

# **“Not One Man! Not One Penny!”**

**German Social Democracy,  
1863-1914**

**Gary P. Steenson**



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**To Vallerie, with love**



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# Introduction

“Diesem System keinen Mann und keinen Groschen!” (“For this system, not one man and not one penny!”). Thus did Wilhelm Liebknecht, as spokesman for the tiny socialist-workers’ faction of the nation, greet the founding of the Bismarckian Reich in 1871. For many Germans, including many socialists, this phrase captured the dominant spirit of the social-democratic movement during the forty-odd years prior to World War I. And yet in August 1914, much to the shock of international socialists and to the surprise of most of German officialdom, the SPD (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands) delegates to the Reichstag voted for war credits, and a large part of the movement went on to back the German war effort. How this came about, how a party and its affiliates seemingly so hostile to their society came to accept it, is the subject of this study.

Beyond the specific story of its development, German social democracy provides fascinating material in two areas. It was the first mass, working-class party in the history of the world, and as such was a prototype of one of the major features of twentieth-century politics. But it was also the first large party to try to work out the practical political implications of the diverse and ambiguous writings of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. At the high point of its international influence—that is, during the decade or two prior to the First World War—the SPD was the model for the world socialist movement, not in the sense that the parties of other nations copied it, but because it seemed to demonstrate the enormous potential of organizing the industrial working class for political ends. The major figures of the German party—August Bebel, Wilhelm Liebknecht, Karl Kautsky, Rosa Luxemburg, and others—were to the world’s socialists of their day what Lenin and Trotsky, Mao and Zhou, Castro and Che would be to revolutionists of later generations.

As the first mass, working-class party, the SPD foreshadowed many

developments now seen as commonplace in such organizations. We are today so familiar with these parties, and with the bureaucracy and stagnation that accompany their increasing size, that it is surprising to realize how recently they came into being. Max Weber and Robert Michels, two founders of contemporary sociology and political science, used the SPD as a model in their analyses of modern politics. From studies by these and other scholars who have looked closely at the SPD, a good deal of insight has been gained into the nature of advanced technological society and its political activities. By 1914 the SPD had fully developed many of the characteristics of and techniques used by later, even larger parties.

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of the SPD was the scope and size of its activities; it was far more than just a political party that sought to have its candidates elected to office. The party sponsored extensive social, cultural, and educational endeavors; it owned an impressive network of newspapers and publishing houses; it ran insurance programs, burial societies, and travel clubs; and in conjunction with the closely allied trade unions, it sponsored facilities in which itinerant and indigent workers could find shelter and support. On a less formal level there were socialist taverns and cafes, socialist theaters, socialist athletic clubs, and in some heavily industrialized areas, even entire socialist neighborhoods. The world had never before seen anything quite like German social democracy.

The German socialists claimed to represent all the workers of the nation, even though not all the workers joined the party or even voted for its candidates. The SPD had exceptionally close ties with the so-called free trade unions throughout the period under consideration, a factor that was of critical importance in the history of the party. After 1890 the unions had a larger membership than did the party, and this gave the union leaders within the SPD considerable influence. The popular vote of the party, however, always exceeded the size of the trade-union membership, demonstrating the party's wider appeal. Finally, neither the trade unions nor the party, either in membership or votes, ever won the support of the entire working-class population of Imperial Germany; the patterns of and reasons for the socialists' support or lack thereof constitute an interesting aspect of the total picture of the socialist movement.

In some ways the SPD is an even more fascinating subject for the second of the two reasons previously defined—its relationship to Marxism. Marxism is now so clearly identified with Soviet communism that it is easy to forget that they are different things, that communism is a specific form or interpretation of Marxism that derived from the

particular historical circumstances of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Russia. As such communism cannot be Marxism any more than the American republic can claim to be democracy or Methodism Christianity. But because a party that called itself Marxist emerged victorious in the Russian Revolution, and because the Soviet Union has become such a powerful force in twentieth-century world history, the identification of a specific variation with the larger theory is quite widely accepted.

Like Russian communism, the theory of the SPD during the Bismarckian and Wilhelminian periods (1871-1918), as the present study argues, cannot simply be labeled Marxist and left at that. A good many conflicting and sometimes incompatible forces gave rise to and sustained German social democracy, not all of which had much to do with Marxism. Nonetheless, for much of the first fifty years of the SPD and its predecessors, Marxism was the strongest ideological element, with the most fecund minds of the movement probing the works of Marx and Engels for guidance. Marxism was so important in these years as to generate a full-scale effort by Eduard Bernstein to replace it with his own revisionism.

Judgments of the SPD both as a mass and a Marxist party, then, must be made with an eye to the specific conditions within which it developed and operated. For while after the turn of the century the SPD may well have shared many qualities with later mass parties, it also had many features that were unique to its time and place. By the same token the interpretations of Marxism that appeared in the party were not just objective evaluations of the masters' writings, but efforts to apply the ideology to a particular set of circumstances.

For instance, the ambiguous political character of the German state was an important factor in determining the party's development. Even though the Second Reich was autocratic in effect, with the kaiser exercising considerable power in all realms of national policy, a national representative body of sorts existed and was elected by the entire adult male population, which was not true of any other major parliament in Europe at that time. This German body, called the Reichstag, could influence state policy in only limited ways, but the suffrage system nonetheless allowed some measure of popular sentiment.

Thus the socialists were confronted with a situation in which they could appeal for popular support, demonstrate their growing strength, and practice in a limited way the principle of power to the people that they preached. All these factors tended to reinforce those within the party who urged an anti-Marxist, reformist approach. On the other hand, the distribution of representation worked against the socialists

everywhere; as early as 1890, the SPD was the largest vote-getting party in the nation, but its Reichstag delegation was not the largest until after the 1912 election. Furthermore, the Reichstag had little real power even with a large socialist delegation. Both these features of Imperial Germany's political system helped keep alive within the party a spirit of revolutionary fervor.

Another feature of German society before 1914 made its socialist movement larger and more comprehensive than similar movements in other industrially advanced nations of Europe. This was the pariah status imposed upon socialists by official policy and widely accepted by nonworker portions of the nation. Socialists were not welcome in most voluntary associations in Imperial Germany, a fact that goes a long way in explaining why the SPD had its fingers in so many pies. Socialists were often specifically excluded from semiofficial organizations like veterans' associations, and they were legally prohibited from serving in the judiciary and the massive civil service. In court the testimony of socialists and workers usually counted for less than that of nonsocialists and nonworkers, and laws and punishments were frequently administered in a manner that blatantly discriminated against socialists and their sympathizers (the antisocialist law of 1878-1890 being only the most obvious example). Rather than restricting the growth of socialism in Germany, these actions and attitudes created a powerful sense of camaraderie among those to whom the party appealed.

Of course socialists were not wholeheartedly and warmly accepted by official circles and the upper classes anywhere in Europe during these years. But in Germany the official persecution and legal discrimination were greater than anywhere outside of Russia. The present study argues that this, more than any other single factor, accounts for the tremendous growth of social democracy in Germany once massive industrialization began after the end of the Franco-Prussian War. Had the leaders of the new state had the sense and foresight to integrate the workers and socialists more fully into the nation, the socialist propaganda about the state as class enemy would not have been as well received, and reformist forces within the movement would have gained the upper hand sooner and more openly. As it was, official persecution created a heroic spirit that won the SPD ever more followers and preserved a radical tradition well beyond the point it could have been sustained by other objective factors.

Economic development, political traditions and institutions, popular acceptance and official hostility, and the personalities of the major figures all determined the development of German social democracy. Obviously any understanding of a socialist movement is predicated to a

great extent on a basic knowledge of the society within which it operated; this knowledge has largely been assumed in the work that follows. In agreement with recent developments in the historiography of Imperial Germany, my assumption is that internal social, economic, and political conditions are of primary importance to understanding the character of the nation, and that foreign policy followed from these internal determinants. Those readers requiring more background in general German history should consult the works of Fritz Fischer, e.g., *World Power or Decline* (New York, 1974); Hans-Jürgen Pühle, *Agrarisches Interessenpolitik und preussischer Konservatismus* (Hanover, 1966); Hans Ulrich Wehler, e.g., *Das deutsche Kaiserreich 1871-1918* (Göttingen, 1973); and others who have emphasized this line of argument.

German social democracy during these years is rather neglected in English-language works on the history of Western socialism and Marxism, and it is in part the intention of the present study to rectify this situation. While several excellent studies, most notably those by Schorske and Lidtke, have focused on the prewar SPD in the context of Germany history, only George Lichtheim's *Marxism: An Historical and Critical Study* (New York, 1961) has placed the party squarely in the center of the history of Marxism. The following more detailed summary of the German party reinforces and amplifies Lichtheim's thesis by laying out more clearly the factors that limited and conditioned the development of Marxism in one advanced industrial society. Marx thought such an environment would be the one in which communism, as he called his own theories, would most firmly take hold. Understanding why it did not sheds light on both Imperial Germany and Marxism.

Despite the hostility and vituperation aroused by social democracy in its own time, the perspective of the twentieth century reveals these years as a time of promise in the history of working-class socialism, as a time when social-economic justice and political democracy seemed to be compatible. This book posits that the failure of the German social-democratic movement to achieve its espoused goals derived from both internal flaws, some of which the party had little control over, and external pressures, most of which the party could not have influenced in any way short of forceful revolutionary action. Whether or not such action was a viable alternative for the SPD before 1914 is an endlessly debatable question, the answer to which readers will have to decide for themselves.

This study is intended primarily for American undergraduate and graduate students as a general introduction to the origins and development of German social democracy during the first five decades of its

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existence. It aims to provide an overview of the most important aspects of the movement's history prior to the First World War and a summary of recent work of German and Anglo-American scholars in the field. It draws heavily on previously published work, particularly that of German academics in the past ten years, but also uses primary sources—especially party protocols, the correspondence of leading figures, and the party press—to try to give as complete a picture as possible of the character of German social democracy.

The first chapter is chronological, dealing with the succession of events that brought the party to the end of the twelve-year rule of the antisocialist law in 1890. The next five chapters are topical treatments of the major aspects of the movement's development from that time to the outbreak of war in 1914. This organizational scheme necessarily introduces some redundancy, which I have attempted to keep to a minimum. But recent scholarly work on German social democracy has provided such a wealth of detail on various aspects of the movement that the topical treatment of the five central chapters is the most efficacious way of presenting this material. The concluding chapter and the "Suggestions for Further Reading" provide interested students with guidelines for additional study. In addition, of course, the suggestions outline the major sources used for each chapter.

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# 1 / German Social Democracy to 1890

Although the connections are sometimes more imagined than real, the origins of German social democracy lie in the revolutionary years of 1848–1849. As far as the workers' movement is concerned, 1848 left a dual legacy—failure and organizational continuity. The legacy of failure had two aspects. First there was the strongly felt but ill-defined conviction that the cause of the workers, in particular, had been betrayed in 1848–1849. In most instances of urban violence during this period in Germany, the people who died on the barricades were workers—masters, journeymen, apprentices, and day laborers. But the men who emerged as temporary political leaders were bourgeois liberals, and the issues discussed and measures proposed served the interests of bourgeois liberals. Thus while the revolution as a whole failed, many workers felt that they had been especially sold out.

The second aspect of the failure of '48 was the inability of the revolutionists to come up with a unified German state. The maze of regional and particularist interests proved too difficult to negotiate, even given the flush of revolutionary unity. When confronted with the arrogant rejection by the king of Prussia of what he called "the crown from the gutter," offered to him by the liberal Frankfurt assembly in hope of achieving unification, the revolutionary forces were too dissipated and splintered to achieve the one thing most could agree upon in principle—national unity. German workers shared with a good many other Germans an acute feeling of failure on this count.

Both the national stillbirth and the sense of class betrayal were to have repercussions that affected the early years of social democracy. In fact, the social-democratic movement was specifically the result of the realization by many workers that alliance with the bourgeois liberals could never bring them what they wanted. On the other hand, conflicting opinion on just how national unity was to be accomplished contributed to a split in the movement during its earliest years. One faction

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argued for a *kleindeutsch* solution to the national problem, that is, the exclusion of Austria; another argued for a *grossdeutsch* solution, the inclusion of at least the German-speaking portions of Austria. The latter faction was largely motivated by fear of Prussian dominance, and much of its fear was realized and its solution made moot when Prussian wars finally brought German unification in 1871. This did not by any means still the anti-Prussian sentiments within German social democracy, and opposition to the Prussian-dominated new state was a hallmark of the movement for decades.

These influences were, however, often illusory and secondary rather than concrete or direct. That is, although at times of stress and when elaborating aims and demands, social democrats frequently made specific references to these things, other, more immediate factors were also involved. Thus when the workers finally began to break away from the liberals in the 1860s, allusions were made to the betrayal of '48, but as we shall see, issues of the day were far more significant than remembered wrongs of the past. Of course this is almost always true in day-to-day politics; connections to the past are far more often rationalizations of present actions than they are causes or explanations in any very useful sense. In the case of German social democracy, intellectuals especially concerned with such rationalizations consciously attached themselves to a working-class movement the members of which were usually driven by more proximate causes.

The much more concrete legacy of 1848-1849 was the surge in the number of worker educational associations in the excited and freer atmosphere of the revolutionary days. Often modeled on similar associations founded by German artisans in Switzerland or on earlier choral, gymnastic, or reading associations in Germany, these worker educational leagues (*Arbeiterbildungsvereine*, *Arbeitervereine*, *Handwerk-erbildungsvereine*, etc.) first appeared in Germany proper in the early and mid-forties, and by the end of 1847, there were thirty or more, some with as many as six hundred (Hamburg) or seven hundred (Bremen) members. These associations were distinguished from earlier bodies by their largely worker membership and the general, organized, and serious quality of their educational activities. Usually they were founded by bourgeois liberals who felt that workers were entitled to access to a minimum of education. In a society in which formal education was generally only open to the wealthy, this was a major change. However, at least until 1848, and then again after the revolution, although some of these worker organizations displayed political interests, they were usually directed by their bourgeois liberal mentors into nonpolitical channels.

Three things were remarkable about the worker educational leagues in 1848. First was a major expansion in number, totaling a fourfold or fivefold increase at least, with Berlin as the center of activity. Second was the politicization of the organizations, especially those associated with the radicals of the revolution, like Stephan Born in Berlin. Third was the organization by August 1848 of a national association of such bodies as the General German Workers' Brotherhood (Allgemeine deutsche Arbeiterverbrüderung) with its own newspaper, *Verbrüderung*. The latter was edited by Born and was the first workers' newspaper in all of Germany.

Because they were often formed in the heat of the revolutionary period, it is difficult to estimate the size of the membership of the workers' educational leagues, although one scholar has suggested eighteen thousand as a good guess for 1850. Quite probably there were somewhat more members at the high point of late 1848 and early 1849, but still in a largely agrarian nation of over thirty million people, even twenty-five thousand organized workers seems a rather insignificant number. Obviously it was not their number, but who these people were and what they advocated that so upset the good citizens of proper German society.

In the traditional order of things (i.e., before 1848), even the elite of skilled masters did not often have political opinions, let alone organize themselves across state boundaries and publish a newspaper. Now here were not only masters but also some journeymen and apprentices and even occasionally common laborers organized and taking stands on political issues. Some of these issues, such as insisting on being addressed in the formal *Sie* rather than by the demeaning, familiar *du*, now seem rather mild, but others, like calls for a democratic state form, were very radical for their time. But there was little suggestion of class struggle or even much commitment to violent revolution, and, except for the few extremists, the organized workers stood politically with the bourgeois left.

When the revolution failed, a period of reaction came to the German states. Terrified by the upheavals of the lower classes, the reestablished authorities moved to eliminate as far as possible the organizations of the workers. State after state passed laws severely restricting rights of assembly, and police observers were widely required at those gatherings that were allowed. Nonetheless, the workers' educational leagues did not disappear entirely, although their number declined precipitously, especially in the north of Germany. Survival often depended upon eliminating political activities of all sorts and cutting ties with leagues and even individuals outside the immediate locality; the

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authorities were particularly concerned about keeping workers from associating with their kind beyond local boundaries. But here too, rules could occasionally be circumvented; in 1855 a Hamburg gathering of delegates from workers' leagues had representatives from at least thirteen other cities.

### The Workers and the Liberals

By the early 1860s the workers' leagues that survived the reaction were gradually being joined by new groups. In the years after 1848, Germany's industrial sector, and thus its industrial working class also, grew considerably. The passage of time had somewhat assuaged fears of the lower classes, and in the slightly more relaxed atmosphere that developed, more and more workers' groups were formed. Not all of them concentrated on political and social concerns; some were little more than cultural clubs for singing and exercise, and most still had close ties with bourgeois liberals. But increasingly those groups that were concerned with political and social issues were developing positions that put them at odds with their bourgeois advisers.

The troubled years of 1862–1863 mark a turning point of sorts in the history of German social democracy. For despite growing demands for worker independence, it still seemed possible at that time to find some sort of liberal-worker accommodation that would preserve the popular image of '48—a people united against the upper-class oppressors. Furthermore, in Prussia in particular, the liberal forces had more pressing reasons to try to preserve some sort of liberal-worker ties. September 1862 saw the intensification of the struggle between Prussian liberals and the Junkers, headed by King William I and Bismarck, for political dominance in the largest German state. The issue was the desire of the king to wrest control of the state purse strings from the liberal-dominated lower house of Prussia; specifically, he sought army reforms that would lengthen terms of service and increase the size of the army, thus considerably strengthening the monarch's hand. Rightly viewing the move as a further expansion of royal prerogative, the liberals sought to preserve what little influence they had over the course of affairs in Prussia by exercising fiscal control over the king.

In this struggle the liberals were at a disadvantage. While they had the constitution on their side, the king had the army and most of the bureaucracy; ultimately this allowed Bismarck to solve the constitutional crisis by simply ignoring the lower house and running the state for several years without an approved budget. About the only thing the liberals could call upon was massive popular support—protests, refusal

to pay taxes, efforts to make things generally awkward for Bismarck and his Junker clique—always with the implicit threat of rebellion behind the more limited actions. But Prussian liberalism was not in a position to make an effective appeal for mass support in the early 1860s.

During these years Prussian liberals were far from unified as a political movement. Although most liberals were more or less hostile to Junker dominance of the state, serious internal differences prevented the presentation of a united front against their opponents. After 1861 two discrete groups constituted the bulk of the movement—the Liberals, the more rightist of the two, and the German Progressive Party, founded in 1861 by dissident members of the Liberals. Together these two parties held over 80 percent of the lower house seats in the years 1862 to 1864. But the splits did not stop here. The Progressives were further divided into right, left, and center wings, with major sources of differences being the degree of commitment to democratic politics, attitudes toward free trade, and willingness to cooperate with the workers. Some left wingers among the Progressives, including Friedrich Albert Lange (1825–1875), J. D. H. Temme (1789–1881), and Johann Jacoby (1807–1877), even sought a close alliance with the workers, up to the point of a further split with the Progressive Party. But these people were not in the majority of their party, and some prominent Progressives were strongly opposed to making overtures to the working class. Given this lack of consensus, the Progressives could not tie themselves to the emerging workers' movement and won little support from it in their confrontation with Bismarck.

Hermann Schulze-Delitzsch (1808–1883) was the most influential member of the Progressives' left wing, and his attitude toward the workers symbolizes the limited potential of a liberal-worker alliance in the early sixties. His major activity vis-à-vis the workers was promotion of various kinds of cooperative associations, especially savings, raw material purchasing, and consumer organizations, aimed primarily at artisans and small-scale producers. Beginning in the early 1850s, this movement took on considerable proportions; by 1864 it included 455 associations with 135,000 members, and by 1874 the number of groups had almost doubled and the membership had almost tripled. Schulze had decided after the '48 experience that the social and political problems of the working class were separate matters, and he devoted himself to solving the former. His resistance to political activities among the workers and to political solutions to workers' problems obviously restricted the range of cooperation between the Progressives and the organized workers in political matters.

The failure of Prussia's liberals to form an alliance with the workers,

even in the face of a broadly shared hostility to Bismarck, also reflected the increasing differentiation of Germany's economic sector. For while bourgeois entrepreneurs, bankers, and professionals may have shared immediate economic interests with handicraftsmen and small-scale producers (i.e., what is generally meant by the term *petty bourgeoisie*), they did not do so with the new industrial workers. Germany did not have a massive industrial proletariat by the 1860s, but it did have centers of industrial or preindustrial concentration, like Saxony and the Rhineland, where the demands for an independent workers' movement were strongest. And even if the members of these workers' organizations were not themselves always industrial proletarians, their political constituencies included large numbers of the new workers. In part, liberals and workers were prevented from cooperating by a developing class struggle.

Ultimately liberal-worker cooperation foundered as much on the rocks of worker class consciousness as it did on the uneven ground of liberal commitment, especially in Prussia. For if the liberals were inconsistent on the matter of cooperating with the workers, the major impetus among politically inclined, organized workers was the desire to free themselves from bourgeois domination. By late 1862 this tendency was sufficiently strong within several workers' educational leagues to give rise to the first working-class political party in German history, the Allgemeiner deutscher Arbeiterverein (ADAV). Although the impulse for its formation came from Saxony, the focus of the ADAV quickly shifted to Berlin, and its charismatic first leader was committed to making Prussia's capital city the center of the workers' political movement.

#### Lassalle and the ADAV

Ferdinand Lassalle (1825–1864) was a man of causes. In the mid-1840s, he defended the great poet Heinrich Heine in an inheritance case; in the late forties and early fifties, he mounted a tenacious and dramatic campaign in defense of the Countess Sophie von Hatzfeldt in a complicated and embarrassing divorce case. By the time he turned to the workers' movement in April 1862, Lassalle was famous and infamous for his commitment to justice, his flamboyance, his questionable relationships with the countess and other women, and his opportunism. When he died a tragic and silly death in a duel in 1864, he did so in service to his greatest cause—himself.

In German social democracy, Lassalle is virtually unique; his flamboyance and notoriety have no equal in the party's history. He came to

the movement at a time when workers were first beginning to detach themselves from the bourgeois liberals who had been their political mentors and masters for years. Although himself a bourgeois who was at one time attached to the German liberal movement, Lassalle strongly reinforced this emerging worker independence by espousing a political philosophy that was based on hostility to liberalism. The workers' movement gave Lassalle another cause to fight for, and Lassalle gave the movement recognition and an excitement it could not then generate from within.

Lassalle, who was the earliest remarkable public figure of German social democracy, left at least two specific legacies to the movement. The first was his insistence on general adult male suffrage, an important deviation from the liberal principle of a franchise based on property qualifications. Lassalle popularized and made respectable among the workers the notion that even they should have a say in politics. His second legacy was the idea that the established state should provide fiscal support to the workers' movement. Although Lassalle primarily envisioned state aid in the form of financial support for the workers' cooperatives that would eventually replace capitalist production, his legacy in this area was more generalized. Quite often in the forty-odd years from the founding of the Second Reich to the outbreak of World War I, German social democrats offered various schemes for having the established state protect and support the industrial working class. In most such cases, the influence of Lassalle may be clearly detected in the proposals.

But Lassalle's major contribution to the history of German social democracy was his role in the founding of the ADAV, the first working-class political organization of the post-1848 era. Lassalle did not create the ADAV; his attendance at the founding congress, 23 May 1863, was the result of an invitation issued by a group of Leipzig workers. This committee sought to bring coherence to the informal working-class bodies that had begun to blossom in Germany during the late 1850s. The appeal was directed to Lassalle because someone of authority and learning was needed to counter the influence of liberals who sought to keep the workers in a politically dependent position, especially men like Schulze-Delitzsch.

The circumstances behind the creation of the ADAV point to an important feature of Lassalle's relationship with the nascent working-class movement in Germany: it sought out Lassalle; he did not call it into being. In a way the movement "made" Lassalle rather than vice versa. Whatever leadership qualities the man had were dependent upon a preexisting audience. He was an effective speaker and agitator, but no

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organizer. Lassalle was politically fortunate that at a time when he could no longer tolerate affiliation with the liberals, a new movement emerged that was directed against his former allies. Certainly without his attachment to the workers' movement, Lassalle would have had a much smaller place in Germany's history. Such was the wedding of a movement with no leader and a leader with no movement.

But it was not a match made in heaven. The skills Lassalle brought to the ADAV were more those of a demagogue than those of a leader of a democratic movement. Though he was a democrat, his democracy was a vague collective will of the Jacobin sort rather than the representative democracy that characterized the later SPD. Even in his demands for a general male franchise, Lassalle was prompted more by his conviction that such a system would promote civil war when the bourgeoisie reacted violently to its loss of special status than by a belief that a general franchise would allow the free expression of the will of the masses; his antiparliamentary sentiments were at odds with the radical parliamentarianism of others in the movement. Furthermore, Lassalle had neither the patience nor the organizational abilities to oversee the growth of the ADAV from a very small, regional pre-party into a large, cohesive national organization. What Lassalle sought was success, influence, and power, and what the workers' movement needed was organization and leadership. Neither side got either from the ADAV.

Infatuation with the French revolutionary tradition, hatred of German liberals, and the need for immediate gratification of personal desires for success led Lassalle simultaneously to pursue two contradictory goals: his activities in the ADAV, and the chimera of the social monarchy. Taking as a model what he supposed to be Napoleon III's achievements along these lines in France, Lassalle hoped to influence Bismarck to support creation of a unified German state under a monarch who would protect and support the working classes (rural and urban). Indeed, Lassalle and Bismarck had several private meetings in which just such things were discussed. But Bismarck sought to use the newly emergent working-class movement to crush further liberal opposition to his high-handed administration of Prussia. When it became clear that Bismarck did not need and Lassalle could not deliver the workers' movement, Lassalle was unceremoniously cast aside. Since Bismarck was Lassalle's only possible contact with the king, any chance to influence royal developments was lost with Bismarck's rejection.

Lassalle's private dreams of personal glory and power that the workers' movement was to bring came to very little. This was not just because he died a relatively young man; it even more resulted from his own miscalculation of the political potential in preunification Germany.



If the immature working-class movement was to have had any impact during these years, it could only have come in alliance with certain factions of the liberals against Prussia and Bismarck. But Lassalle hated and distrusted all liberals, as did most of the avant-garde of the workers. It is possible to argue that this distrust was one of the other major elements of the Lassallean legacy. As the Bernstein revisionist controversy was to reveal so clearly at the turn of the century, the organized portions of the German working class were not inclined to trust German liberalism, such as it was. Of course, for the most part the feeling was mutual. Nonetheless, Lassalle's highly developed hostility to liberalism prevented him from realizing the potential he thought he had.

Virtually all those who came after Lassalle in the German workers' movement were influenced by him in one way or another. He was a renowned, almost legendary figure. But while undeniably strong, Lassalle's influence, like that of most legends, can hardly be defined with any precision. Certainly his attitude toward parliaments and representative democracy had very little impact. While in the years after Lassalle hostility toward German liberals did not lessen, the workers' socialist movement espoused many aspects of liberalism, including the traditional freedoms of speech, press, and assembly and representative government. To this extent Lassalle's influence in the realm of political philosophy was not significant. His greatest biographer, Shlomo Na'aman, argues that in a strict sense there was only one Lassallean, his eventual successor as president of the ADAV, Jean Baptist Schweitzer (1834-1875). Many, many others in the movement revered the memory of Lassalle and attached themselves to this or that agitational slogan or form of organization, but only Schweitzer seems to have understood and dynamically expanded on Lassalle's political and economic concepts.

Paradoxically, through his most famous work, *Herr Bastiat-Schulze von Delitzsch* (1864), Lassalle did a good deal to popularize Marxian concepts and to prepare the German movement for reception of Marxism. Lassalle's own earlier economic thought was somewhat insubstantial. Its basic notion was that under capitalism the lot of the workers was not capable of much improvement because of the "iron law of wages"; this led him to downplay the importance of trade unions. Arguing that competition for jobs and an overabundance of workers would in the long run prevent wages from rising (this was the essence of the iron law of wages), Lassalle proposed state-financed workers' cooperatives as the only way out of this bind. But *Bastiat-Schulze* showed the effects of Lassalle's reading of Marx. Here Lassalle dealt with capital and labor (which is the book's subtitle) historically rather

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than juridically, as he had previously. Here too he dealt much more systematically than ever before with the historical developmental tendencies of capitalism, pointing toward, without specifically discussing, the Marxian view of the uniqueness of the proletariat. In this work Lassalle moved away from his prior romantic, semifeudalistic view of the workers as *Stand* and toward a more historical-economic view of them as a class.

All this contributed significantly to the later reception of Marx and Engels as interpreted by Liebknecht and Bebel, and later by Kautsky and Bernstein. Thus it would appear that the man whom Marx and the Marxists saw as a major ideological opponent in the movement was a perhaps unwitting agent of Marxism. But this was not apparent to the participants at the time, and disputes between so-called Lassalleans and those who looked more to Marx persisted even after their two parties united in 1875.

### The Verband deutscher Arbeitervereine

Lassalle had expected that within months, perhaps even weeks, of its founding, the ADAV would be a major force in German politics with one hundred thousand or more members. Despite fairly regular growth, however, by 1868 it had only about eight thousand members, and it never approached even a quarter of Lassalle's prediction before its merger into the Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands (SAPD) in 1875. Lassalle's deficiencies as an organizer were in part responsible for this, but even more important was the fact that the ADAV was some years ahead of its time—not many, but enough to prevent its growing into a large body. Although it was undeniably the product of a rising spirit of independence among politically conscious members of the working class, these men were themselves but a small avant-garde.

More representative of the state of consciousness among active workers (who of course constituted only a small part of the total working class) in the early to mid-1860s were the workers' educational leagues. Moved by many of the same impulses that led to the formation of the ADAV, 110 delegates from forty-five cities met in Frankfurt on 17 May 1863 to form the Verband deutscher Arbeitervereine (Union of German Workers' Leagues, VDAV). Although it was apparently not a reaction to the founding of the ADAV, the Verband was distinct from Lassalle's organization in several ways. First, during the initial two or three years at least, the Verband retained close ties with bourgeois radicals. Second, its concerns were less overtly political than the ADAV's, again at least for the first few years. Third, the Verband's organization was

both looser and more democratic than the ADAV's—in fact, the most frequent objection to Lassalle's party raised by Verband members concerned its dictatorial organization.

Drawing from preexisting organizations, which retained considerable autonomy, the Verband was much larger than the ADAV, with over twenty-three thousand members in 1865. However, as it became increasingly political and thus increasingly hostile to its former liberal allies, the Verband gradually lost membership until in late 1869 its 109 sections totaled only about ten thousand members. But these figures do not reveal two important aspects of the Verband membership. For one thing, there was often a tremendous turnover of members. For instance, in the Dresden Verein the reported membership between 1861 and 1867 remained relatively stable at about three hundred. But during that period 2,567 different people belonged to the Verein, indicating both that the membership was unstable and that the Verein had an influence far beyond the numbers of people officially reported as members. Second, the decline in membership may be partly accounted for by the departure of bourgeois members and those workers not comfortable with the increasingly political posture of the Verband. Occasionally entire Vereine seceded.

This decline in Verband membership and the failure of the ADAV to grow much beyond fifteen thousand accentuate something that must always be kept in mind about the German working-class movement in the years before World War I. Although it has become fashionable for academics from liberal nations to mock the revolutionary pretensions of German social democracy, for workers in 1868, or even in 1910, to tie themselves publicly to an independent proletarian movement required considerable commitment and often a generous portion of personal courage. The Germany of the Wilhelms was never one that could accept politically independent workers with equanimity. So-called German authoritarianism may have had something to do with this, but a hidebound notion of respectability and a strong feeling of insecurity were probably more important. In Germany workers did not enter politics to become respectable; the movement did have opportunists, of course, but they were not seeking societal approval. Even once the SPD became by far the largest party in Germany, its political representatives were still virtually pariahs in "better" circles. Certainly this helps account for much of the radical rhetoric of the movement; the relatively high psychological cost of socialist activity demanded frequent and fierce reinforcement.

Increased politicization of the Verband was the most striking feature of its brief history. Beginning as an organizational expansion of the

radical bourgeois and worker organizations that had revived on a regional level in the late 1850s, the Verband acquired in a very few years the qualities of an independent labor party. At the second annual congress, in Leipzig, October 1864, the worker faction fought off an effort to have the liberal-dominated Coburg *Deutsche Arbeiterzeitung* adopted as the Verband's official organ. At the third congress, Stuttgart, September 1865, a resolution calling for a general, equal, and direct male franchise was unanimously passed despite some opposition from bourgeois members who felt that the Verband should not be so political, or at least not so politically independent. The social emancipation and enfranchisement of women was also discussed at Stuttgart, clearly signaling the Verband's move to the left.

The Austro-Prussian war in 1866 delayed the fourth congress, but when it was held the following year in Gera, the Verband took two giant steps down the road to becoming a political party. First, it reorganized to provide for the congress to elect the president with his regional Verein to serve as the party headquarters for the year; this considerably tightened up the Verband organizationally. Second, August Bebel, a twenty-seven-year-old woodturner from Leipzig, was elected president, and this almost guaranteed further politicization. At the Stuttgart congress two years earlier, Bebel had led the fight to get a salary for central committee members to free them from the need to devote most of their time to earning a living. Now his election as president set the stage for the final step. At the fifth congress of the Verband, held in Nürnberg in September 1868, Bebel and his colleague Wilhelm Liebknecht engineered the adoption of a common program that linked the Verband to the First International by stressing worker self-emancipation, opposition to monopolistic ownership of the means of production, and the inseparability of political and social freedom for the workers.

After Nürnberg the Verband deutscher Arbeitervereine was in effect a political party. The adoption there of an overtly political program caused a split, with thirty Vereine and almost five thousand members seceding to form the nonpolitical *Deutscher Arbeiterbund*. With this last of the secessions, the Verband's entire membership became finally and firmly committed to independent political action. In a clear statement of the content of the Verband's politics, a resolution was adopted at Nürnberg rejecting a proposal for state-supervised old-age insurance and calling instead for the establishment of old-age, sickness, and death benefit funds to be administered by the trade unions. In addition to establishing the tradition of close trade union-socialist party relations in Germany, adoption of this resolution revealed two of the

sharpest differences between the Verband and the ADAV—namely, the respective attitudes toward trade unions and the established state. While under J. B. Schweitzer's leadership the ADAV was lukewarm on trade unions and looked to the state for assistance, as Lassalle had urged, the Verband specifically promoted the unions and rejected state aid. Conflict between these two strains was to be a hallmark of the later unified socialist-workers' movement.

Actually the highly politicized Verband deutscher Arbeitervereine lasted less than a year. In 1869 all the member Vereine voted to dissolve the Verband and join the Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei founded in Eisenach in August of that year. Popularly known as the Eisenachers, this new form came into being in part because Bebel and Liebknecht decided that the Saxon People's Party they had been instrumental in establishing in 1866 was no longer sufficient for the needs of the time; its original ambiguous character—mixed petty bourgeois and worker—had come to be dominated by the worker faction. Confronted with a populist party that was increasingly worker and a workers' association that was essentially a political party, Bebel and Liebknecht took the logical step of merging their followers in both into an unambiguously workers' political party. But just as the experience of the Verband was to influence the new party, so too was the Saxon People's Party to leave its mark. The story of the emergence of the Eisenach party is partially the story of the developing political consciousness of Bebel and Liebknecht.

#### **August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht**

The two men who led the Verband and much of the Saxon People's Party to form the Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei were the most important individuals in the history of German social democracy prior to the First World War. August Bebel (1840–1913) was one of the most significant figures in German political history in the period 1848 to 1914. He was the only person elected to every term of the German Reichstag between 1871 and 1912. He was the official elected leader of the united workers' movement for almost forty years; his mastery of party politics, his outstanding abilities as a leader, and the respect amounting almost to awe he commanded among the rank-and-file members allowed him to rule by honest consensus. Bebel was rarely challenged and less often defeated. Among prewar social democrats, he is one of very few who are today held in high esteem by both Germanies. It is perhaps fortunate for his political reputation that he died almost exactly one year before the greatest of all tests of socialist commitment, World War I.

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For his part, Wilhelm Philipp Martin Christian Ludwig Liebknecht (1826–1900) provided the early years of the movement with much of its fire. He was a tempestuous, tireless propagandist and organizer who often spoke without due reflection and frequently disconcerted his political allies with outlandish statements; in his memoirs Bebel referred to Liebknecht as "a man of extremes." But if the intensity and sincerity of commitment of social democrats were ever embodied in a single person, that man was Wilhelm Liebknecht. Between 1866 and 1895 he was imprisoned fourteen times for his socialist activities. When asked at one of his trials to state his profession, Liebknecht replied that he was "a soldier of the revolution"; thus his party nickname *der Soldat*.

As a result of his activities in the 1848 revolution, Liebknecht had spent twelve years in exile in London (1850–1862), where he became a close acquaintance of Marx and Engels. On his return to Germany, he plunged directly into activities of the workers' movement, joining first the ADAV and then, following a break with Lassalle's organization and his expulsion from Berlin in 1865, tying up with the workers' leagues in Saxony, where he met Bebel. During the 1860s and 1870s, Liebknecht was known as the Marxist of the movement, and his name was closely associated with Marx's in party circles. Liebknecht was perhaps the best educated of the early members of the socialist-workers' movement, having attended three different universities in Germany. His early contributions to the movement's press were remarkable not only for their vigorous tone, but also for their literary quality.

But it was only when he was guided by Bebel that Liebknecht's enthusiasm could be channeled into constructive directions. The son of a poor noncommissioned officer of the Prussian army, Bebel was apprenticed to a woodturner at the age of thirteen, when he was orphaned. Although he had little formal education, he was a quick student when he wanted to be, and his thirst for more knowledge led him to join the workers' educational movement in 1861. He had settled in Leipzig, quite by chance apparently, after the brief tour as a wandering journeyman that was typical of the preindustrial system of handicraft training in the German states. Even though his work in a Leipzig shop filled thirteen hours per day, Bebel still found time to become involved in the local workers' league. His obvious devotion to the cause, his striking abilities as a speaker and organizer, and his astuteness in reading the mood of his fellow workers quickly led him to positions of authority and responsibility. From the very beginning of his participation in the movement, it was clear that August Bebel was in his milieu.

In these early years Bebel was not a proponent of independent

workers' politics; at the time he joined the educational league, Leipzig also had a workers' political club that he did not join. Even by 1863, when the ADAV was organized and Lassalle publicly proclaimed the principle of general male suffrage, Bebel was not convinced. Shortly before Lassalle's announcement, Bebel had given a speech in which he asserted that the workers were not politically mature enough to exercise the franchise with good judgment. The Leipzig workers' educational league had been founded by a liberal professor, and Bebel continued to feel that a sort of political tutorship for the workers was necessary. To a certain extent this inclination was strengthened when Lassalle led the ADAV further away from the liberals while coquetting with Bismarck and the conservatives. Bebel may not have been fully confident of an alliance with the liberals at this time, but he was certain that Prussia and its strong conservative faction were not the workers' friends.

As his involvement in the workers' movement deepened and his experience with bourgeois liberals increased, Bebel's attitude toward independent political activity by the workers changed. During the mid-sixties a good many liberals made their peace with royal Prussia at the same time that politically active workers were growing ever more suspicious of their liberal mentors. By 1866 this dual process had converted Bebel to the principle of independent workers' politics, but local and regional factors still caused him to resist formation of an exclusively workers' political party. In terms of Leipzig specifically and Saxony in general, he felt that too many potentially valuable allies would be lost if petty-bourgeois democrats and Saxon particularists were excluded. It was this analysis that led him and Liebknecht to participate in the founding of the Saxon People's Party on 19 August 1866 and to delay the establishment of a second workers' party (the ADAV being the first) for three more years.

Actually it is more appropriate to talk about opposition to Prussian hegemony than about Saxon particularism as a factor in the creation of the Saxon People's Party. Anti-Prussian feelings were much heightened outside of Germany's largest state after the war over the Schleswig-Holstein secession in 1864, but they reached unprecedented intensity in the months surrounding the brief Austro-Prussian War of the early summer of 1866. Liebknecht had brought his own powerful anti-Prussian obsession with him to Saxony, and his arguments fell on receptive ears in 1865 and 1866. Creation of the Prussian-dominated North German Confederation (NGC) after the defeat of Austria only stimulated the fears of those who saw Prussia as a bastion of reaction.

For Liebknecht and, under his influence, Bebel also, if the side of freedom was to have any chance at all, the broadest possible coalition of democratic, anti-Prussian forces was required.

Although fierce opposition to the "Prussification" of the rest of Germany was certainly the most visible and important factor that kept Bebel and Liebknecht from forming an independent workers' party during the mid-sixties, the passion aroused by this issue masked an as-yet unresolved ambiguity in the political conceptions of the two men. At this time Liebknecht used the German words *Volk* (usually translated into English as "people") and *Arbeiter* ("worker" in English) virtually interchangeably, the former in a narrower sense than it is now normally used, the latter in a broader sense. However, this was not just the result of fuzzy thinking or a failure to analyze the situation sufficiently. The political constituencies of the two men in the 1860s were much less homogeneous than were most later socialist-voting districts.

Glauchau-Meerane, the seventeenth Reichstag district of Saxony, was one of the most important centers of the German textile industry in the nineteenth century, and well over half of the employable population was engaged in the industry, primarily as weavers and finishers. There were few spinners. Although power looms were introduced as early as 1862, until the end of that decade, textile manufacture in Glauchau-Meerane remained almost entirely a cottage industry. Under these conditions it was only possible for manufacturers to maintain a competitive position by intense exploitation of labor; wages were low, and female and child laborers constituted a significant portion of the work force. In 1864 a severe economic crisis began when the American Civil War interrupted raw material supplies; production that year was only two thirds that of the previous year. The disruption of internal markets caused by the Austro-Prussian War of 1866 exacerbated the already difficult position of the working class in the district.

The workers of Glauchau-Meerane had at least some tradition of direct, vigorous action. On 5 April 1848, a large group of them had stormed and burned the Waldenberg castle, and many had mounted the barricades in defense of freedom in 1848-1849. Of more immediate significance to the matter at hand, the district had seen no fewer than six *Arbeitervereine* established during the revolutionary turmoil, only to have them all suppressed during the reaction that followed. But in the 1860s, the carriers of this heritage were not yet industrial proletarians of long standing. Most of the men active in the revived *Vereine* were themselves former masters or journeymen or the sons, nephews, or brothers of men who had once had greater status. In politics these men



tended to identify more with the older conceptions of a people united against their upper-class oppressors than with the growing independent consciousness that was apparent among other workers. But they were not certain; most of the Glauchau-Meerane delegates to the 1868 congress of the Verband deutscher Arbeitervereine were also active in the Saxon People's Party, and all four men elected to the North German Confederation Reichstag on the party's ticket were also active in the Verband.

Thus it happened that in the elections for the constituent assembly of the NGC, 12 February 1867, Bebel was elected from Glauchau-Meerane as a candidate of the Saxon People's Party and not as a socialist or workers'-party candidate. In the first and only regular election to the NGC Reichstag, 31 August 1867, Bebel held his seat, and Liebknecht, who had lost his election in February, was picked by the voters of the nineteenth district of Saxony (Stolberg-Lugau-Schneeberg). In addition, another People's Party candidate won a seat in both elections, and a fourth representative of the party was also chosen in the August balloting. The ADAV also managed to elect a few candidates to this body.

#### Formation of the Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei (SDAP)

At the same time Bebel and Liebknecht were overseeing the politicization of the Verband deutscher Arbeitervereine, more and more members of the ADAV were growing dissatisfied with the directions being taken by their party. As president of the ADAV, J. B. von Schweitzer was even more autocratic and pro-Prussian than his predecessor Lassalle had been. He seems frequently and freely to have mixed party and personal finances; he employed high-handed tactics in combating those who opposed him, such as dissolving and reconstituting the party; and he moved the ADAV into increasingly close and open cooperation with the Prussian state and its conservative supporters. While all this was going on, he adroitly used his dual position as party president and owner/editor of the party's official organ, *Sozial-Demokrat*, to manipulate the legend of Lassalle, the workers' hostility to the liberals, and the ADAV's unique position as an exclusively working-class party. He was also regularly reelected president of the party by large majorities.

Although Schweitzer's conduct apparently had little detrimental impact on the overall growth of the ADAV, it did alienate many of the most able and politically conscious of the party's members. Men like Wilhelm Bracke, Theodore York, and August Geib resented

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Schweitzer's dictatorial exercise of power and feared his overtures to Bismarck and the conservatives. They felt that the ADAV was being used primarily for Schweitzer's personal aggrandizement rather than to advance the cause of the workers. Furthermore, they knew that the intemperate hostility that characterized relations between Schweitzer, on the one hand, and Bebel and Liebknecht, on the other, was not beneficial to the workers' movement.

Perhaps more than anything else, the continuation of the split in the German workers' movement caused distress in both camps. Almost from the beginning both sides made sporadic efforts to overcome the split, which all agreed vitiated the movement's potential. At first the apolitical posture and close ties with bourgeois liberals of the *Verband deutscher Arbeitervereine* worked against unity, but the politicization of this body by 1868 surmounted that obstacle. By that time only the personal antagonism of the leaders seemed to stand in the way, since cooperation between the members of the two groups occurred often. For instance, in 1867 the Leipzig branch of the ADAV wanted to run Liebknecht as their candidate in the elections to the North German Confederations' constituent assembly, but Schweitzer objected, and in 1868 the *Verband* contributed time and money to the electoral campaign of ADAV candidates York and Wilhelm Hasenclever. On several levels, then, impulses favoring unification existed and were strengthening in 1869.

Dissatisfaction among the anti-Schweitzer forces in the ADAV came to a head in the late spring of 1869 when Schweitzer tried to effect reunion with a splinter Lassallean faction without consulting the party membership or even the executive committee. Pushed to the brink by this arbitrary action, the dissidents, led by Bracke and York, made overtures to Bebel and Liebknecht concerning the possibility of uniting all German social-democratic worker groups into one body. Having reached a point in their experience with the *Verband* and the Saxon People's Party that made such a move obvious, and seizing an opportunity to strike out at Schweitzer, Bebel and Liebknecht readily agreed. On 17 July 1869, the formal call for a unity congress, signed by 66 members of the ADAV and 114 *Verband* members, was published in the *Verband* and Saxon People's Party paper edited by Liebknecht, the *Demokratische Wochenblatt*. The call was addressed to all German social democrats, including those in Switzerland and Austria; this was to be a unity congress on a grand scale.

What became the founding congress of the Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei (SDAP) met in Eisenach, Saxe-Weimar, from the seventh through the ninth of August 1869. After staving off an effort by

the followers of Schweitzer to disrupt the gathering, some 263 delegates, claiming rather outrageously to represent 155,486 organized workers, got down to the business of forming themselves into a party and adopting a program. Geib and Bebel were elected chairmen of the congress, and Michael Quick from Geneva and Heinrich Oberwinder from Vienna were the vice-chairmen. Johann Philipp Becker, the famous democratic revolutionary of 1848, who represented the First International at the congress, declined the honor of being elected president of the meeting.

Once the Schweitzerians had been dealt with, the congress displayed a remarkable measure of harmony. Paradoxically, probably the most significant person for the congress—J. B. von Schweitzer—was not even there. Certainly the strongest unifying force at work during the sessions was the desire to prevent the rise of another Schweitzer. Thus instead of electing a chairman of the party executive committee and having his party local form the rest of the committee, as the Verband had done, or electing a president with an executive committee taken from different geographical regions, as the ADAV did, the new party decided to try to eliminate the possibility of a personality cult altogether. It therefore chose not a man but a local party organization, leaving selection of the entire executive up to the local's members. Furthermore, when Leipzig emerged as the popular favorite for the site of the first executive committee, both Bebel and Liebknecht pointedly rejected the notion because they feared that they would be accused of dictatorial aspirations if their party local were so designated. Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel was selected as a compromise site.

Schweitzer was also a prominent factor in the congress's decision to exclude from executive committee membership anyone officially responsible for the content of the party organ. The president of the ADAV had quite effectively used his control of its newspaper to suppress internal dissent. When it came time to settle on a name for the new organization, Bebel argued in favor of *democratic socialist* rather than *social democratic* in part because the latter expression was so closely associated with Schweitzer as the title of his journal. Again and again during the course of the congress, Schweitzer and his ADAV were held up as models of what the new party should *not* be like.

Beyond this unifying opposition, the SDAP was the result of compromise between slightly different theoretical and political inclinations. The original program proposal was drawn up by Bracke, who relied heavily on the program Marx had provided for the First International. But when the Lassalleans at Eisenach insisted on adding a tenth practical demand, state support for the founding of cooperatives, little

der, speaking for Austria, and Liebknecht, speaking for Germany, asserted that inclusion of the word *republic* as a program goal would guarantee the immediate suppression of the party in both countries. Second, when it came time for Liebknecht, whose hostility to monarchy cannot be questioned, to choose a new name for the *Demokratische Wochenblatt* when it was converted to the SDAP's official organ, he chose *Volksstaat*. The first of these developments could have been a ploy to preserve party peace, but the second was not. There can be little doubt that the entire party understood what *Volksstaat* meant as the title of the party organ.

Finally, the extent of Lassallean influences in the new party must be noted. This is important to point out now, because the relative balance of Lassallean and Marxian influences is a highly debated issue in the history of German social democracy. In 1891, after the end of the outlaw period, the Gotha unification program of 1875 was subjected to severe criticism by the Marxist intellectuals of the party for the supposed concessions it had made to Lassalle's theories. Friedrich Engels even encouraged Karl Kautsky to publish Marx's previously suppressed "Critique of the Gotha Program" in the party's semiofficial Marxist journal, *Die neue Zeit*, in order to combat lingering Lassallean inclinations. But this entire debate is cast in a slightly different light when consideration is given to the significant role played by former Lassalleans at Eisenach, and when the inclusion of a plank calling for state support for cooperatives is noted. Although we have yet to see how significant these influences were in terms of party actions, they undeniably were present well before broad unification was finally achieved in 1875.

