the new standpoint has to deal simultaneously with several opponents, each one of whom has a standpoint of his own.

If the discussion of Bernstein's views is to be fruitful, then the first necessity is that we have a sound basis for it, i.e. a systematic, comprehensive, and carefully reasoned exposition of his basic conceptions, insofar as they transcend the framework of principles hitherto accepted in our party. As things stand today, it seems to me that such an exposition from Bernstein's pen, whether in a separate tract or in a series of articles in *Neue Zeit*, is absolutely necessary. A continuation of the controversy in small, scattered articles on isolated points torn from their context would, I fear, create more personal animosity than clarity of principle.

VICTOR ADLER

The Party Conference at Stuttgart *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, 16 October 1898

The impression created by the recently concluded conference of the German Social Democratic Party gives us the measure of how far the party has grown in every direction. The proceedings of this conference demonstrated, as always, the seriousness, responsibility, and relentless honesty of the leaders of our party, a party which tolerates no unlit corners in its structure and no ambiguity in its conduct.

Because German Social Democrats openly and publicly hammer out whatever happens to be in dispute – questions of the party programme, tactics, organisation, right down to minor but extremely awkward matters of personality – our inveterate opponents have always entertained the hope that our party would be split. But in fact this openness is both the proof and the precondition of the party's strength. In Stuttgart, the usual annual discussion of matters which inevitably arise from the administration of so vast an organisation faded into the background, and a great debate, great in every sense, on the fundamental issues of Social Democracy made this conference one of the most significant and most interesting ever to be held. Not since the Erfurt Conference at least, which gave us a debate on two fronts, with the Youngsters and with Vollmar, have the fundamental issues of the party been discussed within as broad a framework as in Stuttgart. And of course these issues do not affect German Social Democracy alone. In any country, the party has to face these matters at a certain stage in its development. Hence the extraordinary interest, far beyond normal concern for the welfare of a fellow-party, with which we and everyone else outside Germany followed the proceedings at Stuttgart. Reports were devoured with an eagerness never before inspired by a foreign party conference. We all felt that the case under debate was our very own.

The great credit for having initiated this debate belongs to Comrade Eduard *Bernstein*, who, as former editor of the *Zürich Sozialdemokrat*, is under warrant of arrest in Germany and has been living and working in England for many years. Forcibly removed from practical party work, a sharp theoretical mind with encyclopaedic knowledge, a fanatic for justice, and a sceptic of that most refined breed which turns its scepticism upon itself and has an insatiable desire for self-criticism, Bernstein has not only produced a series of excellent theoretical and historical works but has also assumed one of the most important party functions, that of criticising its principles and tactics. His personality and his situation make him especially well qualified for this task, but they also carry within them traits which to a considerable extent imperil his judgment, as was frequently evident in the recent debate. The fact that Bernstein is a man given to thought, and to doubt, easily leads him to forget that men of action can stomach only a limited amount of these without suffering damage, and that a party must not be so scientifically minded that it loses its will-power through sheer force of erudition. And though distance certainly offers a favourable vantage-point for observations and blots out all confusing detail, it also denies the ob-

server that firsthand knowledge of the imponderable and immeasurable which is often the most important thing. Life in exile has punished Bernstein cruelly for not breathing the atmosphere in which the movement lives; he has thus lost his criterion for measuring its progress; he can no longer feel its rhythm. Furthermore, he has not presented his critique of party tactics as a coherent whole but has issued it in a series of individual, party polemical essays in *Neue Zeit*. The most important of these articles, collected under the title "Problems of Socialism," have occupied all thinking men in the party for some time now, but unfortunately they are only *fragments* of a work, and this can only impair the clarity of the debate and any assessment of the importance of Bernstein's views. Of course he has, as we know, summarised his views with exemplary precision in a letter to the conference. But this letter gives only an incomplete picture of his unremitting and ruthless hunting-down of slogans, in which he has observed no closed season, however necessary the struggle might make it in practice. We therefore recommend these essays, which in many respects merit the title of "Untimely Meditations,"⁷ to the particular attention of all who take an interest in the internal life of the party.

Two phrases dominated the Stuttgart party conference, and upon them the discussion turned: "*final goal*" and "*catastrophe theory*." Bernstein had once written, expressing himself very clumsily, that "the final goal is nothing to me, the movement everything." But in his letter to the conference he explained himself precisely: "tactics directed exclusively towards a catastrophe were now obsolete."⁸ There then followed a great deal of excellent talk to the effect that a party, as the vehicle of a great historical development, cannot have a final goal, since this development has no end, but that any conscious movement must, above all, be conscious of its goals. In this regard, it really does seem that we are quarrelling about words. In his letter, Bernstein expressly acknowledges that our programme calls for the seizure of political power by the working class and the expropriation of the capitalists. However, he has taken it into his head to call these, not the "*final goals*," but merely the "*means to accomplish certain aims and aspirations of Social Democracy*." Well, "no enmity over that."⁹ We can talk about it, and once we have got that far we shall have no trouble in coming to some agreement with Bernstein. More important is the question of what role the final goal or aim of our movement, the abolition of capitalism, should play in our propaganda and activity. And this question coincides, partly, with the question of the catastrophe theory.

Karl Marx established the formula for the historic development of

capitalist society: the laws immanent in capitalist production lead to the collapse of the capitalist property system and the class state, and to the rule of "the working class, a class constantly . . . trained, united and organised by the very mechanism of the capitalist process of production. The monopoly of capital becomes a fetter upon the mode of production which has flourished alongside and under it. The centralisation of the means of production and the socialisation of labour reach a point at which they become incompatible with their capitalist integument. This integument is burst asunder. The knell of capitalist private property sounds. The expropriators are expropriated."¹⁰ In these letters of steel Karl Marx wrote his formula in the famous chapter headed "Historical Tendency of Capitalist Accumulation" in volume one of *Capital*. It is a scientifically established formula which indicates the direction of development but which does not, and could not, say anything about when? and how? However, Marx and Engels were not only men of science but also politicians who needed to put precise figures in place of the general quantities of the formula and to form an assessment of the duration and course of the historical process within which we live. They never concealed the fact that they repeatedly made mistakes, and in his introduction to *The Class Struggles*, which could be called his political testament, Engels emphasized most strongly how differently things look today from the way they looked to the authors of *The Communist Manifesto* fifty years ago.¹¹ Such errors are due not only to the fact that the historical bird's-eye view to some extent reduces all dimensions, but also surely to the impatience of the man in battle who sets little store by what is already achieved, who is lashed onwards by a desire to reach his goal, who is driven by the intolerable misery of existing conditions and constantly cudgels his brain for ways of delivering the world from it. Patience, happy and replete with success, mocks these "prophets." But are we not all prophets, patient as well as impatient, the short-sighted super-wise as well as the long-sighted action men? Can any one of us bear to be without some idea of *where we stand*? For it is *this* and not our destination that is at issue. And is it really so certain that pessimistic prophets like *Bernstein* and *Vollmar* are more in the right than optimists such as *Bebel* and *Kautsky*? Or that, in the midst of their discussion, optimists and pessimists alike cannot be overtaken by events and find themselves, as *Bebel* once put it, like the foolish virgins in the Bible who had no oil in their lamps when the bridegroom arrived?

In fact we fear no such thing. For however important this conflict is for the party's standpoint, it seems to us to have little bearing on

the party's day-to-day activity. Look at what is happening. Bernstein sees Europe through English spectacles; he sees the privileges of the bourgeoisie gradually giving way to democratic institutions and the social reaction against the exploitative tendencies of capital becoming stronger and stronger. We Continental Socialists have watched the Germany of recent years find its way from the Imperial decrees of February 1890, which "are intended to assist the improvement of the condition of German workers," to the prison speech of Kaiser Wilhelm in 1898.¹² Bernstein sees the "catastrophe" as a remote possibility, whereas we find the tension quite unbearable. But whatever the differences in our assessments of the future, what conclusions do we draw for present-day tactics? Is there a single point of *political practice, of concrete party tactics* on which Bebel and Auer, Kautsky and Bernstein would not agree at once? *No*, we say, with no fear of serious contradiction. The positions adopted by individual comrades on the agrarian question and on elections to state assemblies have shown that, in practice, they do not group themselves according to their views on the catastrophe theory or on the final goal, but according to very much more immediate considerations.

In our opinion, the whole discussion is materially affected by the fact that Germany, unpredictably enough, has in the space of thirty years become one of the leading industrial countries of the world and is at present still at the stage of economic prosperity. Who is prepared to say when the crisis will occur? Who is bold enough to assert that it will not occur at all? And when it does occur, attitudes are more than likely to change completely.

The upshot of all this is that Social Democracy must, and does, fight not only for the future of the proletariat but also for its present. In our opinion, Bernstein's mistake lies in beating down doors which are already open. With great expenditure of knowledge and sagacity he utters (alongside many errors) a multitude of truths which nobody denies, thus creating the impression that these truths are not recognised in the party. Nobody in the party, in Germany or elsewhere, fails to treat the "extension of the political and industrial rights of the workers" as the focal point of all our endeavours; and whatever we, as individuals, may think of the imminence or remoteness of the "catastrophe," we devote all our strength to the gradual increase of the living standards and political power of the proletariat, as though that alone were the "final goal." And we toil at this feverishly and without pause, as though the "catastrophe" were expected tomorrow.

We do not know how long or short the road to our goal will be. But *we cannot march as the crow flies*, though that is the shortest

route. We must, as Engels put it, "advance slowly from one position to the next, in a hard and determined struggle,"¹³ along the uneven and tortuous paths of given circumstances. And at every turn in the road, we must expect to be surprised, in both senses of the word. However, simply because we cannot see the road as a whole and perhaps let our eager hopes deceive us as to its length, must we therefore deny ourselves and our supporters the prospect of the soaring pinnacles towards which we strive through untold trials and tribulations? How unpractical these practical people so often are! The strength of our party, the efficiency of every single one of our comrades depends on his knowledge that the extraordinary amount of labour, sacrifice, courage, and endurance which he must daily exact from himself and from others is not just devoted to the welfare of the individual groups around him, but that he is the vehicle for a bit of history, that he is working not only for the present but also for the future. Also, of course, not only for the future but also for the present. For it is the height of exceeding folly to think, as some of our opponents do, that since the final goal of Social Democracy is being discussed it will soon lose its power of enchantment for the masses. Social Democracy, they believe, must stand or fall with the theory of the irresistible and inevitable impoverishment of the proletariat. As though the workers would actually be bothered if we told them that the path we recommend will not, as we thought, take you through increasing misery; in fact, you will experience and enjoy, if not the final goal, then at least a little culture, a better standard of living, and a more human existence. Indeed, it is only if you become human that you will reach the goal.

In an article which appeared in *Vorwärts* after the party conference, Bernstein did the Austrian Social Democrats the honour of calling them "masters of that opportunism" which he sees as the tactical ideal.¹⁴ It is true that we in Austria have made much progress on difficult terrain. But he is much mistaken if he thinks that our eyes have therefore been constantly fixed on the ground, anxious to miss no obstacle, and that we have lost our view of the goals of the movement. Had we been earthbound and never raised our eyes to the goals of the movement, we would have sunk without trace in the morass of Austrian affairs; we would never have been able to give the movement the impetus necessary to maintain our brand of "opportunism." We Austrian Social Democrats know ourselves to be in complete agreement with the overwhelming majority of our German comrades, whose convictions were so brilliantly expressed in Stuttgart. What *Kautsky* said, to the jubilant applause of the delegates,

was as if it came from our own hearts, and like our German comrades, we are ready to do the hard, daily work of digging in like sappers; but we are just as ready to give battle when the enemy forces us to engage. We too think that the danger of such crises is by no means a thing of the past. The folly and brutality of our opponents is greater than anywhere else in the world, not less; and the object of all our ingenuity must be to see that the field and day of battle are not too disadvantageous for us and, above all else, that our army is prepared.

We have deliberately not mentioned the ancillary discussion with Comrade *Heine* (Berlin), on the one hand, and Comrades *Parvus* and *Luxemburg* (Dresden), on the other. We do indeed consider them to be of less than prime importance, and viewed with hindsight, they seem to us to have been not entirely worth the irritation and excitement which they caused. Comrade *Heine* condensed his views on tactics into the remark that he knew of only two ways to establish the power of the proletariat: "we put a pistol to the head of the ruling classes; either the pistol of parliamentary consent, or a real one."¹⁵ Comrade *Heine* is much too shrewd not to realise very quickly that there is a third method (the only really possible one) by which the proletariat can gain power, that Social Democracy everywhere has been using it for some time, and that it is due to this method that we have (among other things) all the forms of legal protection for workers which exist in the world today. His two-pistol theory was invented in the study, and in the real world of party life he will quickly get rid of it. And the first idea he will abandon is the ridiculous notion that once we have got hold of the "pistol of parliamentary consent," we shall have nothing better to do with it than approve military appropriations. That would really be worth the trouble! Comrade *Luxemburg* is that old acquaintance of ours who absolutely will not hear of the restoration of Poland and agitates against it as constantly as though it were the worst evil and most pressing danger facing the Polish proletariat.¹⁶ Furthermore, she and the well-informed Comrade *Parvus* make themselves disagreeable by preaching truths utterly familiar to us Social Democrats with an importunate fanaticism, as though they were trying to elevate the unheard of proposition that two and two make four into the privileged dogma of a sect. Fortunately, the road which Social Democracy has to travel is not as narrow as these comrades conceive it to be, nor is the danger of violating principle at every step as terribly imminent as they suppose. But they too will learn this eventually, and let us hope that, in time, all this immoderate ferment will yield a few drops of good wine.

The Stuttgart party conference was not, of course, able to come to any decision on the real question raised by Bernstein, the question of where we stand. Bernstein believes that the concentration of capital and the proletarianisation of the masses is proceeding more slowly than might have been expected, and he bases this opinion essentially upon statistics which cannot prove what he regards as proved, because they cannot tell us anything about the sweeping changes in the economic function of certain social strata. However, these are matters which cannot be settled at the party conference or in the daily press. But if Bernstein believes, on the basis of his experience in England, that a softening of class antagonisms or an abatement of class conflicts is in sight or even possible, then the party conference gave him the answer which we must all give him. Whether we like it or not, nothing of the kind is in evidence. On the contrary, when a milder climate has prevailed for a while, the first serious conflict of interests shows that the gulf is even deeper than before. Look at the fate which befalls the few well-intentioned mediators who counsel the bourgeoisie to make social peace. Look at the persecution of national socialist and state socialist priests and professors. And then Bernstein tells us that we on the Continent are backward. That is true, but we cannot treat our opponents as other than what they are. Are we to wait until they change their skin? Who is to know if they will do it at all? By the look of things, the ruling classes on the Continent will have to be carted to their graves in a thoroughly backward state, and with their skins unchanged. There is nothing in our experience to induce us to lay aside the armour of a solidly united proletarian struggle. The party conference in Stuttgart stated this clearly, and there too we in Austria feel ourselves to be at one with them.

BEBEL to BERNSTEIN¹⁷

Berlin W., 16 October 1898
5 Habsburgerstrasse

Dear Ede,

You have, of course, followed the proceedings of the Stuttgart Conference closely, as your article in *Vorwärts* shows.¹⁸ I believe it my duty at least to tell you what impression your statement made on those who did not speak but who did, to some extent, share your point of view. They were simply shattered by its content. Personally, I must say that, although I had previously read it through two or three times and thus knew its content (in any case broadly familiar to

me from your articles in NZ), its full import first struck me when I read it out aloud.