### The Franco-Prussian War and German Unification

On 19 July 1870, when the SDAP was not yet one year old, the government of Napoleon III of France, tricked by Bismarck's machinations, declared war on Prussia. The ensuing conflict was short, but while disastrous for France, it led directly to the final unification of Germany under Prussian hegemony in early 1871. Both the war and its consequences in Germany and France were to shape German social democracy for the next four decades.

For a short time the war aggravated the split within the German working-class movement. Most of the ADAV considered Napoleon to be the number one enemy of socialism on the continent, and since its members were inclined to be pro-Prussian anyway, they gave their enthusiastic support to the war. The SDAP, on the other hand, was

more ambivalent about the conflict. Bebel, for one, never swayed in his opposition to the war, and Liebknecht, after some brief initial hesitation, also was strongly opposed. Certainly neither man was a supporter of Napoleon, and both distrusted Bismarck's motives and feared a Prussian victory. Led by the Saxons, several SDAP local organizations agitated against the war. But the party executive committee in Braunschweig took a dim view of these activities and even threatened to try to force Liebknecht out of the *Volksstaat* editorship because of his stand. Bebel and Liebknecht were, however, the public figures of the party, and when the North German Confederation was called upon to authorize funds for the conflict, only they voted against the war credits; the Lassalleans in the NGC—Hasenclever, Mende, and Schweitzer—voted in favor, as did Fritzsche, who at that time was vacillating between the two socialist camps.

All this changed drastically on 1 September with the capture of Napoleon at Sedan and the declaration of the Third Republic two days later. The first event clearly converted what the Prussians and their supporters had called a defensive war into a war of aggression. The second event, because the republic was widely assumed to be a populist and truly representative government, made the cause of the Parisians the cause of international socialism and worker solidarity. The vote on the second war credits bill, 28 November, united all of the workers' representatives in opposition.

Needless to say, in a society already inclined to fear and distrust the organized workers' movement, the antiwar posture eventually assumed by both the ADAV and SDAP did not increase their popularity with officials and much of the public. No single event in the history of German social democracy did as much to create the image of lack of patriotism (*vaterlandlos*, literally, "without a fatherland") and opposition to the Reich (*reichsfeindlich*) as did the socialists' posture in 1870–1871. A large part of the intensity of antisocialist feeling in Imperial Germany derived from this stand and from the support socialists gave to the Third Republic. Arrests, suppression of newspapers and meetings, and general harassment were directed at the socialists as a result of the antiwar stand. In one of the most famous trials in the movement's history (the Leipzig *Hochverratsprozess*), Bebel and Liebknecht were sentenced to two years in prison for high treason, and numerous other editors and functionaries received terms ranging from a few weeks to two years. Thus did the relationship between German socialists and the new German state begin in less than propitious circumstances.

In the long run the creation of a unified German state dominated by Prussia was of even greater significance to German socialists than was

the impact of the Franco-Prussian War proper. Politically and socially the changes brought about by unification were important, but it was in the realm of economics that unification had the greatest impact on Germany and thus also on German social democracy. Rationalization of the tariff structure, standardization of weights, currency, and other measures, major expansion of markets, coordination of raw materials, and the demand created by a government committed to a powerful military and to the most advanced communications and transportations systems are only some of the factors that stimulated German economic development after unification. The period from 1871 to 1873, when a long and disruptive depression began, saw such an economic boom in the new empire that it was given a special name, the *Gründerjahre*—the era of the founding of countless new companies. This period was greatly stimulated by the intangible factor of human trust; the bankers, industrialists, and other entrepreneurs had faith in their new country, and they showed it by investing huge sums and reinvesting huge profits.

However, the other side of this coin was the rapid and steady growth of the urban population, especially in the form of industrial laborers and their families. Although Germany never had the huge industrial cities of the north of England or the industrialized portions of America, it did have a large number of medium-sized (one hundred thousand to five hundred thousand persons) industrial concentrations, especially in Saxony, the Rhineland, and the Ruhr district. And although Germany experienced less of the squalid and oppressed industrial masses that characterized nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Anglo-America, industrial laborers did not share equally with the bourgeoisie and landowners in the boom years and suffered more in the bust years. Where industrial populations grew up, so did the following of German social democracy, except in overwhelmingly Catholic areas of the south; for the most part, the social democrats were *the* party of the working masses in Imperial Germany.

German social democracy could not help but be influenced, even shaped, by the politics of the new Reich. Hoping to still popular unrest and to tap a conservative vein in the lower classes, Bismarck instituted general adult male suffrage for the North German Confederation and carried this over to the united Germany. Thus while most of the separate states preserved very restricted franchises well into the twentieth century, the Reichstag was elected on a much broader basis. This naturally meant that if the workers' movement was to participate actively in politics at all, the most fruitful field would be the Reichstag elections, even if this participation was only intended to be for propagandistic purposes.

As it turned out, for a number of reasons the desires of the social democrats had little to do with whether or not their elected Reichstag representatives could pursue effective reform. First of all, the Reichstag was largely an impotent body, at least for the first twenty-five or so years of the empire. Real power on the national level resided in the imperial government, military, and bureaucracy first, in the Prussian government and its adjuncts second, in the Bundesrat—or upper house—third, and last, on the bottom of the national ladder, was the Reichstag. In addition, in order to submit legislation, interpellate the government (which was in no way responsible to the representatives of the people), or conduct virtually any other official business in the Reichstag, a party's delegation had to have at least fifteen members. With the exception of the 1884–1887 legislative period, the social-democratic delegation was not large enough to submit business on its own until 1890, and it was rarely able to find members of other parties to support its proposals. Finally, even if the other hurdles were overcome, the chances of the socialists winning enough support from other parties to permit them to pass legislation were very slight from the beginning, and they declined as the socialist delegation grew in size.

The result of all this created a strange situation. General male suffrage on the Reich level seemed advanced and progressive, but the Reichstag so elected had almost no power; Liebknecht called it the fig leaf that covered German despotism. The socialists of both persuasions had few illusions about the influence of the Reichstag, but its mere existence and its franchise laws were too important and too attractive to ignore. With respect to the nonsocialist segments of society, Reichstag election campaigns were extremely useful for propaganda, and for the socialists themselves, the regular and impressive evidence of growth offered by the increasing vote and mandate count was powerful reinforcement. So influential were these circumstances that the basic organization of the party was to a great extent determined by the Reichstag electoral districts. A more detailed analysis of the political activities of the social democrats will be taken up in the next chapter.

### Socialist Unification

German national unity did not bring an immediate merger of the two socialist, working-class parties, but it did change the situation in certain crucial ways that made a merger much more likely. For one thing, the old dispute over the solution to the so-called German question was settled by the Prussian army. After 1866 the chance of a *grossdeutsch* solution was reduced tremendously; after 1870–1871 there was no

longer any chance that Austrian Germans would be incorporated into the new nation in the foreseeable future. Much as they might have disliked the way things had developed, the anti-Prussian, south German particularists of the SDAP had to recognize that a *kleindeutsch* solution was an accomplished fact.

National unification also made socialist unification more likely because the nature of the new state clarified class interests somewhat. For its part the ADAV suffered a serious loss of following when the upswing in grass-roots trade-union activity during the *Gründerjahre* strengthened the economic organizations of industrial workers. The formation in 1870 by the ADAV of the General German Workers' Support Union (Allgemeine deutsche Arbeiterunterstützungsverband) to aid striking and organizing workers did not improve the Lassalleans' following among trade unionists for long; the highly centralized, highly political character of this new body reduced its membership from over twenty-five thousand in 1870 to just over five thousand in 1874. On the other hand, when national unification made it less likely that the SDAP would continue to find as much support as previously among non-proletarian south German particularists, elements within the party that had been urging it to strengthen its exclusively working-class nature gained the upper hand. At each of its annual congresses from 1870 to 1874, the party passed increasingly stronger resolutions against support for or cooperation with nonworker forces. These moves stilled some of the earlier complaints from ADAVers about the SDAP's lack of class purity.

In the meantime the SDAP was building itself into a mature political party, developing the structural framework of the soon-to-be unified organization. At the 1870 Stuttgart congress, for instance, it voted to establish a special fund to pay travel and certain living expenses for its elected representatives during Reichstag sessions. Since these men were not paid by the government (until 1906 Reichstag representatives received no remuneration), it was difficult for individual workers to bear the expense of Reichstag duties. The establishment of this fund broadened the party's pool of candidates and thus facilitated the expansion of political activities. Funds were also established to support strikes and to help pay for fines incurred by party journalists and agitators when they ran afoul of the law. A central fund for election campaigns was also started, though primary responsibility for finance and campaign agitation remained with the regional and local organizations.

At its 1871 Dresden congress, the SDAP established the institution of the *Vertrauensmann* ("trusted person") to maintain a regular channel



between local and regional branches and the central party organizations. This system provided for the appointment by the executive committee, with local approval, of a trusted comrade charged with relaying party news both ways through the hierarchy. Local complaints, problems, and suggestions were to be passed on to higher levels by the *Vertrauensmann*, who was in turn responsible for distribution of party information and publications, for maintaining general channels of communication, and often for collecting dues. This system was to be invaluable for the party during the outlaw years (1878-1890), when sometimes the only contact between individual members and party officials was through the *Vertrauensmann*. Quite likely these people were responsible for the survival of a mass party under the antisocialist law. In 1873 the SDAP had 170 locals with *Vertrauensmänner*, up from 100 the year before; by 1874 this figure had grown to 226.

Further expansion of the SDAP in the years before final unification took place with the development of a local press. The promotion by the party of local newspapers was one of the most significant differences between the Eisenachers and the ADAV. When Schweitzer lost his Reichstag seat in 1871, he quit the Lassallean party, but his replacement as president and editor of the *Neue Sozialdemokrat*, Wilhelm Hasselmann, was every bit as jealous of his paper's privileged position (he even renamed the paper after assuming control) as his predecessor had been. In contrast, though the SDAP promoted its own central organ, the *Volksstaat*, it also strongly encouraged and gave financial support to local publications. Thus while the circulation of the *Volksstaat* grew from about 3,100 in 1870 to over 6,500 in 1873, greater growth was limited somewhat by the establishment of a vigorous local and regional press. In the early 1870s the SDAP had officially affiliated newspapers in Chemnitz, Braunschweig, Hamburg-Altona, Dresden, Nürnberg, Gotha, Hof, Munich, Mainz, Augsburg, Crimmitschau, Fürth, and Thuringia.

No issue occupied more time at SDAP congresses from 1870 to 1874 than debates about the party press. At the 1871 gathering local administrative commissions were established to oversee local publications, and at the next congress a committee was formed to review finances of both the central and local presses. In addition, the SDAP control commission regularly monitored the party's publications. A much more controversial matter, the extent to which the executive committee could and should regulate the content of the local press, generated extensive discussion at both the 1873 and 1874 congresses. At the first of these meetings, a fairly mild resolution calling for the local papers to be guided by the interests of the entire party in selecting material passed

after an effort to get much stronger central control failed by only two votes. But at Coburg in 1874, continued petty quarrels in the local press led the SDAP to pass two resolutions. These required executive committee approval for the founding of a local paper and limited the use of the party name and funds to such papers. The Eisenachers were prepared to see a major expansion of the journalistic undertakings, but they also were intent upon retaining some centralized control.

As the party's official organ, the *Volksstaat* was also a regular subject of concern at party congresses. The frequency of publication (expanded from two to three times per week in 1873), the tone adopted, the specific content, the techniques of distribution, and the overall purpose and function of the official organ were discussed at length. But despite some carping and minor complaints, such as one delegate's objection to the number of foreign words used in the paper, on the whole the *Volksstaat* received strong support at every congress.

Liebknecht's paper served as the spearhead of the SDAP's activities, and in this role it frequently attacked the Lassalleans and also carried serious theoretical discussions. When some party members felt these aspects were being exaggerated at the expense of more popular and topical articles, Wilhelm Bracke defended the journal. Making a clear distinction between the SDAP press and that of the ADAV, Bracke provided a definition of social-democratic journalism that was to hold true throughout the Imperial period. "The *Neue Sozialdemokrat* appeals to the basest passions; [it is] fanatical, stupid," he claimed. "The *Volksstaat* should build the spirit and character, and educate the workers for their political and social mission, while it offers them an understanding of present conditions."

These developments strengthened the internal organization of the SDAP at the same time that external factors seemed to be moving the two socialist parties toward one another. The problem of personal conflicts remained, however, and the departure of Schweitzer did little to alleviate these pressures. His successor Hasselmann was if anything even sharper and more extreme in his condemnation of Bebel and Liebknecht and their party. Groups from both sides attempted to bring the parties closer together, but while the SDAP majority was receptive, the ADAV continued to reject Eisenach advances.

In the new Reich, the SDAP's superior organization soon began to show results. Although in terms of membership and total votes received in elections the parties were nearly equal, the SDAP's Saxon stronghold and an effective use of campaign funds and propaganda were yielding more mandates. In the wake of the Franco-Prussian War, and with the lowest voter turnout in the history of the Second Reich (51 percent),

neither party fared well in the 1871 election—the ADAV elected no one, and the SDAP elected only Bebel and Schrapf. In the 1874 election the ADAV outpolled the SDAP by almost 10,000 votes (180,319 to 171,351) but managed to get only half the number of representatives. All six of the SDAP mandates were won in Saxony; two of the ADAV's came from Schleswig and one from the city of Düsseldorf.

While there was a growing conviction among some ADAV members that merger had to come because the SDAP was gradually showing itself to be a more effective political organization, another factor was also promoting unification of the two parties—the hostility of the government of the new Reich to socialists of all sorts. Similar hostility had existed before national unification, of course, but the opposition of the two parties to the war resulted in intensified governmental attacks. After unification Bismarck designated the socialists as one of the two major groups he considered enemies of the Reich—the other group so designated was the Catholics, who soon became the objects of the ill-fated *Kulturkampf*. Once Bismarck had thus labeled the workers' parties, socialist-baiting became a means for police and governmental bureaucrats to advance their careers. When coupled with a widespread bourgeois and official aversion to socialism, opportunism bred enthusiastic persecution.

When Bebel returned to Berlin in the spring of 1871, he found that his former landlady had been warned by the police not to let her room to this dangerous man again. Of course Bebel was soon in prison, as was Liebknecht. Later Carl Hirsch, who took over as editor of the *Volksstaat* in Liebknecht's absence, and Julius Vahlteich, who had moved into Hirsch's editorship of the Crimmitschau *Bürger- und Bauernfreund*, were both convicted of lese majesty. And in December 1871 the Leipzig police dissolved the Social-Democratic Arbeiterverein for violations of the association laws.

Saxony's officials were vigorous, but in Prussia, especially Berlin, the assault on the socialists was even more intense. It began in earnest in mid-1873 and was directed against trade-union organizations that were not specifically socialist as well as against the parties themselves. Bismarck operated at the larger level, proposing new laws to prohibit strikes and to limit further freedom of the press; on the smaller level, the Prussian public prosecutor, Hermann v. Tessenlof, pursued the socialists on violations of restrictive press, speech, and association laws. Because it was stronger in Berlin than was the SDAP, the ADAV bore the brunt of Tessenlof's attack. In 1874, 104 prosecutions netted eighty-seven Lassalleans a total of almost twenty years in prison, and in that same year both the Berlin carpenters' union and the Berlin masons'

union were banned. ADAV and SDAP organizations were also prohibited by the police in Frankfurt a.M., Hanover, Königsberg, Munich, Nürnberg, Erlangen, Hof, and elsewhere.

This persecution increased the likelihood of socialist unification in two ways. First, many members of the SDAP had long been suspicious of the ADAV because it seemed specially favored by the Prussian police; obviously, after 1874 that suspicion could no longer be justified. Second, many Lassalleans had opposed unification because they did not want to give up their strong local organizations. Now that the Prussian police had destroyed most of the local power bases of prominent Lassalleans, they turned to unification with the SDAP as a means of survival. By late 1874 various leading figures in the ADAV were making overtures to Bebel and Liebknecht about unification; the funeral of Theodore York in early January 1875 provided the occasion for an impressive show of unity; and in mid-February, a unity commission representing both parties met in Gotha. The ground was thus prepared for the unity congress held in that city from 22 to 27 May 1875.

Approximately twenty-five thousand members were represented at Gotha by nearly 130 delegates with a roughly sixty-forty split in favor of the ADAV. The new party that was formed, the Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands (SADP), was an amalgamation of the two old parties in which the contributions of each were clearly recognizable. The party program adopted at Gotha was primarily Lassallean—the iron law of wages, “one reactionary mass” (the notion that all other classes formed a solid bloc in opposition to the workers), and state-financed producers’ cooperatives were included, but an explicit tie with the trade unions was not. Few concessions to the Eisenachers’ point of view were won by its backers, although Liebknecht did manage to win a much stronger commitment to working-class internationalism than the original program draft had included.

Judged by its program, the new party was a victory for the ADAV, and this was certainly the evaluation of Marx and Engels, who were sitting in England. In fact, the two “old ones,” as they were called in party circles, had tried to forestall the program by sending severe criticisms of the draft to Bebel, Liebknecht, Bracke, and others in the SDAP with whom they had some influence. Ever jealous of their old nemesis Lassalle, and of what they considered their special relationship with the German workers’ movement, Marx and Engels denounced the new program as confused, state-socialistic, and too great a concession for the unity even they considered necessary. Although Marx’s criticism is now more famous (and will be discussed in a later chapter), Engels too sent detailed commentary to Bebel and Liebknecht. Attack-

ing the notion of "one reactionary mass," the iron law of wages (with its implicit anti-trade unionism), the concept of a free people's state, and many other aspects of the program, Engels predicted that unity on this basis would not last a year.

Bebel and Liebknecht were inclined to agree with the substance of this criticism, but they drew markedly different conclusions about what had happened at Gotha. Liebknecht reported to Engels that it would be unity on this basis or no unity at all, and that the power of the Lassalleans would soon be greatly diminished. For his part Bebel was privately annoyed with the harsh stand of the "old ones," but in his letters to them he tried to quiet their fears by speaking confidently of his ability to make of the new party exactly what he and Liebknecht, and presumably Marx and Engels also, wanted. Given the vigor of the criticism from England, Bebel's remarkable self-assurance is somewhat surprising.

But Bebel was familiar with the organization of the new party in a way that Marx and Engels were not, and he may have had more insight into the relationship between the program and the organization as well. In terms of organization, the new party was practically identical with the SDAP. The dictatorial presidency of the ADAV was gone, replaced by a central executive (now called the *Vorstand*) with a measure of effective control over strong locals. Of equal significance was the preservation and even strengthening of the movement's commitment to a local press. Finally, under the new organizational rules, the annual congresses were supreme, and controls on the executive committee were aimed at making domination by an individual very difficult. Convinced that his side could win out over the Lassalleans under these conditions, Bebel was satisfied that the programmatic concessions were insignificant. Although the myth of Lassalle would remain a potent force in the movement for years to come, Bebel was to be proven correct in the decades that followed. The new SAPD and its successor in 1891, the SPD, were to be much more like the SDAP than the ADAV.

### The Outlaw Period

The newly unified party was not given much time to test its strength before being confronted by its most serious crisis prior to World War I. The repression that had driven the two old parties together continued after unification, with the Prussian government dissolving the SAPD in early 1876. This move forced the party to reorganize by dropping the national *Vorstand* and replacing it with a central election committee chosen from the Hamburg area. The party congresses held in 1876 and

1877 were called general socialist meetings so that the organization would not appear to be a national body with local branches. The banning in Prussia had been based on violation of the 1850 association law, which prohibited such groups.

Although hampered by this turn of events, the new movement continued to grow. In 1876 it had twenty-three local papers, in 1877 forty-one, and in 1878 forty-seven. One year after unification, the *Neue Sozialdemokrat* and the *Volksstaat* merged to form the *Vorwärts* as the party's central organ; a literary journal, *Die neue Welt*, and a theoretical journal, *Die Zukunft*, were also founded at this time. Furthermore, in the 1877 Reichstag elections, the first following party unification, the socialists increased their vote count to 493,288 or 9.1 percent (from a combined total of 351,952 or 6.8 percent in 1874) and their mandates from nine to twelve, while running candidates in some 175 districts. But in fact this growth virtually guaranteed even more severe repression.

The specific events that gave Bismarck an excuse to introduce national antisocialist legislation were simple enough: two unsuccessful attempts on the life of old King Wilhelm, one by Max Hödel on 11 May 1878, and one by Karl Nobiling on 2 June. Bismarck's motives were, however, a little more complicated, since the connection between these two events and the socialists was not clear, and because Bismarck probably already had the weapons necessary to combat the socialists. But the chancellor was not after the socialists alone; he also saw his chance to strike a blow against his old allies and new enemies, the National Liberals. While the latter had been staunch enough in their support for the new Reich, Bismarck found them much less cooperative once he started to seek protective tariff laws. His plan, therefore, after the first assassination attempt, was to offer a repressive exceptional law that many of the National Liberals could not support. He hoped thus to gain ammunition for future attacks. His bill was promptly introduced in late May and promptly defeated. Bismarck had apparently failed to achieve his short-range goal and would presumably have to wait to see if he had managed any longer-term gains.

Of course, circumstances frequently play into the hands of the aggressive and opportunistic. When the second attempt on the king's life was made, Bismarck lost no time. On 11 June he convinced the Bundesrat to dissolve the Reichstag; from then until the elections on 30 July, he mounted a campaign against the socialists, as enemies of the Reich, and the National Liberals, as coddlers of the enemies of the Reich. While his assault was a fabric of lies, innuendoes, and distortions, the results were satisfying for the Iron Chancellor. Although the socialists suffered only minor losses—3 fewer mandates and about 56,000 fewer votes—the

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National Liberals were hit hard. Their votes declined by only a little over 10 percent, but they lost 28 mandates, giving them a total of only 99. At the same time the two most conservative, antisocialistic parties increased their representation to 115 from 98. Largely as a result of this shift, Bismarck had a more pliable Reichstag for a second vote on the antisocialist law, which passed 221 to 149 on 19 October 1878. Renewed four times, the legislation made outlaws of the socialists for twelve years, from 21 October 1878 until 30 September 1890.

These years form an obvious and distinct block in the history of the movement, and during them the party acquired characteristics that it would retain for many years to come. It grew from a despised sect into the Reich's largest party, now feared and despised; it acquired a radical, quasi-Marxian ideology that became its most noted feature; the leaders with personal ties to the old Lassallean movement faded from the scene, though the same cannot be said of Lassalleanism; and its political relationship to the new Reich took on an ambivalent quality as its revolutionary commitment did battle with the disturbing realities of Imperial Germany. But above all else the outlaw period left the German social-democratic movement with a heroic legacy that would inspire solidarity and pride while at the same time it masked less heroic and more restrictive developments.

By twentieth-century standards of state-inspired repression and terror, the "law against the publicly dangerous endeavors of social democracy," as it was formally named, was a mild bit of legislation. Under it socialists and their fellow travelers were not tortured and massacred, nor did they suffer mass relocation, though in many cases socialists were deprived of their livelihoods (especially those who had worked for party enterprises) and driven from their homes (under the minor stage of siege provisions of the law). However, German socialists in the years 1878 to 1890 did not judge the antisocialist law by twentieth-century standards, but by their own, more civilized experience. By those standards it was a very harsh law indeed.

The law gave a centrally designated police authority of each federal state the right to dissolve all associations, meetings, public festivities and processions, and publications of every kind "which aim at the overthrow of the existing political and social order through social-democratic, socialistic, or communistic endeavors," and to seize property and assets of such undertakings. Individuals who participated in any prohibited activity were subject to fines of up to five hundred marks or three months imprisonment. Initiators and leaders of such activities were to be imprisoned for not less than one month or more than one year, as were those who provided a place of assembly; the latter could

also be deprived of their right to continue in their businesses. Under certain circumstances the right of residence could be restricted and foreigners expelled (this was the minor state of siege). Finally, while appeal of certain portions of the law was allowed, the appeal commission was elected by the Bundesrat and its chairman was selected by the kaiser.

Interpretation of what constituted dangerous "social-democratic, socialistic, or communistic endeavors" was left up to the administering authorities, so political ambitions, local conditions, and caprice were often important. Application of the law tended to wax and wane, but on the whole very strict interpretations were applied. Not only were party organizations proper outlawed, but also trade unions with even the faintest socialist connections, cultural and exercise clubs, workers' lending libraries, consumer cooperatives, and on occasion even taverns and cafes popular with workers were shut down by overzealous police officials. By 30 June 1879, 127 periodical and 287 nonperiodical publications had been suppressed, including all the party's official papers. During the period of "mild practice," some so-called "colorless" papers were allowed to appear, but only if they were extremely cautious.

People caught violating the law had the right to trial, but if the authorities did not like the verdicts, the charges could be changed slightly and the cases tried elsewhere. This is what happened in the most famous trial under the law, which took place in Freiburg in July 1886. Originally Ignaz Auer, Bebel, J. H. W. Dietz, Karl Frohme, Georg von Vollmar, Louis Viereck, and others had been charged for participating in the party's 1883 Copenhagen congress, but a Chemnitz court failed to convict them. The men were then convicted in Freiburg when the authorities claimed that their association with the *Sozialdemokrat*, which was published in Zurich, was illegal. If police and state officials pushed hard enough, the terms of the law were sufficiently vague to secure conviction somewhere, somehow.

The antisocialist law had an immediate and drastic impact on the SAPD. Hoping to avoid the extremes of persecution, the Hamburg central election committee dissolved of its own accord, and those state, regional, and local bodies that did not follow suit were soon taken care of by the police. Coupled with the loss of its entire press, these steps could have spelled the prompt demise of the party but for one loophole in the legislation—socialists were not prohibited from running for and holding Reichstag and state diet seats nor from holding "meetings called for the purposes of an announced election" to these bodies. Under these conditions leadership of the party quickly devolved upon the socialists' Reichstag Fraktion, a fait accompli ratified at the 1880 Wyden congress



of the party. Bismarck tried on several occasions to get the antisocialist law expanded to include prohibition of socialists in the Reichstag, but the legislators refused to cooperate and were careful to guard their own, even if they were socialists.

This protected status for parliamentary representatives resulted in an exaggeration of their significance and influence in the party that was not proportionate to their support among the rank and file. Prior to the outlaw period, being a Reichstag representative had usually meant that a man had proven himself an able party activist first; people were usually selected by the party to run for the Reichstag because the membership trusted and respected them. But under the altered organization forced on the party by the antisocialist law, the Reichstag representatives, who were, of course, elected by the voters of their districts and not by the party, were not directly subjected to the will of the party membership, and thus did not necessarily accurately reflect trends and developments within the party. Largely because they had to appeal beyond party membership in order to get elected, the Reichstag representatives tended to be more conservative than the membership as a whole. To be a member of the socialist party, participate in its illegal activities, and even associate publicly with known socialists required considerably more consciousness and commitment than did a simple vote for a socialist candidate.

While the disparity between the Reichstag representatives of the outlaw period and the party as a whole can be overdrawn—the representatives were usually special targets of police and court harassment, and thus they too had to be men of some courage and conviction—it did give rise to conflicts within party circles. Two especially knotty problems involved the representatives' activities in the Reichstag and the relationship between the domestic party and the exiled official party organ, the *Sozialdemokrat*. For the tastes of the more radical elements of the party, the Reichstag representatives were too willing to compromise with the hated Bismarckian Reich, while the moderates in the Reichstag Fraktion felt that the radicals who dominated the *Sozialdemokrat* were irresponsible both in the extremity of their language and in refusing to accept Fraktion members as the party leaders and policy makers.

The *Sozialdemokrat* was founded in late 1879, after it became apparent that it would be necessary for the party to have some sort of central mouthpiece if it were to hold together. The original editorial board consisted of Bebel, Fritzsche, and Liebknecht, which in practical terms meant that Bebel dominated, since he almost always could win

Liebknrecht's support. From the very beginning, under the paper's first editor, Georg von Vollmar, the *Sozialdemokrat*, safely in exile in Zurich, adopted a radical, often strident tone that worried the moderate members of the Reichstag Fraktion. In early 1881 the *Sozialdemokrat* became even more firmly radical when Bebel's handpicked candidate, Eduard Bernstein, replaced Vollmar as editor. Since the moderates dominated the Fraktion, especially after Bebel temporarily lost his seat, the stage was set for serious conflicts between the two major branches of the party.

Twice the moderates were sufficiently distressed by the tone and positions of the *Sozialdemokrat* to force confrontations. In August 1882 a special conference was held in Zurich at which the moderates—including a majority of the Fraktion and Auer and Viereck—tried to assert their control over the paper. Three years later, after Bernstein had engineered a particularly sharp attack on the moderate Fraktion members' support for Bismarck's steamship subsidy bill, a party split seemed imminent. But on both occasions, despite the apparent strength of their position, the moderates were unable to gain the upper hand. A tactical retreat by the radicals in 1882, when they promised to behave themselves from then on, and a nearly complete rout of the moderates in 1885, left Bebel and his supporters in firm control of the *Sozialdemokrat* and ultimately of the party. Ironically, in 1886 the *Sozialdemokrat* announced to its readers that it was voluntarily abandoning its status as official party organ because so many socialists were being convicted on the basis of their association with the paper. This had been one of the moderates' fears all along.

Five circumstances help explain the victory of the radicals over the moderates during the outlaw period. First, Bebel was a radical; as a speaker, a political manipulator, and an aggressive leader, he was unchallenged in the entire party. Second, the moderates, while mostly trustworthy and dedicated, were not men of great ability; none had leadership qualities that could begin to match Bebel's. Only Auer was above average, and he gradually came more under Bebel's influence. Third, many men who might have more effectively led the moderate forces either left the movement, emigrated, or died; this was particularly true of former Lassalleans. Hasselmann never reconciled himself to unification, and eventually he ended up as an anarchist critic of social democracy. Emil Reinders died in 1879, Wilhelm Bracke in 1880. Fritzsche and Vahlteich became so discouraged with developments in Germany that they emigrated to the United States after the 1881 elections. In 1887 Hasenclever was hospitalized, and in 1889 he died;

Max Keyser died in March 1888. Thus the moderates, never oversupplied with effective leadership, lost many of their most prominent figures.

The fourth significant factor in the radicals' victory is less concrete than the first three, but no less important. During the course of the outlaw years, Marxism advanced considerably as the major ideology of German social democracy. The party's two most skilled young theoreticians, Eduard Bernstein and Karl Kautsky, emerged during the early 1880s as consistent Marxists, largely under the influence of Engels' *Anti-Dühring*. Bernstein had a forum in the *Sozialdemokrat*, and after 1883 Kautsky was editor of a theoretical journal, *Die neue Zeit*, published in Stuttgart. More importantly, Bebel too developed a systematic Marxian view during these years. Thus when confronting opponents within the party, most of whom lacked a rigorous ideological commitment, Bebel and the radicals could deal from strength. After a victorious run-in with one dissident group, Bebel summarized this advantage by commenting to Engels: "The opposition was dead from the moment it showed that it did not know what it wanted."

Finally, the most important element in the clear domination by the radicals by 1887 was the antisocialist law itself and the vigorous prosecution of socialists, moderates, and radicals alike under it. As a means of permanent suppression of the socialists, Bismarck's tactics could hardly have been more ill-conceived (it should be noted, however, that as a technique to emasculate feeble German liberalism, the antisocialist law was quite effective). Although many of the moderates were willing to accept the new Reich if only certain limited economic and social reforms could be made, Bismarck and his conservative allies continued to tar the moderates with the same brush as they did the radicals. When coupled with the heroic sense of solidarity engendered by governmental oppression, the indiscriminate assaults on all socialists made it very difficult for the moderates to convince the rank and file that moderation was the way.

For in the end the most important legacy of the outlaw period for German social democracy was this sense of heroism, of struggle against a mighty and malevolent foe. Though socialist groups were initially all but wiped out by the police, illegal temporary and even some permanent organizations gradually emerged. In 1881 an elaborate illegal socialist election organization was crushed by the police. But during the same decade, Bremen, Brunswick, Barmen, Berlin, Hamburg, and eventually every larger concentration of social democrats developed similar organizations. By the late years of the law, the Hamburg organization included five or six thousand socialists. In the fall of 1889, regional party

conferences were even dared in Saxony, Rhineland-Westphalia, Baden, Hesse, and Silesia. While in part these activities may testify to the inefficiency of the police authorities, they are much more monuments to the courage and determination of thousands of individual socialists.

The most famous and inspiring activity of the outlawed socialists was the distribution system set up to smuggle the *Sozialdemokrat* into Germany from Switzerland. Supervised and elaborated by the man who came to be called the "red postmaster," Julius Motteler (1836-1908), this system used some 110 *Vertrauensmänner* to receive and distribute packets of issues smuggled into the country by various means. Participation in this system was a dangerous business since detection meant certain arrest and detention. But Motteler, a cantankerous, demanding, and even petty man, ran a highly organized and very effective network of agents. By the last years of the antisocialist law, as many as eleven thousand copies of the paper penetrated Germany, and for some numbers the printing plates themselves were smuggled into the country to be run off by sympathetic and daring socialist printers. Motteler was also head of a security system that ferreted out police spies and agents provocateurs in the movement, denouncing them to party comrades in the columns of the *Sozialdemokrat*.

Without much more effective and brutal suppression, this sort of commitment could not have been stopped. On the other hand, sweeping moves against trade unions, cooperatives, social clubs, and other bodies with only tangential connections with the socialists taught hundreds of thousands of German workers to view the socialists as their only true friends. The party suffered minor reverses at the polls in the first two elections under the antisocialist law, but by the third, 1884, it won more than half a million votes, and at the fourth, three years later, it passed three quarters of a million. In the last election under the law, 1890, when its renewal had already been rejected, the socialists stunned themselves and the rest of the country by winning the largest vote of all the parties—1,427,298! In the same election Bismarck lost not only his Reichstag majority but also the chancellorship. Although the two events were not directly related, the new kaiser, Wilhelm II, accepted the Iron Chancellor's resignation in March after it had become clear that they had irreconcilable differences, not the least of which centered on attitudes toward the workers of the nation. With the passing of their old archenemy, and firmly in the hands of Bebel and his radical supporters, the socialists could face the future with optimism.

The chapters that follow will investigate the nature of German social democracy as it confidently faced the Reich. In four crucial areas—politics, trade-union relations, press and bureaucracy, and theory—the

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party grew and grew until it was the largest and most impressive working-class, socialist party the world had ever known. Admired in some circles and feared in others, Germany's socialists seemed by the early nineties to have started on an inexorable march toward conquest of political power in Germany and, in cooperation with the other socialist parties of the Second International, appeared to be at the forefront of the equally irresistible rise of socialism the world over. But things were not quite what they seemed; the very success of the party was breeding contradictions and undermining the apparent radical convictions of Germany's socialists. By 1914 these developments were to make the SPD's greatest challenge, World War I, a divisive and ultimately a disastrous experience.

## 2 / The Party and the Reich

Politics was the midwife of German social democracy; political activities were of necessity the central and almost exclusive focus of the party during the outlaw years, and running and electing its own candidates continued to be a major, perhaps the major, concern of the SPD after 1890. For better or worse, much of the party and the world judged German social democracy by its successes and failures at the ballot box. Though it developed a massive press and bureaucracy, had an extensive array of social and cultural associations, and produced a staggering volume of theoretical works, German social democracy's most effective claim to leadership among German workers and in the international socialist movement was based on the steady increase in the number of votes it received and the number of representatives it elected on the national level.

To a certain extent the political emphasis of the SPD was dictated by circumstance. For a long time, if the party was to be politically active at all, Reichstag elections were about the only ones in which it had much chance for success. Most of the individual states in Imperial Germany had very restrictive franchises based on property and age qualifications or weighted systems of voting that greatly favored the wealthy. On the Reich level, however, universal male suffrage was the rule—any male German citizen at least twenty-five years old and not incarcerated or institutionalized could vote in Reichstag elections. In addition, Reichstag elections were in theory secret, and in some areas, Prussia for instance, secret ballots were not used in state-level elections. Thus in Reichstag elections workers often could cast their ballots for social-democratic candidates with less fear of reprisal than they could in state and local elections.

Furthermore, the SPD was by origin, inclination, and theory a democratic party, i.e., it was committed to the notion that all adult citizens—male and female—should have a determining voice in their

own government. Generally the party was republican, but even the increasing number within it who would have been content with a constitutional monarchy assumed that eventually real political power would reside in a popularly elected representative body. Thus, when given the opportunity to compete in elections for such an assembly, even one that had very little influence on the policies of the nation, the German social democrats had to participate. Some did so because the elections had propaganda value and some because they hoped the Reichstag would become politically effective, but most did so without a great deal of theorizing and reflection, simply because the Reichstag was there; not participating would have required far more theoretical justification. The SPD and its predecessors were political parties, and in Imperial Germany politics was to a great extent Reichstag elections.

The constituency of the SPD was the industrial working class of Germany and any other voters who cared to support a party that claimed to be the party of the workers. With some large and obvious exceptions, namely in Catholic regions, the social-democratic movement steadily won the support of the industrial workers, and by 1890 it was the largest party in the Reich. It received more than two million votes in the 1893 election, over three million in 1903 and 1907, and over four million in 1912; only one other party ever exceeded two million votes, the Center in 1907. The major strongholds of the SPD were districts that were urban (i.e., cities larger than two thousand residents), industrial, and not Catholic. All three of Hamburg's electoral districts were solidly social democratic from 1890 on; five of the six Berlin districts were virtually solid from 1893 on (2 Berlin had a left-liberal representative for a few months in 1898-1899, and 5 Berlin elected a left liberal in 1898); and Saxony's twenty-three-person Reichstag delegation included twenty-two socialists in 1903, fell to eight in 1907, but rose back to nineteen in 1912. By contrast, the SPD never won a seat in the ten overwhelmingly agrarian and rural districts of Posen, and won only one (3 Königsberg, the single urban district) of seventeen seats in rural east Prussia.

### The Reichstag Electoral System and the SPD

When the Reich was founded, 382 Reichstag districts were designated, each theoretically having a population of about one hundred thousand (that is, about twenty to twenty-two thousand voters). In 1873, 15 more districts were added for Alsace and Lorraine, and this total of 397 was preserved until the end of the Reich in 1918. Although

Germany's population almost doubled between 1871 and 1914, no more Reichstag districts were ever added, and the existing 397 were never reapportioned. Elections were scheduled every three years beginning in 1871 and every five years after 1893. Special general elections were held if the Reichstag was dissolved with the approval of the upper house, the Bundesrat; this happened twice, in 1878 and 1907. Thirteen elections were held between 1871 and 1912, with World War I delaying those that should have been held in 1917.

Election required an absolute majority of valid ballots cast. If no single candidate got a clear majority on the first ballot, the two highest vote getters met in a runoff election (*Stichwahl*). Since five major parties—the socialists, the conservatives, the National Liberals, the Center, and various left-liberal alignments—and an abundance of smaller parties participated in elections, a great many seats were not won on the first ballot. In 1912 runoff elections were required in 191 of the 397 districts. The large number of parties and the religious, economic, and nationalistic divisions of Germany tended to favor sectional parties that concentrated their energies where special electorates favored victory. Only the SPD was a truly national party in geographical terms, running candidates in 385 or more districts from 1893 on; the National Liberals ran candidates in the second largest number of districts, 224 in 1912.

In one way or another almost all of these major features of the electoral system of Imperial Germany worked against the SPD. First of all, the original apportionment of the 397 districts was not equitable. The smallest had a population under 35,000, and the largest had more than 200,000. In most cases agrarian, conservatively inclined areas were significantly overrepresented, while urban areas, particularly those with large concentrations of industrial workers, were grossly underrepresented. This disparity was greatly exaggerated after 1871, for Germany's population grew rapidly, and its industrial cities grew even more rapidly. Because the strongholds of the SPD were urban, industrial centers, this rapid growth and lack of reapportionment meant that it had to win far more votes in its districts than nonsocialists did in theirs.

Although the actual figures varied from election to election depending on specific circumstances, the SPD routinely had to double or triple the national average of votes per mandate in order to win seats in the Reichstag. By 1912 the malapportionment of seats had reached staggering levels; eleven districts had more than 120,000 voters each, and the largest district, 10 Potsdam (Teltow), had a population of well over one million with about 340,000 voters. In that year the four largest districts



together had more votes than the fifty smallest combined (each of which had fewer than 21,000 eligible voters). The SPD won three of the four largest, but also only three of the fifty smallest.

The multiplicity of parties also worked against the socialists, primarily because of the proliferation of liberal, progressive, and populist bourgeois parties that cut into SPD support among workers and liberal bourgeois voters. As discussed in chapter one, the social-democratic movement originated as a workers' split with the liberals, and to a certain extent it continued to grow by the same means. The party's expansion during the Imperial period was in part a gradual but steady process of winning workers away from liberals, of the development of working-class consciousness. But the persistent appeal of various left-of-center bourgeois parties to voters who might otherwise have supported the SPD prevented the social-democratic party from growing even larger than it did. Almost 75 percent of the runoff elections that the social democrats won in the thirteen elections of the Second Reich pitted them against one or another of the liberal, progressive, or populist bourgeois parties. This was because to a great extent they all appealed to similar voters in certain regions.

Nevertheless, this open competition among the socialist and various left bourgeois parties was not characteristic of a great many Reichstag elections in the Imperial era. The existence of several parties with effective regional and particularist appeals meant that in over one hundred districts, the party of the representative was the same in every Reichstag period or in every period but one. Led by the Catholic confessional party, the Center, with eighty virtually safe seats (forty-nine never lost, thirty-one lost only once), and the Center's regional adjunct, the Polish party, with thirteen (twelve never lost, one lost only once), these parties limited the further expansion of socialist victories. This is particularly true in the south of Germany and in the Rhineland, where large concentrations of industrial workers remained immune to the socialist appeal because of their religious ties to the Center party.

But the Center was by no means invulnerable, nor was it a dynamic, growing threat to the expansion of the SPD. The Catholic party generally won only districts that were overwhelmingly Catholic. In districts that were as much as 40- to 50-percent Catholic, the Center was sometimes not even a political force, as in 11 Baden (Mannheim), which was over 40-percent Catholic and never had a Center representative. And even in overwhelmingly Catholic districts like 2 Oberbayern (Munich II), which was almost 90-percent Catholic, the working-class nature of the electorate put it solidly in the socialist camp after 1890.

The Center was steady but not an expanding party of the future. In the second Reichstag election, 1874, it won 91 districts, grew slowly to a high of 106 in 1890 (plus 37 affiliated representatives), and then declined to only 90 seats in 1912 (plus 35 affiliated representatives). The SPD managed to win two of the Catholic's formerly solid seats in 1912 (4 Düsseldorf and 1 Cologne) as well as three new seats in predominantly Catholic Alsace-Lorraine (districts 3, 4, and 14).

Finally, because the SPD was the only truly national party in the country, its efficiency in Reichstag elections was undoubtedly reduced. While this factor was certainly less important than the inequitable distribution of electoral districts, it revealed much about the party's attitude toward participating in elections and winning mandates. Despite their somewhat ambivalent attitude toward the Reichstag, especially during the outlaw period, the social democrats were consistent in their approach to elections.

It was official party doctrine, reiterated at almost every party congress, that all local organizations that possibly could had to run candidates in Reichstag elections. Prospects for victory did not significantly determine whether or not a local put up a candidate; only the financial and organizational demands of such a campaign were acceptable criteria. To this extent the SPD was primarily concerned with the propaganda value of elections rather than with winning mandates.

Thus able candidates often ran in many districts simultaneously, with no hope of winning or desire to win all of them. In 1907 Hugo Haase was the SPD candidate in the third, fifth, and tenth districts of Königsberg and in the fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh districts of Gumbinnen without winning a mandate. The party consistently ran candidates in overwhelmingly rural, Catholic, and/or conservative districts in which it had practically no chance of winning. It did so simply to spread the word to the masses, even to the reluctant, unhearing, and scornful masses.

Within this larger framework of participating in elections in order to make propaganda, the SPD also pursued a more calculating policy of winning seats. While the major burden of financing and running campaigns fell on the local organizations, the central party election committee often contributed speakers and money to districts that seemed ripe for conquest. For instance, in 1903 Otto Braun ran for the SPD in six Königsberg Reichstag districts, collecting a total of over 15,000 votes, but winning no mandates (although he did gain a runoff in 1 Königsberg, only to lose to a Conservative candidate). The national party made a considerable effort in 1 Königsberg while making virtually no contribution to the campaigns in 6, 7, 8, or 9 Königsberg, where Braun won only

228, 706, 1,043, and 222 votes respectively. In 4 Königsberg a modest SPD effort yielded Braun 7,599 of over 18,000 votes in a losing effort.

By the same token SPD Reichstag representatives who were particularly popular occasionally moved from safe socialist districts to run in areas where the party thought it could win a new seat with a strong candidate. August Bebel, certainly the SPD's strongest candidate on the national level, represented 1 Hamburg from 1883 to 1893 and from 1898 until his death in 1913. He won the seat in 1893 too but gave it up after also winning a new seat for the socialists, 8 Alsace-Lorraine. Bebel chose the latter because it was reasonably certain that another socialist could win the by-election in Hamburg, while the prospect of this happening in Alsace-Lorraine was less likely. In the Hamburg by-election the socialist Hermann Molkenbuhr did win by a considerable margin, and the SPD kept its second seat from Alsace-Lorraine as well.

So the ambivalent and ambiguous feelings of the SPD about the nature and function of the Reichstag, which will be discussed below, both shaped and reflected an ambiguous election practice. Much of the ambiguity was generated by the nature of the electoral and political systems themselves. Universal male suffrage appealed powerfully to the democratic strains of the party, and this more than anything else accounts for the continued and growing strength of moderate and revisionist social democrats. On the other hand, the maldistribution of districts and the relative impotence of the Reichstag fed the forces in the party that were hostile to the Bismarckian Reich; coupled with the growth of industry and working-class consciousness, these political factors ensured the persistence of a more radical element within the party. If the Wilhelmian SPD seems a curious collection of socialists, from obvious nationalists and compromisers to outspoken internationalists and revolutionaries, the ambiguous political structure of the era helps explain why.

### **The SPD and Reichstag Elections**

The general nature of the Reichstag electoral system had a good deal to do with the political activities of German social democracy, but the issues and circumstances of individual elections usually determined the specific approach of the party to each campaign. Of the thirteen elections held between 1871 and 1912, at least seven deserve closer attention in order to complete the picture of the SPD's relationship to Reichstag elections. In the 1878, 1887, and 1907 elections, the socialists suffered reverses in what was otherwise a steady increase in the size of their Reichstag delegation, though on only one of these occasions, 1878,

and also in 1881, did the party lose votes compared to the previous election; these elections exposed the vulnerability and weaknesses of the party. In 1884, 1890, 1903, and 1912, social democracy grew in votes and mandates in ways that revealed the strengths and potentials of the movement.

Socialist difficulties in the 1878 election are easy enough to explain. That campaign was conducted in an atmosphere of widespread and intense national fear of the socialists and sympathy for the recently assaulted old kaiser, and under the careful orchestration of Bismarck, these emotions yielded the desired results. Similarly, the election of 1881, at least as far as the socialists were concerned, was dominated by the antisocialist fervor aroused and used by Bismarck. Perhaps a more remarkable fact than the decline of socialist votes in these two elections was the survival of the party at all. In 1878 over 400,000 and in 1881 over 300,000 voters still favored the "dangerous tendencies" of the socialist party. An impressive measure of the party's ability to respond to and reorganize under the restrictive antisocialist law was its winning more mandates (twelve) with fewer votes in 1881 than in 1878 (see table 1). The year 1881 also marked the low point in the decline of workers' wages during the bust years that followed the *Gründerjahre* boom. Typically the socialists did less well at the ballot box when times were hard for the workers than they did when times were good.

By 1884 conditions in Germany brought about a striking change in the fortunes of the socialists and the posture of the government. First of all, the period of "mild practice" had begun in late 1883, and the party's activities were somewhat freer of governmental harassment than in the two previous campaigns. This greater freedom combined with a slight economic upswing by 1884 to swell the following of the social democrats considerably. Second, in 1884 Bismarck was after the left liberals more than the socialists because he was in the midst of his campaign to shift Germany away from greater free trade and toward protective tariffs, a move which the left liberals opposed. Like most able opportunist politicians, Bismarck was not one to let long-term grudges and enmities interfere with possible short-term gains. Such considerations on his part led to the bizarre situation in which the Iron Chancellor personally endorsed the socialist Adolf Sabor in a runoff election against the populist candidate Leopold Sonnemann in Frankfurt am Main (6 Wiesbaden). Sabor won the runoff, and the socialists held this seat in every succeeding election except 1907.

The results of the 1884 election (over five hundred thousand votes and twenty-four mandates) put the social democrats back on the track of steady and sometimes spectacular increases in votes and also gave them

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a large enough Reichstag delegation to be an official Fraktion. This meant that for the first time, the party could place its members on Reichstag committees and introduce bills without the support of other parties. Though the party would temporarily slip under the critical level of fifteen members in its Reichstag delegation in 1887, it regained formal Fraktion status in 1890 and preserved it until the end of the Reich. Thus 1884 marks a significant turning point in the party's history: for the first time it had to face the full implications of its decision to participate in Reichstag elections. Some of the ramifications of this change will be discussed below.