Once again, you are changing your skin -- to use an expression which has become fashionable among us -- and it is a metamorphosis which I regard as the most dangerous you have so far undergone. It is particularly dangerous because the only remedy which might help, namely your removal to a different milieu, is for obvious reasons not practicable. As an old friend and comrade-in-arms, I will be frank. I have pondered the reasons which led you to your present standpoint, and the first thing which occurred to me was that, during the thirty years or so we have known each other, you have always undergone a fundamental change of view whenever you have been exposed, for any length of time, to changed impressions and influences. Your zeal for the truth and your considerable astuteness have not hindered these changes. On the contrary, the changes have been prompted by the fact that you deem the circumstances in which you are living at any given moment to be the generally valid ones and seek to prove this to others with all the acumen at your command. Just think back over the changes you have undergone in the time we have known each other.

You joined the party as an Eisenacher. A few years later, under the influence of Dühringian literature and lectures, you became an enthusiastic follower of Dühring. Then you met Höchberg. The two of you went into idyllic retreat by the lakes of the Italian Alps, and in his company you became, *sit venia verbo*, a Höchbergian. It was in this capacity that you collaborated with Höchberg and Schramm in writing that noxious article (1879) which so enraged us all, and which so strongly calls to mind your present views -- except that you now go even *further*. This article and what happened in connection with Höchberg was, as you also know, the cause of our "journey to Canossa" to see Engels in London, where in fact you were the actual "penitent" and I served as your "guide and advocate" against the wrath of the two old men.

We then returned home with the required "absolution"; you became editor of the *Sozialdemokrat*, and, among our comrades in Zürich, who were then in a most revolutionary mood over the disgraceful conditions under the Antisocialist Law, you became the most outstanding representative of their views and aspirations. This period was the high point of your life, and nobody supported you more zealously than Marx and Engels. And at first your subsequent migration to England and your constant and intimate association with Engels etc. produced no change in your views.

However, since his death, the atmosphere and conditions in England and the personal relationships you have established there have once again led you to change your views in a way that is regarded by almost all of us with misgiving and regret.

I cannot venture on theoretical disquisitions in a letter. Our recent meeting in Switzerland¹⁹ also convinced me that such disquisitions, however impressive, can scarcely be said to have a *decisive* effect on you. (At this meeting I intentionally avoided disputations because I thought it more important to discover from your own words how far your metamorphosis had proceeded.) In any case, it is more proper, sensible, and beneficial to the matter in hand to say what I have to say against you publicly.

I did not regard Stuttgart as the right place, so I did not venture upon a discussion of your changed views, whether on principles or on tactics. Above all else, there was no time, and I took the view that before we discussed tactics we ought to discuss with you the conflict of principle in our basic conceptions. Nonetheless, I was in the end glad that the debate turned out as it did. Although not exhaustive, it was very stimulating and in many ways illuminating, and I was especially pleased that this happened without my participation.

Karl in particular produced a great effect by his spontaneous intervention. It was only your statement, of which I naturally informed him as soon as it came to hand, that impelled him to speak. The debate was not favourable to your views, or to those of your supporters. On this there can be no illusions. I do not know whether you will take up the challenge which Karl levelled at you in his latest rejoinder in *Vorwärts*:²⁰ to give us a comprehensive exposition of your present standpoint. I do not regard this as absolutely vital, since I think that you have said quite enough to indicate the direction in which you are moving and want us to follow; but if you do nonetheless respond to his challenge, so much the better.

I think that you are floundering in glaring contradictions and that you are drawing many false conclusions. This gives the impression that you see only what you want to see and that, when you see nothing at all, you make things up. Thus, to mention a minor point which I nonetheless found uncommonly instructive, after Stuttgart you sent me a copy of our Viennese party paper which contained a discussion between the editors and a bourgeois party on the necessity of changing tactics in the face of changed circumstances.²¹ You had heavily underscored the relevant passages. Now, neither I nor anyone else in the party has ever denied that tactics must suit the circumstances under which we live and fight. On the contrary, it is a self-evident

truth acknowledged as such by the entire party. I think that the debate on tactics at the Erfurt Conference leaves no room for doubt on this score, and the point has been repeated often enough since then. I need only recall Liebknecht's drastic declaration that, if necessary, he would change his tactics twenty-four times in twenty-four hours.²² Where we disagree is on whether, at this given moment, different or modified tactics are necessary, and on the extent to which a particular change should, in the event, be pushed. However, there is one thing that remains constant, *regardless of the circumstances*. Tactics must *always be devised with regard to the principles and the aim of the party*, and on this point there is a basic conceptual difference between you and more than 99 per cent of the party.

Your article in number 2 of NZ shows once again how far you have allowed your entire way of thinking to be influenced, and your judgment to be determined, by English conditions.²³ Even supposing that everything you say about English party relationships is correct – though I do not believe that it is – it could not possibly be applied to Germany and to German party relationships. Indeed, it is not even applicable to our participation in the Prussian state assembly elections, a question on which I am broadly in agreement with you.²⁴ For we are dealing with a franchise which *absolutely rules out any success for us* and which obliges us to support hostile parties, not in order to gain anything, but mainly to *prevent much harm being done*. But the English electoral system is, in spite of everything, such that, if a powerful and class-conscious workers' party existed there, it could achieve independent results at least as good as those we achieved under the previous electoral system in Saxony.²⁵

The lack of success in England depends mainly, not on the franchise, but on other factors which our English comrades have not yet had the skill and ability to overcome. But once again I stress that we are divided not only by profound differences on tactical matters, but also by *fundamental* conceptual differences. Karl was quite right when he declared in Stuttgart that if the views reiterated in your statement on bourgeois society and its development were correct, *then we must cease to be Social Democrats*. Given your present views on bourgeois society and its development, *you are quite right to say: for me the movement is everything, the end is nothing*. Here is the gulf that has opened up between us, and I attach great value to establishing this with the greatest possible clarity.

Among the better-known German comrades, I believe Vollmar is on your side, Schippel only just, and Auer not at all, despite his fondness for diplomacy and mediation. I suppose Heine also shares your

point of view, but he has forfeited all influence during his short time as a party activist.

I write to you so frankly because I want to preserve you from illusions and because unremitting openness can, perhaps, still make you examine very carefully whether you are not after all on the wrong track.

With best wishes,

Yours
A. Bebel

I have just seen Adler's article in the *Arbeiter-Zeitung*.²⁶ It shows you what people think, there as well as here. I am particularly pleased that it answers your attack on the German party. When you are making these attacks, you too ought to deal in facts; otherwise, no discussion is possible.

BERNSTEIN to BEBEL²⁷

146 Hithergreen Lane
Lewisham
S.E. London, 20 October 1898

Dear August,

Many thanks for your letter, which arrived today. It is frank, precise, and although it does not say so in so many words, it tells me quite plainly that in your honest opinion I cannot, with my views as they are, remain a member of the party. You might perhaps suffer me for the sake of tolerance, but you would prefer that I either change direction or accept the logical consequences of my change of heart.

I need hardly tell you that I do not in any way hold this against you. You are acting in accordance with your fullest convictions, and however unpleasant such a separation might be, it would not be the worst thing that could happen between us. A false position with its inevitable frictions and misunderstanding would be very much worse. Even now, I can't write anything without your misconstruing it. In the article on the debate in England about election tactics, I took no standpoint at all but merely reported objectively. You have taken this as a recommendation of some tactic or other – I've no idea what – and declare that it is wrong. My article on the conquest of political power was not remotely intended as an attack on the German party. The reference to Austria was aimed at the line taken by Ledebour²⁸ and his associates. In fact the German party has often enough, or rather always, practised opportunism. At all events, its policy has

always been more correct than its rhetoric. For this reason I have no intention of reforming the actual policy of the party (apart from subordinate points on which we all have our differences of opinion). My aim — an aim I must have as a theoretician, to use for once the term you attribute to me — is to create unity of theory and reality, of formulation and action. In the normal run of things, dualism can be bridged by fudging. (I use the word without malice; I've fudged often enough myself, and at times fudging is the only possible solution.) But when things come to a head it becomes fatal.

You reproach me with my "metamorphoses." First of all I must say that you do misjudge me rather badly. To begin with, I was not a Dühringian in Berlin. I personally sided with Dühring the Socialist,²⁹ but at no time did I identify myself with his system. I do not, incidentally, pride myself on this. On the contrary, I see it as proof of my lack of theoretical awareness at the time and of the shallowness of my thinking. Like most of us, I suppose, I was an eclectic, a radical democrat with socialist tendencies.

Nor did I become a Höchbergian with Höchberg. Far from it. In Lugano I became a Marxist. I was only accidentally involved in the Höchberg/Schramm article. The article had been discussed by Schramm, Höchberg, and Curti and was already finished when Höchberg asked me whether I had any criticism of the method of agitation adopted so far. I mentioned Hasselmann's sycophantic attitude to the workers³⁰ (still repellent to me even today, since in certain men of letters it has found some all too amenable disciples), and at Höchberg's instigation I recorded this in some twenty lines. That is the full extent of my part in the article.³¹

However, as you will recall, my response to Engels's circular letter against the article was entirely different from that of Schramm, Höchberg, and Vollmar. But *long before the circular appeared* I pressed Höchberg to go to London in order to reach an understanding with Marx and Engels. Höchberg's trip to London in July 1880 was my doing, and, happily, I still have a letter from Höchberg which confirms this. The unfortunate outcome of the visit is explained partly by the fact that Engels became extremely heated towards H. and partly by fundamental differences between H.'s way of thinking and that of Engels.

So it was not during or after my visit to London in 1880 that I became a Marxist. Nor did I wait until London or until after Engels's death to modify my views. Please read my articles in the later volumes of the *Sozialdemokrat*; read especially the article "Hazards" in numbers 15, 18, and 21, "Remarks on Tactical Matters" in number

25 and my afterword to the report from Denmark in number 36 as well as the leading article in the same number of the *Sozialdemokrat* for 1890.³² You will find that I have by no means changed as suddenly as you think. This change of skin is the outcome of a very prolonged development, or rather, it took me a very long time to realise fully that this change did not merely involve particular issues but touched on the very foundations of Marxism. Indeed, until just two years ago I was attempting to "stretch" Marxist doctrine and thus reconcile it with practice. Characteristically, and perhaps predictably, the impossibility of this enterprise did not fully dawn upon me until eighteen months ago when I gave a lecture to the Fabian Society on the theme: "What Marx Really Taught."³³ I still have the manuscript of the lecture. It is a horrifying example of a well-intentioned "rescue attempt." I meant to rescue Marx, to demonstrate that everything had happened as he had said, and that he had also mentioned everything that had happened otherwise. But when the *tour de force* was complete and as I was reading the lecture, the thought shot through my head that I was doing Marx an injustice, that it was not Marx that I was presenting. And a few innocuous questions addressed to me by an astute Fabian called Hubert Bland,³⁴ and answered in the old style, completely finished me. I told myself secretly that this could not go on. It is idle to attempt to reconcile the irreconcilable. The vital thing is to be clear as to where Marx is still right and where he is not. If we jettison the latter, we serve Marx's memory better than when (as I did and as many still do) we stretch his theory until it will prove anything. Because then it proves nothing. I must say something publicly on this matter, so for the moment I will let it drop.

At all events, the above should by now have shown that my inner development has not been as you imagined. I am not, when all is said and done, as wretchedly rootless and slavishly dependent upon my surroundings as your description implies. Rather the opposite. For all my outwardly conciliatory style, I am always at heart a rebel against the impressions I receive. But that's incidental.

Basically, it is rather funny that you should all attack me now for assessing Germany through English spectacles. English spectacles are, after all, the basis of the official party doctrine against which I am "in revolt." This doctrine is rooted in England; the evidence supporting it has hitherto been drawn from England; and if you deprive it of this foundation, you will have to provide it with another.

You cannot say that I misunderstand you, that I assess the situation in Germany by reference to current conditions in England or

that I overlook the great differences in development between England and Germany. My reply is that, whatever you think of me, don't take me for an idiot. I am really and truly not so Anglicised that I cannot see the great differences which exist between present-day Germany and present-day England, or fail to appreciate that, with such differences, they cannot develop along parallel lines. I based my arguments against the catastrophe theory, not on English, but on German statistics. I will also show you that the number of property-owners is constantly rising, not only in England, but in all modern countries. What is more, this proof can be deduced from Marx. We need only develop certain propositions which Marx lets drop in the course of his enquiry. Do not forget that, for all its scientific nature, *Capital* was ultimately a piece of propaganda [*Tendenzschrift*] and that it remained unfinished. In my opinion, it remained unfinished because the conflict between propaganda and science made the task more and more difficult for Marx. In this respect, the fate of the great work is almost symbolic; it is certainly an object-lesson.

The striking divergence between reality and the presuppositions of our theory would emerge to its fullest extent if some event in the near future were to put political rule in the hands of Social Democracy. For then the enormous error which lurks behind the bit about the "appropriation of the means of production by society" would be revealed, as would the artificiality of this concept, which is based on taking measures from the French Revolution and applying them to modern society, and the mistaken perception of, or rather the complete *obliviousness* to, the true nature of what is nowadays simplistically regarded as a uniform mass, i.e. the "proletariat," a term by which head stockman and cowherd, clerk and scullion, skilled worker and general handyman are bundled together into the same basket. There is no homogeneous proletariat any more than there was a homogeneous people or homogeneous third estate. They [proletarians] act homogeneously only in certain confrontations and under certain pressures. Diminish the pressure and their reactions become increasingly differentiated, and for that reason nothing is more absurd than the assumption that in a revolution the fifteen million proletarians, by Parvus's reckoning,³⁵ would react in a homogeneous fashion. On the other hand, in a revolution one cannot expropriate selectively and by slow degrees. Elemental forces are released and there is no question of conscious, systematic intervention in the anarchy of production. It [a revolution] is more or less the opposite of the "leap from necessity into freedom."³⁶

When, then, a number of contemporary *literati* indulge in exagger-

ated talk to induce or encourage the workers to think that such a catastrophe is imminent and that everything which they themselves have not envisaged is petty-bourgeois nonsense, they are assuming a very heavy responsibility. In England, idle talk about the forthcoming great revolution is merely ridiculous; in Germany, with the situation already tense, it is simply criminal. In either case, it is irrational.

I have already said that, as a party, German Social Democracy has never allowed itself to be led very far astray by errors in its theory. It has been preserved from this fate partly by the common sense of its leaders and partly by force of circumstance. In any case, such mistakes are not very dangerous when the party is still young. But the party's responsibilities increase with its power, and so does the need to be completely clear about where one stands. For this reason, a close examination of the theory is more vital today than ever before. In the agrarian question you saw how many uncracked chestnuts the theory left you with, and it will be the same with industry if you mean to venture beyond the domain of legislation for workers' protection. On the question of co-operatives, the excuse that nowadays co-operatives are "capitalist enterprises" will have to serve – an excuse which exemplifies the theoretical embarrassment we are in today, when the course of events increasingly reveals the gaping holes in the theory we have adopted. Indeed, the attack on the theory comes not from me; circumstances themselves are demonstrating its inadequacy. And it is not my perception which is clouded, but yours.