A second decline in the number of socialist mandates occurred in the 1887 election. In what proved to be the last great effort, Bismarck hoped by a vigorous renewal of the attack on the socialists to crush finally this persistent and growing opponent. The period of "mild practice" ended abruptly before the election campaign, as prominent socialist politicians were expelled from their home regions under the minor state of siege provision of the antisocialist law. Convictions of socialists because of their relationship with the exiled *Sozialdemokrat* led that paper to announce in October 1886 that it was no longer the

**Table 1 / Growth of Free Trade Unions Under Second Reich**

	Votes Received, First Ballot		First Ballot Mandates Won	Second Ballot Mandates Won	Mandates		Approximate Votes per SPD Mandate
	Total	%			Total	%	
1871	124,655	(3.2)	2	0	2	(0.5)	62,000
1874	351,952	(6.8)	8	2 <sup>a</sup>	9	(2.3)	39,000
1877	493,288	(9.1)	10	3 <sup>b</sup>	12	(3.0)	41,000
1878	437,158	(7.6)	2	7	9	(2.3)	48,500
1881	311,961	(6.1)	0	13 <sup>c</sup>	12	(3.0)	26,000
1884	549,990	(9.7)	9	15	24	(6.0)	23,000
1887	763,128	(10.1)	6	5	11	(2.8)	69,400
1890	1,427,298	(19.7)	20	15	35	(8.8)	40,800
1893	1,786,738	(23.2)	24	20	44	(11.1)	40,600
1898	2,107,076	(27.2)	32	24	56	(14.0)	37,600
1903	3,010,771	(31.7)	56	25	81	(20.3)	37,200
1907	3,259,029	(28.9)	29	14	43	(10.8)	75,800
1912	4,250,399	(34.7)	64	46	110	(27.7)	38,600

Source: Adapted from Fricke, *Handbuch*, table 74, p. 509 and table 76, p. 526.

a. Johann Jacoby gave up the seat he won, and the socialists lost the by-election.

b. Wilhelm Hasenclever won two seats; the socialists could not retain the one he gave up.

c. Wilhelm Liebknecht won two seats; the socialists could not retain the one he gave up.

party's official organ. This new assault was composed by Bismarck and conducted by the Prussian interior minister Puttkamer, who employed agents provocateurs and other illegal means against the social democrats. The socialists were under a greater disadvantage in the 1887 campaign than in any other election under the antisocialist law. In Berlin only one of the six candidates put up by the party was allowed to campaign locally, the others having been expelled.

To a great extent the official attack failed. Although the socialists lost more than half of their mandates (the number declined to eleven from twenty-four), their vote count increased by over 200,000 to 763,128. Furthermore, the extreme and indiscriminate nature of the assault on the party drew together divergent factions within it and strengthened its resolve to redouble its opposition to Bismarck. He had hoped to undermine the popular support of the socialists by playing on German fears of an apparent revival of revanchist spirit in France. But the ploy was not particularly successful as additional economic advances and even the intensified persecution won the party more and more backers.

By the time the next election was held, 1890, Bismarck had already failed to win renewal of the antisocialist law. Moreover, a new kaiser was now head of the Reich, and Bismarck's relationship with Wilhelm II was awkward, if not hostile. The antisocialist law had obviously failed to achieve its ostensible goal, and the new kaiser was inclined, for the moment at least, to be more sympathetic to the plight of laborers than Bismarck could tolerate, so the old chancellor resigned his post. In the midst of these events, Reichstag elections were held on 20 February 1890. The socialists won a smashing victory, amassing almost a million and a half votes and more than tripling the size of their Reichstag delegation to thirty-five.

Having survived the twelve years of the antisocialist law to emerge stronger and more active than ever, with a new kaiser who unintentionally legitimized the socialists' protest against the exploitation of the workers by admitting that some economic reforms were necessary, and having outlasted its staunchest, most able single opponent, the German social-democratic movement could rightly take the victory of 1890 as a mandate. Now the largest party in the Reich, the socialists looked to the future with confidence. Continued economic development and major growth of the trade unions after 1895 seemed to foreshadow irresistible expansion and the eventual achievement of political power. After the 1890 elections the socialists in Germany could savor the fruits of a hard-fought, successful struggle.

Two things are noteworthy about the elections discussed to this point. First, once the initial shock of the assassination attempts wore

off, the electorate responded more and more positively to the appeals of social democracy despite the antisocialist law. Unlike most other European countries, in Imperial Germany the oppositional political movement increased its following with improvements in national economic conditions, and the real wages of workers in general grew steadily from a low in 1881 through 1890 and beyond. Paradoxically, workers and their socialist supporters seemed more confident of the validity of social democracy as the established system provided greater economic success. Second, while the attitude of the government toward socialists seemed to have little to do with their popularity among the voters (note the increases of both 1887 and 1890), it apparently did have a good deal of impact on the ability of social democrats to win mandates (compare 1884 and 1890, on the one hand, with 1887, on the other). This was because the maldistribution of Reichstag districts and the multiparty system in the Reich resulted in a large number of run off elections, which made the socialists particular victims of election agreements among the many parties that shared the government's abhorrence of socialism. When evaluated as an instrument for vote-gathering, the social-democratic movement was quite effective, but when evaluated as an instrument to win parliamentary mandates, it was vulnerable.

The last three elections of the Second Reich accentuated these tendencies and also highlighted further limitations and potentials. For instance, in 1903 the SPD added to the increase of the previous five elections by exceeding three million votes for the first time and winning 81 mandates, giving it the second largest Fraktion behind the Center's 101 members. The major issue of the campaign was the government's proposed increase in agrarian tariffs, designed to protect the competitive position of the grain-producing large landowners of east Prussia. The SPD opposed these tariffs, arguing that the increased prices of foodstuffs that would result would hurt not only the urban workers but also all of the agrarian population that did not produce grain for the market, since they too had to buy much of their food. Apparently this appeal was effective, because of the 25-mandate increase for the party, at least 9 were won in predominantly rural, though not necessarily agrarian, districts that the socialists had never won before in a general election. This revealed previously unanticipated rural potential for the SPD.

Certainly the most traumatic election for the SPD during the Wilhelminian era was that of 1907. It is often called the *Hottentot election* because the central issue was the government's desire to run the German empire, especially southwest Africa, without interference from the elected representatives of the people. Chancellor Bernhard von

Bülow had been forced by Center opposition in the Reichstag to call for elections one year ahead of schedule. As the major critics of the government's imperial policies, the Center and the SPD were designated as targets for defeat by Bülow and his allies. A variety of government-sponsored groups conducted an expensive and widespread campaign to discredit the "unpatriotic" socialists and Catholics and to increase the mandates of parties that supported the imperial policies of the Reich. Secure in its overwhelmingly Catholic strongholds, the Center was not much affected by the government's attack; in fact, it managed to increase its Fraktion from 101 to 103. But the SPD did not fare nearly so well. Although it increased its vote count by almost a quarter of a million to 3,259,029, it lost 38 mandates, declining to only 43, the lowest since the 1890 elections. The key to this staggering loss was the failure of Progressive voters to support socialist candidates in runoffs against backers of the government. In 35 of the 38 districts lost, this lack of second-round support, which the Progressive voters had often given previously, was critical.

Not surprisingly, a large part of the SPD, especially the political leaders, reacted with anguish to this stunning defeat. It seemed to the moderates of the movement that almost three decades of growth had been struck a mortal blow, that the party was in serious danger of slipping into political impotence. The radicals and centrists, on the other hand, pointed out that the SPD was actually as strong as ever, that the increase in votes was a good sign, that the desertion of the party by its former Progressive supporters signaled the clarifying of class commitments. But despite this brave talk, most German social democrats were stung by the loss. The party had typically sought votes *and* mandates, and while the loss of the former might have been more critical, the loss of the latter was a serious problem. Obviously 1907 once more exposed the vulnerability of the socialists in Germany and their reliance on nonsocialist voters—among whom were counted a great many workers, but also middle-class, petty-bourgeois voters of various sorts—for their continued success.

The last elections for the Reichstag of Imperial Germany in 1912 brought the SPD its most spectacular success. Not only did it surpass the four-million-vote mark, not only did it recoup the losses of 1907, but it also won 110 mandates (an increase of 250 percent over 1907) to become the largest Fraktion in the Reichstag, followed by the Center's 90. Here was evidence that 1907 had been an aberration and that the growth of earlier years was continuing. Notwithstanding the relative ineffectiveness of the Reichstag in forming national policy, many socialists were convinced that the size and oppositional nature of the



SPD delegation would have to have some desirable impact on the kaiser and his ruling clique. This time some of the socialists' great victory resulted from the willingness of left-liberal voters to back SPD candidates in runoffs against their more conservative opponents. The traditional approach was vindicated; once more power seemed within the party's grasp.

Not all factions within the SPD were entirely happy with the victory of 1912. Radical critics like Rosa Luxemburg and Franz Mehring had long been arguing that the party's emphasis on winning Reichstag votes and mandates was distracting the movement from its ultimate goals and sapping its followers' revolutionary commitment. To these people 1912 seemed like little more than an orgy of opportunism and compromise. Furthermore, because more than half of the districts (fifteen of twenty-eight) won for the first time by the socialists in 1912 were mostly rural, the radicals felt that the party's commitment to the urban, industrial working class was also weakened. Many struggles had been fought within the party prior to 1912 to preserve its exclusively industrial working-class character; now it seemed that the electoral successes would weaken this association.

Even less biased observers than the radicals could see that 1912 may have revealed some problems for the SPD. In all previous elections there had been major disparities between the percentage of votes received and the percentage of mandates won, with 1907 representing a low point of almost 29 percent of the vote and less than 11 percent of the mandates. But in 1912 these figures approached each other quite closely—34.7 percent of the vote and 27.7 percent of the mandates. In other words, by 1912 the party seemed to have learned to use the Reich's malapportioned electoral districts to full advantage. Although the ratio of votes to mandates was still imbalanced to the disadvantage of the SPD, the gap had been closed considerably. In this election the average number of votes per mandate for the entire Reichstag was 30,750 and for the SPD 38,600, the smallest difference ever. The suggestion was that perhaps the party had approached a saturation point; perhaps the marvelous growth of the previous decades could not be expected in the future.

Finally, 1912 brought a major change in SPD election tactics when shortly after the general election, the party executive entered into a secret agreement with the Progressives to trade support in the runoff elections. Prior to this time the socialists had never entered into such agreements, so common in multiparty parliamentary systems. In the earliest years of the movement, such a thought was anathema. The congresses of the SDAP had regularly renounced the casting of votes

for nonsocialists, let alone entering into election agreements. But a gradual change in this hard line appeared during the outlaw years when in 1884 the central election committee established a set of criteria for voting for candidates in runoff elections not involving socialists. Although this move was later officially condemned by the St. Gall congress of 1887, the practice of proposing guidelines for voting in runoff elections was well established by the late nineties. Prior to the 1898, 1903, and 1912 elections, party congresses outlined conditions under which votes could be cast for nonsocialists, making the requirements less stringent each time. On the local level examples of close cooperation were unusual, though not unheard of. As early as 1884 Georg von Vollmar traded votes with the National Liberals against the Center in order to win the socialists' second Reichstag seat from Bavaria; in 1907 socialists and Center politicians engaged in similar activities in Pfalz; and the south German reformists of the SPD frequently undertook cooperation with nonsocialists on various issues.

But the 1912 agreement with the Progressives was markedly different from these earlier activities, both in its national scope and in what it revealed about the nature of the party leadership. By this time the SPD executive largely consisted not of old-timers who had gone through the great struggles of the early years, but of new party functionaries and politicians who placed a great deal of store by electoral victories. Led by Friedrich Ebert and Philip Scheidemann, these new people tended to be more conservative and perhaps more pragmatic than the veterans who had prevailed previously. As will be discussed in detail in a later chapter, the newcomers were the products of the success of the social-democratic movement—a success that increasingly bred a spirit of compromise and acceptance of the status quo. The one man who might have carried the executive with him in opposition to cooperation with the Progressives, Bebel, was not present at the meeting that yielded the agreement.

Two other factors besides moderation and complacency help explain why the majority of the executive favored the 1912 compromise. First, the disaster of 1907 had upset the leadership considerably, and it was determined to prevent a recurrence. The SPD had reaped a bountiful harvest in the first round of the 1912 election, sixty-four mandates, but it faced over one hundred runoff elections, and in many of them the support of Progressives would be critical. Second, disagreements over how to finance the Reich had broken up the so-called Bülow bloc in 1909–1910. This coalition of parties from the Progressives on the left through the conservatives on the right had assured the government of a Reichstag majority against the Center and the social democrats. But its

collapse opened the possibility, so dear to the hearts of the right-wing socialists, that a *Grossbloc* could be formed to include the left wing of the National Liberals through the Progressives to the social democrats to deprive the government of a Reichstag majority. In pursuit of this *Grossbloc*, the SPD executive acquiesced to the 1912 agreement.

Unfortunately, the party sacrificed principle without gaining much advantage. In the runoff elections, the more disciplined socialists, despite some vigorous local protest, delivered on their promise not to contest the Progressives in fourteen of sixteen cases, and in twenty-one other districts, socialist backing for Progressive candidates not confronting the SPD yielded Progressive victories. The Progressives, however, could not deliver their electorate quite so efficiently; the twenty-five districts in which this support was critical yielded the socialists only eleven seats. In the majority of cases, Progressive voters defied their party leaders and voted their antisocialist prejudices. The bourgeois liberal partners in this agreement owed thirty-five of their forty-two mandates to socialist support, while the SPD won only eleven of its 110 seats with organized Progressive support. Furthermore, the *Grossbloc* dreams of the reformist socialists were never realized.

On the whole the record of German social democracy in Reich elections between 1871 and 1912 was very impressive. Discriminated against by the electoral system, harassed by the state, scorned by the dominant culture, and opposed at almost every turn by the other parties of the nation, the socialists still managed to amass the largest number of votes from 1890 on and to have the largest Reichstag delegation by 1912. These achievements generated pride and confidence within the SPD itself and admiration among the members of the international socialist community. What was not generally recognized at the time was that this success was a double-edged sword. The blow it dealt to the revolutionary fervor of the German workers' movement, however, was not immediately apparent in the socialists' activity once elected to the Reichstag.

### Socialists in the Reichstag

One of the most powerful legacies of official persecution and the outlaw period was the besieged mentality they generated among socialists. To a great extent socialists could not admit to internal differences because of a strongly shared sense of alienation from the rest of German society; dissension within the ranks would have been to the advantage of their enemies. As a result, during the period under

consideration, the socialist Fraktion nearly always voted unanimously on substantive issues in the Reichstag.

Certainly this unity was one of the major strengths of German social democracy, and it was not all illusory. For the most part German socialists were united—they shared an aversion to the political makeup of the Second Reich; they shared a sympathy for the workers, who were largely the victims of the increased industrialization of the country; and they shared an abhorrence of the *Klassenjustiz* and Junker domination of Imperial Germany. Vis-à-vis the rest of the nation, all socialists had more in common with one another than with any other significant political or social group. In a society where class lines were frequently very sharply drawn, the party of the socialists and the workers constituted a real unit.

The external solidarity often belied internal disagreement, however, especially with regard to Reichstag activities, for from the very beginning there existed in German social democracy two very different strains. Moderates, who sought gradual change, were satisfied with small gains and were willing to compromise extensively with the existing system, while radicals, who spoke of bold change, sought large gains and persisted in hostility to the Second Reich. Depending in part on the force of outside pressures and in part on the role of personalities, the balance between these two strains shifted first to the moderates, then to the radicals, and then back again. But both strains were always present, and the outward appearance of unity never reflected the disagreements and even hostility that frequently characterized the inner workings of the socialist Fraktion and the party as a whole.

If German social democrats had little to decide about whether or not they would participate in Reichstag elections, they were much less certain about what to do once elections were won. Usually, of course, they could readily agree on proposals that they themselves put forward. At virtually every opportunity, the socialists offered political reforms to liberalize the Reich and economic and social reforms to protect the workers from exploitation; generally they were not able to make these sorts of proposals until they achieved official Fraktion status with at least fifteen members, which happened from 1884 to 1887 and from 1890 on (though at other times the left bourgeois *Volkspartei* representatives occasionally cosponsored legislative proposals with the socialists). But when socialists confronted the legislation of the government or other parties, internal dissension frequently created splits within the Fraktion, and these occasionally gave rise to serious disputes within the entire party as well.

Under the North German Confederation and for the first few years of the new Reich, the Fraktion was so small and so totally dominated by Bebel and Liebknecht that difficulties were avoided. The distrust, and even hatred, these two men felt for the government of Bismarck limited them to a largely negative, hostile role. If the Reichstag was, as Liebknecht contended, a fig leaf covering despotism, then the few socialists would have nothing positive to contribute to that body. This attitude led Bebel to denounce Schweitzer in 1867 when the latter offered a labor protection law to the NGC Reichstag. For most socialists in the early years, the German parliament was a place for speechmaking, for calling attention to the injustices and limitations of the new nation. What end would be served by this approach was not discussed, since the posture adopted was a natural offshoot of the origins of both the NGC and the Second Reich.

However, by 1874, and even more after socialist unification was achieved, this early attitude had to change. First of all, the new Reich was not going to fade away; the Prussian army and bureaucracy guaranteed that. Second, conviction of the need to engage in political activity had been the original impetus that gave rise to an independent workers' movement. If the party representing the workers now rejected political involvement in the Reichstag, this original impulse would be betrayed. Third, despite the apparent impotence of the Reichstag and the socialists' lack of illusions on this point, the very existence of such a body demanded a more active role for the workers' representatives. If good propaganda could be made by criticizing, better propaganda could be made by proposing reforms that in their very futility pointed out the failings of the Reich. But above all else, during the first six years or so of the outlaw period, the moderates temporarily gained the upper hand in the Fraktion at the same time that Bismarck forced the issue of parliamentary involvement by proposing various social insurance laws and a postal steamship subsidy bill that severely tested the socialists' oppositional posture.

Bismarck's policy vis-à-vis social democracy had two aspects. The most obvious was the fullest utilization of the repressive powers of the state that he had at his disposal. The other aspect was an effort to bribe the lower classes into supporting the established state through centralized social insurance programs that would provide many workers with modest protection against illness, accident, disability, and old age. The Iron Chancellor's concern was not so much to ease the burdens of the working class, though the social insurance measures did help, but, as with his adult male suffrage plan, to play on what he thought was a basic conservative strain among the workers. He hoped simultaneously

to win worker loyalty and steal the thunder of the socialists by proving the state to be a friend of labor. In the long run social insurance was not much more effective than adult male suffrage had been in winning over the proletariat.

Nonetheless, when social insurance legislation was first introduced and debated from 1881 to 1884, the socialist Reichstag delegates were faced with a real dilemma. As representatives of the working class, they seemed bound to support measures that would relieve workers of one of the most disturbing burdens of industrialization—the insecurity of loss of work through sickness and disability. But on the other hand, voting for the legislation would be tantamount to admitting that the current state was not the enemy of the workers, despite the antisocialist law. And the moderates who predominated in the socialist Reichstag delegation, strongly influenced by the Lassallean tradition of looking to the state for assistance and somewhat less hostile toward the state than the radicals, were inclined to favor the legislation. For their part Bebel and his circle, though unquestionably opposed to the Bismarckian state, were not entirely clear about their attitude toward state assistance in principle, but they were inclined to oppose the proposals.

In the end the hostility of the government made it impossible for any conscientious socialist to support Bismarck's proposals. Regardless of their inclinations, the moderates realized that it was impossible to vote for Bismarck while his government was pressing the antisocialist law. After proposing a series of amendments they knew were unacceptable to the government, the Fraktion denounced the legislation as tokenism and voted with the minority in opposition (a tactic they also employed four years later in voting against the old age and disability insurance bills). No better testimony to the bankruptcy of Bismarck's two-pronged attack on social democracy could be found than the more than 75-percent increase (from 311,961 to 549,990) in the socialists' vote from the 1881 to the 1884 elections. Far from undermining socialist popularity with working-class voters, opposition to Bismarck's reform measures apparently convinced even more workers that their real interests were represented by the SAPD.

Although the issue of the socialists' attitude toward the established state as an instrument of reform was not permanently settled after the social insurance debates, the episode does provide some very good clues about the uneasy resolution of the dilemma that persisted for the next thirty years. Many members of the Fraktion did not automatically consider the state an enemy of the workers. In fact, when confronted with the awesome, unapproachable workings of the economic system, few socialists could see any agency of change other than the central

state; nothing else was powerful enough or far-reaching enough to attack the problems. Furthermore, since the socialist delegation never became a majority and could form no effective alliance with other parties, if the socialists were to take part in any useful reforms at all, some compromise on the principle of absolute opposition had to be made. In later years the socialists were to vote for a Center-sponsored labor law (1887) that did not go as far as they would have liked, and in the early nineties they even backed Chancellor Caprivi's proposals to lower tariffs on foodstuffs. Thus the socialists' Reichstag activity was not entirely negative as concerns the legislation of others, including the despised state.

Eventually the SPD delegation even proposed its own laws that would have increased the power of the existing state. Beginning in 1877 the party sought the establishment of an extensive factory inspection system and later broad-ranging health and housing regulations, all of which required an increase in the size of the central government. These proposals reveal the strength of state-socialistic impulses within German social democracy. But the socialists' measures never passed, and they were never willing to compromise sufficiently to get them passed; to do so would have required the almost total emasculation of the bills. Apparently, the SPD frequently adopted the tactic of asking the existing state to do things it could not have done without radical alteration of its character. Thus the Lassallean statist tradition continued to operate at the same time that the party preserved its oppositional posture.

While the stands German socialists took on legislation proposed by others frequently exposed the inner divisions of the Fraktion, the bills and amendments offered by the socialists themselves revealed what they saw as the major failings of the German state. In this context it must be noted that no measures were ever introduced that could be called truly socialistic, i.e., that sought to alter in principle the private property concepts of German society, to convert large segments of the economy to collective ownership, or to transfer control of the means of production directly to the workers, industrial or agrarian. To this extent the activities of German socialists in the Reichstag before 1914 were always reformist. What they sought most frequently was evenhanded administration of existing laws, greater protection for the working-class population, and reforms that would give the workers a greater say in the political realm. The social democrats sought access to political power rather than political power per se, social equality rather than worker domination.

Of course few socialists saw these things as ends in themselves,

notwithstanding Bernstein's famous dictum to the contrary ("the end is nothing, the movement everything"). Although detailed consideration of this issue will have to await the chapter on theory, German socialists did not participate simply for the sake of participation, nor were they, with a few exceptions, simply servants of their constituents. Whether well-versed in ideological matters or not, all the socialist deputies had some vague idea of social and economic reorganization. Problems arose, both in theory and practice, when circumstances forced a more stringent level of clarification of ideals and practice than was usually necessary for the smooth running of the Fraktion and the party. But almost all social democrats, for the entire period under consideration, wanted reforms of the Imperial state that would allow them to pursue their further goals more easily.

So it was that in most of their legislative proposals, the social democrats seemed much more like radical democrats than socialists. In fact, in sheer number, the most common action by the socialists was the seeking of exemptions for party comrades prohibited from attending Reichstag sessions by imprisonment or judicial proceedings against them. During the outlaw years and for some time after, as many as ten or twelve socialist Reichstag members had to be exempted in each session. But in addition to these individual exemptions, the social democrats sought in virtually every legislative period to alter article thirty-one of the Reich constitution to provide broader exemption for representatives for the duration of periods in which the Reichstag was in session. This was the standard immunity afforded parliamentary members in all the representative governments of Europe, except Bismarck's Germany.

Parliamentary immunity was especially important to the social democrats because they were most frequently victimized by the laws restricting freedom of speech, press, assembly, and association. This was obviously true during the outlaw period, but earlier and later socialists were in addition subjected not only to repressive laws, but also to discriminatory application of the law. The so-called *Klassenjustiz* of the Second Reich meant that the testimony of workers and socialists was frequently not equal to that of other people in the courts; it meant that workers and socialists could usually expect the severest fines and sentences provided by law; it meant that workers and socialists were watched more carefully than others; it meant that in Imperial Germany equality before the law was a fiction, and the rule of law was tenuous.

Although socialists could do little about the underlying prejudices that supported *Klassenjustiz*, they could propose legal reforms to establish in principle the traditional liberal freedoms. At every oppor-



tunity they introduced legislation that would have repealed all restrictions on freedom of the press, speech, assembly, and association. From the laws requiring police observers at political meetings and prohibiting political organizations of young people and women, to regulations aimed at punishing lese majesty, to restrictions on when and where newspapers and political propaganda could be distributed, the social democrats hoped to rid German law of its most unliberal aspects. They sought extensive alterations in the social conceptions of the civil code that would have modernized it by establishing broader rights for women, reducing the legal authority of men over their wives and children, and providing for the legitimacy of children born out of wedlock. They wanted to limit police and court powers of search and seizure and to open more trials and judicial proceedings to the public (in both civilian and military courts). They tried to depoliticize the civilian courts by reducing local (aristocratic) influence over them and prohibiting the appointment of long-term civil servants to judgeships. They tried to reduce the role of religion in the schools and the courts. And finally, they tried repeatedly to get the provisions of the Reich constitution and the various legal codes applied to all the lands of Germany, including Alsace-Lorraine, which was governed under special statutes.

In the more strictly political realm, German social democrats sought an expansion and redistribution of Reichstag seats on the basis of periodic censuses. They tried to lower the franchise age to twenty-one and to extend voting rights to women. Beginning in the late nineties, they introduced into every session of the Reichstag resolutions calling for the chancellor to be responsible to the will of the representatives. To finance Reich affairs, the socialists sought to eliminate indirect taxes, such as those on salt and sugar, drastically lower tariffs (especially on foodstuffs), and introduce a progressive income tax. At one point they even tried to tie increases in the military budget to introduction of a progressive tax, implying that they were willing to make a trade of one for the other.

These are just samples of the sorts of changes that the socialists thought needed to be made in the laws of Germany. None of these things were socialistic, and none were designed specifically to benefit the workers. In seeking these changes the social democrats were trying to remold Germany into a more modern, democratic state and society. They did so in large part simply because they were themselves democrats, but also to facilitate the achievement of their more radical goals. The very sweep of the changes they sought revealed the gap that separated them from the rest of their society; more revealing still was the fact that not one of these reforms was ever enacted into law.

But in addition to these general reforms, the social-democratic Fraktion also worked to promote the more specific interests of the working class. Foremost among these efforts were proposals to limit the work day. The socialists tried various approaches, from universal eight-hour-day bills to graduated introduction of the eight-hour day over several years to much more complicated formulas setting hours for different workers at different levels. One of the most persistent features of this proposed legislation was the tying of limitations on child labor to increases in required education, both technical and academic, for children. Women were singled out for special treatment as well, often being classified with older children with work time limited to six or fewer hours per day. In addition, child and female labor were to be prohibited in certain industries.

Worker protection was another particular interest of the social democrats. They sought extensive changes in the existing commercial codes so that workers, agrarian as well as commercial and industrial, could be protected from unhealthy and unsafe working conditions, especially in dangerous industries like phosphorous match production and chemical manufacture. They also hoped to promote unionization by strengthening the sections of the commercial code that dealt with worker organization and repealing portions of the industrial and penal codes that restricted such activities. They repeatedly introduced measures to give special protection to seamen, construction workers, and miners. Here again the socialists paid specific attention to women workers. In the 1898-1903 legislative period, they offered a bill prohibiting female work between the hours of seven in the evening and six in the morning and on holidays, Sundays, and afternoons before such days, prohibiting the employment of females in work that was "harmful to the female organism," placing limitations on work during and immediately after pregnancy, and outlawing required overtime work for females.

Another aspect of the socialists' efforts to protect the workers was the alterations they suggested in the provisions and administration of the several social insurance programs. Generally they sought to increase benefits and expand coverage, including bringing agrarian workers, employees of the state, and lower military personnel into the programs. Here too the social democrats tried to promote a more equal status for women by having the administrative boards of the social insurance programs include women.

Certainly the most comprehensive and interesting of the social-democratic legislative proposals were their many efforts to establish a *Reichsarbeitsamt*, an imperial labor office. First introduced by Bebel in

April 1877, these measures were aimed at establishing state-financed and staffed offices with comprehensive inspection and enforcement powers over hours, working conditions, and forms of payment. One of the most intriguing features of the proposed office was the establishment of local labor boards (*Arbeitskammern*), which were to support the labor officers by compiling statistics and providing advice on local economic and social questions. These boards were to have an elected membership, half from the workers and half from management, with both sexes eligible to elect and sit on the boards. They constitute the only proposal for workers' control over their own economic lives made by German social democrats in the Imperial period.

Taken individually, none of these legislative offerings posed a serious challenge to German capitalism, and none was intended to lay the foundation for socialism. The fact of the matter was that the Fraktion was never in a position to introduce socialistic legislation, both because its members realized that such proposals would not be taken seriously, and because even the most committed Marxists among its number were uncertain about exactly how the socialist society would come out of the capitalist. Furthermore, many of the individual bills placed a great deal of emphasis on the role of the central state, despite frequent socialist protestations of opposition to that state; in part these represent the state-socialistic impulses of the German social-democratic movement. Both of these facts make it reasonable to conclude that in some very important ways, the SPD as it developed after 1891 was to a large extent not a revolutionary party of socialism, but a reformist party of democracy. Wartime and postwar developments of the party tend to substantiate this view.

If, however, consideration is given to the whole of the party's legislative activity, a rather different picture emerges. The very sweep of the alterations in German law and political structure sought by the social-democratic Fraktion bespeaks the enormous gulf that separated the socialists from most of their political contemporaries. In terms of specific political, social, and economic considerations, and also reflecting a larger world view, German social democrats of the Imperial period did not share the hierarchical, authoritarian preconceptions of most of their fellow citizens. The socialists sought a state and a society that were open, free from traditional class prejudices, and based on the concept of political and social equality of all citizens, male and female. Obviously SPD practice was not always in perfect compliance with its principles; in organizational and leadership matters the party was itself sometimes hierarchical and authoritarian. But it was, after all, German, and therefore bound to a certain extent by its cultural and historical milieu.

Nonetheless, any judgment of the party based solely on its national legislative activities would have to conclude that it was a revolutionary democratic party, large but essentially isolated in a hostile political environment.

When we bear this in mind, even the apparently state-socialist recommendations of the party take on different features. At the time these proposals were made by the SPD delegation, the state may have been authoritarian and antiworker, but most socialists assumed that the government's character would change once the party grew large enough to achieve the reforms it sought. Whether or not this was a reasonable expectation, it does help to reduce the apparent contradiction of socialists asking a hostile state to work against its own interests. Many socialists were willing to call upon the state because they assumed that it would eventually become a weapon in their arsenal rather than in that of their opponents.

The man who supervised the activities of the socialist Reichstag Fraktion for the bulk of the Wilhelmian years was Paul Singer (1844–1911). In background Singer was somewhat unusual for social-democratic leaders, many of whom came from bourgeois families but few of whom had themselves been successful entrepreneurs. The ninth child of a commercial family, by age fourteen Singer was active in the family business, and by the time he was twenty-five, he and his brother had founded a very successful ladies' coat-manufacturing establishment. It was not at all uncommon for young men of his class to take an active interest in politics, and from the early sixties, Singer was a devoted though minor figure in Berlin's radical bourgeois circles.

At the time of the formation of the unified German state, Singer allied himself with the left wing of the Progressives, which was anti-Reich and sympathetic to the emerging workers' movement. (Another man who was later to become prominent in social democracy, Franz Mehring, was also a member of this group.) Singer was a member of the Berlin Arbeiterverein when the mother organization affiliated itself with the First International in 1868, and he joined with a minority faction to form the Democratic Workers' League when the Berlin branch rejected the First International alignment. Though at the time closely tied with Johann Jacoby's *Volkspartei*, the splinter Berlin faction joined the SDAP when it was founded in 1869. Singer's association with the independent workers' movement, then, grew out of his left-liberal convictions rather than from any more intimate identification with the plight of the workers.

For a brief period in the early 1870s, a bout with tuberculosis forced Singer to withdraw from political activity, but his successful business

allowed him to continue to give financial support to the socialist movement; he also participated in philanthropic activities, founding and directing an asylum for the homeless in Berlin in the late seventies. But a restoration of health and the passage of the antisocialist law brought him back into active politics by the early 1880s.

Paul Singer perfectly exemplifies the commitment and capacity of the first generation of SPD leaders. From 1883 until his death in 1911, he was a member of the Berlin city council and chairman of the socialists' delegation in that body; from 1884 until his death, he represented 4 Berlin in the Reichstag and was chairman of the Fraktion for most of that period. He was very active at party congresses, and in addition to frequent speeches there, he was responsible for the publication of the protocols of every gathering from 1887 to 1909 except 1904 when he was ill; he also contributed heavily to the socialist press, both articles and money. Finally, in 1889-1890, he played an important role in the founding of the Second International, and after 1900 he was a permanent member of its executive, the International Socialist Bureau. Along with Bebel, Liebknecht, Luxemburg, and Kautsky, Singer was one of the most significant representatives of German social democracy on the international scene.

Save for the antisocialist law's more repressive features, Singer might have remained a moderate socialist prominent in Berlin only. But on 18 February 1886, he gave a stirring speech in the Reichstag denouncing the use of agents provocateurs by the police in their zeal to stamp out social democracy. The enmity aroused in official circles by this speech won Singer expulsion from Berlin in July 1886, under the minor state of siege clause of the antisocialist law. Shortly after his expulsion he settled in Plauen bei Dresden where Bebel had also taken up residence after his own expulsion from Leipzig in 1881. Here Singer established a close relationship with Bebel, and when the latter was imprisoned in November 1886, Singer assumed control of the party funds in Bebel's place and became in effect Bebel's contact man in the Fraktion and his ally on the party central committee; Singer was party cochairman from 1886 to 1911. Despite occasional differences of opinion, Singer was from the late eighties on the right-hand man of the party leader, replacing Liebknecht in this role.

Singer's career illustrates several important features of the Imperial social-democratic movement. First, socialists of outstanding ability were not numerous enough to allow each to participate in only one or two special areas—good people had to wear many hats. Singer was a city council member, a leading Reichstag representative, a major party functionary, a journalist and propagandist, and an emissary to the

International. Second, Bebel's genius as a party leader rested in part in his ability to make followers of people as able as Singer. Third, with a man of Singer's importance allied with Bebel, the latter's ambiguous attitude toward parliamentary activities was much strengthened in the party as a whole. Finally, many of the movement's best-loved leaders were not workers but of bourgeois origins. Singer's popularity within the party is testified to by his continual reelection as party cochairman. His popularity among the working-class population was reflected in his Berlin city council and Reichstag electoral victories. In the latter, with an overwhelmingly working-class constituency, he won barely 50 percent of the votes cast in 1884, 57 percent in 1887, and exceeded 70 percent in each of the next five elections, while the electorate increased from about 72,000 in 1884 to over 130,000 in 1907. By his death in 1911, he was one of the grand old men of the party—his funeral produced a seven-hour demonstration by hundreds of thousands of Berlin workers.

While German socialists argued and vacillated on parliamentary policy, their disputes over foreign affairs, once they began taking a serious interest, were even more acrimonious. Involving as they did questions of nationalism, national defense, military affairs, and imperialism, foreign affairs issues seriously challenged and eventually overturned the SPD's commitment to internationalism, world peace, and socialism also.

### The SPD and Foreign Policy

In an early Reichstag speech, Wilhelm Liebknecht, who supplied social democracy with some of its best quotes, announced that as far as the socialists were concerned, the best foreign policy was no foreign policy at all. Although this was rather typical Liebknechtian hyperbole, in spirit it summarized the attitude of most German social democrats prior to 1907. They had a decided proclivity for domestic politics, being concerned as they were with internal political and social reforms. Of course nothing is so preeminently the affair of the central state as foreign relations, and under Bismarck's brilliant leadership the Reich government certainly did not invite the representatives of the people to share in the formulation of policy.

As a result the social-democratic movement in Germany usually concerned itself with foreign affairs only intermittently and almost tangentially; that is, when foreign relations involved matters of domestic interest—such as tariff policy, jobs for industrial workers, the military budget, and possible involvement in wars—the socialists would take stands and enunciate positions. But they had few or no experts on

foreign affairs, they did not include in their party programs any principles to guide foreign relations, and they rarely bothered with systematic criticisms of Germany's policies with respect to the outside world.

Nonetheless, they did all share some biases that operated fairly consistently, even if their involvement in foreign affairs was sporadic. First, most socialists were nominally pacifists; in general they disapproved of war to resolve international conflicts, preferring negotiation, and they abhorred the loss of life and destruction of property that war involved. However, few socialists were true pacifists who for moral, ethical, or religious reasons rejected all war in principle. Second, they simultaneously feared, distrusted, and hated Imperial Russia, so much so that it would be difficult to exaggerate the breadth and depth of these sentiments within the movement. Obviously this is one inclination that German social democrats and their supporters shared with most other Germans, but it was to be an especially important factor in determining the socialists' response to the outbreak of war in 1914.

Third, both as a matter of theory and for more practical reasons (chiefly because workers constituted a high percentage of inductees), German socialists usually opposed the standing military and favored a purely defensive citizens' militia. Almost without exception the socialists saw the standing army as an instrument of internal repression rather than as one of external defense. They were also opposed to the regimentation and harsh discipline of the German military and to the influence the military had in German society. They were not, however, in any way opposed to the notion of national self-defense, and this frequently complicated their critique of the German military establishment.

The fourth generally shared sentiment among German socialists was an opposition to colonialism or *imperialism*, as it was called after the late eighties. Few foreign affairs issues in the period generated as many complex questions for socialists as did this one, and few caused the party so many difficulties. Because it raised so many interesting points, and because the dispute over colonial policy nearly split the movement in 1884, a more detailed look at the matter is justified.

Colonialism became a major issue for the socialists when in the late spring of 1884, the government introduced into the Reichstag a bill calling for a large, long-term subsidy of postal steamship lines. With Hamburg or Bremen as the starting point, three main lines were eventually to be included: to Hong Kong with a branch to Korea; to Sydney with a branch to Auckland, Tonga, and Samoa; and to Zanzibar. The appearance of Bismarck before the budget committee considering

the bill testified to the importance of this project to the government; this was the Iron Chancellor's first such visit since the founding of the Reich. The major official argument in favor of the bill was that it would facilitate lines of communication and commerce between Germany and Asia, the Pacific, and Africa.

Largely because they presumed the bill would bring some advantage to German workers in the form of shipyard jobs and increased commerce, the moderate majority of the Fraktion, headed by Auer, Dietz, Carl Grillenberger, Hasenclever, and Viereck, favored the measure. The party had achieved official Fraktion status with the election of twenty-four representatives in October 1884, and the moderates decided that it was time the social democrats played a more positive role in Reichstag activities. Since they knew that the Fraktion radicals would oppose the measure automatically—because the state had offered it if for no other reason—the moderates tried to avoid a fight by arguing that the bill was simply a matter of tactics (i.e., gaining advantages for the workers), not principle (i.e., opposition to the state).

At first it seemed that the moderates would carry the day. The radicals were heavily outnumbered in the Fraktion, eighteen to six. Bebel, Liebknecht, and Vollmar were the leading opponents of the bill, but initially they were not inclined to force the issue on principle. At a Fraktion caucus in December, Liebknecht backed the moderates' contention that only tactics were involved and that thus a vote for the bill would not violate the Copenhagen party congress resolution requiring unity on matters of principle. The Fraktion decided that no socialists would speak on the measure, in order to avoid the appearance of internal dissension, and that each representative would be free to vote as he pleased.

Moderate victories, however, were not that easily won in 1884. Although overwhelmed in the Fraktion, the radicals were much the stronger force among the rank and file and were in control of the most potent propaganda weapon of the outlaw period, the *Sozialdemokrat*. While the moderates commanded the legal, "colorless" press—including the *Sächsisches Wochenblatt*, Grillenberger's *Frankische Tagespost*, and the *Berliner Volksblatt* edited by Hasenclever and Wilhelm Bloss—they could not compete with the vitriolic assault launched by Bernstein in the exiled official paper.

Vollmar and Bebel led the radical forces at home, and Bernstein engineered an aggressive campaign against the steamship subsidy in the *Sozialdemokrat*. Three major points were raised by the radicals. First, the issue was one of principle, since a vote for the measure would be interpreted by the workers as support for Bismarck and capitalism.



Second, the moderates' argument that passage of the bill would benefit the workers overlooked the fact that it would also benefit capitalist entrepreneurs, and while the former *might* get some small advantage, the latter would certainly gain considerably more. Finally, Bebel and Bernstein also contended that to support the subsidy would open the floodgates of reform, since virtually any measure could be argued to be of some benefit to the workers.

While these arguments were undoubtedly useless against the moderate proponents of the bill, they carried considerably more weight with active party members both inside and outside Germany. Reflecting the gap between socialist Reichstag members and the party as a whole that emerged under the antisocialist law, party organizations in Berlin, Elberfeld, Magdeburg, Cologne, Stuttgart, Ludwigshafen, Mainz, Offenbach, and Frankfurt a. M. protested against the moderates' position. In Munich Vollmar supervised the passage of a protest resolution by a group of *Vertrauensmänner* from Bavaria. At the same time the moderates apparently could muster only the support of the Hamburg party organization.

Faced with this impressive party opposition, the moderates were forced to modify their stand on the steamship subsidy bill. In March 1885, when the measure came up for final consideration, the Fraktion adopted what was to become the typical social-democrat tactic when confronted with legislation on which the party was divided: the attachment of amendments that were unacceptable to the government and the Reichstag majority. Because the African and Samoan lines were directly linked to Germany's colonial activities, the socialists called for the elimination of those lines. To ensure that German workers would get the maximum possible benefit from the project, the Fraktion proposed that all the ships be new and built in German yards with German materials. When these alterations were rejected, as the social democrats knew they would be, the Fraktion cast its unanimous vote against the bill as it passed.

During the course of the debate over this bill, German social democracy developed a curiously contradictory, even muddled critique of colonialism that it was to hold to for many years. On the one hand, socialist critics tended to see colonialism as atavistic, that is, more closely related to the feudalistic, authoritarian state than to modern bourgeois capitalism. This theme was a persistent one in the socialists' assault on the role of the bureaucracy and military in German colonies. On the other hand, the socialists argued against colonies as simply the "exportation of the social question," that is, a capitalist effort to cope with overproduction and overpopulation at home by expansion abroad.

More often, however, the socialist critique emphasized that German colonies were incidental to the needs of capitalism, of benefit to a very limited number of specific entrepreneurs, rather than fundamental to mature capitalist development.

This contradictory interpretation was largely the product of the nature of German colonialism. In sharp contrast to the fruitful relationship England had with most of its colonial empire, Germany's colonies were almost entirely a drain on the national economy and unprofitable for most investors. Far from providing German labor with employment opportunities, Germany's colonies did not even provide much of a market for German capital investment. More British than German capital went into the colonies of the Second Reich, and German capitalists invested more heavily in the mines of the South African Rand by the 1890s than they did in all of their own colonies up to the outbreak of the war. German socialists apparently had a hard time sustaining a solid anticapitalist critique of colonialism, in part because German colonies were so unsuccessful.

A third line of socialist criticism of colonialism was a constant, no matter what other arguments were adduced. This was rejection of colonialism on humanistic grounds. Socialist critics railed against the brutalization and exploitation of the native population, against the inherent denial of the rights of these people implied by any colonial relationship. They argued that colonialism brutalized not only the colonized but the colonizers as well. At times this powerful humanist argument prevailed over any more political or economic objections, as German social democracy expressed its fundamental moral aversion to exploitation and domination in all forms.

As a result of these various criticisms, none of which were particularly well developed, by the turn of the century the SPD's attack on German colonialism, while often vigorous and obviously deeply felt, was not very coherent. Sometimes the party representatives emphasized that the colonies were simply a tax burden, the brunt of which was borne by the workers. On these occasions the socialists adopted what amounted to a *laissez-faire* position on colonies—that is, if there must be colonies, just let them be; the state (and therefore the taxpayers) has no obligation to support them. But at other times the party adopted a truly contradictory attitude toward colonialism. Even when party commentators accepted the colonies as a given fact, they simultaneously argued that German colonial policy could not be other than brutal and exploitative because of its ties to capitalism and/or Junker militarism, and that it must be humanized and rationalized.

The social democrats' failure to work out a systematic position on colonialism was partly due to a lack of concern. From the steamship

subsidy dispute of 1884–1885, which really was more important for internal party relations than for the development of a socialist foreign policy, until the Mainz congress of 1900, German socialists were far too busy with domestic politics to concentrate seriously on either the practical or theoretical implications of their nation's colonialism. Occasionally a party theoretician would develop a more refined position, as did Karl Kautsky in the 1880s, but such activities did not help the party clarify its own stand. So little were socialists concerned with colonialism that it often seemed their main complaints were about the failure of Germany's policy to yield tangible benefits. Beyond a very strong moral aversion, German social democracy prior to the turn of the century came up with no consistent, uniquely socialist colonial critique.

In the late 1890s a reaction to the presence of foreigners in China yielded a violent uprising called the Boxer Rebellion, which at its high point was sufficiently powerful to lay siege to the foreign quarters in Peking. Startled by this impudent act of Chinese independence, the foreign nations concerned—France, England, Russia, Germany, and the United States—mounted an expeditionary force commanded by a German to liberate the besieged legations in China. The savagery and arrogance of the victorious Western forces, which pillaged, raped, and massacred the defeated rebels and their city, awakened the SPD to the dangers inherent in what was now called imperialism or the *world policy* (*Weltpolitik*) of the German government. At its annual congress in 1900, the party took up its first-scale discussion of the problem.

Mainz was the first congress after the death of Wilhelm Liebknecht, and Paul Singer, the major speaker on "world policy," contended that the topic was on the agenda because Liebknecht had wanted it there. Singer condemned German colonialism in the harshest terms, placing its origins in "the avaricious demands of the bourgeoisie for new opportunities to invest the always growing capital for which the exploitative opportunities at home are no longer sufficient." In the traditional socialist argument of the time, he linked overseas rivalries among capitalist nations to arms increases and threatening international conflicts. He identified three major forces promoting Germany's China policy: "the militaristic thirst for conquest" of the army and navy, "the chauvinistic land hunger" of the extreme nationalists, and "the capitalistic interests of the bourgeoisie," especially manufacturers of ships and armaments and those with specific interests in the colonies. He also condemned the activities of the German military in China as illegal and unconstitutional because the Reichstag had not been asked to approve, though he had no illusions about the possibility of the Reichstag refusing approval had it been asked.

In an effort to forestall party reformists who might challenge the principle of opposing all colonial activities, Singer reiterated two by-then traditional arguments. First, the new colonial acquisitions in China would not bring a whit of advantage to German workers. "International capitalism" could, with native Chinese labor, produce more cheaply in China anything that German workers could make, thus undermining German labor. Already, Singer argued, Chinese crewmen had begun to appear on German ships. Second, to that increasing number of reformist socialists who thought that under certain circumstances imperialism could advance more primitive societies, Singer offered this scathing indictment: "In the name of civilization one goes—a bible in one hand, a gun in the other—to distant lands; in the name of civilization people are robbed of their land, and if they oppose this, they are shot down like dogs; in the name of civilization they are forced into the economic slavery of the conqueror, and that is called cultural policy, that is called civilization! The people have no use for it and can have none."

Singer concluded that the task of the party was not to come up with a socialist "world policy," since there would be plenty of time for that when social democracy came to political power (in the 1907 party congress, Bebel termed disputes over a so-called "socialist colonial policy" "a squabble over the kaiser's beard, a castle in the air [*eine reine Zukunftsmusik*]"). Singer called for a continuation of previous policy, rejecting Rosa Luxemburg's earlier observation that the party had not done enough to combat colonialism. The most important thing for social democracy, Singer said, was to continue to emphasize its opposition to "the world policy of militarism, chauvinism, and capitalism." Social democrats must continue to work for "the international solidarity of the exploited . . . a world policy of popular peace, . . . a world policy of brotherhood."

Singer's defense of the traditional socialist approach to German foreign affairs was well-received by the majority of the delegates at Mainz. Many other speakers added comments to what he had said, but none offered dramatic proposals for new responses. There were, however, several hints of things to come. Bruno Schoenlank, a leading reformist, argued that the major problem was the personal regime of Wilhelm II. He felt that the party had to press its case in the Reichstag, using all opposition forces to gain greater parliamentary influence over foreign policy. Speaking for the radicals, Rosa Luxemburg reemphasized that speeches and posturing were not enough, that the party needed to protest much more vigorously. She bemoaned the party's failure to protest during the operations in China but urged that even now more aggressive action was necessary.

This discussion was a model of what increasingly was to characterize prewar German social democracy. An official representative of the party leadership (Singer) summarized previous party policy and called for more of the same. Then a reformist (Schoenlank) urged the party to broaden its political base and closely tie itself to Germany's established though powerless institutions. Finally, a radical (Luxemburg) urged the party to bypass these same institutions and call for popular protest. Neither the radicals nor the reformists explicitly challenged the leadership's interpretation of German foreign policy, and nobody called for a more rigorous analysis of the current situation. After 1907 this division of the party into a large center challenged on both the right and the left by minority dissidents was to strengthen; usually the center position of the leadership would prevail, as it did in 1900.

In her speech Luxemburg had referred to the invasion of China as "the first thrust of international reaction," thus reinforcing the muddled and often contradictory views the SPD had of imperialism. The party had a difficult time deciding if imperialism was progressive, in the sense of a further development of capitalism, or regressive, that is, tied to the precapitalist classes of society. But A. Fendrich, representing Karlsruhe, and George Ledebour, a prominent Reichstag representative, both rejected Luxemburg's characterization of imperialism as a product of reaction. In so doing they opened the possibility of a more sophisticated socialist interpretation and also specifically anticipated Lenin's later and much more famous critique of imperialism. Fendrich said that imperialism was not reaction but "perhaps the last developmental stage of capitalism," while Ledebour contended that what the party had to come to grips with was "the world historical appearance in the last stage of capitalism."

The incredibly rich implications of this line of criticism were not pursued further at Mainz, and in fact social-democratic analysis of imperialism was not developed much for the next decade. The confusion on foreign policy and the very strong inclination toward internal affairs, coupled with the political impotence of the Reichstag and the party's aversion to potentially violent action in the streets, combined to limit the socialists' response to imperialism to noble but futile gestures. Early in 1901 the Fraktion introduced two resolutions to the Reichstag calling for German missionaries to refrain from becoming involved in the internal affairs of China and providing for the freedom of the children of house slaves in German colonial territories. Of course neither measure passed, and neither confronted the larger questions of imperialism.