That is not arrogance. It is an acknowledgment of our different situations. You are in the political struggle; I was outside and remote *from it*. Kautsky may be right in saying that I would think as you do if I were in Germany. But whether I would be objectively more in the right is a different matter. I too would read the statistics only in order to fish out proofs to support the old "well-tried" theory, and when they actually *showed* that the number of small peasants had fallen by a thousand, as last time, I would see that as proving irrefutably the imminent disappearance of peasant land-ownership. God knows, all this is only human. Political parties are always loath to have their Shibboleths undermined, and the more radical they are the more conservative they are on this point. He who does not believe in the great expropriation as proclaimed fifty years ago cannot be a "proletarian revolutionary" – that, in somewhat different words, was the argument in the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* recently.³⁷ It only takes a number of skilful writers in the main organs of the party to carry on writing in this fashion for a climate of opinion to be created for a while, a kind of intellectual terrorism, to which everything else

will submit willy-nilly or will, at least, be obliged to render account. I have been through all that already; I have after all been "one of them" and am therefore not deceived when you say that 99 per cent of the party is against me. Most of them are against me because they don't understand me, because they are on the wrong track; they find in my articles things which aren't there because they've been made drunk on sonorous phrases and captivating dialectic. That, however, does not and cannot last for long.

The party has already gone through several metamorphoses. It grew to greatness without the illusion of an imminent "final goal." Its early programmes were much more modest, and yet they fired us with enthusiasm. Nor need we fear that, in losing certain presuppositions, Social Democracy would also lose its justification. Only certain illusions would be lost, and new ideals would fire our hearts in place of the old. In this respect, your faith is weaker than mine. My road is slower, but it leads upwards. Yours leads to a precipice beyond which you see the Promised Land.

I take it that you knew, when you wrote the concluding words of your letter, that they were merely *pro forma*. I cannot abandon my convictions. If you think that this puts me outside the party, then tell me so openly and I will draw the appropriate conclusions. I shall not forget, when I do so, that you, like me, are following the dictates of your conscience and that most of you are animated by feelings of the warmest friendship towards me. I have only one further request. Look beyond the borders of Germany to the politically advanced countries: Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Switzerland, Norway, even France. Socialists there will either tell you openly (like Vandervelde)³⁸ that they do not believe in a collapse or they will demonstrate it by their behaviour, just as you do by your arrangements in private life. In Germany, special circumstances have put the party into a position of political power which is at odds with the rest of Germany's political development. This places the party in a difficult situation, which is certainly not improved by constantly beating the revolutionary drum; it can be improved only by a sober reckoning-up of what lies in our power and what does not.

That, I think, will do. Would you please read this, or have it read, to the party executive? I shall explain my position more fully in a separate document. But that could take one or two months, and so I would like to hear from you before then.

Warm regards to you and to all our friends.

Yours,
Ede

BEBEL to BERNSTEIN³⁹

Berlin, 22 October 1898 (despatched 24)

Dear Ede,

Your letter received. Thank you very much indeed. I am not surprised at its length. It could hardly be shorter. However, it covers the ground.

I write to you immediately because I owe you an explanation on a point of importance to you.

You seem to think that my letter was a kind of official letter previously circulated to all in whose name I was writing. That is incorrect; *nobody* saw the letter before it was sent to you. I merely got my wife to make a copy and showed it to Karl, Paul⁴⁰ and Liebknecht in that order.

To this very moment the executive know nothing of my letter, so I take it that you will leave it to me to decide when and whether I inform the executive of your letter.

On the other hand, your letter persuaded me that, as Karl has already remarked, you wish to publish a comprehensive account of your views. I see from your letters to Karl, as well as from your letter to me, that no discussion is possible unless you do so, because the ground is constantly shifting, one thing endlessly leads to another, and so on. But I would like to give you a piece of advice on this publication. Write as though you were setting down your thoughts for the first time, with absolutely no form of polemic against things previously said or written. Secondly, write *clearly and precisely*. For instance, if you wish to cite one of your opponents to exemplify a point, then refer to him so clearly that there is no doubt about *whom* you mean. You say in your last letter, for example, that the attack in your last article in *Vorwärts* was directed, not at the German party, but at Ledebour. But *nobody* here read it as such, and Adler's reply from Vienna shows that he too read it as directed against the party.

But these obscurities and ambiguities have bedevilled your polemics for years. I indicated to Karl certain points which I considered to be directed against remarks of mine or of some other particular person, and Karl replied that he didn't think so, in the one case they were probably directed at one person and in the other at someone else.

Well how on earth is any clarification to be achieved in this way? If, at any particular point, you polemicise against Parvus, you may bet a thousand to one that I shan't have any comment to make. And

the same would be true if you were to write against Ledebour or some other person or group to which I don't belong.

The logical consequence of this obscurity and ambiguity is that you appear to generalise, to mean the whole when you mean only a small part. This does neither you nor us any good whatsoever. Moreover, since the main issue turns on *which of the party's established principles you are attacking, I advise that here too you use precise formulations.*

It makes a most damnable impression afterwards and causes unnecessary offence when you correct people because you didn't say what your opponent took you to be saying.

You have even argued in this fashion in your letters to Karl, though he is after all "pretty bright" and understands what his opponent writes.

I grant that misunderstandings can never be completely avoided, but care must be taken to prevent them *as far as possible* by using a *clear* and positive mode of expression.

Above all, be clear in your own mind that we are not a party sworn to every maxim in *The Communist Manifesto*; nobody is sworn to that, and in tactical matters and in manner of presentation we have, between Parvus and Auer, a very considerable range of nuances.

But for me the cardinal point is that, for the moment, I am convinced that you are no longer on Social Democratic ground at all. I gather this, not only from what you have written publicly, but even more from what you have revealed in private letters and pronouncements. It cannot possibly be that we are suddenly misunderstanding everything about you which we once understood so well. Or that *everybody* who has in the past polemicised against you has, to varying degrees, misunderstood you.

I could also say a good deal against the remarks in your last letter, but I forbear because we are wasting one another's good time.

Only one brief comment: you object to the metamorphoses which I attribute to you. While I admit that a man is a better judge of himself than anyone else is, the fact remains that contributing to the article in the *Jahrbuch*, without expressing any reservations, makes you responsible for the article as a whole.

It is a matter of being "tarred with the same brush." And, unless you did it out of weakness, it is inconceivable that you did not agree at least with the general import of the article, if not with every word. And that is the main point in such matters. You may plead extenuating circumstances, but you don't escape responsibility altogether. On

the other hand, the fact remains that you quickly gained an insight into it which Höchberg and Schramm *never* achieved, since, because you were in contact with our comrades and accessible to their remonstrances, you soon came to realise your mistake. That you sent Höchberg to London in the summer of 1880, firmly believing that an understanding between him and the old man was possible, only shows how far you were deceived about both their positions.

But let that suffice. Otherwise we'll be involved in endless argument yet again.

Sit down and write, and we will leave our swords (that is, our pens) in their sheaths; but after that the fracas will begin.

With sincere greetings

Yours

A. Bebel

Note

- (i) We publish this article by our colleague Bernstein, together with Kautsky's reply. We are sure that Bernstein will agree with Kautsky and ourselves that it would be more appropriate to pursue the discussion further in *Neue Zeit*, where it is easier to give the issues in dispute comprehensive treatment than it is in a newspaper devoted to day-to-day work.

Notes

Abbreviations

Adler BW	Victor Adler, <i>Briefwechsel mit August Bebel und Karl Kautsky, sowie Briefe von und an I. Auer, E. Bernstein, A. Braun, H. Dietz, E. Ebert, W. Liebknecht, H. Müller und P. Singer</i> , collected and with commentary by F. Adler, Vienna, 1954
<i>Anti-Dühring</i>	Engels, <i>Anti-Dühring: Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science</i> , 2nd ed., Moscow, 1959
BKBW	<i>August Bebels Briefwechsel mit Karl Kautsky</i> , ed. Karl Kautsky, Jr., Assen, 1971
BEBW	<i>Eduard Bernsteins Briefwechsel mit Friedrich Engels</i> , ed. Helmut Hirsch, Assen, 1970
<i>Capital I</i>	Karl Marx, <i>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</i> , vol. I, trans. Ben Fowkes, Harmondsworth, 1976
<i>Capital III</i>	Karl Marx, <i>Capital: A Critique of Political Economy</i> , vol. III, trans. David Fernbach, Harmondsworth, 1981
ELC	Frederick Engels, Paul Lafargue, and Laura Lafargue, <i>Correspondence</i> , 3 vols., Moscow, n.d.
LVZ	<i>Leipziger Volkszeitung</i>
MECW	Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, <i>Collected Works</i> , 50 vols. (incomplete). London, 1975–
MESC	Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, <i>Selected Correspondence</i> , Moscow, n.d.
MESW	Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, <i>Selected Works</i> , 2 vols., Moscow, 1958
MEW	Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, <i>Werke</i> , 39 vols., Berlin, 1972–8
NZ	<i>Neue Zeit</i>
<i>Protokoll</i>	<i>Protokoll über die Verhandlungen des Parteitages der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands</i> , Berlin, 1890–1913
RLGB	Rosa Luxemburg, <i>Gesammelte Briefe</i> , 5 vols., Berlin, 1982–4
RLGW	Rosa Luxemburg, <i>Gesammelte Werke</i> , 5 vols., Berlin, 1974–80
SAZ	<i>Sächsische Arbeiter-Zeitung</i>

Introduction

1. Bernstein to Bebel, 20 October 1898; Adler BW, p. 259. See chapter 11 of this volume.
2. Roger Morgan, *The German Social Democrats and the First International 1864–1872* (Cambridge, 1965), remains the best study in English of the German socialist movements prior to the Gotha Conference. The draft programme discussed at the conference was, of course, the subject of Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Programme*.
3. Engels to Bebel, 12 and 15 October 1875. Marx to Bracke, 5 May 1875. MESC, pp. 360ff. MEW, xxxiv, pp. 137ff.
4. E. Bernstein, *Sozialdemokratische Lehrjahre* (Berlin, 1978), p. 72.
5. The offending article was "Rückblicke auf die sozialistische Bewegung in Deutschland," *Jahrbuch für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik* (Zürich, 1879). The reply of Marx and Engels: MESC, pp. 388ff., and MEW, xxxiv, pp. 394ff.
6. Bernstein, *Sozialdemokratische Lehrjahre*, pp. 78ff.
7. There are two serviceable works in English on Kautsky: M. Salvadori, *Karl Kautsky and the Socialist Revolution, 1880–1938* (New York, 1979), and Gary P. Steenson, *Karl Kautsky 1854–1938, Marxism in the Classical Years* (Pittsburgh, 1978).
8. For more detailed analysis, see W. L. Guttsman, *The German Social Democratic Party, 1875–1933: Ghetto to Government* (London, 1981), pp. 42ff., and G. Roth, *The Social Democrats in Imperial Germany* (Totowa, N.J., 1963), pp. 170ff.
9. See Engels to Bebel, 25 August 1881; 21 June 1882; 28 October 1882; 18 November 1884 and 11 December 1884. MEW, xxxv, pp. 221, 335, 381; xxxvi, pp. 238 and 250.
10. Helga Grebing, *History of the German Labour Movement* (Leamington Spa, 1985), p. 78. Along with others, Grebing calls the policy in question "Kautskyism," which underrates the part Engels played in formulating it. Hans-Josef Steinberg warns us against identifying "Kautskyism" with official party doctrine. *Sozialismus und deutsche Sozialdemokratie: Zur Ideologie der Partei vor dem I. Weltkrieg*, 3rd ed. (Bonn, 1972), pp. 75ff. The point is a good one, at least as regards the period prior to the Erfurt conference.
11. Bernstein, *Sozialdemokratische Lehrjahre*, pp. 109ff.
12. See, for instance, Bernstein to Engels, 6 February 1881 and 2 February 1884. BEBW, pp. 17 and 243.
13. See, for instance, Leo (=Bernstein), "Der Sozialismus und der Staat," *Sozialdemokrat*, 20 December 1883 (in chapter 1 of this volume), and Engels's enthusiastic endorsement: Engels to Bernstein, 22 December 1883. BEBW, pp. 236–7.
14. Engels to Bernstein, 1 March 1883. BEBW, p. 195.
15. Bernstein, *Sozialdemokratische Lehrjahre*, pp. 124ff. and 158ff. In these conflicts, Engels generally sided with Bernstein. Engels to Bebel,

- 16 May 1882. MEW, xxxv, p. 322. Engels to Bernstein, 15 May 1885. BEBW, p. 320.
16. Engels to Bebel, 24 November 1879. MEW, xxxiv, p. 424.
 17. Leo (=Bernstein), "Produktivassoziationen mit Staatskredit," *Sozialdemokrat*, 26 June 1884 is a good example. See chapter 1 of this volume.
 18. *Ferdinand Lassalles Reden und Schriften*, edited with introduction by E. Bernstein (Berlin, 1892). Eleanor Marx translated the introduction. (Edward Bernstein, *Ferdinand Lassalle as a Social Reformer* [London, 1893].) Eduard Bernstein, *Sozialismus und Demokratie in der englischen Revolution* (Stuttgart, 1895) (translated as *Cromwell and Communism* [New York, 1963]).
 19. Bernstein to Bebel, 20 October 1898. Adler BW, p. 260. See chapter 11, this volume.
 20. Leo (=Bernstein), "Klippen," *Sozialdemokrat*, 12 April 1890, 3 and 24 May 1890.
 21. Vollmar raised the issue in two speeches delivered in Munich shortly before the conference. See Georg von Vollmar, *Reden und Schriften zur Reformpolitik* (Berlin, 1977), pp. 136–61. Peter Gay describes the Youngsters as "a small group of hyperradicals who attempted to 'save' the party from its 'bourgeois' tactics" (Gay, *The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism* [New York, 1962], p. 49). Their chief organ was the *Sächsische Arbeiter-Zeitung*. For Engels's assessment, see his letter in *Sozialdemokrat*, 13 September 1890, and MEW, xxii, pp. 68–70.
 22. Engels to Kautsky, 23 February 1891. Engels, "Zur Kritik des sozialdemokratischen Programmentwurfs 1891," MEW, xxii, p. 227. Engels did, of course, have some points to make on matters of detail, but the programme as a whole struck him as sound.
 23. Hyndman and Nieuwenhuis both had occasion to complain of their treatment at his hands. Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis, "Bernstein und seine Kampfweise," *NZ*, xi, 1 (1892), pp. 80–5. See also Hyndman's letter in *Justice*, 5 June 1897.
 24. Bernstein, "Die preussischen Landtagswahlen und die Sozialdemokratie," *NZ*, xi, 2 (1893), p. 778.
 25. *Ibid.*, p. 777.
 26. *Ibid.*, p. 774.
 27. Parvus (Unus), "Die preussischen Landtagswahlen," *NZ*, xii, 1 (1893), pp. 37–46.
 28. "Die preussischen Landtagswahlen und die Sozialdemokratie," *Vorwärts*, 24 September 1893.
 29. Engels to Kautsky, 3 November 1893. MEW, xxxix, p. 161.
 30. Bernstein, "Der dritte Band des 'Kapital,'" *NZ*, xiii, 1 (1894–5), pp. 333–8, 364–71, 388–98, 426–32, 485–92, 516–24, and 624–32.
 31. Engels to Adler, 16 March 1895. MEW, xxxix, p. 436.
 32. Bernstein, "Sozialistische Oekonomie in England," *NZ*, xv, 1 (1897), pp. 46–54. For discussion, see Gay, *Dilemma*, pp. 172ff. and Gerhard