Imperialist issues were to rise again and again to trouble German

socialists. In both 1905 and 1911 in Morocco, bungled attempts by Kaiser Wilhelm to expand Germany's world influence stimulated sharp responses in the party. Popular protests occurred on both occasions, but the leadership managed to keep activities very limited. The 1911 crisis generated a serious internal party dispute that will be discussed later. The so-called Hottentot election of 1907 was another example of party crisis generated, at least indirectly, by imperialism. In that same year at the Stuttgart congress of the Second International, the debate on colonialism found the Germans working as a conservatizing force, primarily because the party leadership feared radical resolutions that tied opposition to colonialism to mass-strike activities. On all of these occasions the reformists' notions of accepting colonies and working for piecemeal reform prevailed over more vigorous opposition.

Not all SPD reformists favored a more practical, compromising stance on colonialism. Kurt Eisner (1867-1919) was one of the first social democrats to concern himself with foreign affairs proper, not just colonialism or militarism. Though a leading reformist intellectual on most issues—he was forced off the *Vorwärts* editorial staff in 1905 for his extreme opposition to the mass strike—his position on foreign affairs was much closer to that of the radicals. As early as 1900 he argued that what really distinguished social democracy from all other parties was its opposition to war and *Weltpolitik*, and the 1905 Moroccan crisis struck him as clear evidence of the danger and seriousness of the problem. But his pleas for more attention to foreign policy fell on deaf ears; even his 1906 pamphlet, *Der Sultan des Weltkriegs*, was not distributed by the party.

Apparently nothing could stimulate the SPD to devote any considerable time or energy to developing and exploiting a critique of imperialism. Tactical considerations, particularly a rejection of vigorous action in the streets, played an important role in preventing the development of a coherent policy, as did several other factors already discussed. Another powerful impediment to a more aggressive and consistent anti-imperialist policy on the part of German social democracy was the extent to which the issues of militarism and national defense tended to complicate matters. Ironically, as imperialist conflicts grew in intensity, the likelihood of the SPD taking stronger stands declined. The party was vulnerable on the issues of national self-defense and nationalism.

The two most notable foreign affairs positions in the history of German social democracy prior to World War I were its staunch opposition to the Franco-Prussian War and its capitulation to war hysteria in 1914. Historians and polemicists alike have usually been

unable to resist the temptation to draw comparisons between the two occasions; they frequently use the different responses of the party as symbol and evidence of the changes that had taken place in the intervening four and a half decades. But as with most historical parallels, the similarities between the events in 1870-1871 and 1914 were more apparent than real. To rely too heavily on the comparison distorts the nature of German social democracy in both instances.

As discussed in chapter one, the outspoken opposition of Bebel and Liebknecht to the Franco-Prussian War was as much an expression of Saxon particularism as it was the product of principled opposition to war. The two leaders had considerable difficulty getting the rest of their own party to agree to their antiwar stand, and not until the declaration of the Third Republic was the entire German movement united in opposition to the war. After the formation of the new Reich, the socialists continued to rail against German militarism, but usually because they deplored the domestic impact of the military—the methods by which it was financed, the brutality of military life for the rank and file, the special privileges conferred on officers, and especially the use of the standing army to control the civilian population.

None of this had anything to do with the military as an arm of foreign relations, and none of the arguments mustered by the socialists in opposition to the military ever hinted that they were opposed to national defense or assumed that the nation, or any nonsocialist nation, could get along without some sort of military organization. In place of the standing army, they offered citizens' militia in which all adult males would be expected to serve at some time, but which would include few of the trappings of the militaristic traditions of Prussia. This militia met all of the domestic objections to the standing army raised by the socialists; by instituting it the state would be deprived of one of the major weapons for suppressing the workers, and the universal service requirement would humanize the army, reduce the significance of officers in German society, and eliminate a great deal of the expense of maintaining a large standing army.

Given the context in which the socialists put forth their critique of what they usually called Prussian militarism, it is not surprising that they gained a reputation for lack of patriotism. For while Germany may not have been any more warmongering than any of the industrial, imperialist states of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the domestic influence and prestige of the military were certainly greater in Germany than anywhere else in the West. Although the higher ranks of the regular military were dominated by the Junker aristocracy, commissions were much sought after by the bourgeoisie,

even in the reserves. Among better society, no gathering was counted a success unless military officers were in attendance. In this atmosphere the socialists' antimilitarism was easily painted as antinationalism, even defeatism.

But the misconceptions of their contemporaries should not becloud an accurate picture of the social democrats. Denounce as they might the militarism they abhorred, they were still Germans with ties of culture, property, friends, and family by which most were bound to the nation-state as surely, if less obviously, as the aristocracy, the bourgeoisie, and the peasantry. What did change in the forty-five years between the wars was the nature of the modern military and Germany's relations with its neighbors. These changes, coupled with the rise of reformists within the party, help account for the apparent contradictions between German social democracy's responses to the Franco-Prussian conflict and World War I.

When the myth of the militia was taken over by social democracy from the radical bourgeois left after mid-century, armies were still largely matters of men and horses. But over the next fifty years, railroads, naval ships, and heavy armaments transformed the military from a low-technology status to the avant-garde of industrialization and technology. Whereas in 1848 the opposition conceivably could have overthrown the established state with a relatively unskilled popular militia, even by 1875 the notion that a state could protect itself from possible foreign enemies with such a force was no longer viable. The considerable organizational and technological skills required to run a modern mechanized army, to say nothing of the even more demanding navy, not only gave the state considerable advantage over potential domestic enemies, but also made a mockery of hopes that a semitrained militia could protect its country.

Virtually all social democrats recognized this change of conditions—some sooner than others, of course—and eventually they all gave up the idea of a citizen's militia. The moderates Max Schippel and Ignaz Auer first made technological questions central to the debate over militarism in the late nineties. At the 1897 Hamburg congress, Schippel reported on the Fraktion's activity on military matters, noting that the socialist deputies had voted against the introduction of new weapons for the army; he also pointed out that the absence of these weapons would endanger the workers who were soldiers. Auer strengthened Schippel's rather spurious argument by asking a question that carried much more weight with the congressional delegates: "Should we carry on a war against barbarian, conquest-happy tsarism with outmoded weapons?" The specter of a possible Russian invasion carried as much weight in



Germany before the First World War as it does in the United States after the Second World War.

Although in 1898 Bebel was still defending the concept of a people's militia in his pamphlet "Not a Standing Army, But a Popular Army," by the early 1900s even he had begun to alter his position. Without slackening his humanist critique of the brutality of the German military, he now began to argue that the socialists sought to humanize and democratize the army in order to strengthen it. He also contended that his party had always opposed military budgets primarily because they were financed by indirect, rather than direct taxes. In this same Reichstag debate in 1907, Gustav Noske, in his maiden speech as a socialist delegate, reinforced Bebel's assertions. When the Prussian war minister Count von Einem countered these contentions by quoting from some of the SPD's own propaganda, Bebel denied that the material quoted was representative of the party. This exchange generated what was known as the *Noske debates* at the 1907 Essen congress when the radicals challenged Bebel and Noske.

The pamphlet Bebel denounced in 1907 was *Militarism and Anti-militarism* by Karl Liebknecht (1871–1919), Wilhelm's radical son. Bebel and the younger Liebknecht had tangled before on the same issue, at the 1906 Mannheim congress. Liebknecht saw militarism as the ultimate weapon of the ruling classes against the proletariat. He agitated for more aggressive antimilitarism from the party in the form of propaganda among young German males before they were inducted into the army. As early as 1904 he had unsuccessfully proposed to a party congress that more positive steps had to be taken. But in the aroused atmosphere of 1905 (due to the Russian revolution of that year), the Jena congress had accepted in theory Liebknecht's proposal to hold propaganda meetings before induction days "to inform future soldiers of their rights under military law" but rejected his call for "regular, well-planned, and well-executed agitation" against militarism and navalism as "the strongest pillars of the ruling classes. This set up the 1906 confrontation with Bebel, who marshaled all his skills as a party leader to crush Liebknecht's efforts.

What Bebel, Noske, and their supporters feared most was harsh governmental reaction to radical agitation among military personnel. The Reich government guarded nothing as jealously as its armed forces, rightly viewing them as the ultimate bulwark against socialism as well as the defenders of the nation. Although the radicals mounted a counterattack against Bebel and Noske at the 1907 Essen party congress, shortly after this gathering the fears of the moderates were justified when Karl Liebknecht was sentenced on 12 October 1907 to one

and one half years in prison for allegedly treasonable statements made in his pamphlet. But at the same time many socialists, Bebel included, were genuinely opposed to subverting the strength of the military through radical agitation. They sought reforms that would have slightly lessened the government's powerful grip on its soldiers, but they did not want a weaker military. Like the majority of socialists in most countries prior to 1914, the Germans were sufficiently nationalistic to consider a reliable military a necessity.

Finally, consideration must be given to the antiwar sentiments of the SPD, especially because it frequently joined with the other major parties of the Second International to denounce the war that almost everyone felt was bound to come sooner or later. Certainly in principle the party was as opposed to dynastic, adventuristic, imperialistic wars as any on the world scene. But such wars were always considered in the abstract, as something that happened under clear-cut, definable conditions, with clear aggressors and victims. Socialists everywhere could agree that in times of war the workers bore the greatest burdens and made the greatest sacrifices while gaining the least benefit. They could further agree that in the atmosphere of imperialist rivalry that dominated the first fourteen years of the twentieth century, any major war that might break out would in no way be a workers' war, that the issues that might bring on such a war were only the concern of the capitalists and their puppet governments.

At the same time, whenever discussions among German socialists got down to more specific situations, their antiwar stance wavered considerably. One thing they could all agree upon was that invasion by backward, brutal tsarist Russia would automatically be a workers' war, no matter what the circumstances. The men and women who had devoted their lives to building the German social-democratic movement and its adjunct, the free trade unions, were not about to stand by while reactionary Russia destroyed all they had achieved. The fear of Russia was real and widespread among the socialists of Germany. Auer used this fear to justify support for modernization of the military; Karl Kautsky, one of the party's staunchest opponents of close cooperation with the liberals, singled out a Russian invasion as one of very few possible justifications for formation of a broad coalition of the left in Germany.

In the end this fear fatally limited the options of the SPD. Having failed during the previous forty-odd years to develop a consistent view of foreign relations, having failed in their goal of democratizing and humanizing autocratic Wilhelmian Germany, the socialists had very little choice but to back the government when it asked the Reichstag to

support the war in 1914. Had it been more sophisticated in its earlier critique of foreign affairs, the SPD could have seen that the situation in 1914 was not simply a matter of the Russians invading Germany, but a much more complicated affair. Had the party pushed more vigorously to loosen the stranglehold of the militaristic chauvinists upon the country, the German government might have been less eager to back Austria in its unreasonable demands on the Serbs; in this instance, as so many times before, the great war might have been avoided.

But the SPD, like all of Europe, was the victim of historical circumstance, and in a ranking of those responsible for the war, German social democracy is very, very low. The failure to develop its own foreign policy derived from the nature of the movement, the impulse that gave rise to it, and the day-to-day matters that motivated its participants. The failure to sustain a more vigorous and successful attack on the established powers of their society was, however, something the socialists themselves could have altered. Had they not gotten so caught up in the trappings of their movement, had a more visionary or tenacious leadership been able to maintain the earlier commitment of the movement to making a better world, the socialists would not have found themselves confronted with so few options in 1914, and the party might well have survived the war without a disastrous split.

Several aspects of the development of the social-democratic movement from 1863 to 1914 help account for its inability to achieve its more sweeping goals. The three chapters that follow will deal with the most important elements, and pride of place must be given to the party's relationship with the trade unions. Nothing so restrained the SPD from assuming a more vigorous oppositional posture than the gradual shift from subservience to dominance by the economic arm of the partnership.

### 3 / The Party and the Trade Unions

Prior to the early 1860s, Germany had no worker organizations that could properly be called trade unions in the sense the name is used today. Workers, especially skilled craftsmen, had formed associations earlier in the century, but they usually were more like medieval guilds than unions, or were educational-cultural clubs like those discussed in chapter one. Real trade unions—associations of wage workers in the same or related trades aimed at improving and protecting the economic activities of their members in their workplaces and with some degree of supralocal organization—were not found in Germany until the decade prior to national unification.

One reason for this was the repressive legislation of the reactionary period that followed the revolutionary failures of 1848–1849. During the late summer of 1848, two organizations emerged that were at least proto-trade unions, one of printers in Mainz, the other of tobacco workers in Berlin. Both of these bodies were concerned with matters like wages and expansion of employment, but both included small-scale entrepreneurs as well as wage workers, and neither had very extensive contacts beyond its immediate local area. Both disappeared shortly after the revolutionary turmoil quieted down, when antiassociation laws virtually eliminated all but the most local and limited workers' bodies.

Obviously worker organizations of various sorts survived during the 1850s. Educational groups existed throughout Germany, and the conversion of many of them to political activities in the early sixties was one of the major sources of the emergence of socialist parties. Cultural organizations, exercise clubs, and a variety of cooperative associations also existed, although mostly on a purely local level. But other forms of organization that were more closely related to the activities of workers in their workplaces also developed after 1848. These associations

focused on the economic needs of the workers and were related in function to the burial societies of the earlier guilds.

In Germany the 1850s were years of nascent industrialization and declining real wages for workers. One widespread response of skilled workers to the dislocation and hardship of the times was the formation of organizations called by many names but summarized by the two most common labels, *Hilfskasse* ("assistance fund") and *Unterstützungsverband* ("support union"). These associations originated largely as defensive responses by workers who saw themselves threatened by advancing industrialization, and their original functions was to provide temporary assistance to individuals affected. Very quickly, however, members of these bodies recognized that such a limited response to the changing conditions would not be as effective as broader and more aggressive collective action to protect the lot of the entire trade. This realization led in turn to recognition of the need to organize or at least cooperate on a scale larger than the local level. These impulses gave rise to the trade unions of the 1860s.

What was perhaps the first modern trade union in Germany was founded in Leipzig on 17 January 1862. Called the *Fortbildungsverein für Buchdrucker und Schriftsetzer*, this organization included printers from several parts of Saxony and had been made possible by the suspension of the Saxon anticoalition law in November 1861. Although the name suggests similarities with many other *Arbeitervereine* that existed at the time, the *Fortbildungsverein* was less an educational society than an association concerned with the economic well-being of its members. While the organization conducted some more traditional educational activities—these would be part of the functions of almost all modern trade unions—the Saxon printers in the *Fortbildungsverein* were drawn together primarily by a need to take collective action in the economic sphere.

The *Fortbildungsverein* points up one of the difficulties of understanding this early period of the organized workers' movement in Germany. German has a number of words that under the proper conditions can be translated into English as "union"—*Verband*, *Bund*, *Verein*, *Vereinigung*, *Verbrüderung*, *Genossenschaft*, *Gewerkschaft*, even *Kasse*. Thus any given organization cannot be considered an economic union on the basis of name alone; thus too, organizations from the fifties and sixties with quite similar names often turn out to be different in function. Many *Arbeitervereine* gradually developed an extensively political character; some became workers' unions in the economic sense; and still others retained an almost exclusively educa-

tional quality. Confusion can only be avoided by paying close attention to the actual function of these bodies.

Organizations similar to the Saxon printers' Fortbildungsverein developed in other trades in the early 1860s, but until the end of 1865, none had more than a limited regional character. The first example of extensive coalition of local and regional trade-union bodies into a centrally coordinated association was the founding on Christmas Day, 1865, of the Allgemeine deutsche Zigarrenarbeiterverband (General German Cigar Workers' Union). This was followed by the Deutsche Buchdruckerverband (printers) in the spring of 1866, and the Allgemeine deutsche Schneiderverein (tailors) in the fall of 1867; comparable organizations for bakers and woodworkers were founded in 1868. These bodies were called *Zentralverbände* ("central unions"), and they marked the beginnings of the mature trade-union movement in Germany.

These new trade unions were concerned with wages, hours, conditions of labor, and the organization of workers to achieve common economic goals. The founders and leaders of the unions were people who saw beyond their immediate environment, people who recognized that individual workers were powerless against the superior might of the capitalists, people who were willing to sacrifice their own time and energy—often after a full day of exhausting labor—for the collective good. The same motives drove the early socialists, and the overlap of personnel between the economic branch and the political-socialist branch of the workers' movement is not surprising. Men like Friedrich Wilhelm Fritzsche, the founder of the General German Cigar Workers' Union, Theodore York, president of the woodworkers' union, Julius Motteler, head of the Internationale Gewerksgenossenschaft der Manufaktur-, Fabrik, und Handarbeiter, and of course August Bebel himself were very active in both branches.

Socialists were not, however, the only people interested in promoting the economic organization of the workers, nor was there any necessary connection between socialist politics and trade-union activity. The impulse to organize economically came from the workplace experience of the laborers and was not dependent upon any specific political content. As it happened in Germany, political socialists were best able to use and direct the move toward economic organization, but they did not create it, and they did not have the field to themselves.

As early as 1868 many German bourgeois politicians recognized that to hold the political fidelity of the workers, the liberals would have to grant some recognition to the legitimacy of trade unions. In that year

two Progressives concerned with retaining worker backing, Max Hirsch and Franz Duncker, found the *Verband der deutschen Gewerkvereine*, members of which were popularly referred to as the Hirsch-Duncker unions after the originators. Though it met with some initial success, having a membership of approximately 30,000 by 1869, the Hirsch-Duncker movement never attained the proportions of the so-called "free" trade unions.

Because they were closely tied to the political liberals, the Hirsch-Duncker unions were never free to pursue the workers' aims by all means. These organizations were especially lukewarm on strikers, and this posture cut into their potential to organize an increasingly militant work force. After declining to under 17,000 members by 1878, the Hirsch-Duncker movement slowly expanded to exceed 60,000 by 1889 and 90,000 by 1900. It reached a peak membership of over 122,000 in 1910 only to decline again to fewer than 80,000 in 1914. The liberal unions attracted the highly skilled and highly paid technicians of industrialization; in 1913 over 41 percent of their more than 105,000 members were mechanical engineers.

Various other types of trade unions further complicated the picture of economic organization of the German work force after the late 1860s. In 1869 the first Catholic trade union appeared, so called because of close affiliations with the local Catholic clergy and later the Center party. Unions with religious affiliations emerged very slowly, attaining significant size only after the turn of the century (over 350,000 members in 1912), but they were important in limiting the growth of the free unions among the textile, mining, and metalworking industries of the Rhineland and Westphalia. Other economic organizations of workers, called *yellow unions*, were founded by employers in several places; these were clearly designed to suppress rather than promote worker activism. In addition, nationalistic unions were occasionally formed, especially by Polish workers, and many small local unions remained unaffiliated with any larger bodies.

Despite the variety of competition, the free trade unions—so labeled in 1877 by the socialist August Geib to distinguish them from the Hirsch-Duncker unions and those worker organizations with ties to the government—were by far the most successful (membership figures in table 2 will be discussed below). This success derived from two factors: the free trade unions were much more aggressive in pursuit of the interests of the workers, and their association with the socialists cultivated this aggressiveness. The nature and development of the relationship between political socialism and trade unions had a good

deal to do with the fate of German social democracy prior to World War I.

### Early Social Democracy and Economic Organization

As the first socialist, working-class party in Germany, the ADAV was in an excellent position to take advantage of the newly forming unions. The potential for cooperation between the two types of organizations was great; the exclusively worker character of both was a particularly strong point of mutual attraction. Both groups relied on heightened consciousness among workers for their growth, and both were concerned with emphasizing the extent to which the interests of the workers were discrete from and frequently at odds with the interests of the liberal bourgeoisie.

Support by Lassalleans for trade-union activity was, however, irregular at best and destructive at worst. Because of their espousal of the iron law of wages—i.e., their conviction that in the long run trade unions could not increase workers' wages without the conversion to socialism—most members of the ADAV were not vigorous supporters of trade unions. Of perhaps even greater significance were the emphasis the ADAV placed on politics and the jealousy with which Schweitzer protected the dominance of his own organization. Even when pressure from below forced the Lassalleans to become involved in trade unions, the highly centralized, highly political bodies that resulted stifled local initiative and alienated trade-union leaders.

Very early in the history of the socialist movement, such pressure from below compelled Schweitzer to make some compromise with the trade-union concept when he allowed ADAV members to participate in the struggle for coalition rights. By 1868 the presence in the ADAV of men like York and Fritzsche and the obvious popularity of the VDAV's strong commitment to trade unions forced even further concessions. On 26 September of that year, the ADAV founded the Allgemeine deutsche Arbeiterschaftsverband, a central organization of member trade unions, which included groups of miners, metalworkers, dyers, weavers, manufacture workers, shoemakers, bakers, bookbinders, leather workers, woodworkers, and carpenters. It met with significant initial success and included over 25,000 members by mid-1869.

In June 1869 Schweitzer effected his merger with a splinter ADAV faction that considered itself more Lassallean than the larger organization primarily because it held more firmly to the iron law of wages; i.e., it was not at all sympathetic to trade unions. Coupled with Schweitzer's



insistence that membership in affiliated unions had to be linked to direct ADAV membership, the maneuver caused many leading functionaries of these unions to switch allegiance from the ADAV to the SDAP in August; this group included Fritzsche, Schob (tailors), Schumann (shoemakers), and York. This obviously weakened both the ADAV and its affiliated unions.

Further dissension within and continued grassroots agitation from without forced a reorganization of the Allgemeine deutsche Arbeiterschaftsverband into the Allgemeine deutsche Arbeiterunterstützungsverband in 1871 with only about 4,250 members. Although more vigorous support for the widespread strike activity of the *Gründerjahre* brought this organization to a peak membership of just over 8,300 by the following year, continued insistence by Schweitzer's successor, Hasenclever, on the absolute supremacy of the political organization reduced membership to an insignificant 5,300 by 1874. Despite the immense power of the Lassallean legend to attract workers to unions affiliated with the ADAV and despite the attractiveness of that party's purely worker membership, the implicitly anti-trade-union ideology of Lassalleanism and the dictatorial tendencies of the ADAV leaders severely limited the development of a Lassallean trade-union movement.

The story of the relationship of the VDAV and the SDAP with the embryonic trade-union movement is much different. From the very beginning Bebel in particular realized the central importance to the political movement of support from and promotion of the trade unions. Even before the formation of the SDAP in 1869, he worked for the establishment of more unions, and in 1868 he and Liebknecht issued a call for the unification of all trade unions into a central organization; at that time Schweitzer's opposition restricted any serious efforts to form such a body. Also in 1868 Bebel published his pamphlet *Musterstatuten für deutsche Gewerkgenossenschaft (Model Statutes for German Trade Unions)*, on the basis of which several unions were formed in the following two years. The major differences between these bodies and those affiliated with the ADAV were the former's emphasis on strong local organizations and the inclusion of women in their membership. By 1869 these "international trade unions" had approximately 10,000 members.

Until the VDAV reorganized as a political party in 1869, the issue of its relationship to the trade unions was not as pressing for Bebel and Liebknecht and their followers as it was for the ADAV. But with the formation of the SDAP, which included many trade-union advocates who had defected from Schweitzer's party, the matter became of central

importance. The new party was not restrained by the same ideological considerations that bound the ADAV, and its record of promoting the economic organization of workers was far more consistent than that of the Lassallean party.

Ties between the SDAP and various trade unions were close because of personnel overlaps, because party leaders encouraged and participated in the founding of new unions, and because, in general, the party supported the economic activities of the unions. What party leaders like Bebel expected in return, and usually got, was the political support of trade-union members—their votes, their contributions, and the participation of many of them in party affairs. In this sense the trade unions were seen as “schools for socialists”; through their activities in the trade unions, workers would learn that their limited measures in the economic realm were insufficient to improve their lot in the long run and would turn to political socialism for a permanent solution to their problems. This process would be promoted if the SDAP maintained close ties with the unions, showing itself to be the true friend of labor.

The press was one of the most important avenues through which the socialists could demonstrate their concern for the trade unions. When Liebknecht's *Demokratisches Wochenblatt* became the official organ of the SDAP as the *Volksstaat*, it was also declared the official organ of the trade unions. The individual unions often had their own papers as well—the tobacco workers had the *Botschafter*, the shoemakers had their *Vereinblatt*, and the book printers issued the *Korrespondent*—but they were content to have a special subsection of the *Volksstaat*, called “Die Union,” serve as a central organ. At least two SDAP congresses, Mainz in 1872 and Coburg in 1874, had extensive discussions about the official organ's relationship with the unions, and each time the ties were firmly reinforced. Speaking at Coburg in defense of this close association, Eduard Bernstein argued that to eliminate trade-union articles from the *Volksstaat* would undermine the paper's following among workers. Most party members viewed the socialist press as one of the surest ways to exercise political influence over the workers.

For the most part this concern with politics motivated the SDAP in all its relations with the trade unions; the party obviously did not simply promote unions for their own sake. The second congress of the SDAP, Stuttgart, 1870, had a full-scale discussion of the trade-union question. Theodore York, himself an ardent trade unionist, was the main speaker on the topic. In his analysis York placed particular emphasis on the need for the party to promote unions that were clear and united on questions of principle and that therefore could be used for political agitation in the struggle against capital. At the founding congress Bebel had sounded a

similar note when he called upon the party to work for the "further education of the trade unions on international conditions," i.e., an emphasis upon the larger political picture rather than the localized economic picture.

From the point of view of the trade unions, their relationship with the SDAP was somewhat different. They tended to see the party as a source of financial support and political clout, but they also tended to see the relationship as a simple separation of function rather than as hierarchical. For the trade unions the solidarity of the workers at their workplace was more important than their solidarity because of their political inclinations. Obviously most highly conscious workers, that is, those who would be active in unions in the hostile atmosphere of the sixties and seventies, also were relatively sophisticated in politics. But the internal splits between socialists and liberals, and within socialism between the ADAV and the SDAP, made it sensible for the trade unions to avoid official associations with any party. This need helps explain the failure of most ADAV-dominated unions.

Several leading SDAP figures realized that outright domination by the political branch of the movement was not acceptable to the unions, and thus Bebel's party avoided such a posture. Ignaz Auer, a prominent Eisenacher and a lifelong socialist activist, was also the leader of the harness-makers' union in the early seventies, but he avoided tying his union too closely to either socialist party in order to be able to use both as necessary. When the third congress of the SDAP, Dresden, 1871, debated a definition of party membership, Bebel felt prompted to remind the delegates that "the trade unions do not belong to the party," however close the relationship might seem. As one prominent historian of the movement, Dieter Fricke, has contended, the SDAP conceived of the trade unions as nonpartisan but not apolitical.

At an 1872 congress of trade unions with ties to the SDAP, the following resolution succinctly summed up the nature of the relationship.

Inasmuch as capital equally severely *suppresses* and *exploits all workers* no matter whether they are conservative, progressive-liberal, or social-democrats, the congress declares it to be the highest duty of the workers to put aside all party disputes in order to make, on the *neutral grounds* of a *unified trade-union organization*, the necessary conditions for a successful, vigorous opposition, to secure the threatened existence, and to fight for an improvement of our class condition.

But in particular have the different factions of the Social Demo-

cratic Workers' Party promoted the trade-union movement to the best of their ability, and the congress expresses its regret that the general assembly of the ADAV has reached a contrary conclusion.

In other words, politically the trade unions accepted anyone, but they also had special friends.

The SDAP frequently won stronger allegiance from the trade unions because the Eisenachers were more willing than were the Lassalleans to give support and encouragement to economic strikes. The difference was, however, one of degree, and it should not be exaggerated. Several times SDAP congresses were faced with antistrike proposals; at the 1870 gathering in Stuttgart, the party rejected a resolution stating that "strikes are an objectionable means for our agitation and will no longer be supported by our party." As the party's leading spokesman on trade-union issues, York frequently expressed the opinion that strikes were slower and less certain than legislation as a means of achieving better working conditions; he also argued that higher wages and shorter work days were only palliative measures. But despite these tendencies, the SDAP did consistently support strikers with funds and propaganda, and men like Bebel and Liebknecht clearly perceived strikes as means of heightening consciousness among workers.

This did not mean that the SDAP encouraged strikes at the drop of a hat (or even necessarily at the drop of a wage rate). There was sufficient Lassallean influence in the party to maintain a moderate level of skepticism about the efficacy of strikes, and most party members understood that strikes were often dangerous and should not be undertaken when there was little prospect for success. In 1871 the Leipzig local of the SDAP passed a seven-point resolution counseling moderation in the use of strikes to achieve economic ends. This resolution highlighted several features of the SDAP, thus justifying a close analysis.

The first three points argued from an essentially Lassallean position. Strikes were no help in the long run since under capitalism the level of wages was fixed by supply and demand, and anyway, the aim of socialism was not higher wages, but the overthrow of capitalism. The next three points emphasized a feature of the German system of production that made it somewhat different from that of other countries, namely the very aggressive use of the lockout by German producers as a means of controlling both markets and the labor force. The Leipzig resolution cautioned that manufacturers could sometimes use strikes and lockouts as occasions to dump overproduced stock, raise prices artificially, and drive out smaller competitors who could not

survive a long strike. Finally, the party was not in a financial position to support the greatly increased number of strikes that the *Gründerjahre* brought. In 1905–1906 this last argument was to be turned around and used by the trade unions against the party to restrict its political options.

Socialist unification did not mean the immediate creation of a central organization for the trade unions, despite the continuing efforts of some trade unionists and socialists to achieve that goal. Indeed, in some ways the Gotha unification program of 1875 represented a backward step in socialist–trade-union relations. One of Engels' sharpest criticisms of the Gotha program was its failure to provide an explicit, strong tie between the new party and the trade unions. Bebel had tried to prevent the inclusion of the Lassallean concept of the iron law of wages in the new program, but he failed. This programmatic retreat did not signal a lessening of interest in trade unions on the part of the newly unified socialist party; as in so many other areas, the SDAP part of the merger made concessions in theory while holding its ground in practice.

In 1874, after the metalworkers had united SDAP and ADAV unions into a common body, Theodore York attempted to capitalize on the prevailing spirit of unification by promoting a more comprehensive union across trade and party lines. This effort died with York in early January 1875, but the interest in closer cooperation persisted. Immediately after the Gotha unity congress, leaders of thirteen of the major unions met in the same city to lay the groundwork for creation of some sort of central body, and a central commission consisting of Fritzsche (tobacco workers) and Otto Kapell of the carpenters' union as well as leaders of the printers, masons, and joiners was created to pursue that goal. However, by the time a central trade-union congress could be planned for June 1878, the suppression of the party and the trade unions under the antisocialist law caused its cancellation.

Up to the passage of the antisocialist law, trade unions continued to grow; by 1878 almost 60,000 workers belonged to free trade unions. The years between socialist unification and the outlaw period were particularly active ones for the trade-union press. Founded in 1875, the Gotha *Der Wecker* had over 2,100 subscribers by 1878 and was the official publication of the shoemakers' union; in 1876 the Braunschweig *Das Panier*, organ of the metalworkers, had about 4,000 subscribers; in that same year the Geissen *Der Fortschritt* became the official paper of the tailors with nearly 3,000 subscribers; and in 1877 the Berlin *Pionier* became the official organ of the Gewerkschaften Deutschlands with a circulation of over 9,000. Compared with the really massive circulations of trade-union papers after the turn of the century, these figures are

small, but they nonetheless represent the beginnings of an extensive trade-union network in Germany.

Despite the almost total suppression of the free trade unions under the antisocialist law, the impulse to organize independent unions could not be crushed. Christian and Hirsch-Duncker unions were for the most part not dissolved under the repressive legislation, but the workers who had been attracted to the free trade unions were not often inclined to join these safer organizations after their own were outlawed. In a way the free trade unions survived by recapitulating their origins; when politically inclined unions were abolished, the workers fell back on the older *Kasse* form of organization for financial mutual aid. But even more important was the development of associations called *Fachvereine* ("trade leagues"), which were essentially depoliticized trade unions.

The problems confronting members of the free trade unions after the suppression of their organizations were quite different from those confronting the SAPD. The latter was still free to run its candidates in Reichstag elections, thus sustaining at least a modicum of both local and national activity, and because of the very nature of a political party, it was possible for an exile organization to carry on many political functions (especially propaganda). Trade unions, on the other hand, are worthless in exile, and their field of action is so clearly the workplace that some form of day-to-day, on-the-spot organization is a minimum requirement for them. Obviously it is also much more difficult for a trade union than a political party to operate clandestinely, though neither flourishes in secret. What the unions needed were bodies that could function openly on a local level, and under the antisocialist law this meant that politics was taboo. The *Fachvereine* provided a solution to these problems.

Industrial expansion in the decade of the eighties greatly increased the demand for labor, and in this atmosphere worker militancy grew. This decade marks the transition from the older forms of labor organization, which looked to the guilds of the past for models, to newer, more aggressive forms. The major impetus for this change was the widespread conversion to industrial-scale production, particularly in the new sectors of the "second industrial revolution," electricity and chemicals. To a certain extent, however, the conversion of trade unions to forms more closely derived from the modern industrial work experience was facilitated by the antisocialist law itself. By destroying the unions that had in part been generated from preindustrial precedents, the repression of the outlaw period made way for the new unions.

At first the *Fachvereine* were simply local bodies, organized by trade, which dealt with immediate local economic issues. But the nature of the

economic system, above all the increasing size of production units and the geographical spread of industry, made some sort of more extensive organization imperative. Despite the antisocialist law and the necessity of remaining nonpolitical in order to survive, the local *Fachvereine* gradually developed more centralized organizations in many trades. Led by the carpenters, who founded a new central organ in 1878—the *Neue Tischlerzeitung*—and a *Zentralverband* in 1883, and the metalworkers, who established the *Deutsche Metall-Arbeiterzeitung* in 1883 and a *Zentralverband* in 1886, by 1890 there were at least thirteen trade unions with some central organization. By the end of the antisocialist law, over 300,000 workers were organized in Germany, mostly by skilled trade, and more than 225,000 of them belonged to unions with national *Zentralverbände*.

During the 1880s the SAPD fully endorsed the trade-union (*Fachvereine*) movement, always with an eye to winning more political followers by these activities. In fact, the outlaw period saw the virtual disappearance of the last vestiges of anti-trade-union sentiment among German socialists, and thus the end of at least one aspect of the legacy of Lassalle. Bonds between the two branches of the workers' movement were strengthened under the antisocialist law as organized, or formerly organized, workers increasingly viewed the socialists as their only true friends. With the complicity of all the political parties save for the socialists and a tiny radical-liberal faction, the government suppressed the political and economic organizations of the workers while the SAPD representatives in the Reichstag introduced measures aimed at strengthening the right of labor to organize, legalizing boycotts, and ending special protection for strikebreakers; in addition, socialists provided strike funds and much of the trade-union leadership.

On the matter of strikes, the party maintained some of its earlier cautious attitude. It repeatedly counseled discretion in the use of strikes, even while usually giving unqualified support to such activities after they began. The last year of the eighties was the first great period of strikes in modern Germany; from the beginning of 1889 through the spring of 1890, there were more than 1,130 work stoppages involving nearly 400,000 workers, more than in the rest of the decade combined. In May 1889 nearly 150,000 miners engaged in strikes, including 90,000 workers in the Ruhr. Although neither union nor party leaders played an important role in initiating these walkouts, the uncompromising support socialists gave to them won the SAPD increased backing. Especially in the Ruhr, the new militancy moved many workers away from the Church and the Center party, though only temporarily; in the

1890 elections the socialists increased their Ruhr vote by as much eightfold in many districts.

By the end of the antisocialist law, then, a vigorous political party claiming to represent the workers of Germany was closely allied with the rapidly growing economic arm of the workers' movement. The trade unions experienced a temporary decline in membership in the first half of the nineties during an economic downturn but recovered rapidly in the last five years of the century. However, too much can be made of the association, since trade unionists, and most socialists as well, never conceived of the unions as *only* "schools for socialists." The significance of developments in the relationship after the turn of the century will be distorted if party dominance during and immediately after the outlaw period is exaggerated. Partly intellectuals like Karl Kautsky and Rosa Luxemburg enjoyed emphasizing the theoretical supremacy of the party in the partnership, but this view was never in accord with reality. The union leadership and most of the rank and file accepted the help of the party and participated heavily in party affairs, but the trade unions were sustained by an economic impetus derived from member experiences in the workplace. This impetus usually had a political aspect as well, and the SPD profited from it; it was, however, a secondary quality from the beginning.

### Centralization and Growth of the Trade Unions

The end of the antisocialist law did not mark a beginning of significant growth for the trade-union movement in Germany, but it did bring the culmination of the move toward the unified organization of all the Zentralverbände that had been aborted in 1878. In the quarter of a century that followed, the consequences of this centralization were to have an even greater impact on relations between the SPD and the free trade unions than did the impressive growth of the unions. The centralization of the unions in the form of the general commission allowed them to deal with the party on a more nearly equal basis.

Hamburg was a hotbed of trade-union activity, and the metalworkers there took the lead in calling for the formation of some sort of central organization. On 16-17 November 1890, barely six weeks after the expiration of the antisocialist law, seventy-four delegates of leading unions met in Berlin to prepare the ground for a general trade-union congress. At the Berlin gathering a general commission of seven members was chosen with the Hamburg turner Carl Legien (1861-1920) as its chairman. The general commission was charged with proposing an



administrative and organizational structure for the member unions and with calling the general congress.

Late in January 1891 the general commission issued the first number of its own journal, the *Correspondenzblatt der Generalkommission der Gewerkschaften Deutschlands*, which was edited by Legien. In its 25 April 1891 issue the *Correspondenzblatt* published the general commission's organizational plan. It called for the *Zentralverbände* to meet every two years in a congress to discuss problems and to elect the general commission. The latter was intended to be less than a trade-union executive, since it would have very little power over the member unions. Rather, it was to have three major functions: promoting trade unions where none existed, collecting statistics on the labor movement, and editing the *Correspondenzblatt* as a central organ of the free trade unions.

Discussion of the proposed organizational plan delayed the holding of the first general trade-union congress until the middle of March 1892, when it met in the Prussian town of Halberstadt. This discussion continued at the congress, where the major questions were the role to be played by local unions (i.e., those which belonged to no *Zentralverband*), trade vs. industrial unions, and the extent to which the commission was to serve as an executive (specifically, whether or not the commission would have control of a strike fund). With the exception of the strike fund issue, the congress accepted the general commission's original organizational proposals; it was decided that the individual *Zentralverbände* would retain control over all strike funds.

The general commission also lost in principle on trade vs. industrial union question when a metalworkers' resolution calling for the eventual formation of industrial unions passed. In practice, however, most member unions retained a trade structure at least until the war years, although there was some consolidation of related trades in the interval. The "localist" issue was important because the local unions tended to be more political and therefore more radical than the centralized unions. But the logic of expanding German capitalism demanded centralization, and the localists lost out on this issue, bringing thirteen representatives of such bodies to leave the Halberstadt congress in protest.

At this congress the roles to be played by the various bodies were defined to some extent, though the organizational structure of the free trade unions was not yet fixed. Basically the general commission was charged with the same duties as outlined above, plus the establishment of international contacts. While never specified as such, the general commission also served as the representative of the unions vis-à-vis the SPD. The *Zentralverbände's* duties included organization for and sup-

port of strikes and lockouts, financing itinerant journeymen, supporting lodging and labor exchanges, agitating for new membership, keeping statistics, and publishing a central organ.

In addition to the Zentralverbände, the general commission, and the general congresses, which were held approximately every three years (nine between 1892 and 1914), the free trade unions had a conference of Zentralverbände chairmen that dealt primarily with lockouts and the organization of strikes involving more than one member union, jurisdictional disputes among member unions, and international affiliations and meetings. This was the body that met in 1890 and 1891 to organize the Halberstadt congress, and after 1900 it played a very active role in trade-union affairs. On a regional and local level, functions similar to those of the chairmen's conference were conducted by groups called trade-union cartels; these bodies allowed lower-level cooperation among various unions. Between the local organizations and the Zentralverbände, regional organizations existed in most states. Together these several parts constituted the whole of the free trade-union movement.

During the Wilhelmian years, the free trade unions grew enormously both in size and geographical extent, expanding nearly ninefold in the former category between 1890 and 1914 (see table 2). The greatest growth after the end of the antisocialist law occurred during two periods: from 1896 through 1900 and from 1903 through 1906. During the first of these intervals, the unions grew at an average annual rate of over 20 percent with a low of 17.2 percent in 1900 and a high of 25.2 percent in 1897; in 1896 they had 329,230 members, and in 1900 they had 680,427. The second burst of growth came in 1903-1906, when the average rate was over 23 percent per year; here 1904 saw the smallest increase (18.5 percent) and 1905 the largest (27.8 percent). This phase began with 887,698 members in 1903 and ended with 1,684,709 in 1906.

Before and after these two periods of great growth, the trade unions frequently stagnated during economic downturns. For three successive years in the early nineties they lost membership, as they did again in 1901, 1908, and 1914; in addition, membership increased by less than one percentage point in 1909 and 1913. Furthermore, the membership of the unions was very unstable, a problem that concerned the leadership greatly. Nonetheless, despite a somewhat irregular growth curve, what had been in the mid-1880s an insignificant movement emerged after the turn of the century as one of the most powerful civilian institutions in the nation.

Geographically the trade unions obviously were concentrated in areas

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that were heavily industrialized, although they were not strong in all such areas. Prussia had over half of the Reich's population, and after 1897 it also had over half of the trade-union membership. The great cities were areas of particular strength for the unions. By 1913 Hamburg, with less than 2 percent of the German work force, had nearly 6 percent of the trade-union membership; comparable figures for Berlin were 5.6 percent of the work force and 9.6 percent of the trade unionists, and for Bremen, 0.6 percent and 2.1 percent. On the other hand, the unions were especially weak in the Rhineland, which had 12.9 percent of the work force but only 4.3 percent of the trade-union membership, in Alsace-Lorraine (3.3 percent, 0.5 percent), and in Westphalia (6.6 percent, 2.5 percent). Like the SPD, the free trade

Table 2 / Growth of Free Trade Unions Under Second Reich

	<i>Trade-Union Membership</i>	<i>% Change</i>	<i>Party Membership<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>% Change</i>	<i>Party Membership As a % of Trade Union Membership</i>	<i>Trade Union Membership As a % of Party Vote</i>
1890	294,551	—				20.6
1891	291,691	- 1.0				
1892	251,511	-13.7				
1893	218,970	-12.9				12.3
1894	245,723	12.2				
1895	255,521	3.8				
1896	329,230	22.4				
1897	412,359	25.2				
1898	493,742	19.7				23.4
1899	580,473	17.6				
1900	680,427	17.2				
1901	677,510	-0.4				
1902	733,206	8.2				
1903	887,698	21.0				29.5
1904	1,052,108	18.5				
1905	1,344,803	27.8				
1906	1,689,709	25.6	384,327	—	22.7	
1907	1,865,506	10.4	530,466	38.0	28.4	57.2
1908	1,831,731	-1.8	587,336	10.7	32.1	
1909	1,832,667	0.05	633,309	7.8	34.6	
1910	2,017,298	10.1	720,038	13.6	35.7	
1911	2,320,986	15.1	836,562	16.1	36.0	
1912	2,530,390	9.0	970,112	15.9	38.3	59.5
1913	2,548,763	0.7	982,850	1.3	36.6	
1914	2,483,661	-2.5	1,085,905	10.5	43.7	

a. No official membership figures were kept by the party until 1905-1906.

unions were for the most part organizations of non-Catholic, urban dwellers.

By trade, the movement was dominated by skilled and semiskilled workers, although this tendency was less strong in 1914 than it had been in the 1890s and before. From 1892 the metalworkers' union was the largest single body, exceeding 25,000 members in that year (10.4 percent of the total), over 125,000 in 1902 (17.6 percent), over 400,000 in 1910 (20.6 percent), and nearly 560,000 in 1912 (22 percent). Other large groups included the masons (over 175,000 in 1908), the woodworkers (formed by the merger of eight smaller unions, almost 160,000 members in 1910), and three true industrial unions after 1912: construction workers (326,631 members in 1912), transport workers (229,785), and factory workers (210,569). In 1912 the four largest unions comprised over 52 percent of the total union membership, and at the movement's high point the following year, about 12 percent of the total German nonagricultural work force was organized (compared to about 8.5 percent of the nonagricultural work force of the United States similarly organized in the American Federation of Labor at the same time).

In addition to being the largest union, the metalworkers were the best example of the tendency for trades to merge with related groups beginning in the nineties. The basic metalworkers' union absorbed the mechanics in 1891, the locksmiths and mechanical engineers in 1892, the goldsmiths and silversmiths in 1900, the metal casters in 1901, the diamond workers in 1904, the engravers in 1907, and finally the blacksmiths, whose union was nearly thirty years old, in 1912. These and similar consolidations steadily reduced the number of *Zentralverbände* from a 1905 high of sixty-six (with an average membership of about 20,000) to forty-six at the end of 1914 (with an average membership of almost 54,000). The resulting bodies often only approximated industrial unions while preserving a basic trade structure.

Free trade unions were primarily concerned with employment and job conditions, including wages, but they also had other interests, some of them quite extensive. A variety of social services occupied their time, especially far ranging insurance systems against unemployment, sickness, accidents, and moving expenses. The unions also developed a truly massive press. The general commission issued Polish and Italian language journals as well as the *Correspondenzblatt*, of which an average of 30,000 copies per issue was printed in 1913. By early 1914 fifty *Zentralverbände* had papers with a total circulation of over two and one-half million, led by the *Metallarbeiter-Zeitung* (585,000), the masons' *Grundstein* (350,000), the factory workers' *Der Proletarier* (217,000), and the transportation workers' *Der Courier* (203,000).

Finally, mention must be made of one of the most important features of the free trade unions in the years before the First World War: the amazing growth of the bureaucracy. As late as 1899 there were only 108 paid full-time functionaries in all the *Zentralverbände*; by 1904 there were 677, by 1907, 1,625, and by 1914, 2,867. Between 1902 and 1913 trade-union membership increased by just under three and a half times, and the bureaucracy by over nineteen times; in 1902 there were one and a half full-time bureaucrats per ten thousand members, while in 1913 there were over eight and a half per ten thousand. In any search for the increasing conservatism of the free trade unions, these figures play an important part. For most of this bureaucracy the movement was truly everything, the end nothing.

Carl Legien, who was chairman of the general commission from its founding in 1890 until 1920, was at least theoretically at the top of the massive organization. Although his powers were not nearly as great as those of his contemporary American counterpart, Samuel Gompers, Legien was an influential figure, and he was accepted by most Germans as the head of the trade-union movement. He is doubly important to this study because he was also a prominent SPD figure, representing the trade unions at party congresses and serving the seventh Reichstag district of Schleswig-Holstein for many years as a socialist.

Born in Marienburg, West Prussia, on 1 December 1861, Legien lost his parents while he was still young and grew up in an orphanage. Shortly before his fourteenth birthday, he left the orphanage to serve a five-year apprenticeship as a turner. In the spring of 1881 he began his obligatory stint as an itinerant journeyman, only to be interrupted in November by a three-year military tour. Upon leaving the army he resumed his *Wanderschaft*, traveling to and working in Berlin, Frankfurt a.M., and Deutz before settling in late 1886 in Hamburg where he lived until the end of 1902.

Legien's rise to prominence in the workers' movement was typical of the careers of many of the prewar leaders. In Hamburg he became involved in both a workers' athletic club and in a *Fachverein* of turners. His obvious dedication and speaking ability won him a leading place early on, and when the Hamburg association took the initiative in founding the Union of Turners of Germany in 1887, Legien was elected chairman. For a year and a half he held this unpaid position, contributed frequently to the turners' newspaper, and continued his ten-hour-per-day job as a journeyman as well. In December 1888 he became a part-time paid bureaucrat, but he had to continue to do piecework at home for a time to earn a living. In this way Legien showed the

commitment and dedication of so many other early workers' movement leaders. All during this time he was also an active participant in the Hamburg social-democrat movement.

When the Hamburg union sent Legien to Berlin to participate in the organization of the first general trade-union congress, he began a new phase of his career. In Berlin he was one of seven people elected to the general commission, and he was then chosen chairman by the other members, whereupon he resigned as chairman of the turners' union to devote full time to the new commission. From 1891 on he was the chief bureaucrat of the movement, and from 1892 until his death in 1920, he was the only person reelected to the general commission by every congress. Legien supervised the growth of the commission and the movement from infancy to maturity; he was, as an active socialist, also a central figure in the developing relationship between the two branches of the workers' movement.

#### Party-Trade Union Relations to 1905

At the first trade-union congress in 1892, the principle of fundamental conversion from a capitalist to a socialist system of production was proclaimed, but the specific issues of relations with the SPD and the connection between piecemeal reform and the final socialist goal were left open. For many years these questions remained unanswered largely because, in the absence of any particular pressure, both the party and the trade unions were content to let stand the vague, unarticulated, general agreement that conditioned their relationship. Only the growth of the unions and the gradual emergence of clear tactical and strategic differences within both branches of the movement forced clarification in 1905-1906.

For their part the trade unionists never had any doubts about certain aspects of the matter. First of all, even the most ardent socialists among their number recognized that the activities of the unions had to be determined by trade-union perceptions, not by the orders or wishes of the SPD. Second, very few trade unionists saw their activities as contrary to the goals and activities of the socialist party; virtually all of the leaders were willing to accept the label of "schools for socialists," though hardly any of them perceived this as the primary, let alone exclusive, function of their unions. Third, in order to achieve their maximum potential as organizations representing the economic interests of the workers, the trade unions were not willing to tie themselves directly to the party lest this offend possible nonsocialist supporters.

And finally, even after it became clear in 1905–1906 that the party was not superior to the trade unions, most members and all leaders of the latter still considered themselves socialists.