- Himmelmann, "Die Rolle der Werttheorie in Bernsteins Konzept der politischen Oekonomie des Sozialismus," in Horst Heimann and Thomas Meyer (eds.), *Bernstein und der demokratische Sozialismus* (Berlin, 1978).
33. This position was first hinted at in Bernstein's "Die preussischen Landtagswahlen und die Sozialdemokratie," *NZ*, xi, 2 (1893), pp. 772–8. It was developed a bit further in his commentary and postscript to L. Heritier, *Geschichte der französischen Revolution von 1848* (Stuttgart, n.d.), and in his postscript to S. and B. Webb, *Die Geschichte des Britischen Trade Unionismus* (Stuttgart, 1895). See Bo Gustafsson, *Marxismus und Revisionismus: Eduard Bernsteins Kritik des Marxismus und ihre ideengeschichtlichen Voraussetzungen* (Frankfurt am Main, 1972), pp. 89ff.
 34. In her "Die englische Brille" (*LVZ*, 9 and 10 May 1899), Rosa Luxemburg notes that the phrase had, by then, become a slogan in the party. *RLGW*, I/1, p. 471. So far as we can tell, the phrase was coined by Adler in his "Der Stuttgarter Parteitag," *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, 16 October 1898 (translated in chapter 11 of this volume).
 35. Bernstein to Bebel, 20 October 1898; Adler BW, p. 260 (translated in chapter 11 of this volume).
 36. See in particular Bernstein's "Der Kampf der Sozialdemokratie und die Revolution der Gesellschaft," *NZ*, xvi, 1 (1898), pp. 485ff. (translated in chapter 5 of this volume). But see also, of course, his *Die Voraussetzungen des Sozialismus und die Aufgaben der Sozialdemokratie* (1899; modern edition, Berlin, 1977).
 37. In the first instance, by Belfort Bax in his "Our German Fabian Convert: or Socialism according to Bernstein," *Justice*, 7 November 1896. Hyndman took up the cry, calling Bernstein "our liberal-Fabian friend" ("Die Orientfrage und das Makedonien Europas," *Vorwärts*, 5 May 1897). Engels himself had occasion to comment on Bernstein's "comical respect for the Fabians" as early as the autumn of 1892 (Engels to Bebel, 14 and 20 August 1892. *MEW*, xxxviii, pp. 426 and 433). For further discussion, see Gay, *Dilemma*, pp. 97ff.; Gustafsson, *Marxismus und Revisionismus*, chapter 4; Thomas Meyer, *Bernsteins konstruktiver Sozialismus* (Berlin, 1977), pp. 122ff.; and Helmut Hirsch, *Der "Fabier" Eduard Bernstein: Zur Entwicklungsgeschichte des evolutionären Sozialismus* (Berlin, 1977).
 38. See, for instance, Bernstein's "Englische Partei-Entwicklungen," *NZ*, xiv, 1 (1895), pp. 77–85.
 39. In 1892, Bernstein published an appreciative assessment of Lange's work ("Zur Würdigung Friedrich Albert Langes," *NZ*, x, 2 [1892], pp. 68–78, 101–9, and 132–41). For his relationship to Kant, see Gay, *Dilemma*, pp. 144ff., and for his relationship to Lange, see Meyer, *Bernsteins konstruktiver Sozialismus*, pp. 114ff. For a general discussion of the relationship between Revisionism and philosophical Idealism, see George Lichtheim, *Marxism* (London, 1964), pp. 278–300.

40. Belfort Bax, "Our German Fabian Convert," *Justice*, 7 November 1896. See chapter 2 of the present volume.
41. Belfort Bax, *Leaders of Modern Thought*, xxiii (1881). See Marx to Sorge, 15 December 1881, and Marx to Lawrow, 23 January 1882. MEW, xxxv, pp. 248 and 262.
42. Engels to Bernstein, 22 October 1886. See also Engels to Laura Lafargue, 9 February 1886 and 9 August 1887, and Engels to Sorge, 18 June 1887 and 7 December 1889. MEW, xxxvi, pp. 548, 443, 692; xxxvii, p. 320.
43. Engels to Kautsky, 12 August 1892. MEW, xxxviii, pp. 422–3.
44. Engels to Ludwig Schorlemmer, 25 July 1892. MEW, xxxviii, p. 412.
45. Belfort Bax, "Die materialistische Geschichtsauffassung," *Die Zeit*, no. 93 (July 1896). (An English version appeared in Bax's *Outspoken Essays on Social Subjects* [London, 1897] and in his *Essays in Socialism, New and Old* [London, 1906].) Kautsky, "Die materialistische Geschichtsauffassung und der psychologische Antrieb," *NZ*, xiv, 2 (1896), pp. 652–9; Belfort Bax, "Synthetische contra neu-marxistische Geschichtsauffassung," *NZ*, xv, 1 (1896) pp. 164–71; Kautsky, "Was will und kann die materialistische Geschichtsauffassung leisten?" *NZ*, xv, 1 (1896), pp. 213–18, 228–38, and 260–71; Belfort Bax, "Die Grenzen der materialistischen Geschichtsauffassung," *NZ*, xv, 1 (1897), pp. 676–87; Kautsky, "Utopistischer und materialistischer Marxismus," *NZ*, xv, 1 (1897), pp. 716–27.
46. Bernstein, "Sozialistische Oekonomie in England," *NZ*, xv, 1 (1897), pp. 46–54, and "Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie und die türkischen Wirren," *NZ*, xv, 1 (1896), p. 110.
47. Rosa Luxemburg, "Neue Strömungen in der polnischen sozialistischen Bewegung in Deutschland und Österreich," *NZ*, xiv, 2 (1896), pp. 176–81 and 206–16, and "Der Sozialpatriotismus in Polen," *NZ*, xiv, 2 (1896), pp. 459–70 (also in *RLGW*, I/1, pp. 14–51). For an account of the quarrel, see J. P. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg* (Oxford, 1966), vol. 1, pp. 87–104.
48. *Justice*, 31 July 1896.
49. Rosa Luxemburg, "Die nationalen Kämpfe in der Türkei und die Sozialdemokratie," *SAZ*, 8–10 October 1896 and "Abermals Orientfrage," *SAZ*, December 1896.
50. *Justice*, 26 September 1896.
51. Bernstein, "Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie und die türkischen Wirren," *NZ*, xv, 1 (1896). Adler to Kautsky, 9 November 1896. Adler BW, p. 219. See chapter 2, this volume.
52. Bernstein, "Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie . . .," pp. 109–10.
53. Belfort Bax, "Our German Fabian Convert."
54. The first issue appeared in October 1896.
55. Bernstein, "Probleme des Sozialismus: 2. Eine Theorie der Gebiete und Grenzen des Kollektivismus," *NZ*, xv, 1 (1896), pp. 204–13. The original article has been reprinted in J. A. Hobson, *The Crisis of Liberalism*, ed. P. F. Clarke (Brighton, 1974).

56. Bernstein, "Probleme des Sozialismus: 3. Der gegenwärtige Stand der industriellen Entwicklung in Deutschland," *NZ*, xv, 1 (1896), pp. 303–11, and "Probleme des Sozialismus: 4. Die neuere Entwicklung der Agrarverhältnisse in England," *NZ*, xv, 1 (1897), pp. 772–83.
57. *Fabian News*, vi, 12 (1897), p. 48. There was also a report in *Justice*, the inaccuracies of which Bernstein felt constrained to correct. See his letter in *Justice*, 13 February 1897.
58. Bernstein to Bebel, 20 October 1898. Adler BW, p. 260.
59. Bernstein, "Die sozialpolitische Bedeutung von Raum und Zahl," *NZ*, xv, 2 (1897), pp. 100–7 and 138–43. See chapter 2, this volume.
60. Engels, "On Authority," *MESW*, i. pp. 636–9. *MEW*, xviii, pp. 305–8.
61. *Vorwärts*, 29 May 1897 (2 Supplement).
62. He clashed with Hyndman on the Eastern question ("Russland und die englischen Radikalen," *Vorwärts*, 9 May 1897, and "Der Sieg der Türken und die Sozialdemokratie," *NZ*, xv, 2 [1896], pp. 260–8) and with Giovanni Lerda on whether a policy of compromise was preferable to one of intransigence (Lerda, "Die Taktik," *NZ*, xv, 1 [1896], pp. 420–31; Bernstein, "Klassenkampf und Kompromiss," *NZ*, xv, 1 [1897], pp. 516–24; Lerda, "Nochmals die Frage des Kompromisses," *NZ*, xv, 2 [1897], pp. 179–82).
63. The diversity of opinion within the party is graphically illustrated by the debates at the annual party conferences. Even the leadership was not united. See Pierre Angel, *Eduard Bernstein et l'évolution du socialisme allemand* (Paris, 1961), pp. 166ff., and Steinberg, *Sozialismus und deutsche Sozialdemokratie*, *passim*.
64. Bernstein, "Probleme des Sozialismus: 1. Der Sozialismus und die gewerbliche Arbeit der Jugend," *NZ*, xvi, 1 (1897), pp. 37–44 (translated in chapter 4 of this volume). "Bernstein's Latest," *Justice*, 16 October 1897.
65. Bernstein, "Die Menge und das Verbrechen," *NZ*, xvi, 1 (1897), pp. 229–37 (translated in chapter 4).
66. Bebel to Kautsky, 16 November 1897; BKBW, p. 102. Kautsky to Adler, quoted in BKBW, p. 102.
67. Bernstein, "Der Kampf im englischen Maschinenbaugewerbe," *NZ*, xvi, 1 (1897–8), pp. 454–60 and 644–53 (translated in chapter 4 of this volume).
68. See Marx's closing remarks in his "Wages, Price and Profit," *MESW*, I, pp. 446–7. Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, *MESW*, II, pp. 114–15. *MEW*, xxii, pp. 310–11. Engels to Bebel, 28 October 1885 and Engels to Schlüter, 11 January 1890. *MEW*, xxxvi, pp. 376ff., and xxxvii, pp. 340ff.
69. *NZ*, xvi, 1 (1897), p. 459. Bernstein was to elaborate this point in his "Klassenkampf-Dogma und Klassenkampf-Wirklichkeit," *NZ*, xvii, 2 (1899), pp. 577–84 and 619–26.
70. Bebel to Kautsky, 15 February 1898; BKBW, pp. 102–3.

71. Belfort Bax, "Kolonialpolitik und Chauvinismus," *NZ*, xvi, 1 (1897), pp. 420–7) (translated in chapter 5 of this volume).
72. Bernstein, "Der Kampf der Sozialdemokratie und die Revolution der Gesellschaft: 1. Polemisches, 2. Die Zusammenbruchstheorie und die Kolonialpolitik," *NZ*, xvi, 1 (1898) pp. 484–97 and 548–57 (translated in chapter 5 of this volume).
73. *Ibid.*, p. 553.
74. *Ibid.*, p. 556.
75. Franz Mehring, "Sozialistische Selbstkritik," *LVZ*, 9 February 1898, and "Das sozialistische Endziel," *LVZ*, 10 February 1898. And a month later: "In Sachen Bernstein," *LVZ*, 10 March 1898.
76. "Ueber Kolonialpolitik und Krisentheorie," *Vorwärts*, 28 January 1898.
77. Belfort Bax, "Der Sozialismus eines gewöhnlichen Menschenkindes gegenüber dem Sozialismus des Herrn Bernstein," *NZ*, xvi, 1 (1898) pp. 824–9.
78. Parvus, "Soziale Revolution und Kolonialpolitik," *SAZ*, 27 January 1898.
79. Parvus, "Bernsteins Umwälzung des Sozialismus," *SAZ*, 28 January 1898 to 6 March 1898 (translated in chapter 6 of this volume; see the Bibliography for full details). Parvus's title for the series was meant to recall Engels's *Herrn Eugen Dührings Umwälzung des Sozialismus*, the full title of the *Anti-Dühring*.
80. Bernstein, "Erklärung," *Vorwärts*, 7 February 1898.
81. Parvus, "Eine Erklärung E. Bernsteins," *SAZ*, 9 February 1898.
82. C. S. (Konrad Schmidt), "Endziel und Bewegung," *Vorwärts*, 20 February 1898 (translated in chapter 7 of this volume).
83. See his review of Kronenberg's *Kant, sein Leben und seine Lehre* in the supplement to *Vorwärts*, 17 October 1897.
84. Parvus, "Soziale Revolution und Sozialismus," *SAZ*, 26 February 1898, 1 and 6 March 1898.
85. Bernstein, "Kritisches Zwischenspiel," *NZ*, xvi, 1 (1898), pp. 740–51 (translated in chapter 7 of this volume).
86. Parvus, "Ed. Bernsteins Herumwälzung," *SAZ*, 9 March 1898; "E. Bernstein als 'armer Toms,'" *SAZ*, 11, 24, and 26 March 1898. The title of the latter refers to *King Lear*, III, iv, 50–60.
87. For Heine's proposals on relations with the National Liberals, see his *Die Sozialdemokratie und die Schichten der Studierten* (1897). His "compensation policy" was launched in an election speech delivered in Berlin on 10 February 1898.
88. Samuel H. Baron, *Plekhanov: The Father of Russian Marxism* (London, 1963), pp. 172ff.
89. C. Tsuzuki, *The Life of Eleanor Marx, 1855–1898* (Oxford, 1967), pp. 290–1.
90. *Ibid.*, chapter 13. According to Bernstein, Aveling provided the model for Dubedat in Shaw's *The Doctor's Dilemma*. Bernstein, *My Years of Exile*, trans. Bernard Miall (London, 1921), pp. 162ff.

91. Bernstein, "Probleme des Sozialismus: 2. Das realistische und das ideologische Moment im Sozialismus," *NZ*, xvi, 2 (1898), pp. 225–32 and 388–95 (translated in chapter 8 of this volume).
92. Engels to Bloch, 21–22 September 1890. *MEW*, xxxvii, pp. 462ff.
93. Bernstein, "Das realistische und das ideologische Moment," p. 395.
94. Rosa Luxemburg, *Selected Political Writings*, ed. Dick Howard (New York and London, 1971), pp. 127–8. *RLGW*, I/1, p. 440.
95. Baron, *Plekhanov*, pp. 173ff.
96. Plekhanov, "Bernstein und der Materialismus," *NZ*, xvi, 2 (1898), pp. 545–55. *Selected Philosophical Works* (Moscow, 1976), II, pp. 326–39.
97. Rosa Luxemburg to Jogiches, 3 and 10 August 1898. *RLGB*, I, pp. 179 and 181.
98. Kautsky to Adler, 9 April 1898; *Adler BW*, pp. 245ff.
99. Kautsky to Adler, 4 August 1898 and Bebel to Adler, 29 September 1898; *Adler BW*, pp. 249 and 252.
100. *LVZ*, 21–28 September 1898 (translated in chapter 9 of this volume). With some amendments, these articles were reprinted as the first part of her book *Sozialreform oder Revolution?* (Leipzig, 1899).
101. Rosa Luxemburg, "Sozialreform oder Revolution? 1. Die Methode," *LVZ*, 21 September 1898.
102. Rosa Luxemburg, "Sozialreform oder Revolution?: 2. Anpassung des Kapitalismus; 3. Einführung des Sozialismus durch soziale Reformen; 4. Zollpolitik und Militarismus," *LVZ*, 22 and 23, 24 and 26, and 27 September 1898.
103. Rosa Luxemburg, "Sozialreform oder Revolution? 5. Praktische Konsequenzen und allgemeiner Charakter der Theorie," *LVZ*, 28 September 1898.
104. Rosa Luxemburg to Jogiches, 3 August 1898; *RLGB*, I, p. 179.
105. *Protokoll . . . 1898*, pp. 79–81.
106. In 1894, Vollmar and Schoenlank persuaded the conference at Breslau to establish a commission to see if an acceptable agrarian programme could be worked out. The commission reported to the conference at Frankfurt in 1895 where, after a long debate, its proposals were rejected. However, the issue would not die, and it surfaced again at the Stuttgart Conference. See e.g. the speeches by Scheidemann and Ulrich, *Protokoll . . . 1898*, pp. 86 and 88.
107. *Ibid.*, p. 93.
108. Part II, section 3, of the Erfurt Programme demanded military training for all citizens and the replacement of the standing army by a citizens' militia.
109. *Protokoll . . . 1898*, pp. 95–8.
110. *Ibid.*, pp. 89–91.
111. *Ibid.*, p. 98.
112. *Ibid.*, p. 93.
113. *Ibid.*, p. 100.
114. *Ibid.*, pp. 105–7. In the course of his speech, Parvus tried to interrupt.

- Vollmar refused to give way, saying: "Just wait a bit. Then you can reply to me with twenty-four leading articles in the *Sächsische Arbeiter-Zeitung!*" *Ibid.*, p. 106.
115. *Ibid.*, pp. 112–16.
 116. *Ibid.*, pp. 117–18.
 117. *Ibid.*, pp. 122–6.
 118. Marx, "Speech on the Hague Congress," 15 September 1872. MEW, xviii, p. 160. For other references, and discussion, see Shlomo Avineri, *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx* (Cambridge, 1968), pp. 215ff.
 119. *Protokoll . . . 1898*, pp. 126–30.
 120. *Ibid.*, pp. 134–5.
 121. Bernstein, "Eroberung der politischen Macht," and Kautsky, "Taktik und Grundsätze," *Vorwärts*, 13 October 1898 (translated in chapter 11 of this volume).
 122. Bernstein, *Die Voraussetzungen des Sozialismus und die Aufgaben der Sozialdemokratie* (Stuttgart, 1899). The modern edition (Berlin, 1977) is a reprint of the second edition (Stuttgart/Berlin, 1921).
 123. Steenson, *Karl Kautsky*, pp. 123ff. Nertl, *Rosa Luxemburg*, pp. 205ff. Kautsky gathered his objections in a book published later that year, *Bernstein und das Sozialdemokratische Programm* (1899; modern edition, Berlin, 1979). There are translated extracts in Karl Kautsky, *Selected Political Writings*, ed. and trans. Patrick Goode (London and Basingstoke, 1983).
 124. Bernstein, "Wie ist wissenschaftlicher Sozialismus möglich?" Verlag der Sozialistischen Monatshefte, 1901 (modern edition in Eduard Bernstein, *Ein revisionistisches Sozialismusbild: Drei Vorträge*, ed. Helmut Hirsch [Berlin, 1976]). Kautsky, "Problematischer gegen wissenschaftlichen Sozialismus," *NZ*, xix, 2 (1901), pp. 355–64.
 125. The best account (in English) remains Carl E. Schorske, *German Social Democracy, 1905–1917: The Development of the Great Schism* (1955; reprint Cambridge, Mass., 1983).
 126. As is argued in Roger Fletcher, *Revisionism and Empire: Socialist Imperialism in Germany, 1897–1914* (London, 1984). Unfortunately, the good work Fletcher has done is marred by his quite unnecessary attempt to enhance the historical significance of Joseph Bloch by diminishing that of Eduard Bernstein.
 127. For his comments on the term, see the opening section of his "Der Revisionismus in der Sozialdemokratie" in Eduard Bernstein, *Ein revisionistisches Sozialismusbild*, ed. Helmut Hirsch (Berlin, 1976).
 128. *Protokoll . . . 1898*, pp. 123–4.
 129. Bernstein, *Voraussetzungen* (Berlin, 1977), pp. 50–1.
 130. Engels to Laura Lafargue, 17 August 1891, and, particularly, his "Interview Published in *l'Éclair*," ELC, III, pp. 393–4.
 131. Engels to Paul Lafargue, 12 November 1892, ELC, III, p. 211.
 132. Bernstein, *Voraussetzungen*, p. 230.

133. See in particular her two speeches to the Stuttgart Conference: *Protokoll . . . 1898*, pp. 99ff. and 117ff. Also the preface to her *Sozialreform oder Revolution?*, RLGW, I/1, p. 369.
134. Bernstein, "Allgemeines über Utopismus und Eklektizismus," NZ, xv, 1 (1896), pp. 164ff. *Voraussetzungen* (Berlin, 1977), pp. 176ff. and 199ff. "Der Kampf der Sozialdemokratie und die Revolution der Gesellschaft: 2. Die Zusammenbruchstheorie und die Kolonialpolitik," NZ, xvi, 1 (1898), pp. 548ff. As David McLellan observes, "Bernstein had a much looser definition of class than Marx." And: "The central point of Kautsky's difference from Bernstein was his insistence on the reality of class conflict" (*Marxism after Marx: An Introduction* [London, 1979], pp. 29 and 31). Quite so. In fact, this was the central point of difference between Bernstein and orthodox Marxism as such.
135. Bernstein, *Voraussetzungen* (Berlin, 1977), pp. 184 and 186.
136. See particularly Bernstein's "Allgemeines über Utopismus und Eklektizismus," NZ, xv, 1 (1896), pp. 164ff. Also his *Voraussetzungen*, pp. 176ff. and 199ff.

1. Bernstein as Orthodox Marxist.

1. Leo was the *nom de plume* which Bernstein normally used in signing articles which he regarded as being of special political significance. Bernstein, *Sozialdemokratische Lehrjahre* (Berlin, 1978), p. 119.
2. "Bismarckischen Zweiseelentheorie." A reference to Goethe's *Faust*, I, 1112ff., indicating a tension of conflicting forces. Bernstein is probably referring to Bismarck's policy of suppressing Social Democracy while wooing the working class with a programme of social legislation. The liberal Crown Prince was Friedrich Wilhelm who was married to Queen Victoria's daughter (also called Victoria) and was much influenced by her (comparatively) liberal views. He came to the throne in March 1888, only to die of cancer a few months later.
3. Not the "unification" conference of 1875, but the party conference of 1877, which was also held at Gotha. The fact that the party had just done very well in the Reichstag elections strengthened the hand of those who resisted any watering-down of the programme. *Protokoll des Sozialisten-Congresses . . . 1877* (Hamburg, 1877).
4. As part of its antisocialist campaign, the government periodically increased police powers by imposing a minor state of siege. Besides Leipzig (in 1881), many other German cities were affected, e.g. Berlin, Frankfurt, Hamburg-Altona, and Stettin.
5. Bruno Geiser (1846–98), journalist and editor of *Neue Welt*, Wilhelm Liebknecht's son-in-law, and Social Democratic deputy to the Reichstag from 1882 to 1887.
6. The correspondent enthusiastically endorsed the robust approach of the *Sozialdemokrat* and noted that the paper had a very poor circulation in

- Bremen. He associated this fact with the poor results achieved in the recent elections in Bremen.
7. A reference to Laocoon's declaration, "I fear Greeks, even when they bring gifts." Virgil, *Aeneid*, II, 49.
 8. MESW, II, pp. 150-1.
 9. The "Mark" is the Mark of Brandenburg, the central province of Prussia, and "Ludwig von der Mark" is Wilhelm Ludwig Rosenberg, a journalist living in New York and secretary of the National Executive Committee of the Socialist Labour Party until 1889.
 10. The Republicans. In 1880, the former president, General U. S. Grant, was proposed as candidate for a third term but lost the nomination to Garfield at the Republican Convention. However, he remained a powerful figure in the party. Garfield was assassinated shortly after being elected to the presidency.
 11. Eduard Lasker (1829-84), co-founder of the National Liberal Party and leader of its left wing, staunch opponent of Bismarck. He died on a visit to America.
 12. Eminent German businessmen. Gerson von Bleichröder (1822-93), banker to the king of Prussia and to Bismarck, was largely responsible for financing the Seven Weeks' War (between Austria and Prussia) in 1866. Friedrich Alfred Krupp (1854-1902), head of the great Krupp iron and steel empire and close associate of Wilhelm II.
 13. In German: "*sich selbst aufhebt*." We cannot trace Engels's use of this precise phrase. In the long passage Bernstein has just quoted, Engels says that the state "*stirbt ab*" and in his letter to Bebel on the Gotha Programme he says that it "*sich von selbst auflöst*" (18-26 March 1875). MEW, xxxiv, p. 129.
 14. Bernstein is not referring to the group of Young Hegelians who met in Hippel's Weinstube in Berlin in the early 1840's and which included Bruno Bauer, Arnold Ruge, Stirner, and Marx. Rather, he means the group associated with Johann Most's paper, *Die Freiheit*.
 15. The controversy continued. See Leo, "Polemik," *Sozialdemokrat*, 24 January 1884.
 16. Franz Hermann Schulze-Delitzsch (1808-83), economist, leading member of the Progressive Party, opponent of Lassalle, and initiator of various self-help organisations in Germany.
 17. Lassalle first advocated workers' co-operatives with state credit in his *Offenes Antwortschreiben*. The "famous 100 millions" was mentioned in a speech delivered in 1863 and published as his *Arbeiterlesebuch*. *Ferdinand Lassalles Gesamtwerke*, 10 vols. (Leipzig, 1899-1909), vol. I.
 18. In *Briefe von Ferdinand Lassalle an C. Rodbertus-Jagetzow* (1878).
 19. *Offenes Antwortschreiben*, in *Ferdinand Lassalles Gesamtwerke*, I, p. 34.
 20. Bismarck.
 21. Legislation establishing accident insurance was passed by the Reichstag

- in 1884. For an analysis of Bismarck's intentions, see A. J. P. Taylor, *Bismarck: The Man and the Statesman* (London, 1961), pp. 202ff.
22. The Gotha Programme. Quoted by Marx in his "Critique," MESW, II, p. 30.
 23. Bernstein regarded this attack on Lassalle as erring on the side of caution, but he was nonetheless pleased with its effect. Bernstein to Engels, 16 July 1884; BEBW, pp. 285–6.

2. Colonialism and Socialism

1. Ernest Belfort Bax, "The True Aims of 'Imperial Extension' and 'Colonial Enterprise,'" *Justice*, 1 May 1896. The article included the following: "Those of an adventurous turn, instead of joining the hordes of chartered companies, might do good service in the organisation of native resistance in drilling and teaching the effective use of firearms." A revised version of the article appears in Bax's *Essays in Socialism, Old and New* (London, 1906).
2. See the Introduction to this volume, "The Revisionist Position Defined."
3. In 1850, an attempt by Prussia to establish a Prussian Union failed because of Austrian and Russian opposition. Rather than risk war, Friedrich Wilhelm IV disbanded the union and rejoined the German Confederation. This was the "humiliation of Olmütz."
4. "Prussia could unify Germany only by tearing it apart, by the exclusion of German Austria." Engels, "Marx and the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* (1848–1849)," MESW, II, p. 332; MEW, xxi, p. 20.
5. In 1875, France began to reassert itself on the international stage. Bismarck and Moltke responded by encouraging talk of a preventive war. The British and Russians made representations, and Bismarck gave way "with the masterly grace which he knew how to use when necessary." A. J. P. Taylor, *Bismarck: The Man and the Statesman* (London, 1961), pp. 153ff.
6. In fact, the Czar had a rather mixed reception. D. W. Brogan, *The Development of Modern France (1870–1939)* (London, 1967), p. 318.
7. *Labour Leader*, 3 October 1896.
8. Another quotation from Engels. Engels to Laura Lafargue, 17 August 1891. ELC, III, p. 97.
9. La Barbe, "Die Steuern im türkischen Armenien und die Ursachen der armenischen Bewegung," *NZ*, xv, 1 (1896), pp. 37–46.
10. *Capital*, I, p. 239.
11. David Urquart (1805–77), British diplomat, strongly pro-Turkish and anti-Russian, Tory MP, founder and editor of the *Free Press*, to which Marx contributed some articles critical of Palmerston's policy. See Engels to Marx, 9 March 1853, and Marx to Engels, 9 February 54. MEW, xxviii, pp. 218 and 324.
12. In February 1896, the Christian population of Crete staged an uprising against Turkish rule. In August, the sultan accepted a scheme, drawn up

- by the ambassadors of the European powers, whereby the Cretans were given a greater measure of self-government. The proposal for a blockade was in fact initiated by the Austrians.
13. Bismarck. *Sachsenwald* was an estate given to Bismarck by the Kaiser in 1871.
 14. The Prussian victory over Austria at Sadowa in 1866 encouraged, but only partially fulfilled, the national aspirations of Italy and Hungary. Hungary got, not independence, but the dual monarchy; and Italy got Venetia but not South Tyrol.
 15. In the ‘Reinsurance Treaty’ between Russia and Germany in 1887, Germany recognised Russia’s interest in Bulgaria, and a secret protocol promised German assistance in preventing the restoration of Alexander of Battenberg, dethroned in 1886.
 16. In March 1896, there was a Matabele and Mashona rising in Rhodesia. The fighting continued until October.
 17. Liebknecht had recently been prosecuted for insulting the Kaiser in a speech which, as Shaw put it, “Mr. Arthur Balfour might make to the Primrose League with the approbation of all England tomorrow.” G. B. Shaw, “Socialism at the International Congress,” *Cosmopolis*, September 1896. For an account of the use of such prosecutions in suppressing Social Democracy in Germany, see Alex Hall, *Scandal, Sensation and Social Democracy: The SPD Press and Wilhelmine Germany, 1890–1914* (Cambridge, 1977), pp. 67ff.
 18. J. R. Macdonald, “Probleme der Demokratie in England,” *NZ*, xiv, 1 (1895–6), pp. 357–65 and 394–402. The article was originally delivered as a lecture to the Fabian Society.
 19. “Well, since a whore is what you are, Just mind you be a good one.” Goethe, *Faust*, I, 3730–1.
 20. Apart from the inevitable differences in orthography, Bernstein’s translation is somewhat looser than ours.
 21. See the Introduction, note 45.
 22. Engels to Bernstein, 22–25 February 1882. BEBW, p. 83. MEW, xxxv, p. 281.
 23. *Capital*, I, pp. 365–6. The note occurs in chapter 10, not chapter 8.
 24. Ferdinand Lassalle, *Der italienische Krieg und die Aufgabe Preussens* (Berlin, 1859).
 25. MESW, I, pp. 115 and 126–7. Engels to Marx, 15 August 1870. MESC, pp. 293ff. Marx to the Committee of the Social-Democratic Workers’ Party of Germany, Brunswick, 1 September 1870. MESC, pp. 299ff.
 26. Belfort Bax, “The True Aims . . .,” *Justice*, 1 May 1896.
 27. *Oeuvres de Jean Jaurès*, ed. Max Bonnafons, 9 vols. (Paris 1931–9), I, pp. 122–34.
 28. *Justice*, 26 September 1896.
 29. See, for instance, Bernstein’s “Englische Partei-Entwicklungen,” *NZ*, xiv, 1 (1896), pp. 77–85.

30. We cannot trace this article.
31. Bernstein, "Sozialistische Oekonomie in England," *NZ*, xv, 1 (1897), pp. 46–54.
32. The controversy continued, but not to any telling effect. See Bax, "Save Us from Our Friends," *Justice*, 21 November 1896, and Bernstein, "Justice, Bax and Consistency," *Justice*, 28 November 1896.
33. See the Introduction, note 49.
34. MEW, xxii, pp. 11–48.