From the party's perspective, the issue was somewhat more complicated. Despite its rejection of the Lassallean notion of the iron law of wages and its vigorous support for organization of the workers into unions, the party continued to be permeated by a sense that improved wages and working conditions were only palliative measures, that permanent improvement in the lot of the working class could only come with socialism. Furthermore, as long as most SPD members were under the sway of Bebel, they shared his conviction that the collapse of the present system was imminent and that therefore it would be a waste of time to get too worked up over the unions. Most of these people were convinced that the unions could alleviate the plight of the workers on a stopgap basis, but they also believed that the primary function of the trade-union movement was to make its members aware of its own shortcomings and to teach them that only socialism would help in the long run.

At a time when the party was aggressive, vigorous, and full of hope, the contradictions apparent in these two views were suppressed. As long as the dominant feeling was that the SPD was riding the crest of the wave of history toward a rapidly approaching moment of truth, relations with the trade unions were only a source of possible temporary irritation, not a serious problem. The overwhelming electoral victories of 1890–1903 thus become as important as the growth of the trade unions when we consider the issue of relations between the political and economic branches of the workers' movement. The ennui and frustration of continued impotence, which began to grow within the party around the turn of the century, provided the pressure that cracked the facade of harmony between the SPD and the free trade unions. Once the facade was breached, the centralization and impressive growth of the unions became critical.

To a certain extent the relationship was a matter of power, both numerical and financial. For this reason most analysts have placed great importance on statistical comparisons of the size of the unions as opposed to the size of the party in explaining their relationship. Since the party did not keep official membership statistics until 1905–1906, accurate comparisons cannot be made until then, when the trade unions were over four times as large as the party (see table 2). It is almost certain, however, that the unions had been larger than the party since before the end of the antisocialist law. Further demonstration of the relationship can be found when the party's vote in Reichstag elections is

compared with the membership of the unions. In 1893 trade-union membership was equal to 12.3 percent of the party's vote; this figure rose to 23.4 percent in 1898, 29.5 percent in 1903, and an impressive 57.2 percent in 1907. Finally, the proportion of trade-union officials in the SPD's Reichstag Fraktion also grew steadily, from 11.6 percent in 1893 to 32.7 percent in 1912.

These figures are certainly significant: as the trade unions grew, so did their influence within the party. But the critical matter of the momentum of the two branches should not be overlooked. In 1906 party membership was only 22.7 percent of the size of the trade-union membership. The next eight years, however, saw the party increase by 182 percent and the unions by only 47 percent so that in 1914 party membership stood at 43.7 percent of trade-union membership, nearly double the 1906 figure. Certainly a portion of the party's growth can be accounted for by the new trade unionists who also joined the party, but it is equally certain that those trade unionists who did join the party were the most highly conscious and politically active of the new union members. In this sense, then, the impetus of the moment should have been with the party; that it was not reflected internal party developments more than it did relations with the trade unions.

The influence of the momentum of the two branches of the socialist-workers' in Wilhelmian Germany was abundantly apparent at Cologne in 1893. This was the first congress at which the party conducted a full-scale discussion of its relationship with the free trade unions. The party came to the congress flushed with victory, having, in the eyes of most of its members, defeated Bismarck by outlasting the antisocialist law and with two major electoral successes under its belt since 1890. In contrast, 1893 marked the low point of the trade-union decline in the early nineties; the fewer than 220,000 members of that year constituted a more than 25 percent decline from the nearly 295,000 members of 1890. The following year would see the beginning of decades of growth, but of course no one knew that in 1893.

At Cologne the trade-union question had two major speakers, Legien representing the trade unions and Auer speaking for the party. Eight different resolutions were offered for the party's consideration. These ranged from three that required in varying degrees that all party members join unions to one offered by the Berlin party organization which read: "Party money may in the future no longer be used for strikes, etc., but only for party aims." These proposals typified the extremes of the positions represented at this congress, but the debate very quickly focused on two more moderate resolutions, one proposed by the party leadership (Auer, Bebel, Singer, Liebknecht, etc.), and



one proposed by Leo Arons, one of the very few academics active in social democracy at that time.

Arons' resolution specifically rejected the notion held by some party members that the increasing political successes of the movement would soon render trade unions unnecessary. Instead, he called for continued close cooperation between the two branches and for all party members to join unions unless there were compelling reasons not to. In his proposal Arons represented a strain within the party that was counseling caution against the prevalent euphoria and also one that was not convinced that the collapse of capitalism was imminent. Arons and his supporters, who included Legien among their number, also tended to value trade unions in their own right and not just as "schools for socialists."

The resolution offered by the party leaders was an excellent early example of what they would later do so well, namely, keep things as they were. It began by asserting that the Halle congress (1890) had said all that needed to be said on the subject, that conditions had not changed since Halle, and that, anyway, the party could not force its members to do things. It concluded with the following reaffirmation of past policy: "The congress repeats its expression of sympathy for the trade-union movement and charges anew that party comrades work tirelessly for recognition of the significance of trade-union organization and promote its strengthening with all energy."

Legien's speech was somewhat defensive and primarily intended to secure a positive vote for Arons' resolution. He argued that to a great extent the unions served as an advance guard for the party, because only after participating in the economic struggle could the workers fully appreciate the need for political, i.e., socialist, solutions to their problems. Given this, Legien maintained, the disparaging attitude toward unions often found in the party was not to its advantage. Referring to three particular articles in party newspapers, including the *Vorwärts*, Legien contended that this hostility was widespread as well as harmful. He concluded with a call for acceptance of the Arons resolution while trying to reassure the party that it had nothing to fear from the growth of the unions since most trade-union leaders were also party activists.

Auer's response to Legien obviously came from a position of strength. First he pointed out that one of the articles Legien brought up was a criticism of the general commission, not the trade unions as a whole. He then asked sarcastically: "Are the general commission and the trade unions identical? Indeed, Comrade Legien, are you then the trade-union movement?" Auer generalized further from this point by contending that the contact between the political and the economic arms of the

workers' movement was not confined to the general commission and the party central committee.

In fact, Auer argued, the centralized free trade unions in no way limited the contacts of the socialists since there were also noncentralized unions, local unions, and, above all, unorganized workers as well. All these groups represented the broader concerns of the party, he said, and if it tied itself too closely to the unions, which were suffering an unfortunate period of decline at the moment, it would be severely limiting its potential. Auer got a big laugh from the congress when he asked if the provision requiring party members to join unions meant that Liebknecht would have to join the "Union of Berlin Journalists" and Singer the "Free Union of Young Merchants," neither of which existed nor were likely to exist. He concluded that the unionists would just have to learn to live with criticism, since the central committee was not the party and could not be a censor, and differences of opinion were bound to exist in an organization as large as the SPD.

Many other delegates contributed to the discussion, mostly in opposition to Arons' resolution. Schoenlank pointed out that agrarian workers and lower government employees were not allowed to organize and that there were no unions for the millions of poor workers in the cottage industries. "The number of workers organized in trade unions," he said, "will always remain only a small part of the working class. . . . Social democracy is a proletarian movement, not a movement of workers organized in trade unions." Bebel argued that the party had to maintain constant surveillance of the trade unions because they often occupied themselves with "small questions" and were therefore in danger of losing "sight of the great aim and so aiding in the general dilution" of socialist spirit. The tide of the times was clearly with the party, and Arons' resolution was defeated 169 to 29; the Auer et al. resolution was then accepted overwhelmingly.

Both the defensive tone of Legien and the trade unionists (almost all of whom voted for the Arons resolution) and the aggressive optimism of the promoters of party supremacy reflected the times more than they did any real differences of opinion. At one point during the Cologne debate, Legien was reduced to arguing rather feebly that "mere declarations of sympathy and energetic propaganda are two quite different things." As in so many later party debates, the real differences here were ones of tone and emphasis rather than substance. Both groups viewed each other as mutually supportive, both recognized the need to maintain autonomy, and both would continue to cooperate in the future. Behind these differences there may have lurked more fundamental disagreements (Legien, for instance, seems to have conceived the

trade unions as agents of the transformation to socialism in a way that the political socialists did not), but this was not apparent at the time.

Defeat of the Arons resolution had no impact on the party's relationship with the free trade unions. The party continued to promote trade-union organization and to finance strikes; the trade-union rank and file largely voted for the SPD, and trade-union leaders played an increasingly significant role in party affairs. But the decline in trade-union membership that characterized the early nineties was reversed from the mid-nineties on, and as their numbers grew, the trade unionists gradually became more assertive in their relations with the party. The change was so gradual as to go largely unnoticed by the participants, although the strong inclination of the trade unionists to side with the party's right wing was obvious to everyone. It took, however, a major convulsion to bring the altered power relations to the surface. The conjunction of the Russian revolutionary events of 1905-1906 and the highest level of strike activity in German history created the necessary environment.

#### **The Mass Strike Controversy and the Mannheim Agreement**

Prior to 1905 the tactic of the mass strike had occasionally been discussed in German social-democratic circles; in 1903 Rudolf Hilferding, an Austrian-born intellectual active in the German movement, had even recommended the mass strike as a means of breaking out of the parliamentary deadlock the party found itself in despite the smashing electoral victory of that year. But in 1903, as always before, the combination of party and trade-union leadership managed to suppress discussion of such action. So effective was this suppression that when the 1904 congress of the Second International passed a resolution mildly favoring the mass strike as a potential weapon in the workers' arsenal, the SPD virtually ignored the entire matter.

But 1905 was different. Not only had the Russian workers shown the awesome potential of this weapon by bringing to its knees the reactionary stronghold of Europe, but labor unrest reached unprecedented heights at home. Since the late nineties the tremendous growth of the trade unions had been more than matched by the development of associations of employers. These groups responded with lockouts to the trade-union tactic of organizing one employer at a time, by which the unions attempted to concentrate resources for maximum effectiveness. But the widespread use of the lockout tended to heighten employer-employee tensions, so that the early years of this century saw a major increase in labor conflict. Whereas between 1890 and 1899 a total of

425,000 workers were involved in strikes and lockouts, from 1900 to 1904 there were over 475,000, and in 1905 alone over 500,000.

Naturally this tremendous increase in activity had an impact on the workers' movement, but it took curiously different forms among leaders and followers. Rank-and-file union members, already pressed by major increases in the cost of living after 1904, were pushed to even greater combativeness. The union leaders, however, concerned as they were with preserving the unions and their jobs as well, and viewing the employers' associations as formidable foes, tended to get increasingly cautious about calling strikes. In his now classic study *German Social Democracy, 1905-1917*, Carl Schorske observed: "The same socio-economic situation which made union leaders conservative had the opposite effect on the rank and file. The rising cost of living, the intense and widely shared experience of strike and lockout, and the unprecedented aggressiveness of the employers generated in the workers a new militancy and a receptiveness to radical political ideas."

Within the party a similar split occurred. Its more radical members saw the atmosphere of 1905 as an opportunity to overcome the malaise that seemed to have settled on the party despite, or perhaps because of, increased electoral success. Its more conservative members, who included most of the party leaders, were frightened by the prospect of increased violence; they felt that the physical might of the opposition was too great to challenge with widespread mass action. Among the right wing there were also party members who rejected such activities on principle and others who were simply content to sit tight with things as they were. But 1905 allowed no sitting tight; the pressures within Germany and the Russian model demanded action of some sort.

At this point one aspect of the developing conflict within the workers' movement needs to be emphasized. The party and trade-union leaders both were responding more to external events than to internal pressures. External events aroused much of the general membership of the two organizations and significant portions of the working masses that were not organized either politically or economically. To this extent the old argument about which body represented the larger part of the proletariat was cancelled by the obvious fact that neither did. When first the trade unions and then the party moved to contain the radical groundswell of the period, they both did so in secret, and secrecy was required because they knew they were acting against the wishes of the very people they claimed to represent. While the wisdom of the actions taken by the leaders may be debated, it is highly doubtful that these actions represented a majority of the workers.

Probably no other issue in the history of the German working-class

movement prior to the outbreak of world war in 1914 had such a far-reaching impact on internal relationships as did the mass-strike debate of 1905–1906. The trade unions took the first step at their May 1905 national congress in Cologne by denouncing not only use of the mass strike, but also any discussion of it; persistent spontaneous mass action had stimulated the trade unions' response. The stage was for a major confrontation when in the following month the radical, intellectual wing of the party launched its main response to the trade unions with the publication of *General Strike and Social Democracy* by the Dutch socialist Henriette Roland-Holst, with an introduction by the SPD's leading theoretician, Karl Kautsky. The debate thus launched was long and acrimonious, and despite the best efforts of the party and trade-union leaders, the issue would continue to cause problems right up to 1914.

As for the debate over SPD–trade union relations, the central question was to what extent the unions would support the party if it was to call for a mass strike to achieve political ends. The party was never inclined to invade the unions' domain of economic strikes, nor did discussion of the question ever advance far enough to involve specific cases. The aggressive opposition of the trade unionists and their party allies ensured that the matter was largely confined to the abstract level.

Two party congresses, Jena, 1905, and Mannheim, 1906, were devoted primarily to the mass-strike issue. At Jena, Bebel gave one of the longest speeches in the party's history. In it he simultaneously praised and criticized both sides in the dispute but on the whole sided with the party against trade unionists. His resolution did not call for a mass strike, but it did accept such a tactic as a reasonable alternative under certain conditions, and it did imply that were the SPD to call for a mass strike, the unions would be obligated to support the action. Bebel thus reasserted the party's traditional assumption of the superior importance of political issues and the party's primacy over the trade unions. Not surprisingly, most prominent trade unionists voted against this resolution as it passed by the overwhelming vote of 367 to 14.

Beginning in November 1905 and lasting through 1906, spontaneous mass political upheavals occurred in several German cities, especially in Saxony. Most of the protestors were workers, and the issues generally focused on stopping the trend toward more stringent franchise requirements on the local level. These were exactly the sort of activities that party and trade-union leaders feared would get out of hand, and the leadership moved to limit its responsibility for and involvement in the protests. Fearing both chaos and severe governmental reprisals, the chiefs of both branches of the German workers' movement took

steps to insulate themselves from the people they were supposedly leading.

On 16 February 1906, representatives of the general commission of the free trade unions and the central committee of the SPD signed a secret agreement that would, they hoped, protect them from the radical groundswell. Under the terms of the agreement, the party accepted fiscal responsibility for political strikes and agreed that the trade unions would be held responsible for economic strikes only; the party central committee also agreed to work against mass strikes in most instances. In this way the Jena resolution implying party superiority over the trade unions and the assumption of most party members that their long record of support for the unions' economic activities justified demands for reciprocity were both wiped out.

For the most part this agreement, like the 1893 party resolution, did not change the mundane aspects of the working-class movement. But after February 1906, for all practical purposes, the SPD was no longer in a position to lead an organized mass strike because its treasury could not bear the costs of a strike by the much larger trade-union membership, which was nearly four and a half times the size of the party's in 1905–1906. Whether or not the party would have ever used this tactic anyway is questionable, but by surrendering one of their most potent weapons without ever using it, the supposedly revolutionary social democrats severely limited their political flexibility.

Bebel was responsible for selling this new agreement with the trade unions to the Mannheim party congress in late 1906. The terms of the February agreement, which did not remain secret for long, had to be reconciled with the party's own Jena resolution. But the more difficult task facing Bebel was the need to realign the party majority to back the essence of the trade-union agreement. In so doing the venerable SPD leader displayed his command of the party and his ability to perform logical and verbal gymnastics as he never had before; his achievement at Mannheim was a truly remarkable feat.

The tactic Bebel chose was to argue that the mass strike was useful only as a defensive weapon, to protect against having old rights taken away in new attempts at repression. He argued that most party members would agree that without the support of the trade unions, an aggressive mass strike was not feasible, but he still maintained that the mass strike had not been entirely abandoned. Bebel's own very cautious attitude about this tactic was revealed when he told the congress that he had urged the inclusion of a clause in the resolution requiring an extraordinary congress to ratify any central committee decision to use this weapon, but had been overruled by the rest of the committee. In

cooperation with Legien, Bebel did add one amendment to the formal resolution; by a vote of 323 to 62, the party accepted his argument that the SPD's Jena resolution did not contradict the Cologne resolution of the trade unions. All in all, this was an outstanding demonstration of Bebel's hold over his comrades.

Led by Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Kautsky, the radical forces within the party tried to rally against these moves. But Kautsky's amendment reasserting party supremacy was preempted by Legien and Bebel, who countered with a mild restatement of the need for party-trade-union cooperation. With this minor alteration, virtually all of the radicals, including Luxemburg, voted with the majority to pass Bebel's resolution 386 to 5. By democratic vote the Cologne trade-union resolution condemning even discussion of the mass strike, the Jena party resolution reaffirming the mass strike as a potent weapon, and the secret agreement of February 1906, which effectively eliminated the mass strike from the social-democratic arsenal, had been reconciled.

As will be discussed in the next chapter, much of the conservative bent of the leadership of the German workers' movement can be explained in terms of the development of the party as well as the trade-union bureaucracy. In the case of the mass strike, this line of argument is substantially reinforced since the most important agreement was both secret and in conflict with the spontaneous mass action of the period. The less than radical forces of the party, including the trade unionists, the south Germans, and generally the representatives of the smaller party organizations, greeted the Mannheim resolution warmly. By 1906 the radicals were clearly in retreat, and the electoral defeat of 1907 strengthened the caution of the right wing. But neither party nor trade-union resolutions could still the popular unrest that persisted in Germany right up to the outbreak of war in August 1914. As long as this pressure still existed, the left wing of the party was never quite as weak as it might have seemed.

### **Trade Union Influence on Party Policies**

Actually the mass-strike debate was only the most obvious example of the increasing influence of the trade unionists within the SPD. On three other very important issues, the trade-union elements of the social-democratic movement also worked to still spontaneous mass action and to limit the party's potential to act aggressively in seeking reforms. These issues were the question of socialists' attitudes toward imperialism and militarism, the May Day protests, and the socialist youth movement.

Increasingly after the turn of the century, the questions of imperialism and militarism forced themselves on social democracy. As already discussed, the workers' movement in Germany included factions that attempted to keep the SPD from speaking out too forcefully against German armaments and expansionism, and the trade unions constituted an important element of these factions. Their role was clearly revealed at the 1907 Stuttgart congress of the Second International, where imperialism and militarism were the major topics of discussion. Half of the German delegates at Stuttgart were selected by the free trade unions, and they all worked as a bloc to ensure that the German delegation opposed the extreme antiwar resolutions of radicals like the French socialist Gustav Hervé. Backed fully by the trade unionists, the SPD emerged from Stuttgart as the mainstay of the conservative forces in international socialism.

May Day protests were part of the folklore of the radical workers' movement in the West in the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth. The very first congress of the Second International in 1889 passed a resolution calling for all workers to participate in a one-day strike on 1 May, not so much to demand any specific end, although demands for the eight-hour work day were frequently tied to the May Day protests, but to demonstrate to the world the international solidarity and might of the industrial proletariat. In Germany, as elsewhere, the call was warmly received, but the practice of May Day protests remained rather limited. Fearing massive reprisals by employers and the state, trade-union and party leaders both urged that demonstrations take place on the Sunday closest to May Day.

But despite the caution of their leaders, German workers continued the practice of May Day protest strikes sporadically. The culmination of trade-union opposition came in 1907, when the general commission and the party central committee once again signed a secret agreement. This time the party agreed to share the cost to workers who suffered reprisals from employers because of participation in May Day events. Such an agreement considerably emasculated the sacrificial symbolism of May Day, effectively limiting its significance.

Finally, the trade unionists also actively tried to maintain control of the burgeoning socialist youth movement in the first decade of this century. Because they were often illegal, especially in Prussia, because they were persecuted by state officials, and because their members were young and not institutionally bound to the traditional movement, the youth organizations tended to be more radical than the party at large. Left wingers like Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg, and Franz



Mehring valued the youth groups as potential allies against the conservative elements of the party, but of course the trade unions opposed them for the same reasons. Led by the prominent trade-union leader Robert Schmidt and the ultimate party bureaucrat Friedrich Ebert, the right wing managed to channel the potentially disruptive youth movement into passive activities.

All of these examples of the increasing influence of the trade unions also point to a very strong tendency in the relations between the political and economic arms of the workers' movement. Beginning with the founding of the general commission in 1890, these relations were more and more conducted on the executive level, that is, between the general commission and the party's central committee. The general commission gradually came to view the central committee as the supreme authority of the party when in reality the party statutes assigned this role to the annual party congress. However, as both types of organizations got larger, there was an unavoidable tendency for ever more authority to flow to the respective executives.

This development is of course a characteristic of virtually all bureaucracies, but for the SPD's relationship with the trade unions it implied two particularly important things, both of which worked against the more radical tendencies of the party. First, it suggested that the central committee was in fact the party and that the general commission was in fact the trade-union movement, something that Auer had specifically denounced at the 1893 party congress. Such a view worked powerfully to level out what were serious differences of opinion within the party about the proper conduct of relations with the unions, since the central committee overrepresented the most conservative portions of the party. Second, whatever claim the party had to a broader constituency than the organized workers was weakened by the inclination of the two groups to deal with one another organizationally, which tended to put the two on an equal footing and to limit the party's input to its institutional aspects. Obviously, under these conditions the superior membership size of the trade unions carried considerable weight.

Condemnation of the trade unions came easily from the radicals in the party, and it is still easy to see the unions as at least partially responsible for the failure of German socialism to live up to its own fine dream of a juster and more humane world. The limited and mundane goals of the trade unions frequently led them to reject as chimerical any more sweeping considerations. Perhaps an even more important element of their relative conservatism was the realization that not only was the organization of the proletariat slow and difficult, but the resulting hold

over the workers was often rather tenuous. This is why the very high rate of turnover in the membership bothered the leaders, and it also goes a long way toward explaining why the leadership insisted on remaining neutral in a technical sense. If the free trade unions, no matter how close their apparent ties to the SPD, could maintain organizational and technical independence of the party, then that portion of the unstable membership that was uneasy about the socialist connection could perhaps be held onto. Since this neutrality was universally considered a fiction outside the movement, and since their opponents regarded the SPD and the free trade unions as simply different aspects of the same evil, the trade unionists' insistence on neutrality could only have been important within the movement.

Scorn for theory was presumably also a hallmark of the trade unionists. In the great many theoretical disputes of the party, prominent trade-union figures occasionally took sides, always with the more conservative forces, but they were never major participants. When theoretical conflicts touched on practical, day-to-day matters, the trade unionists would generally express an opinion, but they hardly ever involved themselves in actual discussions of theory. For this reason the trade-union forces in the party regularly voted with the majority to condemn revisionism and radicalism alike. However, to the extent that they were motivated by any theory, Carl Legien best gave voice to it.

Legien's conception of the function of the trade unions in the transition from capitalism to socialism was central to the dispute between the party and the unions. Most political socialists viewed trade unions as bodies that would exist only under the rule of capital; when socialism was achieved, these people argued, trade unions would no longer be necessary, for the economic rights of the workers would be guaranteed in the socialist society. But Legien and the few other trade-union leaders who thought through the implications of their positions were inclined to see the unions as both agents of the transition to socialism and permanent features of socialist society as well.

Legien's notion was that while the party struggled for the political democratization of Germany, the trade unions struggled for the democratization of production. Under capitalism this struggle would take the form of demands not only for higher wages, shorter hours, and better working conditions, but also for a workers' voice in the process of production; in this sense Legien was an early predecessor of the current practice of "codetermination" in major industries of the Federal Republic of Germany. But more important as far as relations with the SPD were concerned was Legien's belief that trade unions would eventually

dominate the process of production and that they would continue to play a similar role under socialism as the permanent representatives of the interests of the workers.

Thus the political socialists saw the unions as important in the present system, but also as transitory, which led them to play down their long-term significance. Many trade unionists, on the other hand, assigned a much more enduring role to economic organization, and they thus rated the unions as considerably more significant than did their political comrades. Other differences of opinion, for instance, on the feasibility of ever organizing all or even the great majority of the workers, separated these two groups as well, but this divergence on the future role of trade unions also played a part in maintaining tensions within the movement.

This chapter has pointed to some of the characteristics of the German free trade-union movement prior to World War I, particularly its tremendous growth, bureaucratization, and consequent centralization. The SPD itself experienced similar developments, and their nature and impact are taken up in the following chapter.

## 4 / State Within the State

The most persistent and compelling feature of the socialist, working-class movement in Imperial Germany was its isolation from and ostracism by the rest of society. Economically, politically, culturally, and socially, the SPD and the free trade unions were pariahs in their own state. In general both the political and economic branches of the working-class movement developed as responses to industrialization, but within this larger framework the specific and often unique features of the German movement were the results of its isolation.

In its most extreme forms, this isolation had obvious origins. At the time of the birth of the socialist movement, Germany was a relatively religious society. In the south, along the Rhine, in Alsace-Lorraine, and in the Polish portions of Prussia, Catholicism was a pervasive force in everyday life. In much of the rest of the country, especially Prussia, an established Lutheran Church played an extensive role. But like most modern socialist movements, the German version was from the beginning dominated by nonreligious and antireligious sentiments. Germany had only a very modest Christian socialist movement, quite in contrast to the importance of such impulses in Great Britain and the United States. Thus the socialists' hostility and indifference toward religion set them apart from most of the rest of the nation.

As mentioned earlier, probably the most significant source of the isolation of socialist workers in Germany was the extent to which they were perceived by the rest of society to be unpatriotic. The attitude of the SDAP toward the Franco-Prussian War had done much to popularize this view of the socialists, and the strong opposition of the SAPD and the SPD to military expansion and diplomatic adventurism reinforced the image. Under Kaiser Wilhelm II, who was often capricious, erratic, and irresponsible in his conduct of foreign affairs and who was dangerously and inordinately proud of the Prussian military,

hostility toward the socialists as enemies of the country increased greatly.

But other less obvious though no less potent forces were also at work isolating Germany's workers, socialist and nonsocialist alike. Powerful social and cultural factors like dress, language, customs, and housing delineated workers from the urban middle classes, to say nothing of the landed aristocracy. By the late nineteenth century, Germany had a fairly well-developed elementary education system, but the instruction available to the lower classes was of poor quality, and access to higher education was virtually impossible for workers. Thus educational differences perpetuated the isolation of the workers, limiting their cultural and artistic horizons. In extent and psychological importance, this sort of isolation was probably at least as significant as the political and religious segregation.

Underlying these matters was, of course, economics. In the urban setting money determined housing, food, clothing, and entertainment, and, to a lesser extent, education and cultural activities. Obviously there was no strict or direct correlation between income level and patterns of consumption, since a variety of factors determined how income was utilized. But in general basic needs had to be met first, and much of the German working class had little surplus to dispose of once these needs were satisfied. This relative lack of financial resources both defined the workers as a class and conditioned the forms taken by their collective action.

Wilhelmian Germany's working class attempted to cope with its economic difficulties by forming trade unions and various kinds of cooperatives. But the other aspects of its isolation were also major concerns, and in many of these areas the SPD provided alternatives. So extensive were these efforts that after the turn of the century, German social democracy developed into a sort of "state within the state." In conjunction with the cooperatives and trade unions, the SPD and its ancillary organizations attempted to satisfy workers' needs that the larger society would not or could not satisfy.

Two features of this complex of alternative organizations are important to note. First, in many ways the party and its affiliates mirrored the developments of nonsocialist, nonworker society, and thus they constituted parallel organizations with a socialist twist. For instance, the press, educational, and propaganda activities of the SPD and its predecessors had counterparts in bourgeois circles; similarly, socialists were usually discriminated against in organizations like veterans' groups and athletic clubs, and they responded by founding their own associations. Often socialist organizations were separate but not re-

markedly different; the people in them were Germans, they were subject to many of the same pressures and prejudices as their non-socialist counterparts, and these things account for similarities along a broad front. To this extent what the socialists supported was a subculture rather than a counterculture.

On the other hand, the socialist aspect of these organizations was not incidental, but reflected real as well as circumstantial differences separating their members from nonsocialists. The political content of these bodies and the values implicit in their politics gave ample evidence that reconciliation with the larger culture could come only with difficulty. Even the existence of such socialist organizations tended to reinforce and perpetuate the differences that gave rise to them in the first place. So while it is possible to see the socialist complex as simply another face of the Second Reich, it is also necessary to keep in mind that in some very important ways, socialists and nonsocialists were incompatible.

Although this argument cannot be fully developed here, its specifics should become apparent in the account of the several socialist bodies. The matter of politics and values is important because of what happened after the fall of the Wilhelmian state and society. While it is true that most socialists were German enough in 1914 to support the war, it is also true that all of them were sufficiently social democratic to try to make Weimar work. Socialists shared the first position with most other Germans, but not the second; in the latter lies the failure of representative democracy in Germany for the first forty-five years of this century.

### **Party Organization Prior to 1905**

Despite its rapidly increasing size and complexity, the SPD remained remarkably free of bureaucratic encumbrances until after 1905. The most important reason for this was the strong tradition of local autonomy and the persistent distrust of the highly centralized organization that had characterized the ADAV. In addition, the party ideals of democracy and self-emancipation were realized in the practice of relying on volunteer workers and in the organizational statutes' definition of the annual congress as the supreme authority of the party. This customary practice was reinforced by the periodic nature of heavy party work requirements, that is, only at election time—usually every three years beginning in 1871 and every five years after 1893—was a large work force necessary.

Reich and state governments, especially the Prussian, also retarded the development of an extensive SPD bureaucracy by continual perse-

cution of the party. Under the antisocialist law the impact of the persecution had obvious consequences. The existing party leadership—defined by the Gotha unity congress of 1875 as a five-member executive, a seven-member control commission, and a much less important eighteen-member board (*Ausschluss*)—was immediately dissolved, and the socialist Reichstag Fraktion became the de facto executive and was confirmed in its position by the illegal Wyden congress in 1880. As long as only the Reichstag representatives were immune to prosecution for public socialist activities, no other official bureaucracy was likely to develop.

As has been pointed out frequently, the SPD remained under the sway of the "heroic period" long after the expiration of the antisocialist law. Therefore the very things that create a need for and perpetuate a bureaucracy—records and statistics—were avoided by the party in part out of fear of providing police and governmental officials with incriminating evidence. But this caution was not bred by paranoia alone. In November 1895, more than five years after the end of the antisocialist law, the Prussian minister of the interior, Ernst Matthias von Köller, moved against the Berlin branch of the SPD on the basis of supposed violations of the 1850 association laws. The local organizations of all six Berlin districts, the Berlin association of *Vertrauenspersonen*, and the party executive were all dissolved. Although the SPD Fraktion stepped in to take over for the executive and the Hamburg party assumed the central administrative responsibilities, not until the spring of 1897 did things return to normal.

This "Köller coup" had been prompted by the government's pique at the failure of the Reichstag to pass some new repressive legislation. But while it only temporarily inconvenienced the SPD, it also strongly reinforced the fears of the leaders that more persecution was inevitable. This resulted in reinforcement of the natural aversion to a strong centralized bureaucracy, dependence on which would make the party very vulnerable to official assaults. As long as there were no people to collect and maintain them, that is, no bureaucracy, there could be no central records to fall into the hands of the authorities.

Under these conditions the party got by with a bare minimum of paid officers. According to the revised organizational statutes that came out of the 1890 Halle congress, five members formed the party executive and seven were on the control commission, with salaries to be determined by the party congress. Not counting editors and staffs of the party press, this was the extent of the party bureaucracy. Socialist Reichstag representatives received some support from the central funds while the assembly was in session; during election campaigns and

occasionally in areas without strong party locals, central funds were used to finance speakers and agitators. But these people were not part of a permanent bureaucracy, which was limited to only twelve people.

Although the Halle statutes did not distinguish between the members of the central executive and the seven-member control commission, customary practice continued to define differences in function for these two groups. In general the officers formed the party executive and were charged with conducting the day-to-day business of the party, carrying out congressional decisions, preparing reports on the condition of the party, and calling and preparing the agenda for the annual party congress. The treasurer was a particularly important officer since he (the post was always held by a man) was responsible for collection of party dues and dispersal of funds. The executive was also responsible for evaluating membership requirements, and individuals and locals that failed to pay their dues or otherwise violated party statutes could be expelled.

Ultimately the entire party leadership was responsible for monitoring the official party press, but in practice this job was left to the control commission. This body also reviewed the work of the executive, especially its conduct in financial matters, and had the power to overrule actions by the officers it thought in violation of party statutes. Expelled locals and individuals, as well as anyone else who had a run-in with the executive, could appeal to the control commission for reconsideration; this decision, in turn, could be appealed to the annual congress.

Even when the party was still quite small, the control commission was often very busy. At the 1873 Eisenach congress of the SDAP, the control commission report summarized its activities for the forty-five week period from 23 September 1872 to 1 August 1873. In that time the commission met on forty-three occasions, considering fifteen different problems; it reached decisions on twelve of these, referred one to the congress, and needed to consider two others further. The problems included three major areas: (1) matters referred to it from the executive, (2) review of the executive's finances, and (3) review of other executive decisions. The last included expulsions, party debts, agitational activities, and protests about the contents of the official party organ, the *Volksstaat*. In addition the control commission did a general review of the contents of six other party papers—the Dresden *Volksbote*, the Chemnitz *Freie Presse*, the Crimmitschau *Bürger- und Bauernfreund*, the Fürth *Demokratische Wochenblatt*, the Braunschweig *Volksfreund*, and the *Hofer Zeitung*.

Prior to 1905, however, the most important figures in the socialist party were not the Reichstag representatives, the central officers, or



the members of the control commission, but the *Vertrauenspersonen* (called in the 1890 statutes the *Vertrauensmänner*, but made genderless by the 1892 Berlin congress, when the name *Vertrauenspersonen* was adopted). These people were the channels of communication between the locals, which were the basic units of the party and corresponded to the Reichstag electoral districts, and the party leadership. In the 1890 party statutes no functions were specified, but each local was to have from one to three of these representatives, elected annually by a method determined by each individual local. How a local would decide whether to have one, two, or three was not specified, and the practice varied greatly; generally the larger locals had more representatives, but virtually every Reich electoral district, no matter how few socialists it had, had at least one *Vertrauensperson*.

A circular from the party leadership at the end of 1890 defined the functions of the contact people as the maintenance of channels of communication, reporting on agitational activities, and the collection of dues. Depending on local conditions, each of these people was backed by some form of permanent political organization, periodic election body, or a workers' association that issued propaganda material, provided speakers and agitators, and raised money to support party activities. The last frequently included the various support funds and cultural and social activities that will be discussed below as well as the political affairs of the electoral district.

This form of organization placed a premium on the local. As a result a relatively large number of members were regularly called upon to contribute time and energy to party affairs. Although the official definition of party membership never included active participation in party affairs, calling instead only for agreement with the principles of the socialist party and regular payment of dues, the heavy emphasis on the locals had the effect of stimulating individual contributions. For one thing, since a local paid-party bureaucracy was either very small or entirely lacking, even the most devoted activists still had to earn their livings and thus could not always do all the work. Obviously not all members shared the work load equally, but the voluntary nature of the responsibilities meant that many would have to contribute if the local was to survive.

Strong locals also made the representatives to the central organization extremely influential people. They were not only of necessity usually privy to all important local developments, but they also benefited from the increased prestige of being knowledgeable about the affairs of the central party. At least until late in the last century, battle-scarred veterans usually held these positions, and their cir-

cumspection and tested reliability obviated the need for tighter control while their long experience made more precise definitions of their duties unnecessary. As long as these people predominated, the party ran fairly smoothly with a minimum of bureaucracy and extremely vague organizational statutes.

At the same time strong locals tended to restrict the SPD's development into a centralized revolutionary political party. In many of the regions that had strong locals, reformists predominated and used their power bases to struggle against the more revolutionary tendencies of the party. Many factors contributed to this process, and several of them will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter. But at least some aspects of the matter deserve passing reference here.

First, a number of the strongest party locals developed in the south of Germany, especially Baden and Bavaria. In much of south Germany neither political nor social restrictions on the workers were as important as in Prussia, for instance. Because state- and local-level elections were often based on a broad franchise and class lines were not so sharply drawn, the potential for cooperation with other classes to achieve effective reform seemed greater in south Germany. Furthermore, the SPD's own local organizations often reflected an imbalance in representation between a large urban concentration and the surrounding suburban and semirural area. One strong urban local with thousands of members could be overwhelmed by several smaller locals with only hundreds of members because of the party's nonproportional method of determining representation at regional, state, and even national congresses. Since industrialized urban locals tended to be more radical than suburban or rural locals, the radicals were often underrepresented in proportion to their number.

Finally the matter of personalities must be considered. The tradition of strong locals frequently produced strong local leaders, like Wilhelm Kolb in Baden and Georg von Vollmar in Bavaria. These men and others like them, backed by strong local organizations, were not inclined to take their lead from a central executive they felt was unduly radical and often ignorant of local conditions. The more the central party attempted to exert influences on the south Germans, the more the strong locals served as a barrier. It was exactly this sort of pressure that gradually gave birth to an organizational reform movement within the party.

### Organizational Reforms of 1905

Modest efforts at organizational reform were made by the SPD at the 1900 congress in Mainz. The central executive was expanded to seven

by the addition of two at-large members (*Beisitzern*), the formal distinction between the executive and the control commission was restored, payment of dues was added to membership requirements, a separate body was created to consider membership disputes, and the Berlin local press commission was assigned responsibility, in cooperation with the executive, for monitoring the official party organ, the *Vorwärts*. On the whole these changes constituted a rather feeble attempt to deal with one impulse for reform, the tremendously increased work load, but they totally ignored the more pressing question of local autonomy vs. centralization. The 1900 reforms were so obviously inadequate that the pressure for change was not relieved at all.

By the turn of the century, the organizational statutes adopted in 1890 no longer reflected the practice of the SPD. The Halle measures defined a party that consisted of some type of local organizations tied to the central executive by the *Vertrauenspersonen* with no intervening supralocal bodies. But even as early as 1893-1894, at least twenty-six different parts of the Reich (including Baden, Bavaria, Berlin, Bremen, Hamburg, Saxony, and Württemberg) had some sort of regional, provincial, or state organizations. These bodies brought together representatives from several electoral district locals in an effort to deal with common problems on a joint basis. Saxony held annual state party congresses every year from 1891, and Bavaria had them every two years beginning in 1892.

Furthermore, the central party itself, confronted with the increasingly unmanageable size of its electoral efforts (as early as 1893 the SPD ran candidates in more than 380 of the 397 electoral districts), had begun to divide the nation into informal agitational regions that combined locals for easier administration. Simultaneous expansions of the party press and the number of electoral districts with *Vertrauenspersonen* swelled the responsibilities of the executive and control commission to extreme limits. What had in earlier years been an effective and highly personalized form of organization was rapidly becoming cumbersome and inefficient.

Despite all this, organizational reform might have been even longer in coming save for two other developments. In 1904 Prussian association laws were eased sufficiently to allow for the first time the formation of a statewide organization of the SPD in Prussia. Prior to this time regional groupings had been tolerated in Berlin, Brandenburg, Posen-Silesia, and the Rhineland, but never a statewide body. With Prussia finally able to establish such an association, much of the resistance to elevating the organizational stature of state groups declined.

The second important development was ideological. The left wing of

the party grew increasingly concerned about the rising influence of reformists during the nineties. Radicals were particularly incensed when socialist deputies voted for state-level budgets. At the 1894 Frankfurt congress the Bavarian socialists had been specifically condemned for such a vote, and opposition to budgets was increasingly made into a matter of party discipline and tradition. The argument used against these votes was that to support budgets was to vote for capitalism and the oppression of the workers. But party condemnations did little to restrict the reformists, and the dispute continued. Further fuel was added to the fire with the emergence of revisionism after 1896, which finally convinced all of the radicals that only a highly centralized, tightly controlled party could maintain discipline over recalcitrant locals.

In many ways this party dispute reproduced a similar debate that had gone on earlier in the trade-union movement. Only this time the conservative trade-union leadership switched positions on the issue of centralization vs. local autonomy. In the trade-union debates the leadership had urged centralization in part because the union radicals had insisted on having a free hand in local issues. But now it was the radicals of the party who favored centralization, and Theodor Leipart led the union forces in demanding that the party remain a federation of relatively autonomous bodies.

Bureaucratization and centralization were inextricably woven together in the reform drive. The first step was taken at the 1904 Bremen congress when the executive was authorized to appoint paid secretaries on all levels of organization. Locals were to nominate the candidates, but their appointment was subject to the approval of the executive, which paid the salaries of the new officers. Regional organizations were free to hire their own secretaries without executive approval, but only if they paid the salaries; only Berlin, Brandenburg, Schleswig-Holstein, South Bavaria, Pfalz, Anhalt, and Hamburg did so. By 1906 there were sixteen regional secretaries paid by the executive; by 1907, twenty-four; and by 1908, twenty-eight; by 1909 all but a few very small regions had this secretarial structure.

However, the first step taken in 1904 was very modest compared to the radical reorganization passed by the 1905 Jena congress. Here the old *Vertrauenspersonen* system was almost entirely eliminated as every electoral district was required to have a formal local association, and two new levels of organization were interjected between the electoral district local and the central executive. Above the local level was the agitational district organization, and above that was the state or provincial organization; *Vertrauenspersonen* survived only where these or-

ganizations were illegal or lacking, and then only until they could be formed. This conversion took place very quickly also; by 1907 there were only forty-six *Vertrauenspersonen* left, and by 1910 all but sixteen Reichstag electoral districts had formally organized locals. All of these intervening organizations were headed by paid bureaucrats, each of whom was responsible for reporting to the next higher level, although the electoral district bodies also had to report statistics directly to the executive. The annual congress remained the supreme authority, but after 1905 a much more complex bureaucratic structure existed on a permanent basis.

We are now so familiar with the conservatizing influence of a bureaucracy that it is a source of wonder that the reformists feared these changes would radicalize the party and that the radicals sought these changes as a means of controlling their more conservative comrades. As the bureaucracy grew so did the conservative bent of the party leadership, and this in turn strengthened the conservative south Germans by giving them allies instead of opponents in Berlin. Perhaps even more important was the extent to which the new organization separated the leaders from the rank and file, thus making the party much less responsive to the volatile masses. Like so many other bureaucracies in so many other places, that of the SPD was better designed to maintain the status quo than it was to respond swiftly to the frequently changing moods of the people it supposedly served.

Radical efforts to control the reformists by the creation of a centralized bureaucracy were defeated by the timing of the development of the new party structure, by the nature of the tasks confronting the new party officers, and by the character of these people. But the radicals, most of whom were intellectuals without positions of authority or responsibility in the party, also lacked the sophistication to perceive and counter the apparently inevitable conservative evolution of the bureaucracy. Emotionally and intellectually, many of the radicals were inclined to place a great deal of faith in the radical potential of the SPD's mass following, so much so that they failed to discover until it was too late that the bureaucracy very effectively buffered party policy and the leadership from the pressure of the more radical lower echelons of the movement.

So powerful was the attraction of organization for the radicals that on at least two occasions when they analyzed the dilemma of the party as a crisis of leadership, their only solution was to expand the executive. In August 1905, during the peak of the debate over the mass strike, Karl Kautsky observed to his friend Victor Adler, the leader of Austrian socialism, that the executive was "a collegium of old men who have

become so absorbed in bureaucracy and parliamentarianism that they curse every increase of their work load." Kautsky's solution was to add new members to the executive, including two or three trade unionists. Given the profoundly reformist inclinations of most leading trade unionists, these additions could only have made the executive more cautious.

Again in 1911 the radicals, this time led by Rosa Luxemburg, mounted an offensive against the circumspection of the party leadership, and again the result was its expansion. The stimulus was the turmoil created when the leaders of the SPD expressed their opinion to the International Socialist Bureau, the permanent executive of the Second International, that no international socialist meeting was necessary to discuss the second Moroccan crisis. Luxemburg was outraged that the executive should dispose of the matter so cavalierly, and enough of the party membership backed her to give her protests substance. But the resolution of the crisis was not only the expansion of the executive in 1911 by two members, Philipp Scheidemann and Otto Braun, both moderates at best, but also the creation in 1912 of a new "party council." This latter was made up of representatives of thirty-two state and regional organizations and was to advise the executive on important political matters. Both of these steps increased the strength of the radicals' opponents within the party.

German social democracy experienced two major outbursts of mass radicalism in the decade prior to the First World War—in 1905–1906 in response to economic difficulties and the Russian turmoil of that time, and again in 1910–1911 as a result of the Prussian franchise reform efforts and the second Moroccan crisis. Unfortunately for the radicals, the new centralized bureaucracy was largely created in the interval between these two periods, an interval that was dominated by the stunning electoral defeat of 1907 and by the ascendance of the reformist trade unions. In this atmosphere the new bureaucrats were bound to be heavily influenced by the moderate tone of the times; the temporary decline of radical spirit was thus exaggerated and extended by the permanence of the new party structure.

Nor did the tasks confronting the party officers encourage responsiveness and flexibility. Foremost among the goals of the new bureaucrats were the increase of membership and dues, the expansion of the party press, development of a more effective election machine, and thorough statistics about all these things. Such targets reinforced the already strong tendency to rely on the tried and true techniques of the past rather than strike out in bold new efforts to cope with the rising tensions of German society. The tremendous accumulation of pa-

perwork that accompanied these exertions was itself sufficient to dampen the enthusiasm of volunteer workers, who increasingly left things to the professionals.

Both the circumstances of its creation and the nature of its tasks determined the character of the members of the new bureaucracy. What the party needed and got were reliable, hard-working attenders to detail who knew the rules and kept to them. These people were administrators, not politicians, and they had no particular reason to maintain close contacts with the rank and file. Whatever their own original inclinations, these bureaucrats usually came down on the side of stability rather than supporting changes that might have divided the party or limited its growth among nonsocialist voters. The result was not exactly inertia, since party membership and votes grew significantly and steadily after 1905, but it definitely was moderation. A new breed of social-democratic functionaries came into being to match the earlier developments of the trade-union movement.

At the head of this new army of officeholders was Friedrich Ebert (1871-1925), who later became the first president of the postwar Weimar government. Ebert was in many ways the ultimate bureaucrat—dour, diligent, and almost colorless. He was a tremendous organizer with a remarkable capacity for detail who could oversee the growth of the party bureaucracy and maintain central contact with an increasingly complex organization. What he lacked in brilliance and imagination, he made up for in dedication and industriousness. He was a model functionary.

Ebert was born in Heidelberg on 4 February 1871 of a Catholic master-tailor father and a Protestant mother. Although at one time local church officials encouraged the family to have the boy study to be a cleric, one of the few channels to higher education open to the sons of the working class, a strong religious commitment was lacking, and Ebert instead became an apprentice saddler (or leather worker really) quite by accident. It is likely that had he entered a trade destined to expand rather than decline with the rise of industry, he would have become a staunch trade-union activist instead of a political socialist. As a very young worker he showed a serious concern for working conditions, organization, and other day-to-day activities that would have suited him well for trade-union work. In fact, just such activities earned him blacklisting from employers and police officials while he was still a teen-aged apprentice and journeyman.

But the saddlers' trade (out of which Ignaz Auer also came to the socialist movement) was not one that grew into a large factory industry. Under these conditions, and heavily influenced by an uncle in Mannheim

who was a social-democratic activist, Ebert became increasingly involved in the political movement. By 1889 he had been introduced to the writings of Lassalle and Marx by his uncle, and in that same year he joined both the local socialist party and a saddlers' union. When he began his tour as an itinerant journeyman the following year, he was already more interested in politics than in the professional affairs of his trade. After short visits to Frankfurt, Hersfeld, Kassel, Hanover (where he worked briefly in a factory), and elsewhere, he settled in Bremen in May 1891, remaining there until he moved to Berlin as a member of the SPD executive in late 1905.

Like so many other workers who were very active in the movement, Ebert had a difficult time earning a living while pursuing socialism. At this time the Bremen party had few positions that paid enough to allow freedom from an outside job, but in early 1893 he did become local editor of the party's *Bremer Bürgerzeitung*. The modest salary of twenty-five marks per week eased his financial difficulties somewhat, but he still could not devote full time to party affairs. Shortly after this turn of events, however, the manager of a local brewery offered to set Ebert up in a saloon in return for having the exclusive right to supply the beer. In this way Fritz Ebert's Restaurant and Beer Hall became a center in which local socialists could partake of a little refreshment and hold meetings. With his new wife and her mother running the business, Ebert was free to be the socialist host, thus expanding enormously his contacts with the Bremen movement. He was an excellent example of the important role played by innkeepers in the growth of German socialism.

In 1896 Ebert was well enough known to be elected a delegate to that year's Gotha party congress; in 1899 he was elected to the Bremen city council; and in 1900 he finally became a full-time paid functionary of the party when he was hired as a labor secretary for Bremen. As labor secretary he was responsible for advising workers of their rights under the law, a position that brought him still wider contacts among the city's workers. Gradually his reputation as an able administrator and patient organizer spread beyond Bremen until at the 1905 Jena congress, he was a somewhat surprising pick to join the expanded executive.

The skills and experience Ebert brought to the Berlin central offices were exactly those that gave shape and substance to the growing bureaucracy. Prior to his arrival the executive conducted its affairs in a casual and rather disorderly manner, without telephones or typewriters and keeping few copies of correspondence. Gradually Ebert imposed more efficiency on the office by acquiring not only phones and typewriters but also a stenographer. One of his first assignments was to assist



the party treasurer, Karl Gerisch, in the collection of dues and compilation of the statistics on membership and dues required from each electoral district association after the 1905 reforms. Ebert further expanded this increase in paperwork by sending out additional questionnaires to local, regional, and state party officers. Thus as the number of functionaries grew, he managed to gain considerable influence in the party by virtue of his contacts with and monitoring of the new bureaucrats. Following Bebel's death in 1913, Ebert became cochairman of the executive along with Hugo Haase, who had replaced Paul Singer in 1911.

### Party Congresses

Despite the organizational changes of 1905, the annual party congress was still the ultimate authority of the SPD in theory. In fact, of course, a good deal went on in the day-to-day activities of the party, shaping the SPD in both profound and trivial ways, that the congresses never had anything to say about. The annual congress was simply the court of last appeal that was dominated by, though not always controlled by, the party leadership. This made the SPD congresses much like any other mass, democratic organization. Not all important issues were always recognized as such; they simply developed out of practice. The congress was too large and met too infrequently to deal with every aspect of the movement; day-to-day administration was the responsibility of the executive under guidelines established by the program and organizational statutes. The congresses dealt only with changes in the last two things, extraordinary situations, and attempts to overrule the leadership or deviant behavior by member individuals and organizations.