3. Problems of Socialism: First Series

1. G. B. Shaw, "Socialism at the International Congress," *Cosmopolis*, September 1896, pp. 658–73.
2. *Capital*, I, p. 99.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 929.
4. The Erfurt Programme suggested that "present society" would "grow into socialism." Engels was not altogether happy with the phrase. MEW, xxii, p. 234.
5. Bernstein, "Englische Partei-Entwicklungen," *NZ*, xiv, 1 (1895), pp. 77ff.
6. Clarke's "The Industrial Basis of Society," in *Fabian Essays in Socialism* (London, 1889).
7. Published in the "Contemporary Science Series" in 1894. Reviewed by Bernstein in *NZ* (1894), xii, 2, pp. 504ff.
8. *Progressive Review*, no. 1 (October 1896), pp. 7–8.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 38–9.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
11. "Probleme des Sozialismus: 2. "Eine Theorie der Gebiete und Grenzen des Kollektivismus," *NZ*, xv, 1 (1896), pp. 204–13. This, a translation of Hobson's "Collectivism in Industry," was the second article in the series "Problems of Socialism."
12. Adler BW, p. 219.
13. Dr Heinrich Kanner had attacked Adler and the Social Democrats in the Viennese weekly, *Die Zeit*, particularly in nos. 93, 94, and 102.
14. Adler BW, pp. 220–1.
15. The third article was "Der gegenwärtige Stand der industriellen Entwicklung in Deutschland," *NZ*, xv, 1 (1896), pp. 303–11.
16. Wilhelm Liebknecht, "Erklärung," *Vorwärts*, 11 November 1896. In it, Liebknecht criticised Rosa Luxemburg's "Die nationalen Kämpfe in der Türkei und die Sozialdemokratie," *SAZ*, 8–10 October 1896. Rosa Luxemburg replied with her "Zur Orientpolitik des Vorwärts," *SAZ*, 25 November 1896. RLGW, I/1, pp. 57–73.
17. See Marx, *Herr Vogt*, chapter viii. MECW, xvii, pp. 133ff. MEW, xiv, pp. 490ff.

18. Kautsky, "Was will und kann die materialistische Geschichtsauffassung leisten?" *NZ*, xv, 1 (1896), pp. 213–18, 228–38, and 260–71.
19. Strictly speaking, the "basic unit" was the Phalanx and the Phalanstery was the building in which it was housed. Charles Fourier, *Oeuvres Complètes*, 12 vol. (Paris: 1966–8), IV, pp. 455ff.
20. Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, p. 387. MEW, xx, p. 262.
21. Bernstein is referring to what Marx described as "the Lassallean sect's servile belief in the state." *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, MESW, II, p. 35. MEW, xix, p. 31.
22. In English in the original.
23. "Der gegenwärtige Stand der industriellen Entwicklung in Deutschland," *NZ*, xv, 1 (1896), pp. 303–11.
24. See, for instance, "Der Sozialismus und der Staat," *Sozialdemokrat*, 20 December 1883 (translated in chapter 1 of this volume).
25. Kautsky's position is inspired by Engels's remarks on the Gotha Programme. Engels to Bebel, 18/28 March 1875; MESC, p. 357. The article by Bernstein which Kautsky is attempting to recall is probably "Der Sozialismus und der Staat," *Sozialdemokrat*, 20 December 1883.
26. Kautsky, *Der Parlamentarismus, die Volksgesetzgebung und die Sozialdemokratie* (Stuttgart, 1893).

4. Socialism and the Proletariat

1. The resolution demanded "a complete system of education, under Democratic public control, extending from the Kindergarten to the University . . . the whole made genuinely accessible to every citizen by freedom from fees and by public maintenance." *Justice*, 1 August 1896. For SDF policy on education, see *Justice*, 6 February 1897, 11 September 1897, 23 October 1897, and 13 November 1897.
2. Herbert Burrows (1845–1923), prominent Theosophist and member of the SDF. We cannot trace his piece on child labour.
3. The resolution called for the abolition of child labour up to the age of fifteen and of all night labour up to the age of eighteen. *Trades Union Congress Annual Reports* (1896), p. 62.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Capital*, I, pp. 613–14.
6. John Bellers (1654–1725), Quaker and radical philanthropist, author of *Proposals for Raising a College of Industry* (1695) (from which Bernstein is quoting) and the subject of the last chapter in Bernstein's *Sozialismus und Demokratie in der grossen englischen Revolution* (Stuttgart, 1895). See the English translation, *Cromwell and Communism* (New York, 1963), p. 261.
7. *Capital*, I, p. 621.

8. MESW, II, p. 36. MEW, xix, p. 32. Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, p. 443. MEW, xx, p. 300.
9. It is not clear what Bernstein has in mind. Owen's standard position was that "no child should be admitted to work in any manufactory before ten years of age and not for more than six hours per day until he is twelve years old." *The Employment of Children in Manufactories*, in *A New View of Society and Other Writings* (London, 1949), p. 137. Also *ibid.*, pp. 98, 124, and 126.
10. Fourier, *Oeuvres complètes*, 12 vols. (Paris, 1966–8), VI pp. 206–14.
11. Bernstein, *Cromwell and Communism*, p. 261.
12. In the spring and summer of 1897, Hyndman mounted a campaign against "British capitalist misrule in India." Eleanor Marx reported that when, during a visit to London, Liebknecht suggested that Hyndman was an authority on Indian affairs, Bernstein lost his temper. C. Tsuzuki, *The Life of Eleanor Marx, 1855–1898* (Oxford, 1967), pp. 287 and 291.
13. "There are ultimately fixed limits." Horace, *Satires*, I, i, 106.
14. Bernstein, "Einiges über das indische Problem," *NZ*, xv, 2 (1897), pp. 618–24 and 651–5.
15. Jules Vallès (1832–85), radical journalist, founder of *La Rue* and *Le Cri du Peuple*, and member of the Commune. His funeral was the occasion for a large socialist demonstration.
16. Felix Pyat (1810–89), republican journalist and playwright, active in 1848 uprising, in exile from 1849 until 1869, founder of *Combat* and *Le Vengeur*, member of Commune and later deputy for Bouches-du-Rhône. Prosper Lissagaray (1838–1901), journalist and founder of *La Bataille*, author of *Histoire de la Commune*.
17. See Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, MESW, I, p. 253. MEW, viii, pp. 120–1.
18. After his defeat in the Convention on 27 July (9 Thermidor), Robespierre retreated to the town hall where a crowd loyal to him and to the Commune of Paris gathered. However, Robespierre was unable to decide on a course of action and the crowd dispersed, whereupon he and his supporters were arrested and subsequently executed.
19. On 15 May the National Assembly was invaded by a mob and temporarily dispersed. As Marx put it, the episode "had no other result save that of removing Blanqui and his comrades, that is, the real leaders of the proletarian party, from the public stage for the entire duration of the cycle we are considering." Marx, *Eighteenth Brumaire*, MESW, I, p. 254. MEW, viii, p. 121.
20. Cesare Lombroso (1835–1909), Italian criminologist, professor at Turin, and author of *L'uomo delinquente*. He stressed the hereditary and physiological factors in criminality. Enrico Ferri (1856–1929) was Lombroso's follower, though after his conversion to socialism he tended to stress the economic factors in criminality. Both were regarded as "positivists."

21. Lessing, *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*, Drittes Stück.
22. Gustave Le Bon, *Psychologie des foules* (Paris, 1895). Translated as *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (London, 1896).
23. Following the deposition of Louis XVI, relatives of émigrés and other suspects were arrested. Early in September, bands of citizens, acting in the name of the people, invaded the prisons and killed some eleven hundred of them.
24. On the night of 23 August 1572, the Protestant leader Coligny was murdered and a general massacre of Protestants took place in Paris and in the provinces. During the last resistance of the Paris Communards against the troops of the Versailles government (21–28 May 1871), fairly spectacular atrocities were committed by both sides. For the September massacres, see the preceding note.
25. In 1641, there was an uprising in Ireland accompanied by a massacre of Protestants. When, in 1649, Cromwell began the reconquest of Ireland, his first objective was Drogheda, which he took against fierce resistance and then had the garrison put to the sword. He was almost certainly mistaken in believing that the garrison had been implicated in the massacres of 1641.
26. In June 1848, the workers of Paris responded to the abolition of the national workshops by staging a general insurrection, which was suppressed after a period of exceptionally severe streetfighting.
27. The revolutionary upheavals of 1848 began with the raising of barricades in Paris on 22 February, followed by several days of streetfighting. The Château-d'Eau (not "d'Eu") was the scene of the bloodiest confrontation. The crowd demanded that the garrison hand over their weapons, but the officer in command, Captain Soupault, refused to do so without an order from his superiors. While the talking was still going on, a member of the garrison opened fire, thus starting the battle.
28. Charles H. Castille was a prolific author of left-wing sympathies. His *oeuvre* includes several biographies of eminent French revolutionaries. We have been unable to trace the source of Bernstein's quotation.
29. J. S. Mill, *Utilitarianism, Liberty, and Representative Government* (London, 1951), p. 152.
30. Georg Simmel, "Ueber Massenverbrechen," *Die Zeit* (no. 157), 1897.
31. BKBW, p. 102.
32. Bernstein's "Crime and the Masses."
33. For a good account of the strike, see H. A. Clegg, Alan Fox, and A. F. Thompson, *A History of British Trade Unions Since 1889* (Oxford, 1964), I, pp. 161–8.
34. In 1859, the demand for new credits for army reform provoked a lengthy constitutional conflict between the king of Prussia and the Prussian Landtag. The basic issue was whether or not the Landtag held the purse-strings. Bernstein's comparison is a trifle forced.
35. Lujo Brentano, "Die atomistische Reaktion in England," *Soziale Praxis, Zentralblatt für Sozialpolitik*, vii (1897), pp. 265–71 and 293–7.

36. Karl Ferdinand Freiherr von Stumm-Halberg (1836–1901), leading magnate of the Saar, member of the Prussian Landtag and later of the Reichstag, noted as an autocratic employer and uncompromising foe of Social Democracy.
37. Colonel Dyer, managing director of Armstrong-Whitworths and first president of the Federation of Engineering Employers. He died in 1898, shortly after the end of the strike.
38. *Amalgamated Engineers' Journal and Monthly Record*, vol. i (May 1897), p. 43.
39. In English in the original.
40. Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *Industrial Democracy*, 2 vols. (London, 1897), pp. 228–9, footnote 1.
41. In 1893 the coal-owners imposed a lock-out in an attempt to get a reduction in miners' wages. In the end, a conciliation board was established, and the owners accepted the new principle of a minimum wage.
42. In 1847, Friedrich Wilhelm IV of Prussia, impelled by financial difficulties, summoned a United Landtag. However, it proved impossible to reach any agreement as to its powers, as the king disliked the formalism of Liberal constitutions. Hence a long and acrimonious crisis.
43. *Daily Chronicle*, 29 January 1898.
44. Bernstein is thinking of *Capital*, I, pp. 565ff.
45. In English in the original.
46. Henry Crompton (1836–1904), clerk of assize on the Chester and North Wales circuit, keen positivist, social reformer, and supporter of trade unionism; author of *Industrial Conciliation* (1876) and many articles on social, legal, and political questions. We cannot trace the particular article in question.
47. In English in the original.
48. A reference to Count Friedrich Wrangel (1784–1877), Prussian field marshal; he suppressed the Berlin uprising in 1848 and commanded the united German armies against Denmark in Schleswig-Holstein in 1848 and 1864.
49. Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis, "Die Stückerarbeit und der Sozialismus," *NZ*, x, 1 (1891), pp. 494ff. Bernstein, "Die Sozialdemokratie und der Kampf gegen die Stückerarbeit," *ibid.*, pp. 805ff.
50. S. and B. Webb, *Industrial Democracy*, pp. 286–7.
51. *The Shipping World and Herald of Commerce*, xvii, no. 237 (15 December 1897), p. 580.
52. *BKBW*, pp. 102–3.
53. Eugen Richter (1838–1906), radical liberal member of the Reichstag from 1871, leader of the Progressives, co-founder and leader of the Independent People's Party. His *Die Irrlehren der Sozialdemokratie* (1890) was an attack on Bebel.
54. An error on Bebel's part. He is almost certainly referring to F. W. Rose, not an "industrialist," but the union organiser for the North-West and a stalwart of the Independent Labour Party.

55. Wolfgang Heine (1861–1944), Social Democratic lawyer and member of the Reichstag. See the Introduction and chapter 10 of the present volume.
56. MESW, II, p. 36. MEW, xix, p. 32.
57. “Social Democracy and Trade Unionism,” *Justice*, 18 December 1897. The letter was widely published in the British press, e.g. in the *Daily Chronicle* and in the *Daily News*, 9 December 1897.
58. In 1896, the expression “ca’ canny” came into use, meaning “going slow” at one’s work for an employer.
59. Sir Frederick Thorpe Mappin (1821–1910), “grand old man of Sheffield,” captain of industry and one-time mayor, Liberal MP from 1880 to 1906. We cannot trace the letter referred to and have therefore had to translate the quotation from the German back into English rather than reproduce the original.
60. J. S. Mill, *Principles of Political Economy* (London, 1909), p. 99 (book I, chapter vi, section 3).
61. Sidney Webb and Beatrice Webb, *Industrial Democracy*, pp. 96 and 132. (Bernstein’s references are to the German translation.)

5. The Movement and the Final Goal

1. “All that tribe.” Horace, *Satires*, I, ii, 2.
2. Kautsky had defended Bernstein, saying, among other things: “And because Bernstein will have no part of this sentimental utopianism, Bax declares that . . . Bernstein has *unconsciously ceased to be a Social Democrat*.” Kautsky, “Was will und kann die materialistische Geschichtsauffassung leisten?” *NZ*, xv, 1 (1896), p. 271.
3. A reference to the boundary dispute between Venezuela and British Guiana in 1895. Much to Lord Salisbury’s irritation, Secretary of State Olney took the opportunity to redefine the Monroe Doctrine, stating that “today the United States is practically sovereign on this continent, and its fiat is law upon the subjects to which it confines its interposition.” Quoted in S. E. Morison and H. S. Commager, *The Growth of the American Republic* (New York, 1962), p. 412.
4. The Dreyfus Affair. Late in 1894, Captain Dreyfus was tried for treason and condemned. Many suspected that his conviction owed more to the fact that he was a Jew than to the weight of evidence against him. The controversy dragged on, coming to a climax with the publication of Zola’s *J’accuse* in January 1898.
5. Suetonius, *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, Julius Caesar, i.
6. Here Bernstein quotes several substantial passages from the articles in chapter 2 of this volume.
7. *Daily Chronicle*, 15 November 1897. Cunninghame Graham: MP from 1886 to 1892, first president of the Scottish Labour Party 1888, wrote extensively and was an associate of John Burns and Keir Hardie.

8. The campaign against the indenturing of the Bechuana rebels was led by the Aborigines Protection Society. As part of the campaign, H. R. Fox Bourne had been writing letters to the *Daily News*, the most recent being on 23 December 1897.
9. Thomas More, *Utopia* (Harmondsworth, 1965), p. 101.
10. Dr Karl Peters (1856–1918), African explorer, first president of the Pan-German League, founder of German East Africa (now Tanzania), which he administered as *Reichskommissar* until 1897. His methods provoked protests in the Reichstag, an official investigation was launched, and, in November 1897, he was condemned and deprived of his commission.
11. In 1893, Lobengula, king of the Matabele, started a war against the Mashonas. The British South Africa Company intervened, defeating the Matabele and taking Bulawayo in November of that year. Lobengula died two months later.
12. Probably a reference to Hermann Knackfuss, born 1848, artist and art historian, professor at the Academy of Art in Kassel from 1881. He specialised in paintings on historical and allegorical themes and was patronised by Wilhelm II. His main historical work was *Deutsche Kunstgeschichte*, 2 vols. (Bielefeld and Leipzig, 1888).
13. For a typical expression of Bax's views on this topic, see his "The Everlasting Female," originally delivered as a lecture and published in his *Outspoken Essays on Social Subjects* (London, 1897). See also, e.g., his "The Proletarian in the Home," *Justice*, 14 November 1896 and Eleanor Marx Aveling's reply in *Justice*, 21 November 1896.
14. *Daily Chronicle*, 28 August 1897.
15. Bernstein may be thinking of Bax's "'Voluntaryism' Versus 'Socialism'" in his *Outspoken Essays on Social Subjects*, pp. 166ff., but the reference is not clear.
16. Marx, *Capital*, III, p. 620.
17. "The footprints scare me." Horace, *Epistles*, I, i, 73. A reference to Aesop's fable of the fox who refused to enter the lion's cave when he noticed that all the animal tracks led into the cave but none came out.
18. In February 1848 a popular uprising in Paris led to the abdication of Louis Philippe; in June a further insurrection led to bloody street-fighting, the establishment of General Cavaignac as dictator, and, eventually, to the coming to power of Louis Napoléon Bonaparte.

6. Bernstein's Overthrow of Socialism

1. Bernstein, "Der Kampf der Sozialdemokratie und die Revolution der Gesellschaft: 2. Die Zusammenbruchstheorie und die Kolonialpolitik," *NZ*, xvi, 1 (1898), p. 554 (translated in the preceding chapter).
2. See his "Das Bauerntum und die soziale Revolution" in the present series (translated in this chapter).
3. See chapter 4, note 53, in the present volume.

4. As part of their attempt to suppress socialism, the military authorities in Germany placed boycotts on public houses frequented by Social Democrats. The SPD responded with boycotts of their own on public houses hostile to Socialists. Alex Hall, *Scandal, Sensation and Social Democracy* (Cambridge, 1977), pp. 53, 70, and 120.
5. In Saxony, in 1896, the electoral law of 1868 was replaced by a three-class franchise much like that which obtained in Prussia. Bernstein's response was 'Die Sozialdemokratie und das neue Landtagswahlssystem in Sachsen,' *NZ*, xiv, 2 (1896), pp. 181–8.
6. Conrad Conzett, prominent Swiss Socialist and publisher, editor of *Die Arbeiterstimme*. See Bernstein to Engels, 29 April 1887. BEBW, p. 351.
7. Goethe, *Faust*, I, 3461.
8. Belfort Bax, "Kolonialpolitik und Chauvinismus," *NZ*, xvi, 1 (1897), p. 425. Translated in the preceding chapter.
9. We cannot find the place in question, but in his *Cromwell and Communism* (New York, 1963), pp. 86 and 159, Bernstein stresses Cromwell's pragmatic approach to politics and his "justifiable opportunism."
10. Parvus preceded his own comments by reprinting, in the *SAZ*, the whole of Bernstein's "Statement" from *Vorwärts*.
11. Bernstein, "Der Kampf im englischen Maschinenbaugewerbe," *NZ*, xvi, 1 (1897–8), pp. 454–60 and 644–53 (translated in chapter 4 of the present volume).
12. Werner Sombart (1863–1941), economist and *Kathedersozialist*. His article on volume III of Marx's *Capital* won Engels's qualified approval. Engels to Paul Lafargue, 26 February 1895 and Engels to Victor Adler, 16 March 1895 (MEW, xxxix, pp. 414 and 436). Heinrich Herkner (1863–1932), another *Kathedersozialist* and a professor of economics at Freiburg, Karlsruhe, Zürich, and Berlin. Julius Platter (1844–1923), Swiss professor of economics who reviewed volume III of *Capital* in *Schweizerische Blätter für Wirtschafts- und Sozialpolitik*, March 1895.
13. In November 1897, the Germans occupied Kiaochow Bay, using the murder of two missionaries in Shantung as the pretext. The move precipitated a general scramble among the European powers to obtain, or force, concessions from the Chinese government.
14. Napoléon le Petit is, of course, the French emperor, Napoléon III. General Georges Boulanger became minister of war in 1886 and, in 1889, made an unsuccessful attempt to use his popularity (based on chauvinism and demonstrated by a spectacular election victory in Paris) to stage a *coup d'état*, which failed. Boulanger then committed suicide. "Shlwardt" is a misprint. Parvus is referring to Ahlwardt, a schoolteacher and violent anti-Semite who stumped the country and founded a political organisation which won sixteen seats in the Reichstag elections of 1893.
15. Kautsky, *Die Klassegegensätze von 1789: Zum hundertjährigen Gedenktage der grossen Revolution* (Stuttgart, 1889).
16. When Hanover was annexed after the Austro-Prussian War of 1866, the

assets of the ex-king of Hanover were confiscated and were subsequently used for a variety of more or less corrupt purposes by Bismarck (Alex Hall, *Scandal, Sensation and Social Democracy*, p. 104, and A. J. P. Taylor, *Bismarck: The Man and the Statesman* [London, 1961], p. 174). The Guelphs, so-called after the royal house of Hanover, were a political grouping of Hanoverian particularists, and the confiscated royal assets were known as the Guelph fund or fortune.

17. Parvus changed his mind. Before the actual summing-up (“Die Klassengliederung des deutschen Reichs,” *SAZ*, 22 February 1898), he published another article discussing, in the same vein as the others, the case of public servants, officials, and the like: “Die soziale Gliederung ausserhalb der Produktion,” *SAZ*, 18 February 1898.

7. Revisionism Defended

1. Supplement to *Vorwärts*, 29 May 1897.
2. Bernstein, “Der Kampf der Sozialdemokratie und die Revolution der Gesellschaft: 2. Die Zusammenbruchstheorie und die Kolonialpolitik,” *NZ*, xvi, 1 (1898), p. 556. Translated in chapter 5 of this volume.
3. Bernstein, “Erklärung,” *Vorwärts*, 8 February 1898.
4. *MESW*, I, p. 46. *MEW*, iv, p. 474.
5. *MESW*, I, pp. 45 and 53. *MEW*, iv, pp. 473 and 481.
6. Bernstein, “Der Kampf der Sozialdemokratie und die Revolution der Gesellschaft: 2. Die Zusammenbruchstheorie und die Kolonialpolitik,” p. 556.
7. Julius Wolf, for example, hailed Bernstein’s article as a declaration of war against socialist theory: “Illusionisten und Realisten in der Nationalökonomie,” *Zeitschrift für Sozialwissenschaft*, 1898, 4, p. 251.
8. “Ueber Kolonialpolitik und Krisentheorie,” *Vorwärts*, 21 January 1898.
9. Parvus, “Eine Erklärung E. Bernsteins,” *SAZ*, 9 February 1898 (translated in the preceding chapter).
10. Erfurt Programme, Article 5.
11. *Capital*, I, p. 610.
12. Bernstein is referring to two articles by Franz Mehring: “Sozialistische Selbstkritik,” *LVZ*, 9 February 1898, and “Das sozialistische Endziel,” *LVZ*, 10 February 1898. A month later, Mehring added “In Sachen Bernstein,” *LVZ*, 10 March 1898.
13. The debate took place in 1893. In the course of it, Freiherr von Stumm-Halberg told the Social Democrats: “Your Zukunftsstaat is nothing more than a large penitentiary, coupled with a common rabbit-hutch.” Quoted in Alex Hall, *Scandal, Sensation and Social Democracy* (Cambridge, 1977), p. 168.
14. The editorial offices of the *Sächsische Arbeiter-Zeitung* were located at 61 Ammonstrasse, Dresden.

15. Engels to Schmidt, 27 October 1890. MESC, p. 505. MEW, xxxvii, pp. 488ff.
16. MESW, I, p. 54. MEW, iv, p. 482.
17. MESW, I, p. 22. MEW, xviii, p. 96.
18. Ibid.
19. See chapter 5 in this volume.
20. Ibid.
21. Parvus, "Das Bauerntum und die soziale Revolution," SAZ, 12 February 1898 (translated in the preceding chapter).
22. Huber was one of the leaders of the Parisian mob which invaded the National Assembly on 15 May. In fact, it was he who caused the Assembly's dispersal by "declaring" it dissolved. When on 22 June, it was rumoured that the national workshops were to be abolished, Pujol led a crowd of workers to see the executive commission. It was the unsatisfactory outcome of this confrontation that provoked the general uprising of 23 June.
23. No surviving letter from Engels contains the sentence quoted. However, the same sentiment is expressed in, e.g., Engels to Kautsky, 28 January 1889. MEW, xxxvii, p. 144.
24. Eduard Adolphe Drumont (1844–1917), journalist and anti-Semitic publicist, editor of *La Libre Parole* and author of *La France juive* (1886). Henri Rochefort, journalist and former communard, editor of *L'Intransigeant*.
25. Parvus, "Konzentration der Industrie," SAZ, 28 January 1898 (translated in the preceding chapter).
26. Speaking of the nationalisation of large estates, in his "The Peasant Question in France and Germany," Engels wrote: "Marx told me (and how many times!) that in his opinion we would get off cheapest if we could buy out the whole lot of them." MESW, II, p. 438; MEW, xxii, p. 504.
27. Interview for *Daily Chronicle*. ELC, III, p. 395.
28. Parvus, "Soziale Revolution und Kolonialpolitik," SAZ, 27 January 1898.
29. See chapter 6, note 13.
30. Adler BW, pp. 242–3.
31. Starting on 7 December, Adler gave a series of lectures, chaired by Leopold Winarsky, on the Hainfeld Programme.
32. Adler BW, pp. 245–6.
33. RLGB, I, p. 166.
34. See Introduction, note 79.
35. "Die Klassengliederung des Deutschen Reichs," SAZ, 22 February 1898.

8. Problems of Socialism: Second Series

1. Goethe, *Faust*, I, 31–2.
2. Thomas Henry Huxley (1825–95), biologist and propagator of Dar-

win's theories. For his essays on agnosticism, see his *Collected Essays* (London, 1895), vol. V.

3. Ernst Haeckel (1834–1919), follower of Darwin and professor of zoology at Jena from 1864, author of *Natürliche Schöpfungsgeschichte* (1868) and *Anthropogenie oder Entwicklungsgeschichte des Menschen* (1874). Subsequently he developed the notion of the unity of nature and mind. Hence his “monism.”
4. *Anti-Dühring*, p. 41. MEW, xx, p. 25.
5. MESW, II, p. 25. MEW, xix, pp. 21–2.
6. *Capital*, I, p. 284.
7. MESW, II, p. 377. MEW, xxi, p. 282.
8. MESW, II, p. 136. The translation here is a bit more free than ours. MEW, xix, p. 209.
9. Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (London, 1971), p. 23. MEW, xiii, p. 11.
10. See the Introduction, note 45.
11. “Was will und kann die materialistische Geschichtsauffassung leisten?” NZ, xv, 1 (1896) pp. 213–18, 228–38, and 260–71.
12. Max Stirner (1806–56), Young Hegelian philosopher, propounder of extreme individualism and a form of anarchism, author of *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* (Leipzig, 1845).
13. “Zur Kritik des ökonomischen Systems von Karl Marx,” *Archiv für soziale Gesetzgebung und Statistik*, vii (1894).
14. *Capital*, I, pp. 280 and 301.
15. MESW, II, p. 21. MEW, xix, p. 18.
16. Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy* (London, 1956), p. 11. MEW, xxi, p. 178.
17. See *Anti-Dühring*, part I, chapter ix, esp. pp. 129ff., and *The Housing Question*, MESW, I, pp. 616ff. MEW, xx, pp. 86ff., and xviii, pp. 269ff.
18. In English in the original.
19. From a song by James Guillaume, the Swiss anarchist and follower of Bakunin.
20. See chapter 4 of the present volume.
21. MESW, II, p. 36. MEW, xix, p. 32.
22. Adler BW, p. 249.
23. Bernstein's “Die Menge und das Verbrechen,” NZ, xvi, 1 (1897), pp. 229–37. See chapter 4.
24. See the Introduction, note 83.
25. T. G. Masaryk, “Die wissenschaftliche und philosophische Krise innerhalb des Marxismus,” *Die Zeit*, nos. 177–9 (1898).
26. Dante, *Inferno*, III, 14–15.
27. In Germany there was (and is) a widespread prejudice against eating lamb and mutton.
28. Bax's last word was “Der Sozialismus eines gewöhnlichen Menschenkinde gegenüber dem Sozialismus des Herrn Bernstein,” NZ, xvi, 1 (1898), pp. 824–9.

29. Probably a reference to “Bernstein Again,” *Justice*, 5 June 1897 which included the remark: “It is no use for Bernstein–Kautsky to think they can carry on the firm Marx–Engels in their own personalities. You have, of course, the outward conditions, the Semite and the Aryan and the exact echoing of each other’s thought, but ‘there I swear all likeness ends betwixt the pair.’ ”
30. The Dreyfus Affair was in full spate.
31. In the Barnsley by-election in the autumn of 1897, Curran, the working-class candidate, suffered a dramatic defeat at the hands of Walton.
32. J. S. Mill, “Bentham,” *London and Westminster Review*, August 1838, and *Life of Robert Owen Written by Himself* (London, 1857), pp. 95–6.
33. Philipp Lotmar, *Vom Rechte, das mit uns geboren ist. Die Gerechtigkeit. Zwei Vorträge* (Berne, 1893).
34. *Anti-Dühring*, pp. 142ff. MEW, xx, pp. 95ff.
35. MESW, I, p. 387. MEW, xvi, p. 16.
36. Antonio Labriola, *Essays on the Materialist Conception of History* (Chicago, 1908), pp. 13ff. Bernstein overstates Labriola’s doubts about the term “scientific socialism.” As Kolakowski more accurately puts it, “He took seriously the description of scientific socialism as a ‘critical’ theory . . . in the sense that it regarded no truths as everlasting, recognized that all established principles were provisional, and was ready to drop or modify its own ideas if experience should so dictate.” *Main Currents of Marxism*. Vol. 2, *The Golden Age* (Oxford, 1978), p. 183.