In order for a question to be raised in the party congress, it had only to be submitted as a proposal through proper channels. The requirements were simple to meet; a proposal had to be submitted to the executive about four weeks prior to the congress by any member in good standing, and it would then appear on the agenda. After the congress had begun, new proposals could be offered, and they would usually be accepted if supported by five or more members (since each congress set its own rules, the specific number varied from year to year). Time was then set aside to discuss the matter with specified individuals who served as reporters on major issues by giving long (from twenty minutes to three hours or more) presentations of the issues involved; on particularly important questions, there were often two or more reporters, pro and con.

After the reporters' speeches, the proposal was opened to general

discussion. Members interested in speaking on a question often had to sign a speaker's list prior to the debate, although contributions from the floor were almost always recognized. Each congress set its own limits on speakers, but they were usually allowed five to ten minutes and could speak only twice. Following this general discussion the reporters had time for rebuttal, and then the vote was taken. Controversial issues frequently involved roll calls, but technical questions and less controversial matters were decided by voice vote or a show of hands.

SPD annual congresses were not highly formal, and at least until 1914 they did not have parliamentarians; procedural questions were settled by the session chairperson or by argument. Debates were frequently heated, and speakers were often hooted or interrupted by cheers or comments, but sessions rarely degenerated into uncontrolled confusion. Most delegates accepted unwritten laws of decorum, and excessively rude or boisterous members, who were rare after unification was achieved in 1875, were generally controlled by peer pressure. The discussions challenged the rhetorical abilities of the speakers and sometimes lasted until the small hours of the morning, thus testing stamina as well, but bitter verbal assaults were uncommon.

One very unusual aspect of the socialist congresses in Germany was the presence at most of them of police officials. These men had the right to interrupt speakers who ventured into forbidden territory, and they could even cancel a session altogether if the discussion got too extreme. But the congressional participants themselves usually knew the allowable limits, and after the end of the antisocialist law, the police officials did not often intervene. Their presence was, nonetheless, a source of embarrassment for the SPD and should have been for the authorities also.

August Bebel was the dominant force of the annual congresses; the positions he supported almost always carried the membership. An accomplished speaker, something of a showman, and an absolute master politician, Bebel was truly in his element at the congresses. Although he often won over delegates by his prestige or the force of his arguments, he typically was on the winning side because he could read the will of the delegates like a book. His sense of timing and balance, his skill at playing opposing sides against one another, and his supreme ability simultaneously to praise, cajole, and browbeat made him a formidable opponent. On occasion he could also be brutal, as his attack on Karl Liebknecht at the 1906 Mannheim congress showed. But Bebel was much beloved in the party, and for the most part he dominated by his superior comprehension of the moods of the membership.

The party leaders were rarely surprised by developments at congres-

ses, and they were usually thoroughly prepared to get measures they favored passed. Not only did they almost always succeed, but the margins of victory were often very large. Despite pockets of opposition on specific issues, a high degree of unanimity prevailed within the SPD, and a large measure of unapproved behavior was tolerated from the minority. Expulsions from the party were neither frequent nor uncommon, but they usually derived from the failure to pay dues or from blatant disregard for party policy. For instance, even though revisionism was soundly denounced by congress after congress, as was support for state-level budgets by SPD representatives, up to 1914 no one was ever thrown out of the party for being a revisionist or for voting for a state budget. As party congresses frequently revealed, the SPD was a collection of divergent and eclectic socialists.

Representation at congresses was based on local party organizations, with every local, no matter how small, having at least one delegate; after 1891 every local could send up to three delegates. From the beginning efforts to adjust voting strength to the size of locals were frequently made at party congresses. Most members accepted the necessity of allowing even the smallest local to have at least one representative, but there was little agreement on how to increase representation for the larger locals. Obviously people from the smaller organizations did not want to be overwhelmed by those representing the larger groups.

At the founding congress of the SDAP, one delegate tried to overcome the problem by proposing a weighted voting system (one vote per five hundred members represented) rather than a weighted representation. He failed in his efforts, and the issue was not raised again until 1875. But the party's fourth congress, 1872, recognized the problem by giving every local at least one delegate and the larger ones one delegate per two hundred members. This system prevailed until unification, when the number of members per delegate was raised to four hundred, but voting on most important questions was based on a weighted arrangement according to the number of members actually represented. This obviously did not last long, since the antisocialist law disrupted the entire process of representation.

As long as the party remained rather small and geographically limited, it made little difference that congressional delegations were based on locals regardless of size. Some of the older, more established locals like Leipzig, Berlin, and Hamburg were short-changed, but the imbalance was not extreme. Once the party started growing rapidly, however, representation was increasingly distorted in favor of smaller,

usually suburban and rural locals. This inequity was not adjusted until 1909, when moderate reforms were introduced.

According to the reforms of 1909, every local up to 1,500 members was allowed one congressional delegate, those with 1,501 to 3,000 members got two delegates, those with 3,001 to 6,000 got three, those with 6,001 to 12,000 got four, those with 12,001 to 18,000 got five, and those over 18,000 got six; in 1912 a further reform stipulated an additional delegate for every 6,000 members over 18,000. Although this was an improvement, it still left the large urban locals grossly under-represented and the small rural locals grossly overrepresented. At the 1911 congress the 52 percent of the party membership from locals larger than 8,000 members had only 27 percent of the delegates (94 of 349), while the 31 percent of the membership from locals smaller than 4,000 had 53 percent of the delegates (183).

Given that German social democracy was overwhelmingly a party of the urban industrial working class, no method could have been devised to provide proportional representation without swamping the many very small rural and suburban locals; this, of course, is a problem that confronts virtually all modern representational systems. But in the case of the SPD, the problem was compounded by basing the organization of locals on the Reichstag electoral districts. In this way the party simply mirrored the severe malapportionment that prevailed in the distribution of Reich political representation, making almost as much of a mockery of the party's claim to democracy as the Reich did of universal suffrage. In 1913 the 10 largest social-democratic electoral associations had approximately one quarter of the total party membership (roughly 240,000 of 980,000), while the 304 smallest associations also had nearly a quarter (230,000). The only thing that would have helped was a complete reorganization of the basic structure of the party to reflect better the true nature of the party membership.

Party congresses were not just business meetings; they were also celebrations of the movement's victories, the year's major social event, and a time for, one is tempted to say, spiritual renewal. The pageantry of the congresses—the decorations, choral presentations, and related social events—was planned by the locals in whose cities the events were held, and these organizations often seemed to be competing to hold the grandest festival. Delegates frequently returned home from these gatherings rejuvenated and strengthened by the camaraderie and good will of the three- or four-day gatherings.

Sessions were usually held in large halls, since delegates and guests regularly numbered in the many hundreds. These halls were decorated

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with red bunting and the flags of local organizations, trade unions, and various party groups; busts or portraits of Lassalle and Marx, and often Engels, too, were mandatory, and at least one banner was always displayed with the slogan: "Workers of the world, unite!" At the 1896 congress, the Gotha local outdid itself by covering the walls with banners bearing the following aphorisms:

Socialism is peace.

The liberation of labor is the liberation of mankind.

Socialism is the bearer of all culture.

Against the unholy alliance of the capitalist powers, the holy alliance of the international proletariat.

Where the first [class] privilege begins, law ends.

The flames of freedom do not flare up from the blood of tyrants—  
No, rather from the hearts of the people who know themselves.

The enemy which we hate most—that is the unreason of the masses.

We live not in order to work, but work in order to live.

Now, friends, the day is just lighting,  
The dawn comes for our chances,  
Not without struggle, nor fighting,  
Spirit is stronger than lances.

An emotional recharge was also provided for Germany's socialists by the regular report of the annual total of jail sentences and fines accumulated by party and trade-union members in the performance of official activities. In 1892 sentences totaled 117 years, three weeks, and five days, while fines amounted to over 20,500 marks; in 1893 sentences exceeded 86 years, and fines were almost 32,000 marks. After the turn of the century, jail sentences declined sharply, but fines remained high; in 1910 the former totaled almost 37 years while the latter ran over 30,500 marks, and in 1911 the comparable figures were 26 years and over 32,500 marks. More than anything else, regular reports like these reinforced the "heroic" spirit of the outlaw period among people who saw fines and jail terms for political offenses as badges of honor.

Pages and pages of reports on other party activities, from agitation to the press to the youth movement to education and culture, along with a financial accounting, organizational and membership statistics, and a

summary of the activities of party representatives in the Reichstag and state political houses filled the protocols of each party congress. The impact of all this reporting was to demonstrate the irresistible march of socialism and the effectiveness of the party as its agent. Such information was the life's blood of the movement, especially as the great battles of the 1880s and 1890s faded from memory and the caution and hesitancy of the decades before the war grew. Inspiration came from numbers, and even the doubters found comfort in the annual congresses and their reports.

### The Party Press

The socialist press and publishing network was one of the three great branches of the German movement, the other two being the election machine and economic organizations. The commitment of German social democracy to a strong press came early and persisted throughout the period under consideration. One function of this journalistic complex was information, i.e., announcements of meetings, speeches, etc., but its primary function was education and propaganda. The socialist press in Germany was based on a profound distrust of its bourgeois counterpart; most socialists were convinced that the latter could not be relied upon in matters of fact or interpretation. From the very beginning German socialists pursued a highly didactic course in their newspapers and journals, leaving entertainment to separate publications.

As on so many other occasions, Wilhelm Liebknecht provided the aptest quotes on the party's press. At the Gotha unity congress of 1875, he observed: "Our most dangerous enemy is not the standing army of soldiers, but the standing army of the enemy press." Though perhaps something of an exaggeration, this line expanded on the meaning of a much more famous Liebknecht quote: "Knowledge is power." To a very great extent, leading German socialists of the nineteenth century were convinced that the liberation of the working class would follow automatically from the enlightenment of its members, and to this end a competent and extensive press was the movement's most potent weapon.

Liebknecht's attitude was shared by almost all his fellow social democrats. Implicit in this position were several assumptions that are important if we are to understand social democracy's approach to liberation of the working class. First, there was the notion that the subjugation, and therefore also the liberation, of the workers was largely a product of consciousness; at present the bourgeoisie predominated because of its superior command of learning and education, but in the future the proletariat would reign by establishing its own supre-

macy in these fields. Thus while the conditions of their experience might predispose workers to adhere to social democracy, specifically socialist consciousness had to be taught and learned.

A corollary to this first assumption was the idea that socialists competed for the fidelity of the workers with bourgeois and other nonproletarian forces. This belief obviously had its origins in the nature of the early movement, when liberals and socialists openly contended for control of workers' educational associations, and it was reinforced by the persistence of nonsocialist workers' groups in Catholic and nationalistic regions of the united German state. Taken together, the notion of competition and the emphasis on education help explain the range of topics dealt with in the socialist press. Bourgeois knowledge had to be confronted in every field—not just politics and economics, but science, literature, and the arts as well. If the aura of bourgeois intellectual superiority was to be overcome, socialism would have to establish its superiority in all realms of knowledge.

Finally, one unarticulated suggestion in the emphasis on "knowledge is power," and even more in Liebknecht's quote about standing armies, was that the liberation of the workers would not primarily or fundamentally involve the use of violence. This conclusion should not be carried too far, however, since very few German socialists thought that violence could be avoided altogether during the transition from capitalism to socialism. But the importance of the socialist press both reflected and reinforced the more pacific tendencies of the movement, for while the disputes of social-democratic journals were sometimes harsh and even extreme, they were fought out with words and not fists or guns.

Socialist journalistic and publishing activities served a third major function of providing jobs and income for a large number of workers and party activists. On the one hand, a great many printers and their associates, as well as distributors and business agents, were needed to issue and circulate party publications. The shutdown of virtually the entire party press by the antisocialist law created a good deal of hardship for these people, but the tremendous expansion of the network after 1890 yielded many hundreds of new jobs. Quite often firms producing for the party were organized as printing cooperatives, thus serving as models for socialistic production and worker ownership as well as propaganda factories.

The party press also provided positions for various types of editors and writers. Although such jobs involved fewer people, in the long run they were probably more important because they served to subsidize party activists and intellectuals. Every major figure in the history of German social democracy was at one time or another an editor or

regular contributor to the party press, and they all received pay for their work eventually. Since the government did not pay Reichstag representatives until 1906, income earned from the party press was a major source of financial support for the growing ranks of socialists who sat in the national representative house, and party intellectuals earned their livings almost exclusively from being paid by the party press. Without this form of support, very, very few German socialists could have afforded to devote full time to party and general socialist activities. Even after the bureaucratic reforms began in 1905, the press maintained far more activists than did the party bureaucracy.

The complexities of this system of support were revealed in 1894–1895, when efforts were made to reorganize the *Neue Zeit*, then the party's semiofficial theoretical journal, which had been founded in 1883 and was edited by Karl Kautsky. The journal was published in Stuttgart by the private house of J. H. W. Dietz, a Fraktion member and long-time party activist. At the end of the antisocialist law it was converted from a monthly into a weekly, but the change increased the debt of publishing, which distressed Dietz, and led to a lowering of the quality of its contents, which distressed Kautsky. Three possible solutions to the problems were considered. One was to move the journal to Berlin where Kautsky would be more able to keep current on party and national affairs and thus increase its popular appeal. The second was to convert it back into a monthly and increase the length of articles, allowing it to serve as a better theoretical forum. And third, the price could be raised, and payments for articles reorganized to affect economies.

Although Kautsky argued vigorously for the second solution, he was overruled by both Dietz and Bebel, the latter representing the interests of the party at a meeting about the fate of the *Neue Zeit* in August 1895. In fact, Kautsky got a long lecture from Bebel about not letting personal wishes outweigh the broader consideration that as a weekly the *Neue Zeit* provided important income for major party intellectuals, especially Eduard Bernstein, Franz Mehring, and Max Schippel. As a monthly the journal could not support these people nearly so well, and so, Bebel argued, it had to remain a weekly.

It was finally agreed to raise the cost (from 20 to 25 pfennigs per issue) and readjust payment, since all three men recognized that the move to Berlin would only increase costs even more. The stipends of Bernstein and Mehring for their work on the *Neue Zeit* were reduced by 100 marks per month to a total of 3,600 marks per year. Bernstein's loss was made up by a 100-mark per month increase in his pay for contributions to the official party paper, the *Vorwärts*, and Mehring got the same adjust-



ment for his work for the *Wahre Jakob*, a humorous journal also published for the party by Dietz. Finally, Schippel's regular honorarium from the *Neue Zeit* was increased by 75 marks per month. Such maneuvers testify to the significance of the party press as a means of supporting party intellectuals.

German social democracy had newspapers and journals for every occasion. By shortly before the war, its sundry collection of affiliated publications included some broad interest items whose circulations in 1913 exceeded 100,000. Samples of these include the following: *Der Arbeiter-Radfahrer* (*The Worker-Cyclist*), which was the journal of "Solidarity," the workers' cyclist federation in Offenbach (1913 circulation 168,000); the *Deutsche Arbeiter-Sängerzeitung* (*the German Worker-Singers' News*), published in Berlin by the German Worker-Singers' Union (112,000); and the *Arbeiter-Turnzeitung* (*the Worker-Gymnastics News*) from the Leipzig-based Worker Gymnast Union (119,000). But it also included some very small special-interest journals: *Der abstinente Arbeiter* (*The Abstinent Worker*), issued in Berlin by the executive of the German Workers' Temperance Federation (5,100); the *Arbeiter-Stenograph* (*the Worker-Stenographer*), published in Lahr, Baden, by the Union of Worker Stenographers (3,000); and *Der freie Gastwirt* (*The Free Innkeeper*), also from Berlin, issued by the League of Free Innkeepers and Publicans (11,000).

But these publications were largely the window dressing of the more serious theoretical-political journalism that appeared nearly everywhere there were ten or more social democrats. Although such papers were all but wiped out in 1878 (actually two minor socialist newspapers survived, the *Offenbacher Tageblatt* and the *Fränkische Tagespost* from Nürnberg-Fürth), by the end of the antisocialist law there were about sixty local newspapers with some ties to the socialists. These had a total circulation of about 250,000; nineteen of them appeared six times weekly and twenty-five three times per week. By 1895 socialist newspapers numbered seventy-five with thirty-nine appearing six times per week. For the next decade the total number fell while the percentage appearing at least six times per week increased; in 1906 the party had sixty-five papers, fifty-eight of which were published that frequently. After 1905 socialist journals expanded once again, reaching a prewar peak of ninety six-time-weekly papers out of a total of ninety-four in 1913. In 1906 socialist papers made up about 1.5 percent of Germany's 4,183 papers, and in 1913 this number rose to 2.2 percent of 4,221.

By 1909 the total circulation of social-democratic newspapers exceeded one million, and in 1914 it stood at nearly one and a half million.

The number of readers per copy was high, however, as workers frequently shared subscriptions and nearly always passed copies from household to household. A German scholar, Hans-Josef Steinberg, estimated that in 1912 the *Wahre Jakob's* circulation of 380,000 meant that it was read by more than one and a half million people, or nearly four people per copy. Applying the same analysis to the entire party press, possibly as many as six million people read at least one of the socialists' newspapers by 1914.

Local papers varied greatly in circulation and quality, although various party-affiliated press bureaus did provide regular news services that helped standardize and improve many local publications. At the head of this complex stood four newspapers and journals that were not primarily local publications, but were aimed at a national audience, and one local newspaper that because of its particular inclination often assumed national importance. The first group was led by the party's official central organ, the *Vorwärts*, which was also the local paper of the Berlin social democrats, and included the women's journal, *Die Gleichheit (Equality)*, an official theoretical journal, *Die neue Zeit*, and the humorous *Wahre Jakob*. The one strictly local paper that most often achieved national prominence was the *Leipziger Volkszeitung*.

The *Vorwärts* was designated the party's central organ in 1890, when it changed its name from the *Berliner Volksblatt*. It had been preceded as central organ by the exiled *Sozialdemokrat*, which in turn had replaced the Eisenachers' *Volksstaat* and the Lassalleans' *Neue Sozialdemokrat* when they were banned by the antisocialist law. Until his death in 1900, Wilhelm Liebknecht was the chief editor of the *Vorwärts*, supported by a bevy of coeditors, assistants, regular contributors, and correspondents. The editorship was not an easy position to fill, primarily because the SPD had a diversified membership, and all factions could not always be pleased. In addition, since the Berlin locals tended to be somewhat more radical than the party as a whole, their pressure on the paper was often at odds with other interests it had to serve. However, Liebknecht's skill and enormous prestige managed to keep an at times uneasy peace in the editorial offices and between the party and the paper.

Kurt Eisner (1867–1919) followed Liebknecht as editor of the *Vorwärts*, assisted by a large editorial board that included Georg Gradnauer, Wilhelm Schröder, and several others. The choice of Eisner was not a particularly propitious one, although it would have been difficult for anyone to fill Liebknecht's shoes adequately. Quite in contrast to his later activities in Bavaria during the revolutionary period of 1918–1919, Eisner was a cautious reformist as *Vorwärts* editor. Having taken over

at the paper in the midst of the revisionist controversy, he and his moderate supporters on the editorial board frequently found themselves at odds with the more radical elements of the party. A sharp clash between Bebel and Eisner at the 1903 Dresden party congress was but a prelude to a major dispute that broke out in 1905–1906.

Tactical and strategic questions raised by the Russian Revolution of 1905—especially the nature of worker coalitions with bourgeois and peasant forces and the use of the mass strike—created a crisis within German social democracy, as discussed above. Almost from the beginning the *Vorwärts* adopted a sympathetic but extremely cautious attitude toward the revolutionists, warning especially of the dangers of coalition with bourgeois liberals and peasants and of the mass strike, which it saw as extremely risky and putschist. Party radicals took umbrage at these attitudes, and they mounted a major drive to reform the editorial policy of the *Vorwärts*. In the wake of this protest, Eisner, Gradnauer, Schröder, and three other board members were replaced, while the remaining four members survived the purge. Even though Rosa Luxemburg was designated a regular contributor at this time, the new board was not leftist so much as it was inoffensive.

While this incident was the most extreme example, strife of varying degrees was rather typical of the *Vorwärts*. In part, of course, this was simply a reflection of the complexity of the SPD, but four other factors also contributed to the situation. First, the paper was simultaneously a local and a central organ, and as such had to answer to both local and general pressures. Second, because they were in the nation's capital, a great deal of influence flowed to the Berlin organizations quite aside from their size. Simply having the Reich government, the kaiser, and the Reichstag in Berlin automatically made the Berlin locals more significant. Third, the Berlin party was by far the largest in the country, and the party's virtually solid control of five of the six Berlin Reichstag seats after 1893 reinforced its influence. And fourth, the radicalism and central importance of the Berlin social-democratic organization meant that radical intellectuals gravitated to the city like iron to a magnet. The more moderate party leaders tended to have power bases outside of Berlin, even outside of Prussia, which kept them from collecting in the capital in the same way the radicals did. All of these factors subjected the *Vorwärts* to particularly strong centripetal forces.

For its subscribers the SPD's central organ was heavily dependent on the local market; in 1906, 46,000 copies of the paper's total circulation of 112,000 were absorbed by Berlin and Potsdam. By contrast, Schleswig-Holstein, which in 1904 had a total party membership of over 16,500, provided the *Vorwärts* with only 66 subscriptions; this figure

was exceeded in the area by both the *Neue Zeit* (114) and the *Gleichheit* (226). The heavy reliance on more local publications throughout German social democracy was reflected in the more than 14,000 subscriptions to the *Schleswig-Holsteinische Volkszeitung* and the nearly 10,000 readers of the *Hamburger Echo*. The only national journal that was widely distributed in Schleswig-Holstein was the *Wahre Jakob* with a circulation of just over 11,000. Figures of this sort tended to reinforce the role of the *Vorwärts* as a local organ and weaken its significance as a central organ.

The *Vorwärts* was nonetheless the most broadly circulated of the party's political papers. In it the party leadership and the Reichstag Fraktion announced and defended their positions on party policy; it also generally put forth the widest range of views on political questions, usually making an effort to give space to all party factions. Between 1903 and 1906 *Vorwärts* circulation went over 100,000, and it reached a prewar peak in 1912 with 165,000. No other party daily could match these figures, and only the *Wahre Jakob*, a weekly, had larger runs. As a result of this real and potential influence, control of the *Vorwärts* was considered important even by those factions of the party that did not depend on it or even read it with any great regularity.

Of the scores and scores of local SPD newspapers that existed before 1914, only eight could properly be identified as having been at one time or another controlled by the party's left wing. The largest and most influential of these was the *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, which first appeared in late September 1894 with Bruno Schoenlank as its first editor-in-chief. Under his guidance the paper developed a moderate leftist position and a reputation for high quality. Shortly after Schoenlank's death in 1901, Franz Mehring took over; for the next six years, Mehring sharpened the leftist tone of the paper considerably, especially by his strong stands in favor of the 1905 Russian revolutionists and in support of the mass strike. Three other prominent leftists joined the editorial board shortly after Mehring's arrival—Rosa Luxemburg and Julian Marchlewski in 1902 and Hermann Duncker in 1903.

Led by the sharp and highly skillful polemics of Luxemburg, the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* rapidly expanded its position as the leftist conscience of the SPD. Luxemburg and Mehring were at the forefront of the continuing assault on reformism and revisionism, and their paper became the almost exclusive refuge of those who attacked the increasing conservatism and bureaucratization of the party after 1905–1906. It was also extremely popular during these years, generally ranking as the third- or fourth-largest party paper after the *Vorwärts*, the *Hamburger Echo*, and, occasionally, the *Chemnitz Volksstimme*. But in 1907 Mehr-

ing had to resign because of ill health, and the tone of the Leipzig paper gradually changed; in 1913 Rosa Luxemburg also ended her affiliation with it. By that time none of the major local newspapers of the SPD was dominated by the left.

Newspapers like the *Vorwärts* and the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* generally concentrated on current events, reporting and analysis, and informational announcements, but occasionally they carried serialized fiction or, less often after 1890, theoretical works. Earlier social-democratic papers had frequently included theory, with some of Marx's and Engel's most famous works (like the former's *Civil War in France* and the latter's *Anti-Dühring*) first appearing in serialized form in the *Volksstaat*. After the end of the antisocialist law, however, the German social-democratic press tended to become more specialized, and serious theoretical treatises were left to journals devoted primarily to that cause. By far the most important of these was Karl Kautsky's *Die neue Zeit*.

For the first fifteen years of its existence, the *Neue Zeit* was edited and published in Stuttgart, until in the late nineties its offices were moved to Berlin. From its establishment in 1883 through March 1901, it was technically a privately owned journal published by Dietz, who absorbed most of its annual deficit. For much of this time, however, its technical status as a private journal belied its intimate ties with the party. In fact, Bebel regularly used the *Neue Zeit* as a theoretical arm of his own efforts to control party politics. The cooperation between Kautsky and Bebel was mutually satisfactory and useful; Bebel got theoretical justification for his practical politics, and Kautsky was assured of a platform from which to espouse his brand of Marxism. On 1 April 1901, the *Neue Zeit* became an official party journal, though Kautsky retained a completely free hand in shaping editorial policy.

Kautsky's journal was concerned with far more than just German theoretical questions; nearly all the major socialists of the world published in it. Non-Germans were such frequent contributors that an SPD critic once observed that the *Neue Zeit* might as well be published in Kamchatka for all the German issues it dealt with. But Kautsky's goal was to provide a forum in which competing socialist theories could be analyzed and discussed, and the extent to which he was successful in this made the journal unique in all the world. Given its highly intellectual approach, the *Neue Zeit* did not, of course, have a mass circulation. Until after the turn of the century, its subscription list did not exceed 4,000, but during the nine years from 1902 to 1911 it grew by more than

2,000 every three years, reaching a peak of 10,500, which it held until the outbreak of the war.

A third more or less national publication subsidized by the party, *Die Gleichheit*, was aimed at female workers and socialists. This too was published in Stuttgart by Dietz, and it was edited from its first number in 1892 until 1917 by Clara Zetkin. The original goal of the journal was the theoretical training of female functionaries and agitators, not the masses. With the support of leading leftists—including Rosa Luxemburg, Franz Mehring, and Käthe Duncker—Zetkin kept her journal consistently on the party's left wing. Under her leadership the *Gleichheit* sided strongly with the revolutionaries of 1905 and regularly attacked German militarism. After 1904, in order to attract a wider audience, it also began to broaden its appeal, in part by adding sections on children, mothering, and housewifery. Between 1905 and 1909 the *Gleichheit* nearly tripled its circulation from 28,700 to 82,000, and by 1914 it stood at 125,000.

Clara Zetkin (1857–1932) was a noteworthy figure in German social democracy on two counts. First, she was a prominent figure in a movement overwhelmingly dominated by men. Though most German socialists were personally committed to the equality of the sexes—and officially committed in party programs also—in practice women did not often achieve prominence except within the women's branch. After Rosa Luxemburg, Zetkin was the most outstanding exception to this rule. Although her status was largely based on her early and continuing work in the socialist women's movement, her prestige within the party transcended this more limited field. Second, Zetkin was a leading party radical who also held an official party position (as a member of the control commission); in this she was virtually unique, since except for associations with party newspapers and journals, the prominent radicals had no such institutional ties.

Born Clara Eissner, she became involved in the workers' movement in Leipzig after her family moved there in 1872. While in Leipzig she met an exiled Russian revolutionary, Ossip Zetkin, and they were married in Paris in 1882 after both had been forced out of Germany by the antisocialist law. Although Ossip died in 1889, and Clara remarried in 1899—her second husband was an artist, Georg Zundel—she retained the name Zetkin until her death in 1932. She returned to Germany with the end of the antisocialist law, settling in Stuttgart where she quickly became important in local party politics and a leading figure in the national women's movement. In 1889 she attended the founding congress of the Second International as a reporter on the women's ques-

tion, and in 1892 she became editor of the *Gleichheit*. Her radical commitment to internationalism led to her election as the first secretary of the International Socialist Women's Conference in 1907 and the designation of the *Gleichheit* as its official organ.

Zetkin's major field of activity was the women's branch of social democracy, but she was also a staunch radical. She was a supporter of Luxemburg, Mehring, and Karl Liebknecht in their attacks on German militarism and imperialism and an outspoken proponent of the potential of the mass strike. She also jealously guarded the exclusively worker character of the SPD. At the 1895 Breslau congress, where the party discussed the possibility of winning support from the peasantry by adopting a peasant program, Zetkin gave an impassioned speech that closed with a stirring call for rejecting the program and thereby holding "firm to the revolutionary character of our party." The popularity of her position and her status in the party led to her election for the first time to the control commission at this congress.

By far the most popular of the several humorous political-satirical journals affiliated with the SPD was the *Wahre Jakob*, published in Stuttgart by Dietz. This was an insubstantial, entertaining publication specializing in light fiction, cartoons, and political satire. In form it was much like the much better-known bourgeois satirical journal *Simplicissimus*. The party had other such journals, including the *Braunschweiger Leuchtkugeln* (the *Brunswick Fire Ball*) and the *Nussknacker* (the *Nutcracker*), both of which were inserts for other party papers, but the *Wahre Jakob* attracted the best talent and had the widest circulation. Founded in 1884, it had a circulation of over 100,000 by the late eighties, exceeded 200,000 in 1906, and peaked at over 380,000 in 1912. Although its facetious content had little impact on shaping party policy, it probably did contribute greatly to reinforcement of the stereotypical views socialists held of themselves and their opponents.

Vast as it was, the journalistic empire of the SPD did not exhaust the scope of the socialist press in Germany. Like the country's other major parties, the SPD swamped the electorate with campaign literature at election times. Handbills, posters, special editions of newspapers, and election pamphlets were printed by the party in the millions. But unlike the rest of the parties, the SPD had a large number of printing establishments that were kept busy producing socialist literature even between elections. The two most prominent of these were the Berlin-based official Buchhandlung "Vorwärts," the party-owned affiliate of the central organ, and Dietz's firm in Stuttgart.

The Buchhandlung "Vorwärts" was founded in 1890-1891 to produce

the party's central newspaper and propaganda literature as well as popular cultural, literary, and historical titles. By 1910 it was a massive operation as attested to by the following partial summary of its production during the period 1 July 1909 through 30 June 1910:

- 445,000 copies of a May Day pamphlet
- 91,000 copies of *Grundsätze und Forderungen*, the principles and demands of the party
- 50,000 copies of the *Illustrated Election News*; a total of 26,000 copies of four postcards with franchise slogans; and 5,000 copies of the discussions of the Prussian lower house on the topic of franchise reform
- 50,000 copies of the *Freiligrath Memorial Issue* to commemorate the one-hundredth anniversary of the birth of the great German revolutionary poet, Ferdinand Freiligrath
- 50,000 copies of Maurenbrecher's *Biblical History*
- 30,000 copies of the protocols of the 1909 Leipzig congress and 5,000 copies of the protocols of the Prussian party congress of the same year
- 25,000 copies of the "Worker's Notice Calendar" for 1910
- 10,000 copies each of four new pamphlets in the Worker's Health Library; 27,500 copies of previous works in the series
- 10,000 copies of the party program
- 5,000 copies of volume three of Bernstein's *History of the Berlin Workers' Movement*
- 5,000 copies of Mehring's *German History from the End of the Middle Ages*
- 2,000 copies each of two new contributions to the series Socialist Theater Plays: "Assessor Schneidig's Adventure" and "In the Struggle for Survival," both by Karl Rübzahl.

There were also many thousands of copies of other propaganda tracts, histories, and literary works.

Even this remarkable list only just outstripped the production of



Dietz's firm. In addition to the *Neue Zeit*, the *Wahre Jakob*, the *Gleichheit*, and the Stuttgart local party newspaper, Dietz also published a large number of serious theoretical works. Foremost among this latter group was the series entitled the International Library, in which German and some foreign authors published studies in early socialist and working-class history and original theoretical works. Bebel, Bernstein, and Kautsky led the list of contributors to the series, which included sixty-four volumes by the time Dietz died in 1922. It was an impressive monument to the efforts of the Germans to give an intellectual pedigree to their own socialist commitment.

Johann Heinrich Wilhelm Dietz was born in Lübeck in 1843 and received training as a printer. Part of his *Wanderschaft* was spent in St. Petersburg, where he made the acquaintance of many Russian socialists; after his return to Germany, he frequently published the works of Russian émigré socialists. Dietz's ties with the socialist movement began shortly after he arrived back in Germany at the time of the Austro-Prussian war (1866). By 1874 he took over the firm that published the *Hamburger-Altonaer Volksblatt*, but the antisocialist law drove him first from Hamburg and then from Harburg. Like so many of his comrades at this time, Dietz finally found troubled refuge in the freer climate of south Germany, settling in Stuttgart.

Once in Stuttgart Dietz quickly rose as a prominent socialist politician, although not necessarily on the local level; he was first elected to the Reichstag from 2 Hamburg in 1881, and he held this seat up to and through the war. Despite his supposed immunity as a Reichstag representative, he suffered various imprisonments, fines, and other persecutions even in the relative freedom of the south. Nonetheless, Dietz could develop his publishing firm in Stuttgart, so much so that he was able for years to subsidize publication of a broad range of socialist writings. By 1897 the national party was sufficiently established financially to become a partner with Dietz, and beginning on 1 January 1906, the publishing house became the exclusive property of the party. German social democracy during the years before the First World War owed a great deal to men like Dietz. Even though he was himself a rather conservative socialist and usually sided with the reformists, for many years he continued to support left-wing intellectuals by publishing their works.

### The Making of Socialists

By far the most extensive activities of German social democracy were its political and journalistic efforts and the affiliated economic organiza-

tions of the free trade unions. The largest numbers of people influenced by socialism in Imperial Germany were voters for party candidates, the second largest were subscribers to and readers of the party press, and the third largest were the sympathizers found in the trade unions. The ranking of agents of the expansion of socialism was probably somewhat different. Certainly the party's political activities were the front line of contact with nonsocialists, both in Reichstag campaigns and on the state and local levels, but trade union organization and strike activities were probably second, while socialist journalism came third, since subscribing to or even reading socialist papers implied a previous measure of familiarity.

The process of becoming a socialist supporter, trade-union member, and then a party activist, however, probably began for most people in their family, workplace, and neighborhood. Personal contacts in these places undoubtedly usually preceded familiarity with written forms of socialism; in fact, given the nature of the German educational system and the living conditions of most German workers prior to 1914, word of mouth was surely the most widespread form of socialist propaganda. One became a socialist sympathizer and supporter because one's parents, relatives, friends, and coworkers were. On this level the social and cultural activities—organized and unorganized—of the party and trade-union followers played an important role, but so did much less easily studied factors such as language and residential patterns.

Language both reflected socialist isolation and promoted socialist consciousness. For example, it was an important factor in distinguishing the supporters of German social democracy from other Germans. Four particular words—*vorwärts*, *Arbeiter*, *Genosse*, and *frei*—took on distinctive connotations that made them the special if not exclusive property of the social-democratic movement in the years before the First World War. *Vorwärts* simply means "forward," but as a name for a journal or an organization such as a singing club, it was generally applied only to socialist undertakings. *Arbeiter* literally means "worker," but as it was used in Imperial Germany, it often in effect meant "socialist." Organizations with *Arbeiter* in their names were not necessarily, or even usually, comprised exclusively of manual or industrial laborers but included skilled workers, petty-bourgeois sympathizers, and socialist intellectuals as well. While workers of one sort or another almost always predominated in such bodies, in practical terms the name meant "socialist," and the adoption of the name *Arbeiter* often constituted an announcement of political sympathies.

*Genosse* means "friend, comrade, or associate," but as a form of address, it was used almost exclusively by German socialists. The word

*Genossenschaft*, meaning "cooperative," was not the exclusive property of social democrats, but it often did have socialist implications. *Frei*, meaning "free," was less exclusively associated with the socialists, since even as a political term one of the major groups of radical bourgeois liberals also used it in the word *freisinnig*, which was usually translated as "progressive." But when applied to the trade unions, *frei* meant "socialist," and frequently this adjective was also applied to other socialist organizations.

These and other words, forms of address, and special linguistic features worked to establish a sense of class and political separateness among large portions of the working-class population even before conscious identification with socialism was possible. Workers' children were reared in an environment permeated with this exclusive language, and their perceptions of the world had to have been at least partially conditioned by this fact. Through language, participation in socialist activities, even when the actors themselves were overwhelmingly adult males, came to be a family affair. And many special socialist activities such as festivals, concerts, and other celebrations were literally family affairs.

Residential patterns in most German cities, especially those that expanded with industrial growth, generally contributed to making the neighborhood an important aspect in the conversion of workers to social democracy. In most such places workers and their families lived in rather close proximity to their workplaces; occasionally companies encouraged this concentration by providing convenient housing, although this also frequently served to check socialist sympathies because of the threat of eviction from such projects. But even in large cities like Berlin, particular areas tended to take on a class character determined by the nature of the population that lived in them. In this manner, as social democracy expanded, socialist neighbors reinforced one another and exposed the uninitiated to their movement. The socializing and politicizing functions of local inns and taverns also played an important role in this process; establishments with tolerant or sympathetic owners became centers of both formal and informal gatherings of socialist workers.

It is difficult to assess the impact of these and similar factors on the development of German social democracy, for the characteristics described usually were not the result of conscious efforts or programs of the party and trade unions. Nonetheless they cannot be ignored, and given the hostility the majority of German society felt toward the socialist-workers' movement, their impact was likely quite significant. On a day-to-day basis they established and reinforced the personal ties

that bound social democrats together in the periods between campaigns, strikes, and the other more obvious events that gave rise to cooperative action and a sense of solidarity.

On a more organized and conscious level, the social-democratic movement developed an extensive complex of activities and organizations outside the strictly political and economic realms. By the early twentieth century the movement included at least twenty different kinds of ancillary associations that encompassed recreational, entertainment, educational, and service functions. Singing societies and gymnastics clubs were the oldest and largest—the former began in the 1860s and included many thousands of participants by 1914, the latter began in the early 1890s, growing to over 180,000 members by 1913.

Cycling clubs appeared in the 1890s, and after the turn of the century, so did swimming clubs, athletic associations (mostly wrestling, boxing, and weight-lifting), and eventually hiking, rowing, and sailing clubs as well. Just prior to World War I, workers' football (soccer) clubs began to appear; in 1913 Brunswick alone had five football clubs affiliated with the social-democratic movement. Smaller organizations included chess clubs, the Friends of Nature (*Naturfreunde*), dramatic societies, free theater societies (*Freie Volksbühne Vereine*—mostly in Berlin, Hamburg, and Bielefeld), workers' samaritan associations (which originated in a split from the German Red Cross), the Association for Popular Health (*Verband Volksgesundheit*), temperance groups, and the Proletarian Freethinkers (*Arbeiter-Freidenker*), intended to combat theism.

Most of these organizations served multiple functions. First, they gave their members an opportunity to engage in the activities implied by their names. In this way they satisfied specific needs and desires felt by workers that were not satisfied elsewhere. Along these lines the organizations frequently went beyond their primary activities by offering related services. The national federation of cyclists, "Solidarity," provided accident and death insurance, cooperative supply and repair shops, legal assistance, and even free road maps. Second, they provided opportunities for fraternization in a congenial atmosphere. Most such groups had regular social periods in conjunction with their other activities; during these periods members could drink, smoke, and gossip together. Third, to varying degrees, these bodies functioned as arms of the political socialist movement. The cycling clubs tended to be the most obviously political, while some groups expressed hardly any overt political qualities, but all were to some extent identified with socialism by their names, membership, meeting places, and the content of their activities.

Local organizations came into existence either as specialized subdivisions of larger party or trade-union bodies, as splinters of nonworker groups, by gradually taking over older nonworker groups, or as independent organizations. The normal pattern was for local bodies to band together on a regional basis and then into national associations. Beginning with the singing clubs in 1892 and the gymnasts in 1893, by 1912 there were at least a dozen national federations and one superorganization of sports clubs (gymnasts, cyclists, athletes, and swimmers); the latter was called the Central Commission for Workers' Sports and Physical Fitness. Increasing organization and centralization led to standardization, the founding of association journals, and even the development of a modest bureaucracy. Prior to the turn of the century, only the directors of choral groups had received salaries, but in 1904 the national cyclists' federation authorized a salary of two thousand marks per year for its executive secretary; in that same year the gymnasts got their first salaried position, and by 1910 they had five paid officers. In these ways the affiliated organizations paralleled developments in the party and trade unions.

Membership in these organizations tended to draw very heavily from party and trade-union activists. In Hamburg's ninety-seven workers' singing societies in 1896, fewer than 10 percent of the participants belonged to neither the SPD nor a free trade union. In 1910 the membership of the workers' singing societies of Leipzig matched this rate, while in the same year in Chemnitz more than two thirds of the members belonged to either party or a trade union, and over half belonged to both. Occasionally clubs required such overlapping membership, but usually any male who accepted the organizational statutes was admitted. Not all workers who belonged to voluntary organizations belonged to workers' groups, and though most nonworker bodies excluded socialists, not all of them did. But in general these associations reinforced the predominant pattern of worker and socialist isolation in Imperial Germany.

Workers' cultural, athletic, and service organizations were usually very active. In addition to regular weekly or fortnightly sessions, they held special events, trips, and festivals. In 1913-1914 the 142 workers' singing societies that made up the Chemnitz singing federation averaged 44 practice sessions each, conducted 123 concerts, participated 163 times in workers' festivals, and had 223 events devoted exclusively to their own amusement and socializing. During 1908-1909 the 191 workers' gymnastics clubs of Thuringia practiced weekly, participated in 14 local festivals, and sponsored 650 trips and outings. Regular members, most of whom were also party members and trade unionists as well,

devoted a considerable portion of their free time to these activities.

One special aspect of the social and cultural life of Imperial Germany's socialist workers was the festival—public parades, meetings, and associated events to celebrate particular occasions. Festivals were numerous, being held in March to commemorate 1848 and later the Commune and in July to celebrate the summer; gradually March festivals gave way to May Day events, and the summer celebrations became Lassalle Festivals held in August (the anniversary of Lassalle's death), partially to counter the government-backed Sedan Festivals, which commemorated the German victory over the French in 1870. Actually most of the clubs needed no special event, since if nothing else each could hold a Founder's Day Festival (Stiftungsfest).

Festivals were gaudy, noisy, and devoted to fun, but they also constituted more serious political statements. Many local clubs, party organizations, and trade unions would generally participate in what were often two- or three-day events. Occasionally local governments cooperated, even to the point of modest financial support, but more often police officials imposed petty restrictions. At one July festival in Prussia in 1911, police allowed banners reading *Arbeitersänger* but not those inscribed *Freie Sänger*, and the color red could not be used on the first letter of words on flags or banners. May Day parades were often not allowed to have music, singing, or speeches; this gave them a solemnity that did not characterize other festivals. Vernon Lidtke concludes of these affairs:

All labor movement festivals embodied political significance. They were public dramas, expressing in action, deed, and symbol the values of the political culture to which they belonged. Some were explicitly political, but all were at least implicitly political, even when their organizers denied all political intent. The labor movement was on public display, often in seemingly innocent clothing, but never lacking sufficient symbols to make a clear public declaration of political and social values.

Most of the workers' voluntary associations had no official connections with either the party or trade unions. In part this was prompted by a need to avoid having the clubs labeled political and thereby subject to stricter police regulation. But in part, too, the unofficial status was the result of the doubts some socialists had about the importance of these groups. They were usually financially independent, and many regularly complained about the lack of support, both moral and financial, they received from the political and economic branches of the movement.

Nonetheless, the personal ties were generally very strong, and relations were amiable. The dominant view within the movement was that such associations served real needs and reinforced the work of the other branches.

Other affiliated organizations—women's groups, youth groups, and those concerned with educational endeavors—had more official relations with the SPD. These three types of bodies were more overtly political and socialist than the other voluntary associations. They were usually much more directly concerned with winning followers for the movement and with teaching the precepts of political socialism. Largely for these reasons, ties between these groups and radicals were quite close. While the other affiliated organizations tended to be strongly supported by the reformists, radicals were more concerned with serious efforts to expand socialist consciousness. Such organizations were much more controversial than their blander counterparts, and they represent the more radical potential of pre-1914 German social democracy.

Education was an old tradition in the German workers' movement; the original socialist parties themselves grew out of the workers' educational associations. Most of the first leaders of social democracy, including Bebel, Liebknecht, and Auer, had in their early years actively participated in teaching workers. After the formation of the parties, educational activities continued with a new dimension. Rather than simply providing workers with the rudiments of reading and writing skills, socialists became increasingly occupied with the inculcation of doctrine. As the SPD grew and matured, the perceived need to provide a political as well as a general education increased. After 1906 the party became even more extensively involved in education as it became more and more concerned with training functionaries and attempted to broaden the understanding of socialist ideology.

The recovery from the almost total elimination of socialist-run worker-education efforts under the antisocialist law was slow. Leipzig and Berlin led the reestablishment of socialist education with an emphasis on elementary subjects. A workers' school was founded in Berlin in 1891, but it floundered for several years until reorganization in 1897 put it on a firm footing. After that time three-month courses were offered three times per year, concentrating on history, law, national economy, natural science, and speaking. Bebel, Liebknecht, Zetkin, Paul Kampffmeyer, Max Schippel, Hermann Duncker, and others taught or lectured, and enrollment grew from about 540 in 1898–1900, to over 700 by 1904, to more than 1,000 the next year, and to over 1,700 by 1907. Trade unionists made up the bulk of the students, and by 1909–

1910 nearly two thirds of those attending belonged to both the party and a trade union.

The turmoil associated with the 1905 Russian Revolution and the mass-strike debate within the SPD also yielded an increased interest in educational activities. At the Mannheim party congress of 1906, a central educational committee (*Zentralbildungsausschuss*, ZBA) was established; in November of the same year a central party school, located in Berlin, was founded; and the party initiated an extension program consisting of both single lectures and multipart courses given by centrally financed instructors. With these three measures the SPD considerably expanded and centralized the scope of its educational activities.

To a certain extent the party conducted debates about the approaches to be followed in these several endeavors, but the position adopted by the radicals was staunchly supported by Bebel, and his support was usually decisive in any party struggle. As a result radicals dominated the party school from the very beginning, emphasizing the training of highly conscious political functionaries. Rosa Luxemburg, Franz Mehring, and several close followers of Karl Kautsky, including Rudolf Hilferding, Heinrich Cunow, Gustav Eckstein, and Emanuel Wurm, gave the school a strongly Marxian air. Classes were small and study was intense. By 1914 slightly over 200 students had completed one of the seven six-month courses; a very high percentage of these people held official positions in the workers' movement as newspaper editors and party or trade-union functionaries.

Despite the best efforts of the radical Marxists, however, the party school yielded few prominent new radicals and no discernible swing in favor of the left wing of the party on the part of the students. The fact of the matter was that the acquisition of a sophisticated, comprehensive Marxian world view was a task that required thorough grounding in what the socialists called "bourgeois" knowledge and long-term, intensive study of Marxian tracts and contemporary social and economic conditions. Even though the students in the party school were carefully screened by local selection committees to ensure success, most of them came to the courses poorly equipped to handle the demands their radical instructors wanted to make of them. In the end the party school was one of the most important concrete achievements of the radicals, but it failed to produce the competent phalanx of dedicated revolutionaries they had hoped it would.

Much larger numbers of workers were reached by the local education committees and the centrally sponsored extension program (called the



*Wanderkurse*). The number of local committees with ties to the ZBA increased rapidly from 124 to 1909 to over 200 by 1911 and to more than 400 by 1914. Many of these were not particularly vigorous, but the number of participants nearly doubled in these years, from roughly thirty-three thousand in 1909 to over sixty thousand in 1914. The lectures and courses offered by these groups were obviously not rigorous programs of study, and the most popular offerings were lectures that were enlivened by slide presentations. Even the programs offered by the ZBA (which accounted for nearly half the students in 1913–1914), while usually stronger than the purely local efforts, were severely hampered by bad working conditions, inattentive audiences, and official harassment. Nonetheless, the party's educational exertions were an important part of its efforts to counter the dominant bourgeois culture and to promote socialism's particular outlook.

At the 1907 Essen party congress, the functions of the ZBA were defined as supervision and support of the party's educational activities, publication of youth propaganda, and production of a catalog and other materials for workers' libraries. The first charge was largely filled by assisting in the financing of local educational programs and sponsoring the extension courses. The second charge was soon transferred to the youth commission formed in response to the new Reich association law passed in the spring of 1908 (discussed below). The third task officially involved the central party for the first time in the phenomenon of the workers' libraries that had gradually developed during the previous decades.

Although a few workers' libraries existed prior to 1878, no new ones emerged during the outlaw period, and growth was moderate during the last decade of the century. But beginning in about 1900, workers' libraries experienced a burst of expansion that resulted in a 1914 total of more than eleven hundred libraries established by nearly 750 different localities. The trade unions generally took the lead in founding the collections, but local party organizations usually cooperated after a time. As a result of efforts to provide improved facilities, centralized libraries for the party and all free trade unions of a localized area became increasingly characteristic in the last decade before the war. By 1914 nearly two thirds of the over eight hundred thousand volumes held by workers' libraries were in centralized facilities. These varied in size from the roughly 20 percent of the centralized and over 50 percent of the noncentralized holding fewer than two hundred volumes to the 20 percent of the centralized that exceeded one thousand volumes and two giants that held more than twenty thousand volumes each. There were 365 paid socialist librarians in 1914 with their own journal. A special

training course for librarians was held in Berlin by the party for seven weeks in that year also.

Not many workers' libraries had reading rooms; they were generally lending libraries only. The smaller ones began as a shelf in a worker's home or in a friendly inn, while the larger ones gradually acquired their own rooms or a permanent section in trade-union buildings. Hours were usually confined to a few evenings and weekends, since most of the expected users worked during the day. Usage was not heavy, and the readers very strongly favored light works of fiction and travel. Despite the best effort of party officials, serious theoretical and political works were not much read; Bebel's *Women and Socialism* was far and away the most frequently charged-out serious work, but there is reason to doubt that even it was diligently read. For the most part, like all other Germans, the workers sought relaxation and escape in their literature, not polemics.

In its recommendations of library acquisitions, as in its efforts to promote cultural activities, the ZBA leaned heavily on the German classics and popular nineteenth-century bourgeois writes like Emile Zola and Jules Verne. It did very little to promote socialist fiction writers like Robert Schweichel and Ernst Preczang. In part the problem was one of balancing ideological commitments and participants' preferences, since a library full of books no one was interested in or a drama reading that attracted no listeners was a waste of resources. But a more important factor was the lack of concern within the party for the promotion of a uniquely socialist culture. To the extent that party intellectuals considered the matter at all, most of them thought that future developments, that is, the economic and political advance of socialism, would eventually yield a socialist culture. But most party and trade-union leaders and members were content with German culture, avoiding only the most extreme monarchist and nationalistic representations. Within the workers' movement as a whole and the SPD specifically, there was very little awareness of the possible political implications of the strong attachment to traditional German culture, at least not until the war fervor of 1914 made the point all too clearly.

All the organizations discussed to this point, including the trade unions and the party itself, consisted overwhelmingly of adult males. Despite the theoretical commitment of German social democracy to sexual equality, in practice it remained a male movement. Bebel opened his most famous work, *Women and Socialism* (which first appeared in 1879 and went through more than fifty editions prior to 1914), with noble words: "Women and workingmen have, from ancient times, had this in common —*oppression*," and of all the political organizations in Imperial

Germany, none could begin to match the SPD's record of promoting the rights of women and including women in its activities. But the socialists still talked equality better than they acted it out. Rarely did the party and its affiliated organizations have female memberships of more than 10 percent, even though women comprised more than one third of the industrial work force and even a majority in some branches, like textiles.

Many obstacles confronted attempts to translate the socialists' espoused goal of sexual equality into practice. The most important was that in most German states, especially Prussia, the political organization of women was prohibited by law until passage of a uniform Reich association statute in 1908. Furthermore, local police authorities frequently used the presence of women as an excuse to break up otherwise innocuous socialist gatherings. Men who worked and sacrificed to build up their organizations were often loath to imperil them by having women too obviously involved. Despite all this, women were often included in early efforts at trade-union organization, and Bebel overcame the resistance of Hasselmann and the Lassalleans at the 1875 Gotha unity congress to include women in the SAPD's demand for universal suffrage. But to the extent that the SPD and its predecessors were election machines, it was not profitable to devote large amounts of time and money to propagandizing among female workers, since women could not vote in Reich, state, or local elections.

Other obstacles also existed for which male socialists must be held more culpable; a great many of them were not willing to admit women to equal status in the movement. German women had never had political and organizational rights, and probably most male socialists were incapable of seeing beyond this tradition. Socialist activities of all sorts had an air of conviviality and fraternization about them, and the men were not used to sharing these experiences with women except at special events like the public festivals. The sexual attitudes of male German socialists are further evidence of the extent to which the attitudes of almost all people are profoundly conditioned by their general social environment. The major difference between male socialists and any other group of men in the Second Reich was that more socialists freed themselves of sexual stereotypes than did the others.

Four results followed from these circumstances. First, with the exception of some areas of south Germany and in the free imperial cities, women socialists were usually organized into separate bodies rather than integrated into larger male organizations. Second, because of legal prohibitions and informal obstacles to political activity by females, women who did join socialist organizations tended to be more radical

than their male counterparts; generally a stauncher commitment to the cause was required to bring women to action. Third, and somewhat paradoxically, women were frequently overrepresented at congresses and in the leadership in proportion to their numbers in the party. This was because until 1894 the party had a regulation requiring that women be elected to the annual congress, and because especially prominent women, like Zetkin, Luxemburg, Emma Ihrer, Luise Zeitz, and Käte Duncker, were called upon to play leading roles. The presence of Zetkin and Ihrer as official German representatives at the founding congress of the Second International in Paris, 1889, was an example of the disproportionate representation. Fourth, once the prohibitions against female political activities were lifted in 1908, the number of women in the movement exploded and the end of separate organizations reduced both their radicalism and their influence.

Affiliated women's organizations first appeared in significant numbers around 1885 in Berlin, Dresden, Düsseldorf, Halle, Gera, and elsewhere. By the end of the antisocialist law, nearly forty women's groups existed in twenty-eight cities, but specifically political organizations were limited to Hamburg, Bremen, Lübeck, Württemberg, Baden, Hesse, Weimar-Eisenach, Oldenburg, and the kingdom of Saxony. So many of these women's agitation committees, as they were called, were dissolved by the authorities that the 1894 party congress replaced them with a *Vertrauenspersonen* system as the basis of representation at congresses. Eventually sufficient numbers of women were well enough organized to justify a national conference of social-democratic women. Called by Zetkin and Ottilie Baader, then leader of the female *Vertrauenspersonen*, the first conference met in 1900; this was followed by meetings in 1902, 1904, 1906, 1908, and 1911, all in conjunction with the regular party congresses of those years. In addition, a special conference was held in Berlin in 1907. The German women socialists also hosted the founding gathering of the International Conference of Socialist Women in Stuttgart in 1907, at the time of the Second International congress there.

In part because of the special commitment required to be an active women socialist and in part because of the extraordinary influence of radicals like Zetkin and Käte Duncker, the women's branch was more radical than the men's. This radicalism took the form of sharper condemnations of German militarism and imperialism and more persistent demands for reform of the franchise laws, especially in Prussia and the Reich as a whole. But the relative homogeneity of the women's socialist movement could not withstand the explosive growth that came with the new association law of 1908.

From fewer than thirty thousand women SPD members in 1908, the number passed sixty thousand in 1909, exceeded one hundred thousand in 1911, and reached nearly one hundred seventy-five thousand by 1914; this rate of increase was nearly double that of the party as a whole. In 1908 the old *Vertrauenspersonen* system was replaced by the Central Bureau for Female Comrades. In 1911 this latter body was incorporated into the party executive, and by 1912 it was eliminated completely. In that same year Luise Zeitz was designated party secretary with special responsibility for agitation among and recruitment of women, but separate women's organizations ceased to exist on a central level. With this full incorporation into the party, the distinctive radicalism of female socialists was effectively dampened.

The last special branches of the socialist movement to be considered are the various manifestations of youth organizations. Although from a very early date there was a rather persistent undercurrent of feeling that German youth should be a special concern of the socialists, discrete youth organizations did not develop until late 1904, when Berlin and Mannheim both became sites for independent groups. Both the northern and the southern branches gradually grew to about five thousand members each, and each had its own newspaper—in Berlin *Die Arbeitende Jugend* (*The Working Youth*) was edited by Max Peters as a monthly, and in Mannheim *Die Junge Gar*e (*The Young Guard*), also a monthly, was edited by Ludwig Frank.

Karl Liebknecht was the guiding force of much of the youth movement. He gave to it a stridently radical tone, especially in his assaults on German militarism, imperialism, and conscription. The harsh and, to their minds, irresponsible radicalism of the youth movement roused the ire of the moderate and conservative forces of the party and even more of the trade-union leadership. From their founding the youth organizations were severely attacked within the party, with only the radicals like Luxemburg, Mehring, and Zetkin providing encouragement and support.

As on so many other occasions, the support of the radicals was not sufficient to bring victory, but this time the more conservative socialists were considerably aided by the Reich government. While the southern branch had legally operated as a political group because of less restrictive laws, the northern branch had been forced from the beginning to maintain a nonpolitical front. But the new association law in 1908 outlawed political activities by those under eighteen years old throughout the Reich. Thus reinforced, the right wing of the SPD moved against the youth organizations, replacing them with party-dominated local youth committees. Both *Die Arbeitende Jugend* and *Die Junge*

*Garde* ceased publication, and the centrally controlled *Arbeiter-Jugend* (*Worker Youth*) replaced them.

Under the guidance of the national party in coalition with the trade unions, the socialist youth movement increased in both numbers and moderation. Beginning with hardly three hundred locals in 1908, the movement steadily grew to include more than eight hundred by 1914. The circulation of the *Arbeiter-Jugend* also grew rapidly, from twenty-five thousand in early 1909 to over sixty-five thousand in 1911 and over one hundred thousand in 1914. But the strident radicalism faded quickly as the moderate forces assumed control. The central youth committee also sponsored youth rooms for temporary lodging, youth libraries, and, in cooperation with the trade unions, local youth protection commissions. Once again the massive bureaucracy smothered incipient radicalism while at the same time providing useful, practical services to a large number of people. Had it not been for the war, which once again radicalized a great many socialist youths, this step might well have been very successful in producing moderate SPD activists in abundance.

As outlined in this chapter, the cultural, educational, and journalistic endeavors of the social democrats constituted an expansion of what Guenther Roth called "negative integration"; that is, the party was allowed to exist, but was denied access to the centers of power. Similarly, in cultural terms, the socialist workers were neither fully German nor quite something different. The differences in content of the separate organizations were sufficient to make them distinct, and yet even a partially formed, unique socialist-workers' culture cannot be detected. Beyond serving a vital psychological function—by providing a sense of belonging—and allowing freer expression of social and political values—especially democratic organization and greater sexual integration—the SPD's "state within a state" could not replace the larger German culture.

## 5 / Patterns of Regional Development

Although the SPD was the most highly centralized and disciplined of Wilhelmian Germany's many political parties, the traditional significance of local organizations and the later development of strong state and regional bodies gave considerable importance to sectional differences within the party. By far the most fundamental of these differences was the persistent conflict between the north Germans (i.e., the Prussians) and the south Germans (i.e., the Badenese, Bavarians, Württembergers, and, to a lesser extent, Hessians). Time and again the party was brought to the brink of a split by regional disagreements over the peasant question, budget votes, and alliances with nonsocialist parties. On each occasion the south Germans pressed for more moderate, reformist positions, while the north Germans generally held to a hard line. Not even the difficulties with the trade unions created as much unrest within the SPD as did the north-south clashes.

Three major factors shaped the regional development of the SPD. First, the nature of the economic activity of an area's population, whether predominantly industrial-commercial or agrarian, determined whether or not the socialists would find an audience receptive to their message. Second, the political practices of a given region, particularly its franchise and association laws, conditioned the approach the party took in organizing and participating in political affairs. And third, the overwhelming dominance of Prussia and its very restrictive political traditions had a marked impact on the SPD throughout the Reich.

Within this larger framework, several other factors could also be important. For instance, the nature of the predominant political opposition, especially in southern Germany, where the Center was powerful, frequently shaped the local- and state-level politics of the socialists. Powerful personalities could also be very important, as in Bavaria, where Georg von Vollmar was the major figure, or in Hesse, where the local party boss, Karl Ulrich, earned the nickname the *Red Duke*. In

some areas a more detailed look at the nature of economic activity is necessary in order to understand patterns of development. In Württemberg, for example, industry tended to be spread out rather than concentrated in relatively small areas; this resulted in a great many small pockets of industrial workers in towns that hardly qualified as urban areas (that is, they had populations of fewer than two thousand).

The impact of the first major factor is obvious: as the party that claimed to represent industrial workers, the SPD could not very effectively appeal to a population that included very few of these people. This was one of the reasons the socialists never had much success in the almost exclusively agrarian regions of East Prussia, Pomerania, and Posen. On the other hand, it was precisely in those areas where commercial and industrial activity prevailed that the socialists had the greatest success, always excepting, of course, places where Catholicism was an obstacle. In Saxony, Berlin and environs, Hamburg, Bremen, and portions of the Rhineland, the SPD established major strongholds that could not be breached. Size of enterprise was not necessarily an important factor in determining the party's success; it was able to win and hold both small and large concentrations of industrial workers.

Significant numbers of peasants and agrarian workers in areas with socialist urban strongholds also influenced the regional development of the SPD. As will be discussed in greater detail below, this was an especially important factor in Bavaria. There the party first established itself in commercial-industrial areas like Munich, Nürnberg, and Fürth, only to find that further growth seemed to require an ability to attract a peasant following. Beginning in 1894-1895, the SPD fought a decade-long battle over the so-called agrarian question.

After the nature of economic activity, the most important factor acting upon the SPD was the political environment within which it operated. This factor was not important in determining whether or not the party could win a following in a particular region; rather, it shaped the character of the local party, giving it radical or moderate qualities depending on conditions. The ramifications of this element are sufficiently important to justify closer attention.

Southern Germany—Baden, Bavaria, and Württemberg—had much stronger strains of liberalism and political toleration than did Prussia. Although socialists usually attributed this to the less-developed state of class distinctions in the region, political traditions going back to the middle ages were important also, as was the much greater ideological impact of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution in southern Germany. Whatever the origin, two particular aspects of south German



politics were of special importance to the SPD—the relative willingness of liberals to accept and cooperate with the socialists, and the freer environment, especially the less restricted franchise for Landtag elections.

In sharp contrast to the adult male suffrage that prevailed for the Reichstag, most of the states of Germany had more restrictive requirements. Although each state and independent city had a different set of franchise regulations, in general there were similarities. All states allowed only men to vote, usually at age twenty-five (until 1906, Bavaria's twenty-one was a major exception), but only if they paid some sort of direct tax; the minimum tax required varied from state to state, though it was generally lower in south Germany than elsewhere. All states either had two houses, one elected and one hereditary or appointed, or one house with some members not elected; no state had a ministry responsible to the representatives. Elections were usually secret (Prussia was the major exception), but indirect (Württemberg was a notable exception here). The term of office was usually six years, with staggered terms, but in some states the term was shorter.

Most states sought to prevent the industrial and rural workingmen from having political influence commensurate with their numbers by requiring a minimum direct tax payment in order to vote or by weighting votes of individuals according to a graduated scale of direct tax payment or by size of landholding. The most famous case of weighted votes, Prussia's three-class franchise, will be discussed in detail below, but several other states and cities had similar schemes, some more complicated than that of Prussia (Braunschweig, for instance, had at least eight different classes of voters, depending on wealth, profession, and place of residence). Furthermore, beginning in Saxony in the spring of 1896, many areas introduced even more restrictive franchise laws in the two decades before World War I. In all such cases, the primary motive of the reformers was to check the growing influence of social democracy.

Each of the south German states differed from the general model in some ways that were significant in terms of the access of workers to the political system. In Württemberg elections had always been direct; in 1903 Baden adopted direct elections; and in 1906 Bavaria followed suit, while at the same time raising the voting age from twenty-one to twenty-five. In all three of the states, the representative bodies could exercise considerably more influence on the governments than was possible in Prussia. And in all three the relative strength of political liberalism made some of the other parties more willing to allow the socialist representatives a say in political maneuvering. In Baden, for

instance, the SPD delegation was often able to side with first one and then another of the major parties to win minor concessions.

The result was an atmosphere in which the south German socialists felt that they could win reforms of the sort that would make their states even more open—things like greater separation of the church and state, an even broader franchise, and reduction of expenditures on projects that favored the old order. Arguments raged for years within the SPD about whether the concessions won were significant or just tokens, but there is little doubt that the majority of the leaders of south German socialism felt that they had a voice in shaping state policy. Even more importantly, they felt that the future would be still more promising if these options were vigorously pursued.

The significance of this for the national SPD was not that the south German branches of the party actively participated in state politics by proposing reforms, supporting the proposals of other parties, and trading votes on specific issues. This sort of activity was engaged in everywhere there were socialist representatives and had little to do with whether they were radicals or moderates. During the 1880s, at the same time he was engineering the radical conquest of the national party, Bebel was also heading the socialist faction in the Saxon diet that proposed nonsocialist measures like requiring cabooses on state-run trains, reductions in the swine-slaughtering tax, and expanding the Saxon state fire insurance regulations to cover movable property. Whatever policies were being pursued on the national level, even the most radical socialists could see their way clear to seeking very limited reforms on the state level.

Rather, the problem with the south Germans was one of attitude and tone, on the one hand, and violations of party tradition and congressional decisions, on the other. For while the Saxon socialist delegation of the 1880s might have sought limited reforms, there was never any question about its commitment to proletarian purity or its fundamental hostility to the established system. But the south Germans frequently adopted a much different attitude. As early as Vollmar's famous "El-dorado" speeches in 1891, the south Germans began arguing that the freer atmosphere and the less clearly developed economic conditions of their states made it possible for them to aspire to a much more sweeping policy of compromise with and appeals to nonproletarian segments of the population. Thus although most of their specific actions were not much more reformist than those pursued earlier by the Saxons, the claims the south Germans made about future developments and the conspicuous solicitation of nonproletarian support posed a serious challenge to the self-image of the SPD.

Central to this conflict was the question of voting for state budget bills. From the very earliest days of the movement, the social democrats had insisted on not voting for the budgets of the Reich, primarily because they included funds for the military, but also out of fear that such a move would be interpreted as a vote of confidence in Bismarck's creation. Once again it was Wilhelm Liebknecht who summarized the socialist attitude, this time with his slogan "Diesem System keinen Mann und keinen Groschen!" ("For this system, not one man and not one penny!"). Few expressions captured the intransigence of social democracy as succinctly as this one; and, as far as the Reich was concerned, few party members balked at the spirit it expressed.

Once socialists began to be elected to state representative bodies in significant numbers, however, new issues and attitudes began to develop. For one thing, except for Prussia, most state budgets included little if any money for military expenditures. This meant that the original and primary objection to budget support was removed. Second, again in contrast to Prussia, socialists in several states, especially in the south, were sometimes able to get incorporated into budgets funds for desirable reforms or favorable alterations in patterns of taxation. Under these circumstances SPD representatives were confronted with a difficult choice between adhering to party tradition and discipline or voting for the budget. In Baden, Hesse, Bavaria, the votes of socialists occasionally spelled the difference between passage and defeat of the budget. Finally, the freer atmosphere of south Germany, where various left-liberal parties were more open to cooperation with the SPD, made voting for hard-won budgets part of the process of political give and take; voting against a budget, elements of which had involved the socialists in compromise with these liberals, would endanger future cooperation of all sorts.

Faced with this dilemma some state delegations began to vote for budgets in the early nineties. The first major party debate over the issue came in the 1894 annual congress as a result of a budget vote by the Bavarian socialists earlier in the year, but both the Hessian and Baden socialist factions had supported budgets prior to this. At Frankfurt in 1894, despite a spirited defense of the Bavarian vote by Vollmar, official condemnation was only avoided on a technicality. Bebel and others had offered the congress a resolution condemning budget support in no uncertain terms, in part "because support for the entire budget is a vote of trust" in the government and existing economic system. When Arthur Stadthagen's amendment of "because" to "insofar as" in this clause was accepted by the congress, Bebel successfully urged the

rejection of his own resolution since it had been altered from a question of principle to a matter of judgment. However, the hostility of most congressional delegates to such votes was quite clear.

As with so many other disputes in the history of the prewar SPD, congressional decisions did not resolve a problematic issue. Again in 1903 at Dresden and in 1908 at Nürnberg, support for state budgets was specifically rejected by large majorities, both times as an aspect of the reformist-revisionist debate within the SPD. Nonetheless, in 1910 the Baden socialists once again voted for their state budget, and in so doing precipitated a major party crisis.

Two things made the 1910 budget-support issue especially disruptive. First, it was another episode in the years-long frustration of party radicals with the growing strength of the reformists. Once again, so thought many of the movement's leftists, the will and traditions of the party had been violated by the upstart reformists, and once again they would have to be disciplined. But the second factor was even more important. The Baden delegation had not quietly voted for the budget; rather, it had boldly announced as early as the Nürnberg congress that it would not necessarily be bound by the party's decisions. For weeks before the actual vote was cast, the Badenese had bragged of what they were about to do. This attitude, more than anything else, made the debate on the question at the 1910 Magdeburg congress a particularly vituperative one.

Bebel's initial response to the Baden budget vote was very severe. On 14 July 1910, the very day the vote was cast, the party leader wrote to Kautsky urging him to attack the Badenese "sharply," forcing "either acknowledgment of and submission to party decisions or withdrawal from the party." By congress time two months later, however, tempers had cooled sufficiently, and Bebel was once again certain enough of his position, to allow him to adopt a more moderate posture. As the major speaker in favor of a resolution of condemnation, he emphasized that he for one was not seeking to drive the south Germans out of the party, but only to force them to see the error of their ways and accept party discipline. Despite this and his seventy years, Bebel still gave a long, harsh, and very aggressive speech.

First, on the matter of party discipline, Bebel was greatly distressed that the south Germans had used the word *Kadavergehorsam* ("abject submissiveness") to describe what was sought by the opponents of budget votes. The issue, he said, had been thoroughly and openly analyzed in the party press and at previous congresses; if the south Germans thought they had something new to contribute, they should

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have brought it before a party congress prior to casting their votes. To do what they did was simply to violate the democratic principles by which the SPD arrived at such positions.

Second, Bebel rejected out of hand the argument that the local conditions of south Germany justified the break in discipline. For one thing, he contended, it was not just a local issue, but a national one. In fact, it called into question all of the tried and true tactics of the party by challenging one of the oldest principles of German social democracy. Third, he combined this criticism with a mocking attack on the pretensions of the south Germans, who thought they had discovered the only route to real reforms—compromise. Bebel justified the largely negative posture of the SPD by arguing that "sharp criticism, sharp opposition, often falls on fertile ground if it is legitimate, and ours is certainly legitimate." He further claimed that "there is in the whole world no social democracy which has won and accomplished so many positive things as the German social democracy," and it has succeeded "because we are the only principled party."

Finally, Bebel concluded that no matter what local conditions were, the party congress was the absolute authority on all questions of program and organization. While he did not consider the Badenese to be traitors to social democracy, and could not support an expulsion resolution submitted by 211 party comrades, he did think that those who could not live with the decisions of the party must leave it of their own accord. In other words, although he would not insist that budget supporters be thrown out right then, his patience was drawing to an end, and the south Germans should take heed.

Ludwig Frank gave the major speech against the resolution of condemnation, and his defense was based on four points. One, the actions of the Baden socialists were simply a recognition of things as they were, and no matter what seems to be a principle, not even a socialist party congress "can make a woman out of a man; we cannot change the nature of things." Two, the working-class movement, not the annual party congress, was the "highest law" of the socialists, and anything that advanced the cause of the workers was good. Three, the particular conditions in Baden, specifically the close balance of power between the Center, the National Liberals, and the socialists, gave the Baden Fraktion a unique opportunity to gain real reforms, but only if it participated fully in the political process. And four, largely because he argued on the basis of special conditions, Frank contended that that the Baden branch was not suggesting new tactics for the entire party, but simply recognition of the emptiness of automatic budget rejection under these conditions.

Sixteen or seventeen speakers on each side of the question followed these two men; the vast majority of those in favor of condemnation came from Berlin, and most of those opposed came from south Germany. The Berlin radicals were especially outspoken in their assaults, but the south German moderates boldly stood their ground. The Baden party had greatly strengthened its position by securing approval of budget support from popular meetings in a majority of its party locals. Wilhelm Kolb struck a telling blow for the south Germans when he argued that the Prussians were simply trying to force their own impotence on the entire party; the six votes of their Landtag delegation were of no consequence in a budget vote, while the twenty members of the Baden delegation were powerful enough to have to face the consequences of their actions. Max Quarck also struck a sensible note when he pointed out that if the party continued to grow, all socialists would eventually have to face this same problem, so why not deal with it now?

But the spirit of the day was not with the voices of moderation. Although Rosa Luxemburg was unceremoniously hooted down when she exceeded her allotted speaking time while trying to turn the debate into a full-scale attack on the "parliamentarians" in the party, Liebknecht, Zetkin, and other radicals scored heavily with the congress. They emphasized party discipline, the dangers of compromise, and the simple fact that none of the state governments in Germany was truly parliamentary, so reforms like those advocated by the Badenese still missed the mark. After Bebel pointed out that the expulsion resolution was unnecessary because article twenty-three of the organizational statutes already provided for expulsion under these conditions, the expulsion petitioners agreed to withdraw their motion. The harsh condemnation resolution then passed overwhelmingly 289-80.

Normally this would have ended the matter for that congress. But the sectional dispute roused by the budget-support issue was so intense that the debate continued. In his closing remarks Frank had adopted an almost fatalistic tone that was a combination of certainty of defeat and a dogged insistence on the correctness of the stand the Badenese had taken; the Berliners, he said, simply knew nothing of Baden. Once the condemnation resolution passed, Frank reiterated these points, and he added that despite this new rebuke, no one could predict what would happen on next year's budget. This arrogant challenge to the supremacy of the congress so infuriated some of the radicals, especially the northerners Karl Zubeil and Hugo Haase, that they forced through an additional resolution calling for the immediate invoking of article twenty-three if any socialists ever again voted for a budget. With the

Baden and Bavarian delegations withholding their votes in protest, this new resolution passed 228 to 64.

Better than almost any other event in the party's history, the debate over budget support brought out the regional conflicts within the SPD. Defenders of the action repeatedly emphasized that critics just did not understand local conditions in the south and were arrogantly imposing their own limitations on the entire party. Vollmar made this point most effectively at the 1894 congress when he denounced the "Prussian corporal spirit," which had made "Prussian domination so generally hated in all of Germany." In this way a nagging grievance against Prussia that was shared by almost all south Germans made its appearance in the socialist party. While south German socialists could do nothing about what they saw as the Prussian conquest of their own states, they were determined to struggle against a similar Prussian takeover of the party. Interestingly, a similar charge of domination by the Germans over the rest of the Second International was later made by the great French socialist Jean Jaurès and others.

To a great extent the problem of Prussian domination was simply a reflection of the realities of the Second Reich. At the time of its founding, Prussia had slightly over 60 percent of the nation's total population, and by 1910 this figure had risen to nearly 62 percent. In 1871 Prussia was five times larger than the second-largest state, Bavaria, and in 1910 it was nearly six times larger. In that same year, among the other German states only Bavaria, Saxony, Württemberg, and Baden had populations larger than Prussia's largest city, Berlin. Thus despite a party organizational structure that favored the smaller states and the rural areas (see chapter four), non-Prussian socialists still were nervous about the sheer numbers of their Prussian comrades. This tendency was compounded by the fact that Prussia was also the least open, most repressive state in Germany, and thus its socialists tended to be the most radical in the party.

In order to get a better sense of the striking differences among socialist party branches in various parts of the nation, we will take a closer look at two of them, the Prussian and the Bavarian. The differing characters of these two state organizations, the divergence of their concerns, and the impact of the much different social, economic, and political environments of each will illustrate many of the strengths and weaknesses of the Wilhelmian SPD. These two states were chosen because of their importance and because they were so different. As models they do not exhaust the forms taken by the party in the Second Reich, but they do define major extremes.

### The SPD in Prussia

Prussia's domination of Germany was based on military conquest, and to a great extent the army continued to be the ultimate source of Prussia's strength. However, the political-constitutional structure of the Second Reich further ensured this domination by designating the king of Prussia as emperor of the new nation, and because the chancellor of the empire was also minister-president of Prussia, except for a brief period in the early nineties. Finally, the foreign policy of the nation was virtually the private preserve of the kaiser and his chancellor, which is to say of Prussia.

Economically Prussia was also the major force in the nation, both in agriculture and industry. The most striking feature of Prussian agriculture was the much larger size of its agrarian holdings. In 1907 nearly half of the total agricultural acreage in all of Germany was held in plots smaller than fifty acres, while in Prussia nearly 60 percent was held in plots bigger than that; of the more than 23,500 agrarian plots in the nation that exceeded 250 acres, over 81 percent (19,117) were in Prussia. Largely as a result of this, Prussia produced the bulk of Germany's agrarian exports, including 76 percent of the rye and 64 percent of the wheat produced in the nation in 1906.

In the industrial sector, which was much more important to the SPD, Prussia was even more powerful. In 1907 it had just over 132,000 industrial establishments, while the next six largest states in the nation had just over 130,000 combined. But in Prussia 3,248,000 industrial workers were employed, compared to just over 1,575,000 in the other six states. Thus the average industrial enterprise in Prussia had nearly twenty-five workers, over twice as many as the non-Prussian average. As a corollary to this, Prussia had the largest urban concentrations in the nation. Not only was Berlin by far the largest German city, with a population nearly equal to the combined total of the next three largest cities, but seven of the twelve largest cities (300,000 persons or more) were Prussian (Berlin, Cologne, Breslau, Frankfurt a.M., Düsseldorf, Charlottenburg, and Hanover). In 1871 Prussia was over two-thirds rural, but by 1910 the urban-rural balance was nearly equal, and the urban population had grown more than twice as fast as the rural. Precisely these characteristics made Prussia prime territory for the rapid growth of the social-democratic and trade-union movements.

One very large segment of the industrial working class in Prussia was not open to recruitment by the party or the trade unions. The largest single employer of industrial workers in the state was the Prussian



government itself. In 1906 nearly 540,000 workers were employed by the state in various industrial enterprises, including almost 450,000 on the railways and over 80,000 in thirty-nine state-owned mines (the rest worked in foundries, quarries, saltworks, and forests). Income from these endeavors typically provided the state government with about half of its annual income (327.8 million of 672.3 million marks in 1908). The state was definitely big business.

Three things about this work force made it especially interesting to the socialists. First, the wages paid to most of the state workers were not generous. According to the SPD, in 1906 the average income of these people was less than 800 marks per year, which was 100 marks below the minimum level on which the income tax was levied. Second, none of these workers were allowed to organize in unions, strike for better wages or working conditions, or do anything else the trade unions sought. Third, under the franchise system that prevailed in state elections, balloting was public; workers who voted social democratic could be and often were dismissed and blackballed. For these reasons the industrial workers employed by the state became a central focus of the socialists' attack on the Prussian government and the dominant social-economic system.

Actually social democracy grew rather slowly in the heart of Prussia, Berlin, despite the prominent role the capital had played during the outburst of worker activity in 1848-1849. While both the ADAV and the VDAV quickly established strongholds in the Rhineland and other centers of industrial activity, Berlin was not represented at the founding congress of the Lassallean organization, and the VDAV was largely concentrated in Saxony and portions of south Germany. One of the major reasons for the slower development in Berlin was the strength of the bourgeois liberal movement there. In the early days of the workers' movement, competition with liberal organizations for the allegiance of the workers was intense, and in Berlin the liberals were much the stronger force until the late sixties and early seventies.

Another reason the social-democratic movement developed more slowly in Berlin than elsewhere was the important role played by anti-Prussian sentiments in the establishment and growth of the VDAV and the later Eisenacher party (SDAP). The early ties of the Bebel-Liebkecht group with the Saxon People's Party were the clearest organizational expression of these sentiments, but the SDAP's stand on the Franco-Prussian War was a much stronger demonstration of them. This hostility to Prussia was one of the things that prevented the closer cooperation of the two workers' parties prior to unification in 1875, and

following the merger the anti-Prussian forces maintained the upper hand in the new party.

But after 1871 Berlin began to increase enormously in importance for the workers' movement, and it soon became the focus of attention for the national party. Some of the reasons for this were discussed in the previous chapter when the role of the official party organ, the *Vorwärts*, was analyzed. Basically the capital-city syndrome was at work, for Berlin was not only the capital of the Reich, it was also the center of the Prussian state government, and was thus intimately involved in the complicated, overlapping political organization of the Reich and its largest state. In this way the tendency to view Prussia and the Reich as virtually interchangeable entities was further reinforced. Although non-Prussian particularists were very careful to point out that Prussia was not Germany, Prussians themselves were not always so technical.

More than for any other party, this ambiguity had a far-reaching impact on the development of Prussian social democracy. The most important result was the much slower development of a state-level organization of any sort. During the nineties many branches of the SPD created such state bodies, most notably Baden, Bavaria, and Saxony, but prior to 1904 the Prussian party had only divided the state into agitational districts that coordinated the work of several locals. It had not organized itself on a statewide basis because the restrictive association laws of Prussia made such an organization illegal, and also because the Prussian party leaders and members felt little need for such a body. Although they were not represented as a state group, their influence within the national party was significant because of the broadly shared assumption that Prussia and Germany were one.

Somewhat paradoxically, the extreme hostility to the Prussian state on the part of the socialists also retarded the development of a separate state body. Rather than encouraging strong central organization for more efficient struggles against the enemy, the sham representational system that prevailed in Germany's largest state and the regular persecution and harassment by state officials strengthened the resolve of Prussia's socialists not to become involved in state affairs. The matter of nonparticipation in state elections was particularly important here, since elsewhere in Germany the party was prompted to organize state bodies in order to participate more effectively in such campaigns.

Socialists in Prussia, then, felt little need to organize as a state group because they saw no overwhelming special condition that demanded such organization, because they could easily see the goals of the national party and those of the Prussian branch as identical, and because their

numbers and special political significance gave them sufficient influence within the councils of the central party. Even after the late nineties, when the party decided that participation in the Prussian state elections was a necessity, thus for the first time giving rise to a compelling reason for a separate state organization, these other factors continued to operate. The resulting organization was unique among social-democratic state bodies in the Wilhelmian period.

A more thorough discussion of the three-class franchise in Prussia is presented below, but the major question confronting the socialists was whether or not to participate at all. Because of the almost grotesque distribution of political power under this system, the chance of a socialist candidate winning an election was very remote. Partly for this reason and partly to protest the system, the party did not actively participate in Prussian Landtag elections until 1903. At that time it managed to collect the second highest number of votes (after the conservatives) but elected no candidates. Nonetheless, the conjunction of this surprising achievement with a slackening of the stringency of the Prussian association laws led directly to the organization of a Prussian state body. The first Prussian party gathering was held in 1904, in the aftermath of the 1903 elections, and at the next meeting, in 1907, organizational statutes were adopted.

At this second meeting the two major organizational questions discussed were whether or not a Prussian party organization was even needed, and if so, how independent it should be from the central party. That the first question could even be posed at this late date was a clear reflection of the strong sentiments within the Prussian branch against such a move. In other states with strong social-democratic movements, similar bodies had existed for fifteen years or more, and they had become integral parts of the national party organization after the reforms of 1905. The second question, however, revealed why it was still necessary to pose the first.

Hugo Haase presented to the 1907 gathering the organizational proposal drafted by a commission established at the previous meeting. Two features of the plan eventually adopted (which included only minor alterations of the commission's proposal) were especially revealing of the mood of the Prussian party members. First, the suggested biennial meetings were to be called conferences, not congresses, in order to give them a less independent quality than those of other state organizations. Also in order to avoid any suggestions of the creation of a parallel hierarchy, the highest administrative board of this new organization was to be called a state commission (*Landeskommission*) rather than the more autonomous-sounding executive (*Landesvorstand*). Its member-

ship was not chosen by the party at large, but rather was comprised of one representative from each of the district (*Bezirk*) bodies. This organizational structure was intended to create a mechanism that could deal with peculiarly Prussian issues without suggesting too strongly that the Prussian party was all that distinct from the central party.

Just to make absolutely certain that even this modestly independent structure meant no diminution of the influence of Prussian socialists in the national party, a clause was inserted into the statutes as they were finally adopted specifying that all decisions made by the state organization should be arrived at "in agreement with" the national executive. To facilitate achievement of this goal, members of the national executive were designated full voting participants in the biennial conferences of the Prussian party. Both Haase and Paul Singer, who also spoke in favor of the commission's proposal, argued forcefully that the exceptional importance of Prussia in the Reich required the closest cooperation of Prussian party activities and central party affairs. In fact, Singer even suggested that it would be very difficult to distinguish Prussian concerns from the larger issues of the Reich.

Although the commission's proposal as slightly amended was accepted by a substantial majority, some dissonant voices were raised. The Berlin reformist Leo Arons, supported by Bernstein, offered an alternative organizational plan that called for the creation of a much more independent Landesvorstand and did not include any statement of close cooperation with the central party. This would have made the Prussian body much more like those of the other German states, but Arons' proposal won little support from the delegates; it was defeated by a vote of 20 yeas to 175 nays. Once again the social-democratic rank and file demonstrated its rejection of the conspicuous reformism of the party's right wing.

The openly expressed sentiment of this conference was that it was much to the advantage of the Prussian socialists to make certain that Prussian affairs, especially the matter of the reform of the three-class franchise, remained central concerns of the national party. The creation of a powerful, independent party structure in Prussia, so most delegates feared, would divert the attention of the national party from such issues, and ultimately would either undermine the solidarity that made the SPD so impressive or, worse yet, open the door to even greater influence on the national level for the powerful reformist forces of southern Germany. Certainly there was never any question of the ability of the radicals to control any Prussian organization that was established—continued official repression ensured that—but there was

considerable concern that whatever happened with the Prussian party not work to weaken the national movement.

At first blush it seems that here the Prussians were overcoming particularist sentiments in favor of the larger view of the party as a whole, but what was in fact being demonstrated was an especially virulent form of particularism. Most of the Prussian socialists were so convinced of the central importance of their state, and rightly so for the most part, that they truly did not distinguish between Prussian issues and German issues. This attitude made it very difficult for the Prussians to accept the arguments of the south Germans that conditions were significantly different outside of Prussia. Needless to say, this attitude also gave considerable offense to the south German socialists.

One final organizational matter deserves closer attention, although it did not generate especially heated debate at any of the Prussian conferences. When he presented the commission's organizational proposal, Haase noted that it established a graduated representational scheme that gave locals under one thousand members one delegate to the conferences, those up to three thousand members two, up to five thousand members three, up to ten thousand members four, and those over ten thousand members five delegates. Haase expressed a preference for this plan but also said that an alternative proposal, specifying that any local, regardless of size, could choose "not more than three delegates" was also acceptable. After rather desultory discussion of the matter, including Haase's observation that under the proportional plan Berlin would be entitled to twenty-six delegates, while under the "not more than three" method it would have twenty-four, the latter plan was accepted by a large majority.

The central issue was one that the party had confronted before, namely the fear on the part of smaller locals that unless some steps were taken to prevent this development, they would be swamped by the gigantic urban socialist centers, especially those as large as Berlin. On the national level and in the south German states, like fears had yielded congressional representation systems that favored the smaller suburban and rural locals over the larger urban concentrations. In Prussia, however, the larger locals were not much threatened by a similar situation since few of the small isolated groups that characterized much of the SPD in the south even existed. Nonetheless, at the 1910 conference, a new plan was adopted providing for graduated representation from one delegate for fifteen hundred members or fewer up to six delegates for eighteen thousand more. This system yielded much more equitable representation for the Prussian SPD organization than prevailed on the national level.

With only one major and one minor exception, the central concerns of the Prussian party organization were similar to those of any other state socialist body. All were primarily preoccupied with those areas that were left to the state governments by the Reich constitution: education, church-state relations, community government, and housing and health regulation. The minor exception was the greater amount of time the Prussians spent discussing the plight of state-employed workers, which followed from the much more significant role played by the Prussian state as an employer of industrial workers. The major exception was the pervasive concern of Prussian socialists with the three-class franchise for Landtag elections.

Since the socialist Landtag delegation was never large enough to introduce its own legislation (fifteen members were required to attain Fraktion status), the Prussian conferences generally confined themselves to extensive criticism of government proposals. The discussion at the 1904 meeting of the recently introduced reform of housing regulations illustrates the approach taken by the party on the state level in Prussia. Because of the smaller size of the socialist contingent and the greater influence of Junker conservatives in the Landtag as compared to the Reichstag, the socialists in the former adopted an even more negative and strident posture than did the Reichstag Fraktion. This tendency was considerably reinforced by the fact that all the socialist representatives in the Prussian Landtag came from radical strongholds like Berlin and Hanover. Unlike the Reichstag situation, therefore, no representatives from more moderate socialist concentrations gave balance to the Prussian delegation.

Hugo Heimann presented the official Landtag delegation critique of the proposed housing legislation at the 1904 conference. His emphasis, and that of the few speakers who followed him on this subject, was on the gross inadequacy of the measures offered and the obvious class nature of the proposal and the government that had made it. He concluded his presentation with a brief outline of the sort of bill the socialists might be able to support.

Employing a favorite tactic of the socialists, Heimann used official government statistics to attack the government's proposal. If the minimum healthy housing standard for a worker with a family was a kitchen and two other heatable rooms, he argued, the cost of minimum housing in Berlin had risen from 352 marks per year in 1901 to 423 marks per year in 1904. According to a royal Saxon ministry report, he continued, housing was too expensive if it cost more than one sixth of the residents' income. That meant that a Berlin worker needed an annual income of 2,538 marks ( $6 \times 423$ ) to afford minimum healthy

housing, but the 1903 *Statistische Jahrbuch* of Prussia reported that over 90 percent of Berlin's population had family incomes below 2,400 marks per year. To this Max Quarek added the observation that air-space requirements of the proposed legislation were less than those for prisons and jails in Prussia!

Heimann also sharply denounced the class bias of the bill. Article three of the proposed housing regulations stipulated that the provisions of the bill would apply only to communities larger than ten thousand people, and that the proposed housing authority would have jurisdiction only in communities larger than one hundred thousand. He called these provisions capitulation to the Junker landholders of the East Elbe region because they would be exempted from providing decent housing in the small communities on their lands. Heimann explicitly linked this fact to the class nature of the Prussian government and to the class bias of the Landtag membership.

German socialists, Heimann concluded, were very interested in having the housing standards legislation of Prussia and the Reich reformed, but they could not support any bill like the one presented to the Landtag by the government. A bill acceptable to the SPD delegation would have to cover the entire Reich, and workers would have to have a regular voice on the administrative level. Furthermore, inspectors of both sexes would have to be designated at the community level with the power to report violations directly to the Reichsamt, which would have the authority to enforce the law. Finally, to ensure local control, the communities involved would have to have broad powers to determine land use, enforce building codes, monitor construction and upgrade projects, etc. In other words, the only bill the socialists could support was one that would never be introduced into the Landtag, let alone get the approval of both houses and the government.

This criticism contained most of the elements of the social-democratic concept of the just society—local control, worker participation, an end to sex discrimination, social obligation over the rights of private property, and a strong central authority to back it all up. But it also paid little attention to the potential of the Landtag, although not because Heimann and his fellow socialist politicians did not realize the limits of that body. Rather the socialists, recognizing their own powerlessness (in the Landtag elected in 1908, the party held fewer than 2 percent of the seats), did not bother to seek the possible, but strove to use legislative situations as a source of propaganda. The Prussian party members had few illusions about what to expect from a Landtag dominated by reactionary Junkers and timid National Liberals, and therefore the party concentrated its energies on franchise reform.

Prussia's three-class franchise system was a masterpiece of obfuscation designed to yield the appearance of a representational political structure while retaining the content of aristocratic despotism. When it was developed, during the spring of 1849, some considered it a concession to the vaguely parliamentary sentiments of the revolutionary period. And at times during the late 1850s and into the early 1870s, the legislature it returned included enough so-called liberals that Bismarck was prompted to denounce the system as the worst in the world because it did not yield the servile representatives he wanted to work with. But this phase passed quickly, and by the years after the founding of the Reich, Bismarck regularly got a pliable and obliging Landtag that balked only when the government sought to modernize or rationalize Prussia's anachronistic social, political, and economic character.

The basis for the three-class franchise was the payment of direct taxes, primarily the income tax, but various forms of real property taxes and land taxes were also included. To qualify for the franchise on any level, a man had to pay a direct tax of at least three marks per year, and because the minimum taxable income was nine hundred marks per year, in 1903 just over seven million men of a total population of more than thirty-five million met this minimum tax standard. In the case of workers, most of whom owned little land or other real property, the income tax was the only means by which this standard could be met. Thus the voting pool in Prussian Landtag elections consisted of males over twenty-four years old who had lived in their voting precinct at least one year and who paid an annual direct tax of at least three marks.

Prussia was divided into a large number of precincts (*Bezirk*)—nearly twenty-three thousand in 1888 and twenty-nine thousand in 1906. At elections each of three classes in every precinct elected, by public ballot, an equal number of electors, who in turn voted with the electors of other precincts for their electoral district (*Kreis*) representative (i.e., election was indirect). Membership in the classes was determined by dividing a precinct's total annual direct tax revenue into thirds. The highest taxpaying eligible voters whose annual tax equaled one third of the precinct's total annual tax formed the first class of voters. The next highest taxpayers whose collective total equaled one third formed the second class, and the remainder of the eligible voters formed the third class.

Two features of this system were especially curious. First, because the determination of class membership was done on a precinct-by-precinct basis, the actual level of any man's tax obligation had less to do with what class he voted in than did the taxes paid by his neighbors. A level that qualified a man for the first class in one precinct might place



another man in the third class of a different precinct; in a particularly poor district, a very modest tax bill might qualify a voter for the first class, while in a very rich district a very high tax bill might leave a man in the third class. Second, because of the enormous gulf that separated the highest taxpayers from the minimum taxpayers, a very large number of precincts had only one or two voters in the first and second classes. In 1888 over 4,000 precincts (approximately 17.5 percent of the total) had only one or two voters in the first class, and by 1906 this number had dropped only slightly to just over 3,900 (approximately 13.5 percent).

For Prussia as a whole, table 3 summarizes class membership in the last four Landtag elections (as a percentage of total eligible voters). In 1903 the first class had 238,845 members, the second 856,914, and the third 6,006,204 (or more than twenty-five times as many as the first class). Even with the slight trend toward more equitable distribution, in 1913 the third class was still more than eighteen times as large as the first class.

Furthermore, the electoral districts were no more equally drawn than were those for the Reichstag. In 1898 the ten largest districts had a total population of over 814,000 and elected 20 Landtag representatives, while the fifty-five smallest districts had a combined population of just under 814,000 but elected 90 representatives. And by 1906 the imbalance was still enormous; in that year the 139 Landtag members from the largest districts represented as many people as did the 304 men from the smallest districts.

For obvious reasons the vast majority of the votes cast for socialist electors came from the third class, that is, the largest and least influential group of voters. In the first election in which the party made a major effort, 1903, 96 percent (298,410) of its total vote (311,145) came from the third class. However, because of the odd method of determining voting class membership, the SPD was not always shut out of the first and second classes. In 1903 nearly 750 voters in the first class and 12,000 in the second class voted for socialist electors. In the third

**Table 3 / Class Membership in Landtag Elections**

	<i>I</i>	<i>II</i>	<i>III</i>
1898	3.26	11.36	85.38
1903	3.36	12.07	84.57
1908	3.82	13.87	82.32
1913	4.43	15.76	79.81

Landtag district of Berlin in 1903, the party had 5 percent of the electors in the first class, a quarter of those in the second, and 93 percent in the third, but did not win the seat.

Participation in Prussian Landtag elections was very low, even among the first and second classes, especially when compared to the relatively high level of participation in Reichstag elections. In 1903 the percentage of eligible voters casting valid ballots rose by more than five points over the previous two Landtag elections but was still under 25 percent; even in the first class the figure remained below 50 percent. By contrast, over three quarters of the eligible Prussian voters cast ballots in the 1903 Reichstag elections. One reason for this was the much lower level of interest in Landtag elections, particularly among members of the third class. Certainly a powerful factor causing this lack of interest was the public nature of balloting. In the secret balloting of the 1912 Reichstag election, the SPD received over 2.4 million votes in Prussia, while the public balloting in the 1913 Landtag election yielded the party only about 775,000 votes. Of course, under the general male suffrage of the Reich, the pool of voters was considerably larger than it was on the state level, but the percentage of voters who cast ballots in the Landtag elections was lowest in the class in which the SPD's following was strongest.

Apathy, fear of retaliation, and the unjust apportionment of representation worked together to keep the SPD from participating fully in Prussian Landtag elections. While other branches of the party were successful in their state elections as early as the late 1870s, when socialists began to return representatives in Saxony, in Prussia no socialists won seats until the second election in which a concerted effort was made, 1908. But even the decision to take part was a long time in coming, and the issue was considered and reconsidered again and again by the socialists. The national party congresses of 1893, 1897, 1898, 1900, 1903, 1908, and 1910 all devoted some time to the question of participation in Prussian Landtag elections, as did, of course, the three Prussian party conferences in 1904, 1907, and 1910.

The dilemma confronting the socialists in Prussia was very complex. First of all, the system obviously would not result in a true reflection of the popular will, even if the socialists put up candidates, and thus it was in their terms a fraud. Second, if the socialists were to play any active role in Prussian politics at all, they had no choice but to involve themselves in the Landtag elections. Third, if the socialists had any hope of pressing for franchise reform by legal means, they could only do so with the support of other parties in the Landtag. Fourth, therefore,

what were the prospects for such coalitions, and what price was the party willing to pay to gain franchise reform? Fifth, what would franchise reform mean for the future of the Prussian party?

Although in many ways this last issue was the most important one, and the answer to it should have guided the party on the other matters, the Prussian socialists spent virtually no time in public trying to answer this question. Just as the national party never really dealt systematically with the implications of participating in Reichstag elections, so too did the Prussians avoid taking too close a look at the implications of achieving franchise reform. What would social democracy have gained from a more equitable system? Certainly a larger number of seats in the lower house of the Landtag, and by that the ability to exercise somewhat more influence on its activities. But even granted that the most farfetched reform, proportional representation with universal suffrage, had been achieved, the example of the Reichstag elections should have suggested that even this would have left the socialists with well under half the seats.

Furthermore, universal proportional elections for the lower house would not have changed the complexion of the upper house, which was hereditary and appointive and far more conservative than the lower house. Nor would such a reform have altered the fact that the Prussian government was not a parliamentary one, that is, it served at the sufferance of the king, not the representatives of the people. Certainly a largely oppositional lower house could have caused problems for the government, especially in budget matters, but Bismarck had already demonstrated that a determined ministry backed by a strong king could resist even that pressure. Finally, there were the problems that later gave Germany's first constitutional, representative government, the Weimar regime, so much trouble—a bureaucracy, judiciary, and military that remained loyal to the old order and suspicious of the parliament.