9. Social Reform or Revolution?

1. The 1899 edition omits “and Konrad Schmidt.”
2. For Stumm, see chapter 4, note 36. Arthur Graf von Posadowsky-Wehner, Secretary of State for Home Affairs and Vice-Chancellor from 1897 to 1907, was a fierce opponent of trade unions and of Social Democracy.
3. See chapter 4 of this volume.
4. Saxony adopted a three-class electoral system in 1896. Early in 1897, Alfred Graf von Waldersee wrote a memorandum to the Kaiser recommending a putsch for the purpose of abolishing universal suffrage and suppressing the labour movement. This helped create a suspicion (and not for the first time) that right-wing elements in the establishment were conspiring to suspend the constitution and establish a military dictatorship.
5. Somehow Rosa Luxemburg managed to lose a page of her manuscript and Schoenlank filled the gap with a linking phrase. Rosa Luxemburg was not grateful. RLGB, I, p. 205. The missing page (omitted here) was restored in the 1899 edition.
6. Bernstein, “Der Kampf der Sozialdemokratie und die Revolution der Ge-

- sellschaft: 2. Die Zusammenbruchstheorie und die Kolonialpolitik," NZ, xvi, 1 (1898), p. 555 (translated in chapter 5 of this volume).
7. *Ibid.*, p. 554.
 8. *Ibid.*
 9. *Capital*, III, p. 573. MEW, xxv, p. 457.
 10. In 1899 edition, "eingebildet." Here, "als Eintagsfliege."
 11. 1866: Prussia's victory over Austria at Sadowa. 1871: the final unification of Germany and proclamation of the Reich following the defeat of France.
 12. *Anti-Dühring*, pp. 379ff. MEW, xx, pp. 257ff. *Capital*, III, *passim*.
 13. Bernstein, "Zusammenbruchstheorie . . .," NZ, xvi, 1 (1898), p. 551.
 14. *Capital*, III, p. 368. MEW, xxv, p. 269.
 15. C. S., "Endziel und Bewegung," *Vorwärts*, 20 February 1898 (translated in chapter 7 of this volume).
 16. Bernstein, "Zur Frage der ehernen Lohngesetzes: Schlussfolgerungen," NZ, ix, 1 (1891), pp. 600–5.
 17. C. S., "Endziel und Bewegung."
 18. *Ibid.*
 19. Bernstein, "Zusammenbruchstheorie . . .," p. 556.
 20. C. S., "Endziel und Bewegung."
 21. Shortly after coming to the throne, Wilhelm II promoted a package of legislation limiting the working week to six days and controlling the length of the working day for women and children. The laws were accepted by the Bundesrat but not by the Reichstag.
 22. C. S., "Endziel und Bewegung."
 23. Goethe, *Faust*, I, 31–32.
 24. The 1899 edition omits "and Konrad Schmidt" and transfers the paragraph as a whole to the beginning of the next article.
 25. "Kritisches Zwischenspiel," NZ, xvi, 1 (1898), p. 742 (translated in chapter 7 of this volume).
 26. Rosa Luxemburg is quoting Schiller, *Die Verschwörung des Fiesko zu Genua*, III, iv (end).
 27. Fourier made extravagant claims for the efficiency of his phalanx system. He claimed, for instance, that it could turn the Sahara into a fertile garden (*Oeuvres Complètes*, I, pp. 172–8) but not, so far as we know, that it could turn the sea into lemonade.
 28. The 1899 edition omits "and Konrad Schmidt."
 29. A reference to Wolfgang Heine.
 30. Gustav von Schmoller (1838–1917), historian, economist, and holder of professorial chairs at, successively, Halle, Strassburg, and Berlin. He was associated with the *Kathedersozialisten*, particularly Adolph Wagner and Lujo Brentano.
 31. Goethe, *Faust*, I, 2012–14.
 32. The 1899 edition omits "and Konrad Schmidt."
 33. The 1899 edition has *Stillstand* instead of *Stagnation*.
 34. The 1899 edition omits "and Konrad Schmidt."

35. Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *Industrial Democracy* (London, 1897), pp. 562ff.
36. *Ibid.*, pp. 576ff.
37. *Capital*, III, p. 342. MEW, xxv, p. 245.

10. The Party Conference at Stuttgart

1. The conference was debating the annual report of the executive committee. "The Press" was one of the items in the report.
2. *Protokoll . . . 1898*, p. 103ff.
3. Bernstein, "Der Kampf der Sozialdemokratie und die Revolution der Gesellschaft: 2. Die Zusammenbruchstheorie und die Kolonialpolitik," *NZ*, xvi, 1 (1898), p. 556 (translated in chapter 5 in this volume).
4. After a protracted legal battle, Liebknecht was convicted of *lèse-majesté* and sent to prison for four months starting in December 1897.
5. On Kiaochow, see chapter 6, note 13. We have been unable to identify the particular article referred to, but something like the view complained of is expressed in *Vorwärts*, 19 and 21 December 1897.
6. This was in 1887. See Schoenlank's *Die Fürther Quecksilber-Spiegelbelegen und ihre Arbeiter* (Stuttgart, 1887), and Engels to Schoenlank, 29 August 1887; MEW, xxxvi, p. 697.
7. Arthur Stadthagen (1857–1917), lawyer and Reichstag deputy since 1890; contributor to and later editor of *Vorwärts*.
8. In fact, Fendrich levelled the accusation at Rosa Luxemburg. *Protokoll . . . 1898*, p. 100.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 94. The humourless comrade was Thiele. *Ibid.*, p. 104.
10. The Prussian ministry of state was preparing a bill to bring industrial strikes within the criminal law. In its final form, the bill provided prison sentences in the case of strikes that endangered life, property, or the security of the state. It was submitted to the Reichstag in August 1899 and was defeated.
11. Paul Singer (1844–1911), shopkeeper, Reichstag deputy since 1884, member of the party executive since 1886, and joint chairman of the party since 1890.
12. By Stadthagen (*Protokoll . . . 1898*, p. 87). See also Gradnauer's speech, *ibid.*, p. 103.
13. At the Erfurt Conference. See the Introduction and note 21.
14. *Protokoll . . . 1898*, p. 106.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 105.
16. Vollmar was referring to Marx's remarks on the Factory Act in his "Inaugural Address of the W.M.I.A.," MESW, I, pp. 382ff. MEW, xvi, pp. 10ff. Marx's basic position was that legislation for the protection of workers tends to accelerate capitalist development. *Capital*, I, pp. 604ff. and 635. In that sense, Rosa Luxemburg had a point.

17. Engels to Bebel, 20 January 1886, and Engels to Florence Kelly-Wischnewetzsky, 3 February 1886. MEW, xxxvi, pp. 427 and 433.
18. Ludwig Börne (1786–1837), political author and critic, associated with the Young German movement. Rosa Luxemburg is referring to his *Menzel der Franzosenfresser*. Ludwig Börne, *Sämtliche Schriften*, 5 vols., ed. I. and P. Rippmann (Düsseldorf, 1964, and Darmstadt, 1968), III, pp. 960ff.
19. In his *Ueber Verfassungswesen*, a speech given in 1862.
20. *Protokoll . . . 1898*, p. 100.
21. C. S., “Endziel und Bewegung,” *Vorwärts*, 20 February 1898 (translated in chapter 7 of this volume).
22. See note 3, this chapter.
23. Addressing a meeting of industrialists at Oeynhausen, the Kaiser announced that the “Prison Bill” (see note 10, this chapter) was being prepared and that it would make it a criminal offence to encourage workers to strike or to prevent them from working if they wished to do so.
24. Thiele’s speech, omitted here, was devoted entirely to discussing the technical problems of producing and distributing a party newspaper.
25. Karl Franz Egon Frohme (1850–1933), engineer and, since 1881, Reichstag deputy; he became editor of the Hamburg *Echo* in 1890. Within the parliamentary party he was known as “Cicero.” See Bernstein to Engels, 7 April 1884. BEBW, p. 254.
26. See, e.g., Anon., “Die Tagesordnung des Parteitags,” *SAZ*, 24 August 1898.
27. Georg Gradnauer (1866–1946), journalist, editor of *SAZ* from 1890 to 1896 and of *Vorwärts* from 1897 to 1905. He became a Reichstag deputy in the elections of 1898.
28. *Protokoll . . . 1898*, p. 93.
29. At the Hamburg party conference, delegates resolved (by 145 to 64 votes) that where local circumstances made it feasible, the party should take part in the Prussian state elections, but that there should be no compromises or alliances with other parties. *Protokoll . . . 1897*, p. 217.
30. Eberhard Freiherr v. d. Recke (1847–1911) was the Prussian minister of the interior from 1895 to 1899. His policy was to combat Social Democracy by means of “exceptional laws.” In December 1897, this policy was revived in the Prussian Landtag. See the report in *Vorwärts*, 29 December 1897.
31. MESW, I, p. 125. MEW, xxii, p. 515.
32. MESW, I, p. 22. MEW, xviii, p. 96.
33. MESW, I, pp. 134 and 136. MEW, xxii, pp. 523 and 525.
34. MESW, I, pp. 135 and 134. MEW, xxii, pp. 524 and 523.
35. Bernstein, “Der Kampf der Sozialdemokratie und die Revolution der Gesellschaft,” *NZ*, xvi, 1 (1898), p. 556 (translated in chapter 5 of this volume).
36. MESW, I, p. 129. MEW, xxii, p. 518.

37. MESW, I, p. 134. MEW, xxii, p. 523.
38. Parvus. He was no longer editor because he had just been expelled from Saxony and thus forced to relinquish the post.
39. G. Plekhanov, "Bernstein und der Materialismus," *NZ*, xvi, 2 (1898), pp. 545–55 (translated in Georgi Plekhanov, *Selected Philosophical Works* [Moscow, 1976], II, pp. 326–39).
40. Parvus, "Ed. Bernstein als 'armer Toms,'" *SAZ*, 26 March 1898.
41. "In proportion as the bourgeoisie, i.e. capital, is developed, in the same proportion is the proletariat, the modern working class, developed." *The Communist Manifesto*, MESW, I, p. 40; MEW, iv, p. 468.
42. "Gesellschaften." We have preserved the ambiguity of the original. Does Kautsky mean capitalist society as a socio-economic system? Or does he mean organisations of capitalists such as cartels and employers' federations?
43. Marx, "Speech on the Hague Congress," 15 September 1872. MEW, xviii, p. 160.
44. Alexander the Great is reputed to have untied the Gordian knot by severing it with his sword.
45. In his 1895 introduction to Marx's *The Class Struggles in France, 1848–1850*.
46. *Protokoll . . . 1896*, pp. 99–102.
47. In May 1898 serious bread riots broke out in various parts of Italy. Martial Law was proclaimed, but order was restored only after a considerable amount of bloodshed.
48. Parvus had recently reiterated his suggestion that the Social Democrats participate in the Prussian state elections. Anon., "Von unsere Agitation, unserer Taktik und den preussischen Landtagswahlen," *SAZ*, 30 August 1898.

11. The Summing-up

1. Bernstein, "Der Strike als politisches Kampfmittel," *NZ*, xii, 1 (1894), pp. 689–95. For the franchise in Saxony, see chapter 6, note 5, this volume.
2. Spain was, at the time, troubled by unrest caused mainly by Carlists, anarchists, and Catalonian separatists. The crisis which preceded the *Franco-Prussian War* was provoked by the imminent election of Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern to the throne of Spain in 1870.
3. In an attempt to establish the claims of France to the left bank of the Nile, an expedition under Marchand reached Fashoda on the Nile in July 1898. Kitchener, having defeated the dervishes at Omdurman, marched up the Nile and demanded that the French evacuate Fashoda. This they eventually did (in November), but the episode increased feelings of hostility between France and England.
4. The general strike called in Belgium, in April 1893, did much to per-

suade the Belgian government to introduce electoral reforms broadening the suffrage.

5. *Protokoll . . . 1898*, p. 123. See chapter 10 of this volume.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 124.
7. A reference to Nietzsche's work of that title published in 1873, 1874, and 1876.
8. Bernstein, "Der Kampf der Sozialdemokratie und die Revolution der Gesellschaft: 2. Die Zusammenbruchstheorie und die Kolonialpolitik," *NZ*, xvi, 1 (1898), p. 556 (translated in chapter 5 of this volume). *Protokoll . . . 1898*, p. 124. See chapter 10 of this volume.
9. A quotation from Louis Angely's play, *Das Fest der Handwerker* (1828).
10. *Capital*, I, p. 929.
11. *MESW*, I, pp. 123ff. *MEW*, xxii, pp. 513ff.
12. The Imperial decrees in question placed limitations on Sunday work and child labour. For the "Prison Speech," see chapter 10, note 23.
13. *MESW*, I, p. 125. *MEW*, xxii, p. 515.
14. Bernstein, "Eroberung der politischen Macht," *Vorwärts*, 13 October 1898 (translated in this chapter).
15. *Protokoll . . . 1898*, p. 130. Chapter 10 of this volume.
16. See the Introduction, note 47.
17. Adler *BW*, pp. 255–8.
18. Bernstein, "Eroberung der politischen Macht."
19. Shortly before the Stuttgart Conference, Bernstein went to Switzerland to consult Bebel and Adler. See Bebel to Kautsky, 3 and 9 September 1898. *BKBW*, pp. 108–10.
20. Kautsky, "Taktik und Grundsätze," *Vorwärts*, 13 October 1898 (translated in this chapter).
21. It is tempting to suggest that the article in question could be Victor Adler's "Zum ersten deutschösterreichischen Parteitag," *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, 29 May 1898.
22. Bebel is probably referring to Liebknecht's speech at the Erfurt Conference in which he said, "Just as I have never changed my principled standpoint and never will, so I shall always be ready to change my *tactics* as soon as I see that the circumstances require it . . . Changed circumstances require changed modes of combat, changed tactics." *Protokoll . . . 1891*, p. 206.
23. It is not clear which article Bebel has in mind. The article in no. 2 of *Neue Zeit* (xvi, 1897) is "Sozialistische Oekonomie in England" which has nothing to do with party relationships. Bebel is probably thinking of Bernstein's "Englische Partei-Entwicklungen," *NZ*, xiv, 1 (1895), which is in no. 3 of that volume.
24. See the Introduction, notes 24, 27, and 28. Bernstein had recently returned to the topic in his "Was die Sozialdemokratie in Preussen bei der Landtagswahl ausrichten kann," *NZ*, xv, 2 (1897), pp. 385–95.
25. See chapter 6, note 5.

26. "Der Stuttgarter Parteitag," *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, 16 October 1898 (translated in this chapter).
27. Adler BW, pp. 258–63.
28. Georg Ledebour (1850–1947), a journalist of initially liberal views who joined the Social Democrats in 1890 and became a spokesman for the radical left. In 1894 he engaged Kautsky in a sharp polemical exchange. G. P. Steenson, *Karl Kautsky 1845–1938: Marxism in the Classical Years* (Pittsburgh, 1978), p. 106.
29. In 1874, the University of Berlin deprived Dühring of his chair because of his socialist views. There were widespread protests in which Bernstein and Most took an active part. Bernstein, *Sozialdemokratische Lehrjahre* (Berlin, 1978), pp. 54ff.
30. Wilhelm Hasselmann (b. 1844), Lassallean, strong supporter of unification at the Gotha Conference, and Social Democratic member of the Reichstag, 1874–6 and 1878–80. His position became increasingly anarchist, and in 1880 he was expelled from the party together with Most.
31. For this episode, see also Bernstein, *Sozialdemokratische Lehrjahre*, pp. 78ff.
32. The leading article in no. 36, "Ueber Parteifragen," was devoted to insisting that a party newspaper must stand on the same political ground as the party and that it must therefore be subject to the judgment of the party. In "Etwas über taktische Fragen," Bernstein argued that, in Germany, the eight-hour day was an objective that could be achieved only in stages, and that, whereas extreme demands may be necessary for a young movement, realistic demands are more appropriate for a powerful, established movement. For "Klippen" see the Introduction, "Bernstein's Conversion."
33. The lecture was in fact delivered to the Fabian Society at Clifford's Inn on Friday, 29 January 1897. See *Fabian News*, vi, no. 12 (1897), p. 48. This is twenty-one months earlier, not eighteen. However, Bernstein delivered the same lecture on Sunday, 4 April in the SDF Hall on Bow Road. See *Justice*, 3 April 1897. It is possible that Bernstein got the two occasions confused.
34. Hubert Bland, founding member of the Fabian Society and contributor to *Fabian Essays*. For his influence on Bernstein, see Bo Gustafson, *Marxismus und Revisionismus* (Frankfurt am Main, 1972), pp. 155 and 172. He died in 1914.
35. Parvus, "Die Klassengliederung des deutschen Reichs," *SAZ*, 22 February 1898.
36. *Anti-Dühring*, p. 391. MEW, xx, p. 264.
37. Rosa Luxemburg, *Sozialreform oder Revolution?* *LVZ*, 21–28 September 1898. See chapter 9 of this volume.
38. Émile Vandervelde (1866–1938), leader of the Belgian Social Democrats and prominent member of the Second International. See L. Kolkowski, *Main Currents of Marxism: Its Rise, Growth and Dissolution*. Vol. 2, *The Golden Years* (Oxford, 1978), pp. 15ff.
39. Adler, BW, pp. 263–5.
40. Paul Singer; see chapter 10, note 11.

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