These were obviously extremely knotty problems, and perhaps just for that reason the Prussian social democrats never addressed them. Unfortunately, this gave their discussions of franchise reform and participation in Landtag elections an unreal air, and elevated to the level of a myth the "general, equal, direct, and secret franchise"—a phrase they repeated endlessly. Although what they were seeking was only a means, the obstacles preventing its attainment made it seem like an end. On the other hand, they might simply have been taking things one step at a time; a decent franchise first, then the other problems can be faced. But if so, their own propaganda hid this more sensible approach from public view.

From the very beginning of the discussion of the Prussian franchise system and participation in Landtag elections, everyone in the party assumed that as things stood no significant number of socialists could be elected without some sort of cooperation with other parties. Therefore the debate at the 1893 national party congress in Cologne focused on the issue of where the socialists might find such support. Bebel was reporter on this question, and his review of the possible coalitions left little doubt that only the Progressives offered any hope, and they but little. He pointed out that not only were the Progressives lukewarm on major suffrage reform and not a very large group anyway (the two left-liberal delegations totaled only 20 of 433 Landtag representatives), but the Reichstag election of a few months earlier had shown that the leaders of this group could not deliver the votes of the rank and file. Given Bebel's powers of persuasion, he had little difficulty winning unanimous approval of his resolution calling for abstention from the Prussian Landtag elections and outside agitation for franchise reform.

Four years later the national party took up the issue again, but this time the situation was somewhat different. During the time between these two congresses, the Prussian Landtag had only narrowly failed to give its approval to new repressive legislation requested by the government; in one case the margin was only four or five votes when a very severe new law on assembly was considered. This threw a serious scare into many socialists, who were further frustrated by the impotence of agitation for franchise reform outside the Landtag.

Ignaz Auer was the reporter for the party leadership on the franchise question at the 1897 congress in Hamburg. Well-known in party circles as moderate and pragmatic, Auer was an excellent choice to persuade the socialists to change their tack. In addition to reviewing the presumed growing conservative threat, Auer emphasized another aspect of participating in Landtag elections: "Whoever wants to learn to swim must get into the water! . . . If we want to stir up and remake the world in its essence, we still must gain more experience, and in order to gain that experience, we must achieve certain positions in which we will be able to get it." In other words, Auer was suggesting that the socialists learn by doing.

Even though the "old soldier," Wilhelm Liebknecht, gave an impassioned speech against lifting the 1893 prohibition, receiving considerable support from the Berlin delegation on the issue, the tenor of the times was on Auer's side. He received valuable support from the radical side when Clara Zetkin argued in favor of participation. Her primary arguments were that the struggle for votes would help clarify class lines by revealing the true friends of the workers, and that even if no

mandates were won, participation offered considerable opportunity for agitation. In this way she stilled some of the concerns party radicals had about compromise and coalition, which they feared would dilute the SPD's proletarian commitment.

However, in 1897 the party was still not willing to go all the way on the issue of election participation. By a vote of 160 to 50, the Cologne resolution against campaigning in Prussia was overturned, and a radical countermove simply to leave the matter entirely to the discretion of Prussian locals was defeated by 62 to 148. What passed was a modified version of Bebel's original proposal that approved participation in principle while prohibiting compromises and affiliation with other parties and leaving specific decisions about putting up candidates to the locals; this halfway measure passed 145 to 64.

On all three of these votes the Berlin delegates formed a disproportionately large part of the losing side. Because of their more highly developed radicalism and greater familiarity with the Prussian franchise situation, the Berliners were still opposed to participation. The rider to the 1897 resolution that allowed the locals to decide whether or not to enter the fray gave these people, and most of the rest of the Prussian party apparently, a way out. In the 1898 Landtag campaign, the socialists did not mount a major effort, with the result that only about 26,500 voters cast ballots for socialist electors. The first effort to change the attitude of the Prussian socialists about their very restricted franchise system ended in failure.

By the next Landtag election, 1903, the mood of the party had altered considerably. Brief discussions of the franchise issue as part of the larger reformist-revisionist debates at the national congresses of 1898, 1900, and 1903 had yielded ever-stronger statements on the need to participate, with the 1900 Mainz resolution requiring election agitation under all multiclass franchise systems. This time the Prussians made a much greater effort, which yielded a more than tenfold increase in votes (well over 300,000), but once again no mandates were won. However, the forces favoring participation for agitational purposes could triumphantly point out that had the Landtag been based on proportional representation, the socialists would have won 81 seats and the two conservative parties only 96, instead of the 203 they actually captured. This was a rather hollow victory perhaps, but for the radicals who dominated in Prussia, votes were at least as important as mandates.

Between 1903 and 1908 concerns over the continued survival of the three-class franchise heightened, and the Prussians organized themselves on the state level. The first Prussian conference provided the curious spectacle of the revisionist Bernstein urging the party to

consider street demonstrations as a means of breaking the deadlock in Germany's largest state, while the leadership sought to moderate the tone of the final resolution somewhat. In the end the considerably heightened class tensions of this tumultuous period forced acceptance of a much sharper resolution than had been offered originally.

In preparation for the upcoming elections, the 1907 Prussian conference engaged in a full-scale discussion of franchise reform and participation. This time the delegates staged a real donnybrook, complete with name-calling, extreme sarcasm, and ad hominem arguments. Both the reformists and the radicals were intent upon pressing the struggle against the three-class franchise, but their methods differed drastically. Eduard Bernstein, with support from Leon Arons and Paul Löbe, argued for an elaborate alliance system within the Landtag that relied on a very unlikely coalition of socialists, Progressives, the Center, and National Liberals to win reform. The radicals resisted this chimera, with Emanuel Wurm capturing the spirit of this resistance in an English expression, "splendid isolation." "We are only strong," he said, "if we are alone," and the delegates agreed with him by passing a very strongly worded call for action that excluded election deals of any sort.

The 1908 Landtag election in Prussia brought the socialists an even larger vote (nearly 600,000) and success for the first time when they elected seven representatives. But the winning of nearly 24 percent of the vote (the largest share of any party) and less than 2 percent of the seats only aggravated the opposition to the now clearly outmoded and unfair franchise. This time a proportional system would have given the party 103 seats and the conservatives only 72, instead of the 212 they actually won. The socialists had only vigorously contested about 100 seats, and despite informal agreements, once again the leadership of the left-liberal parties failed to deliver their electorate.

A final burst of agitation for franchise reform hit Germany in 1910. In January a Prussian party conference reinforced its call for struggle "by the sharpest means," and only narrowly avoided a specific call for use of the mass strike. By that time, however, the trade unions had gained the upper hand on the mass-strike issue, which forced the Prussian party leadership to keep the lid on the increasingly radical rank and file. Years of frustration with the old approach, an economic downturn during the winter, and a broad coalition for franchise reform that went beyond the socialists threatened to spill out into the streets.

And spill into the streets it did. On 4 February 1910, Chancellor and Minister-President Bethmann-Hollweg announced his long-awaited Prussian franchise reform bill; it was a joke that offered nothing and served as a red flag before the eyes of an aroused citizenry. Beginning

on 6 February in Halle, Bielefeld, Solingen, and elsewhere, spontaneous and planned street demonstrations continued through April. On 6 March the famous "suffrage promenade" took place in Berlin's Treptow Park with 150,000 demonstrators after the police had cancelled a scheduled demonstration. Clashes with the police produced injuries on several occasions, and strike activity in the spring heightened tensions throughout the nation.

In the end nothing came of the whole affair. The so-called "suffrage storm" that the Prussian party had called for in January yielded no tangible gains. To overcome inertia and the superior force of the opposition demanded much more commitment to mass action than even the relatively radical Prussian organization could sustain. By the summer the intellectuals, especially Luxemburg and Kautsky, were still debating the mass strike, but the more practical politicians soon turned their attention to the Baden budget crisis. In a matter of months, even the radical forces were distracted by the rising concern with imperialism.

Suffrage reform was on the agenda of the national party congress again in the late summer of 1910. Representatives from the major south German party branches announced their unswerving solidarity with the struggle of their Prussian comrades. For once Luxemburg controlled her intolerance enough to give a reasonable, persuasive speech calling for consideration of the mass strike as a means of pressing for a new franchise, and for once the phrase *mass strike* was even included in the resolution finally adopted. But the moment had passed; what was certainly the best opportunity German social democracy had before the war to force the Second Reich to alter its basic political character had been wasted.

One more Prussian Landtag election was held in 1913, and again the socialists' vote grew, so that they remained by far the most popular party. The SPD vote total of over 775,000 surpassed that of the second largest party, the Center, by over 300,000 votes, but the socialists won only 10 seats to the Center's 103. The two conservative parties also fell more than 300,000 votes shy of the socialists' total, while winning 202 seats. Proportional representation would have given the SPD 126 seats, the two conservative parties 74, and the Center 73. Instead of having a strong voice in the Landtag, the socialists were left to rage against a system they could not move.

### The Socialists in Bavaria

The influence of economics on the development of the SPD in Bavaria was as striking as in the case of Prussia but yielded much different

results. Bavaria was primarily an agricultural state with holdings distributed much more evenly than in Prussia. In the south German state, the almost 94 percent of agrarian plots that were 50 acres or smaller included nearly 70 percent of the land; comparable figures for Prussia were a little over 94 percent of the plots but less than 41 percent of the land. The north German giant had almost 20,000 landowners with holdings larger than 250 acres, and they owned nearly six times as much land as the over 2,000,000 peasants with 5 acres or less. By contrast, Bavaria's 535 landowners with holdings larger than 250 acres held hardly half the area owned by the almost 242,000 peasants with 5 acres or less. Virtually all of the agricultural land of Bavaria was worked by the people who owned it; tenancy accounted for only 3.3 percent of the land. In Württemberg tenancy was twice as common, in Saxony three times, and in Prussia four times.

Other factors, however, limited the overall wealth of Bavaria, making it the poorest of the five largest states in Germany shortly before the war. In 1913 the per capita annual income of the entire nation was 748 marks, but of Bavaria only 625; Hamburg led the country with 1,346 marks, greater Berlin averaged 1,064 marks, Saxony nearly 900 marks, and Prussia, despite all those very poor peasants, even managed to exceed the national average with 752 marks, over 20-percent higher than Bavaria. The major reason the latter was so poor was the weakness of its modern industrial sector.

Bavaria did have some industrial centers, but only three cities were larger than 100,000 in 1910 (Munich—596,467, Nürnberg—333,142, and Augsburg—123,015). As a result the population density of the state was quite low. In 1910 Germany as a whole averaged 120 persons per square kilometer, but Bavaria only 85; the major industrial regions were much more crowded—Saxony averaged 321 and the Rhineland 264. In 1882 just over 42 percent of Germany's population was employed in agriculture and forestry, but 62 percent of Bavarians were; by 1907 the national figure had dropped to only 34 percent, while Bavaria's remained over 50 percent.

Within the relatively undeveloped industrial sector, the work force had some characteristics that made it much different from that of Prussia. First, as late as 1907 Bavaria had only thirty-six industrial concerns with 1,000 or more workers, the largest of which employed 8,000. In the same year Prussia had hundreds of establishments that employed more than 1,000 workers, and the Krupp works alone had about 70,000 workers on the payroll. The level of unionization was also quite low among Bavaria's industrial work force. In 1912 when about 20 percent of Bavaria's industrial workers were in unions, with half of them living in the three largest cities, over 35 percent were in unions in



Saxony, while in greater Berlin the figure exceeded 50 percent and in Bremen it approached 90 percent. Finally, women played a much more important role in the total work force of Bavaria than they did elsewhere. In 1885 there were just over 22 working women for every 100 men employed; by 1914 this number had risen to over 58. At the 1907 Bavarian socialist party congress, Erhard Auer reported nearly 2,000,000 employed men and over 1,300,000 women, so the socialists reckoned the female work force to be even larger than did the government.

These economic and demographic factors combined to yield a distinct pattern of development for Bavarian social democracy. It first emerged in the few industrial centers in the state, primarily Munich in the south, the Nürnberg-Fürth region of the north, and the Ludwigshafen-Kaiserslautern area of the Pfalz district in the west. These strongholds were surrounded on all sides by agrarian populations that did not respond to the appeals of the socialists, despite concerted efforts by the party to win a peasant following. By 1914 the Bavarian socialist party was still largely confined to these same areas.

Another characteristic of the Bavarian population that limited the expansion of the socialists was the strength of Catholicism and its political arm, the Center party. Bavaria was the most Catholic of all the large German states, with over 70 percent of the people at least nominally affiliated with the Church; in many districts of old Bavaria, this figure exceeded 90 percent. As it was on the national level, so too in Bavaria the Center party was a large and stable political force. Under the indirect election system that survived until 1906, the Center managed to achieve significant success in nearly every Landtag election, and in the last election before the war, 1912, it still won 87 of the 163 seats, even though by then the socialist faction had grown to a significant size (30).

In marked contrast to Prussia, the political system in Bavaria was at least tolerant of social democracy and was also open to change. During the years of the Second Reich, Bavaria's association and assembly laws were liberalized twice, the franchise was made direct and representation was redistributed in accordance with population changes, and in 1905 the state's transportation minister instituted the nine-hour work day on state-owned railroads, against the advice of his fellow ministers and the governments of Baden and Württemberg. These are just a few examples of reforms that were favored by the socialists, although such actions were by no means sufficient to reconcile the party to the established system. Nonetheless, Bavarian social democrats quite rightly felt that the judicious use of pressure could yield desirable

results occasionally. Their Prussian comrades did not share a similar conviction about their own government.

Liberals were more influential within the early working-class movement in Bavaria than they had been in Prussia, except for Berlin. By the early 1860s there were workers' educational leagues in many cities, especially Munich, but the strength of ties with liberals made these groups less responsive to Lassalle's call for independent political positions than was so in other parts of Germany. The VDAV, on the other hand, very early on established strong branches in Fürth and Nürnberg and had a particularly influential personal contact in the person of Gabriel Löwenstein. A native of Fürth, Löwenstein had been a cochairman of the VDAV at one time, and he represented his native city at the founding congress of the SDAP in 1869.

The first really prominent Bavarian socialist was Karl Grillenberger (1848-1896), who rose quickly through the ranks after joining the Eisenachers in 1869. Trained as a metalworker, Grillenberger began his organizational activities almost immediately upon settling in Nürnberg, where he led a wage-protest movement of some three thousand workers in the fall of 1871. By mid-1872 he was a frequent speaker at SDAP gatherings, and in that same year he represented Mainz at the party's annual congress. In March 1873 he entered the editorial board of the *Fürther Demokratische Wochenblatt*, becoming chief editor in October. Such positions usually provided prominent socialists with a forum from which to promote their particular interests as well as badly needed regular income to subsidize their total commitment to the workers' movement.

In the earliest elections in which the Bavarian socialists contested for seats, the Customs Union Diet balloting in 1868, they had won only a meager response. But the entry of Grillenberger in 1871 increased the socialists' vote total considerably, in that year he drew over 5,000 votes in a losing effort in Nürnberg. He gradually came closer and closer to victory in succeeding elections, losing a run-off contest in 1877 by only 540 of over 24,000 votes. Finally, in 1881, he won the first socialist seat from Bavaria in a Reichstag election. In 1884 he was joined in the Reichstag by a second Bavarian representative, Georg von Vollmar (1850-1922), by far the most influential and remarkable of all the Bavarians who were active in German social democracy.

Vollmar's background and training were most unusual for a German socialist. He was born of an ancient noble Catholic family in old Bavaria and received a traditional Catholic education. In 1865 he entered the army where he served with various regiments, including a brief stint in 1869 as a papal guard in Rome. Sent into active service during the

Franco-Prussian War in 1871, Vollmar received a leg wound but suffered a far more serious injury when his stretcher collapsed as he was being carried to the hospital; for most of the rest of his life he suffered pain and had to use crutches when he walked.

During his convalescence Vollmar studied philosophy, history, and social science to pass time. This reading led him directly to contemporary socialist literature and eventually into the young socialist movement itself. By late 1876 he had become active in the movement as a speaker, writer, and agitator. In 1877 his journalistic talents earned him the editorship of the *Dresdener Volksboten* and later of the *Dresdener Volkszeitung*, but also short prison terms for lese majesty for his attacks on the existing system. When the outlaw period began, Bebel picked Vollmar to be first editor of the official exile newspaper, the *Sozialdemokrat*, and although Vollmar did not hold this position very long, it certainly catapulted him into national prominence in the socialist movement.

Largely because of his close association with Bebel and the *Sozialdemokrat*, Vollmar was considered part of the radical faction of the party through most of the outlaw period. In 1881 he was elected to a Reichstag seat from Saxony, showing himself a skilled parliamentarian during his first session. In 1883 he returned to his home city of Munich, where in 1884 he was sent to Reichstag as representative from the second district. Although he lost this seat in the 1887 election, he did not drop out of politics, but returned to Saxony for another short term as a Landtag representative. Finally in 1890 he once again won the Reichstag seat from Munich 2, whereupon he returned to Bavaria for good. He held the Munich seat for the rest of the Wilhelmian period and added a Bavarian Landtag seat from the same city in 1893.

Shortly after the end of the antisocialist law, Vollmar gave two of the most famous speeches in the history of German reformist socialism, the "Eldorado" speeches of 1 June and 6 July 1891, named after the meeting place in which they were delivered. In these presentations the Bavarian party leader called upon the socialists to make their peace with the existing system sufficiently to pursue effective reforms. His particular grievance was with those social democrats who expended energy on theoretical quarrels. In a 1903 speech Vollmar outlined his own theoretical position in this way: "As for me, I have certainly never labeled myself a Bernsteinian or a Bebelian, or even called [myself] a Marxist; I have no taste and talent for such 'ists' and 'ians'—for me it entirely suffices that I am a social democrat."

Actually, of course, Vollmar did have a theoretical position, espe-

cially since just being a social democrat in Imperial Germany implied a good deal about a person. Furthermore, what Vollmar tried to pass off as plain, down-to-earth social democracy derived as clearly from a special set of circumstances as did the more militant radicalism of many Prussian socialists. To a certain extent Vollmar continued to speak the language of the stricter Marxian analysis, using phrases like "the world power of capitalism" that still ruled through its "representatives and tools, the ruling classes and parties," but he came to identify the victims of this power not just as industrial proletarians, but as workers, the petty bourgeoisie, and peasants. For this he often referred to the peculiar conditions of Bavaria.

At the 1894 Bavarian state party congress, Vollmar emphasized the origins of his position:

Moreover there are the special conditions of the Bavarian land and people. In Bavaria we by no means have to do with a state in which large industry is predominant. Bavaria is the largest agricultural state in the Reich; over four fifths [*sic*] of our population lives not in the cities, but in the countryside. The typical social-democratic section—the heavy industrial and factory proletariat—is well in the minority in Bavaria; middle and small economic enterprises, above all peasants, play a large role here. In general, the social extremes, and with that the class conflicts, are not so sharpened and embittered, especially in old Bavaria, which influences the mode of perception of the entire population.

Given this, what Vollmar sought was not a purely proletarian party, but a popular party, or a socialist *Volkspartei* in the German parlance of the time. He hoped to draw together a coalition of all oppressed people under the banner of social democracy. He concluded his 1894 speech with this rather romantic call:

In a word, we must make obvious to the Bavarian people the community of interest with the working class and social democracy of all the politically and socio-economically oppressed, the discontented, the forward-looking in the state, and kindle in them the knowledge that social democracy does not merely have the highest ideals for the future, but even today is the stimulus and instrument of all progress, that social rebirth and political liberation and all cultural goals have no better, indeed no more conscious and energetic champion than us.

Despite this somewhat exaggerated language, Vollmar was no fool when it came to evaluating the task confronting social democracy in trying to appeal to the peasants in particular. When in the early nineties peasant organizations began to emerge in Bavaria and elsewhere, he recognized them for what they were—the first stumbling steps toward peasant self-consciousness. In arguing against the higher tariffs these bodies wanted as a means of raising the prices they received for their products, Vollmar claimed that the peasants "now know what they do not want, but they do not know what they want." Even though this immature movement was aligning itself for the moment with reactionary Junkers, Vollmar argued that this would change as "the logic of things," i.e., the further maturation of capitalism, forced the peasants toward social democracy.

The tactical conclusions Vollmar drew from this evaluation had a major impact on the Bavarian party. Efforts among the rural population had to be increased, special agitational newspapers were needed, and agitators themselves had to be taken from the countryside, rather than having city folks go out to the people. Furthermore, the most popular socialist agitational forum, the mass meeting, would not work in the countryside, where one-on-one contact, or at best meetings of six to a dozen people, were optimal. All this required the expenditure of funds and personal effort in activities that would yield results only slowly. But Vollmar was able to convince his fellow Bavarian socialists that this was the proper course to pursue.

Had the issue of appealing to peasants stopped there, it would simply have remained one of the quirks of the Bavarian branch and perhaps of the other south Germans as well. But despite his own recognition of the special conditions of his state, Vollmar was convinced that the national party also needed a peasant plank in its program. Because he found sufficient support elsewhere in the party, especially among the reformists and opportunists, Vollmar and his allies were able to make the peasant question a national issue. At the 1894 Frankfurt national congress, the peasant forces managed to push through a resolution calling for a committee to draft an agrarian policy to be grafted onto the Erfurt program. At Breslau in 1895, a full-scale debate over the proposed new plank resulted in resounding rejection and a powerful reaffirmation of the proletarian purity of the party.

The debate at Breslau was extremely acrimonious, reflecting the depth of passions aroused by the peasant question. Vollmar was unable to attend because of illness, but Bruno Schoenlank, Max Quarck, and even Bebel made an able defense of the peasant commission's report. On the other hand, Karl Kautsky and Clara Zetkin made stirring speeches

against the new peasant plank, warning of dire consequences if the social democrats were to sully their ranks with ultimately unreliable peasants. Though the party was brought to the brink of a split over the issues, the majority of the delegates rejected the agrarian program because their cultural and emotional prejudices made them see the peasants as part of the backward-looking, archaic forces that kept the workers and their party isolated and scorned. Bebel suffered one of his very few defeats ever when Kautsky's resolution calling for rejection of the commission's report passed 158 to 63.

Ironically, although the Bavarian branch was largely responsible for raising the peasant issue on the national level, after the mid-nineties efforts to recruit followers from among the agrarian populace in Bavaria faded somewhat. Both the 1892 and 1894 state party congresses were filled with rhetoric and resolutions on the matter, but the lack of response from the peasantry put a damper on the socialists' enthusiasm. In his report on the state of the party at the 1896 congress, the party treasurer had to announce that contributions from locals had not been sufficient to finance a peasant paper; rather than the ten thousand marks needed, the executive had received only fifty marks. The peasant question survived, but neither the national party nor the Bavarian branch ever had much luck in winning support in the countryside.

A second major interest in the Bavarian party was the struggle against strong centralism that had its origins in Berlin, both in the Imperial government and in the central party executive. Some ramifications of this concern have already been referred to in the discussion of budget votes, but further evidence of its importance can also be found in the organizational structure of the party. The federative commitment of the Bavarians was reflected not only in their struggles against Prussia but also in the federal structure they adopted at home. As the laws of association were liberalized in the state, and as the party grew, this federal structure altered gradually, but it was basically preserved up to the war years.

Very shortly after the end of the antisocialist law, the Bavarian socialists organized themselves on a modest level as a state body. In 1892 they had their first state congress, a rather brief affair that met in Regensburg for only one day, 26 June, and was attended by only sixty-seven delegates from forty-seven locals. Although there are no reliable figures available from that early date, it is unlikely that the party had more than eight thousand or so members. However, this still meant that the Bavarians organized over a decade before the Prussians did, and the south German party did so largely to make certain that it remained distinct from the larger party to the north.

Until 1898 the Bavarians preserved without change the organizational structure that had emerged during the outlaw period. This had strong locals linked to a relatively weak executive through the institution of *Vertrauenspersonen*; the executive was made up of the socialist Landtag and Reichstag delegations, a de facto situation that was formalized at the 1894 congress. Two things prevented the party from establishing a more formal structure. One was the flexible and unpredictable interpretation of the association laws by the Bavarian police and courts; technically supralocal political organizations were illegal, but the laws were not applied systematically. Therefore, to avoid possible future reinterpretations that could wipe out painstakingly developed organizations, the socialists did not build up a tightly knit central organization. But a strong bias in favor of local control also worked against centralization.

Reforms of the association laws in 1897–1898, specifically an end to the prohibition of interrelated political bodies and the opening of political organizations to women, allowed the party to impose a more formal structure on itself at the 1898 congress. Although at that time it would have been possible to form a strong central organization, and a few voices in favor of this were raised at the congress, the great majority of the delegates and all the prominent party leaders favored retention of a decentralized system. What emerged was a federated structure based, as were all state socialist organizations, on the local political association (*Verein*), but organized first on a regional level (called *Gau*), and then on the state level. Primary responsibility for organization, agitation, and propaganda rested with the *Gauvorstände* ("district executives"), not the state executive (*Landesvorstand*). At election times the district executives were automatically designated as central election committees.

The three districts of the state were south Bavaria—including upper and lower Bavaria and Schwabia with headquarters in Munich; north Bavaria—including upper, middle, and lower Franconia and upper Pfalz with headquarters in Nürnberg; and Pfalz—the Rhenish Palatinate with headquarters in Ludwigshafen. Although the presence of Munich in the southern district always assured that region of considerable importance, since the capital city was a socialist stronghold, the northern district was the largest. Up to the outbreak of the war, it had more than half the total party membership, followed by the southern district with an increasing proportion equal to roughly 30 percent and then Pfalz with a decreasing proportion of less than 20 percent. An example of the influence of the southern Bavarian organization was the distribution of mandates at the 1908 congress. For the party as a whole, each delegate

represented just over 500 members, but for the southern district the figure was under 240, while for the northern it was over 1,000 and for Pfalz over 600.

Despite revisions in the organizational statutes in 1900, 1904, 1906, and 1908, from 1898 to 1910, the district executives maintained relatively independent positions, including giving separate treasury and membership reports at the annual congresses. Because they were assigned primary responsibility for agitation and elections, the districts often reported higher income and expense figures than did the central treasurer. In 1904, for instance, a reporting year that included a Reichstag election, both the northern and southern Bavarian districts reported income and expenses more than three times greater than the central party's, and even Pfalz exceeded the levels reported by the state executive.

New national party statutes in 1905, adopted at the Jena congress, required the Bavarians to make two changes in their own organization. First, the membership of the state executive had to be redefined from the Landtag and Reichstag members to officers and members-at-large selected by the annual congresses, although in 1910 further changes stipulated that at least one member of this new executive had to come from each of the three districts. Second, payment of a portion of the annual dues to the national executive was also specified (in 1906, local dues were set at fifteen pfennigs per month, with three pfennigs to the national executive, five to the district executive, and two to the state executive). The 1908 reform, which was prompted by further reforms of the state association laws, eliminated the separate male and female socialist organizations that had developed during the previous decade.

Steady growth and increasing electoral success gradually worked to undermine this federative structure, however. The combined treasury reports of the district and state executives in 1908 came to over 220,000 marks income and over 215,000 marks in expenses in a reporting period that included both Landtag and Reichstag elections. Furthermore, for the first time, in 1908, the central executive's treasury report included an accounting of the capital investments (primarily bank accounts) of the party. For the 1907 Reichstag election the national executive had given the Bavarian state executive 20,000 marks to distribute to the districts; the distribution of these funds was 8,000 marks to the northern district, 7,000 to the southern, and 5,000 to Pfalz (which later returned the money because it was able to rely on local sources). Between 1902, the first year for which reliable figures are available, and 1910, the Bavarian branch of the SPD grew from 18,721 members to 67,116, and by 1914 it exceeded 91,000.



As a result of these increases, two major changes were made in the organizational statutes of the party in 1910. The most important of these was an expansion of the influence of the state executive by giving it the right to veto the establishment of new party journals and the appointment of secretaries, powers formerly reserved for the district executives, and also by specifying that decisions on "especially important party questions" no longer required the approval of both the state executive and the district executives, but only the approval of the state executive or a joint sitting of both bodies. These two changes considerably increased the centralized character of the Bavarian party by giving more control to the bureaucrats of the state executive. A further reflection of this change was the end of the separate financial reports by the three districts in 1910. Finally, in 1910 reforms recognized the tremendous growth in party membership by changing the standards for representation at state congresses from one delegate per fifty members in a local, with a maximum of ten, to a graduated system of one delegate for the first one hundred members up to ten for locals with more than ten thousand members.

Thus did the Bavarian party experience the same sort of developments that came with increased size that the national party did, "the logic of things," as Vollmar said of another situation. In the Bavarian case the federative structure was retained, but compromises in the direction of centralization had to be made. In the 1912 Landtag elections, the Bavarian party returned the largest socialist delegation in the nation, thirty, followed by Saxony's twenty-six and the twenty members each in Baden and Hamburg. This growth also had an impact on the Bavarians, as they came increasingly to think that they could influence developments within their state. But at the same time, the growing crisis within the Reich, especially the growth of imperialism and the military and the conflict over Prussian franchise reform, made the south Germans ever more aware of their impotence on the national level.

In the end internal developments in Bavaria were less important to the fate of its socialists than was the inability of their northern comrades to influence developments in Prussia. The war that engulfed Bavaria, as it did all of Germany, came from Prussia and its world position, and had little to do with the socialists' role in Bavarian state affairs. So powerful was the impact of this war that Bavaria, a pillar of prewar reformism and moderation, was to emerge from it with a surprisingly radical socialist movement, the revolutionary efforts of 1918-1919 headed by Kurt Eisner. That development alone is sufficient testimony to the significance of World War I for the SPD.

## 6 / Theory and Intellectuals

If German social democracy prior to World War I may be said to have had a theory, it was Marxism. This does not mean, however, that all or even most leaders of the movement, let alone the rank-and-file members and SPD voters, were guided in their political decisions by a unanimously accepted world view and a preconceived political system. For the most part the party was eclectic and opportunistic in its approach to practical activities, with limits imposed only by a very vague, rarely articulated set of assumptions. These assumptions—including hostility to the state, concern for the welfare of industrial workers, rejection of capitalism, and a commitment to political democracy (i.e., universal suffrage with a responsible representative government)—were not sufficiently precise or consistent to justify the label theory.

Marxism was nonetheless the theory of social democracy in two senses. First, among those members who were concerned with any theory, both the greatest number and the most accomplished considered themselves Marxists, although this group included people who frequently disagreed on specific questions. Second, whenever the SPD engaged directly in theoretical discussions—as when its new party program was adopted in 1891, when its relations with small farmers were debated in 1895, or when Bernstein's revisionism was repeatedly condemned—the proponents of Marxism nearly always carried the day. By any set of criteria much more stringent than this, the writings of Marx as interpreted by his German followers could not accurately be considered the theory of German social democracy.

Theory thus played a markedly different role in the SPD than it does in post-1917 communist parties or in the modern liberal parties that have dominated in the West for roughly the past century. In the former theory is centrally controlled and manipulated, and very little deviation is tolerated. In the latter theory is ignored when it is not scorned; bourgeois liberal parties often delight in having no very clear principles

at all. The SPD of Wilhelmian Germany resembled the former when theory was used to try to achieve uniformity and discipline, but it also frequently resembled the latter when its practice seemed so at odds with the precepts of Marxism.

Western scholars have frequently concluded that the gap between theory and practice in the SPD demonstrates the low esteem the workers' movement as a whole had for theory. But this analysis does not hold up too well as case after case of significant SPD concern for theory must somehow be explained away. The only useful conclusion to reach is that large segments of the party, led by the intellectuals, were indeed enough concerned with theory to devote time, energy, and print to it, while an even larger segment was not enough concerned with theory to prevent such efforts. In the SPD as in any other reasonably democratic organization, be it a social club, a political party, or an entire nation, it was the majority of those who were active who largely determined its nature.

Theoretical activity should, therefore, be neither underrated nor overrated in considering the Wilhelmian SPD. Sometimes theory was important, sometimes it was not; no consistent pattern is discernible. What is clear is that on the whole, the party devoted a good deal of its resources to theory, especially compared to other German political parties or even other European socialist parties of the period. From beginning to end these activities covered a wide range of concerns and broad portions of the socialist spectrum. The officially sanctioned theoretical journals of the SPD strove to include all segments of party opinion, and censorship from within of the party media was made all the more noticeable by its rarity. Theory was perhaps the richest of the many fields of activity of pre-1914 German social democracy.

### **Theoretical Activities to 1890**

In its earliest years the German social-democratic movement was dominated by the theory of one man, Ferdinand Lassalle. As discussed in chapter one, Lassalle's theory included three major elements—the iron law of wages, universal male suffrage, and state-supported workers' cooperatives. Lassalle developed these central themes into a relatively coherent whole that directed the movement away from economic activity and toward political organization aimed at forcing the state to assist in the gradual conversion from capitalism to socialism. Although his more serious theoretical analysis also postulated a political and social revolution as a result of resistance to the political maturation of the

working class, this was not a feature of his polemical writings, nor was it popularly considered an aspect of Lassalle's message.

Actually, Lassalle was so much the publicist and politician that serious theoretical works played a very minor role in his public presence. He was primarily an actor and a symbol, an effective speechmaker who could stir working-class crowds with slogans and rhetoric but who spent little time developing his thought systematically. As noted before, one of the most amazing things about Lassalle is that despite his significant impact on German social democracy, he did not spawn a Lassallean school of theorists. To a great extent Lassallean theory died with the man, though his influence persisted. Even thirty or forty years after his death, his works were probably more widely read in the movement than those of any other theoretician, but they stimulated no one to expand on his suggestions.

The fate of Lassalle's theory was just the first example of what would happen again and again in German social democracy prior to 1891. For a brief period the writings of one or another theorist would be in vogue, usually in some popularized form, but intense interest would fade quickly and the new theories would disappear from view. This happened to Eugen Dühring's work in the late 1870s, to Johann Most's anarchism in the early 1880s, and to Carl August Shramm's attempt to popularize the theories of Karl Rodbertus in the mid-1880s. Lassalle's case was not typical because his personality and legend continued to exercise influence, while the others left no legacy at all.

One of the major sources of this theoretical instability was the very small number of German socialists who were concerned with theory to a significant degree. Because there usually was not much competition, often a single commentator could launch and briefly sustain a burst of interest in a particular theory or theorist. Those major figures who did have some concern with theory—including Bebel, Wilhelm Bracke, and August Geib—were usually much more occupied with organizational and political matters, and thus they did not focus all their attention on theory. Although the first party journal devoted to such concerns, *Die Zukunft*, was established in Berlin in 1877, there was really no sustained effort to promote theory until Karl Höchberg, who had also financed *Die Zukunft*, began to collect young socialist intellectuals around him in Zurich after the antisocialist law was passed.

A second source was both the incidental and the conscious eclecticism that characterized German social democracy at least until 1891 and probably beyond. The incidental eclecticism derived from those people who were in effect searching around for an appropriate theory to which

they could attach themselves. The young Bernstein and Kautsky were included in this group, as were Max Quarck, Conrad Schmidt, Hermann Buhr, and Max Schippel. These men were concerned enough with theory to consider seriously first one and then another author, but on closer inspection, they usually abandoned unpromising lines to move on to other theorists. Lassalle and Marx were the objects of rather regular, and in the case of Marx, increasing attention from these younger men, but most of them had brief flings at the writings of Most, Dühring, and Rodbertus as well. On the other hand, many early German socialists—Wilhelm Blos, Karl Frohme, and Bruno Geiser included—were simply muddleheaded when it came to theory. The eclecticism of these men, all of whom were moderates and some barely socialists, was not the result of a search for a satisfying theory.

Conscious eclecticism was primarily the conviction of Ignaz Auer, one of the most important and able of early social democrats, who continued to play a major role in the party until his death in 1907. He differed considerably from Blos, Geiser, and the others because he was not an opportunist, nor was his radicalism ever in question. Auer argued that the imposition on the party of any doctrine, whether derived from Lassalle, Marx, Dühring, or Rodbertus, would impose unacceptable restrictions on socialist politics. He wanted to maintain maximum flexibility within the limits of an independent workers' movement.

Finally, specifically socialist theories were only a part, probably a small part, of the generally accepted intellectual needs of the early movement. Literacy was the first goal, followed by familiarity with contemporary events, an awareness of modern scientific thought, and then the development of coherent theory. Most of the leaders of the movement in the 1870s and 1880s knew that they were working with people who did not have adequate backgrounds and training to handle sophisticated theory, and this knowledge restrained them from devoting time and resources on a large scale to theoretical endeavors. Men like Bebel and Liebknecht assumed that to a certain extent, theory would mature along with the rest of the movement; they developed a sense or urgency about theory only when it was necessary to assist them in their political struggles.

Two specific episodes, one in 1877–1878, the other in 1884–1885, mark the beginning of theoretical clarification and the emergence of Marxism as the prevalent theory of German social democracy. In the first case Engels presented the most comprehensive statement of Marxism available to that time; in the second case the theoretical utility of Marxism as a means of weakening dissident forces within the party was revealed. Coupled with the decline of Lassallean influence dis-

cussed in chapter one, these two episodes help account for the victory of Marxism.

Eugen Dühring was a lecturer at the University of Berlin who in the late 1860s and the 1870s published a number of works of philosophy and political economy that seemed to be radically socialist. But according to Dühring, in his most famous works—*Course of Philosophy* (1875), *Critical History of Political Economy and Socialism* (1875), and *Course of Political and Social Economy* (1876)—his writings were much more than that. Dühring argued somewhat immodestly that he had come up with a totally comprehensive system that explained the nature of the universe, including human society, for all of history, past and future. After rejecting the likes of Liebnitz, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, Marx, Darwin, Fourier, Saint-Simon, Owen, and Newton, and only reluctantly recognizing the achievements of Kant, Dühring offered himself to his readers as the true genius of his age.

Even allowing for rather marked differences in acceptable style between then and now, Dühring comes off as pompous, florid, and above all, hollow. But at the same time he was also a critic of the established system, an enemy of the enemies of the social democrats, and a learned man. In the confused environment that prevailed among the intellectuals attached to the workers' movement then, Dühring seemed to have something to offer. The young Eduard Bernstein was the major disciple among the socialists, but Dühring was widely admired and praised, even by Bebel, who should have known better. Marx and Engels were encouraged to counter Dühring by some of Bebel's colleagues who did know better, especially Liebknecht. From January 1877 through July 1878, the party's official journal, the *Vorwärts*, carried Engels' serialized attack on Dühring; later in 1878 it appeared in book form under the title *Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science*. But from the very beginning the book was known by a shorter and more descriptive title, *Anti-Dühring*.

*Anti-Dühring* was the most comprehensive and convenient presentation of Marxism ever made by the two founders of the doctrine. In a considerably shortened form, published as *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, it became the single most important source of the spread of Marxian thought in Europe. Other works, including various popularizations of *Capital*, Johann Most's 1873 work *Capital and Labor*, and Schramm's *Principles of National Economy*, had done much to introduce Marxism to Germany, but it was the publication of *Anti-Dühring* that signaled the beginning of a Marxian school of thought in the country of the master's birth.

In the context of the history of Marxism, the significance of *Anti-*

*Dühring* lies in the extent to which Engels tied Marx's work to a comprehensive world view based on the natural-scientific rage of the times. But in the context of the history of German social democracy, this is nearly matched in importance by the fact that the most promising young intellectuals of the movement, Kautsky and Bernstein, were converted to Marxism by it. In retrospect, the least important result of the book was that it finished, totally, the appeal of Dühring to German social democrats. Despite the fact that several socialists at the 1877 party congress objected to Engels' attack on Dühring and despite the latter's momentary elevation to the stature of martyr when he was fired by the University of Berlin for his radicalism, *Anti-Dühring* successfully achieved its proclaimed goal.

Marxism certainly did not win the party in 1878, but it was well on its way to doing so. The next landmark in the party's theoretical development came six years later, by which time Kautsky and Bernstein, now confirmed Marxists, edited the semiofficial theoretical journal *Die neue Zeit* and the official organ *Sozialdemokrat*, respectively. This time the opposition was the theories of Karl Rodbertus as represented by Carl Schramm. The issue was important because with some difficulty Rodbertus could be made out as a theoretical supporter of state socialism, and the Marxian radicals were at the time fighting against those in the party who argued that the state should be called upon to promote socialism. This fight focused on the government's steamship subsidy bill, which some members of the socialist Fraktion wanted to support because of the benefits it supposedly offered the workers. Thus the Marxists' critique of Schramm and Rodbertus was an integral part of a more practical political dispute.

Objectively the Marxists did not have much to attack, since besides Schramm only Louis Viereck in the Fraktion and Höchberg outside it were followers of Rodbertus. Others were more or less receptive to his ideas, but they were mild sympathizers at most, and none belonged to the Fraktion. Nonetheless, aided by Engels and urged on by Bebel, Kautsky and Bernstein launched a vigorous attack in the party's two most prestigious journals. Once again the result was nearly total victory as Schramm withdrew from the fray and Rodbertus was never again seriously offered as a possible theoretical mentor of the German workers' movement.

By the last years of the outlaw period, the Marxists were in a very strong position in German social democracy. Not that the majority of the party or even of the leadership had carefully studied, digested, and accepted Marxism; far from it. As always, most socialists were concerned with the more mundane aspects of the movement, with organiza-

tion and politics, not theory. But the major competitors in theory had been vanquished one after another, and the brightest and most active minds of the movement had become consistent Marxists. Kautsky and Bernstein were staunchly supported by Engels, giving their work the aura of having been chosen by the masters. Above all else Bebel now saw Marxism as a useful tool in his struggle to hold the movement together and guide its politics. The importance of Bebel's support cannot be overestimated. As political master of the party, his backing of Marxism virtually assured its victory, while his opposition would have been fatal.

Still, when the antisocialist law expired in 1890, the public face of the SPD had not changed much. The old Gotha program with its predominantly Lassallean character was still officially accepted by the party, despite recognition at the last exile congress in 1887 of a need to adopt a new program. At that meeting Auer, Bebel, and Liebknecht had been charged with drafting a new set of guidelines for the party, but at the 1890 Halle congress, Liebknecht reported that the press of time and events had prevented them from fulfilling their charge. He also offered a resolution calling for a new program to be presented at the next congress, and the party approved it unanimously. For the next year a debate over the new program occupied much of the party press, and when the theoretical dust settled, the proponents of Marxism were in firm control of SPD theory.

Kautsky set the tone for the Marxists' part in the debate by carrying an extensive discussion of the old programs and the new exigencies in the pages of the *Neue Zeit*. The journal's publisher, Dietz, originally suggested that Kautsky solicit articles on various aspects of the program from leading party lights, including Auer, Bebel, Bernstein, and Engels. Naturally Kautsky hoped to lead with strength, so he requested a contribution from Engels first. The latter's response launched one of the most acrimonious disagreements in the SPD's history and briefly imperiled Kautsky's position in the party, but it ended with the Marxists' position strengthened and gave the world for the first time one of Marx's most famous works, the *Critique of the Gotha Program*.

Engels did not accept Kautsky's invitation to write an original article on the new program, claiming that his work on Marx's literary estate demanded too much time. Instead he sent a copy of comments Marx had made on the 1875 Gotha program at the time of its adoption. These remarks had been circulated as a private letter among German party leaders at that time, but they had never before been published. The *Critique* proved one of the most important of Marx's works published posthumously under Engels' supervision.



Marx's comments were characteristically blunt. He attacked the Gotha program for its unclear and contradictory wording, especially the phrase *free state*. As a substitute for the preferred *democratic republic*, Marx found the program's characterization vague and inconsistent. But the most explosive of his criticisms were those directed against Lassallean notions and Lassalle's supporters. In 1891 the Lassalle legend was still sufficiently strong to leave no doubt in Kautsky's mind that this attack would rouse the ire of many in the party. Nonetheless, he felt that the potential benefits of publication to the Marxian camp outweighed the threat of party turmoil, although with Engels' approval some of the harsher personal attacks were deleted.

The storm Kautsky expected came. Even before the issue of the *Neue Zeit* that carried the article was distributed, Bebel and Dietz tried belatedly to stop it. Both men hoped to avoid party strife, but Dietz's strong Lassallean sympathies were also offended. Once the article became public, the majority of the Reichstag Fraktion, including above all Dietz and Liebknecht, were the most upset, vilifying Kautsky for deception and dirty politics. On substantive programmatic issues, however, the Fraktion members made little headway in attempting to discredit the Marxian critique.

Thus initiated, the rest of the pre-congress debate over the new party program was conducted in a much less heated manner. By the time of the Erfurt meeting in mid-October, four major proposals were still under consideration, but when the congressional program commission got down to more detailed discussions, only two drafts were in serious contention. One was written primarily by Liebknecht, though Auer, Bebel, and others contributed to it also. Kautsky and Bernstein had drafted the other—Kautsky the opening theoretical portion, Bernstein the longer tactical section. The two programs did not differ significantly, except that Kautsky's was much shorter and crisper. At the program commission's first meeting, it was accepted as the working basis by a seventeen-to-four vote.

Few alterations were made in the proposed program. Ironically, despite the fact that Bebel's support ensured acceptance of Kautsky's draft, Bebel also pressed for changes that the younger Marxist strongly opposed. The party leader wanted to include the phrase *one reactionary mass*, referring to the political tendencies of all nonsocialists, but Kautsky led the victorious opposition to it. Bebel did manage to win on his demand for inclusion of a clause calling for the free administration of justice. The final product was, however, a brief and reasonably accurate summary of Marx's theories concerning the course of capitalist development and the growth of the working-class movement.

That a program proposal drafted primarily by Liebknecht lost out and one drafted by Kautsky and Bernstein was accepted revealed an interesting shift in German Marxism. From the late 1860s until perhaps the mid-1880s, Liebknecht was almost without exception regarded as the major German disciple of Marx. This reputation was based mostly on Liebknecht's personal acquaintance with Marx and Engels rather than on any clear and consistent demonstration of a profound grasp of Marxian concepts and methods. For while it is true that he could effectively use words and phrases taken from Marx, Liebknecht never studied the major Marxian tracts in any great depth. In fact, during the Erfurt debates over the new program, he pointed with pride to his independence from any other person's theories. Liebknecht had always been too deeply involved with the practical politics of German socialism to spend the time necessary to develop a fuller understanding of Marxism.

But the new, much younger theorists of the party had studied long and hard to develop their Marxism. Both Kautsky and Bernstein were bright and diligent, and their work demanded rather than prevented more serious study than the more politically active could manage. This new generation of German Marxists would labor for the next decade and beyond to make Marxism work as the doctrine of a mass movement. At least Kautsky and his circle would, for Bernstein was within a few years to fall away from orthodoxy to become the only person ever to attempt an extensive right-wing internal revision of Marxism. Shortly after the turn of the century these two major lines of theoretical development were joined by a third, left or radical Marxism. Its major proponents were Franz Mehring, Clara Zetkin, Karl Liebknecht, and several others, but above all of them stood Rosa Luxemburg.

The course of German social-democratic theory from 1891 to 1914 can best be explained by taking closer looks at the three major figures: Karl Kautsky, the orthodox Marxist-centrist, Eduard Bernstein, the right-wing revisionist, and Rosa Luxemburg, the left-wing radical. In this way the full sweep of the Marxian legacy in Germany can be presented.

### **Karl Kautsky**

Karl Kautsky (1854–1938) was the most important of the many hundreds of people who tried their hands at theory for German social democracy. From the early 1880s until after the end of World War I, Kautsky devoted virtually all of his time and energy to making Marxism the viable doctrine of a growing working-class movement. To a great

extent his success in this endeavor ensured a continued concern with Marx's work as something other than simply a fascinating intellectual exercise. Along with Engels, Kautsky was the chief popularizer of Marxism, and it was his tie with the SPD, more than his creativity and brilliant interpretation, that made his efforts successful. Entire generations of SPD intellectuals learned their Marxism from Kautsky, as did scores of the most prominent figures in the history of Marxism, including Lenin, Trotsky, and Luxemburg.

Kautsky, who was born in Prague, came to the German movement from Vienna, where he had grown up. As a young man he was strongly attracted to socialism because of its romantic appeal as a defender of the downtrodden and its scientific appeal as the most rational and historically necessary system of social-economic organization. The strongest intellectual influences of his early years were the major so-called natural philosophers—Ernst Haeckel, Ludwig Büchner, and Charles Darwin—who were popularizing the natural-scientific, positivist outlook that dominated the intellectual atmosphere of the second half of the nineteenth century in Europe.

Although he received a formal university education and had originally planned to become a university or secondary-level teacher, Kautsky's growing attachment to socialism soon pulled him toward devoting full time to this cause. But the socialist party in Austria at that time, the mid- to late 1870s, was far too weak to satisfy his vigorous and eclectic interests. From the very beginning of his career as a socialist, he was far more concerned with intellectual activities than he was with politics and organization. The meager socialist press of the Dual Monarchy could not support him, so he began publishing articles in the newspapers of the more prominent German movement. Here his work attracted sufficient attention to cause Karl Höchberg, who already employed Bernstein as a private secretary, to offer to subsidize him in the pursuit of socialist scholarship. In January 1880 Kautsky arrived in Zurich to begin his nearly half century of devotion to German socialism.

During the decade of the eighties, Kautsky developed from a romantic natural-scientific socialist into a consistent Marxist strongly influenced by Engels. In unison with Bernstein, he carefully studied the major tracts of Marxism, especially *Capital* and *Anti-Dühring*, and gradually began to write his own political and historical pieces in which Marxian categories and language played a central role. He also established a close personal relationship with Engels, and for three years (1885–1888) he lived in London, where he had almost daily contact with Marx's closest friend and collaborator and used the marvelous resources of the British Museum library to further his studies. The founding in

1883 of *Die neue Zeit* gave him a steady income, but more importantly it gave him a nearly perfect forum from which to propagate Marxism.

In 1887 Kautsky published his first major contribution to the popularization of Marxism, *The Economic Doctrines of Karl Marx*, which was written in London with regular and important assistance from Engels. The book was a lucid and fairly comprehensive summary of the economic analysis contained in Marx's *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, Wage Labor and Capital, Capital*, and *Poverty of Philosophy*. The major features of *Economic Doctrines* were careful and straightforward definitions of critical Marxian terms (*commodity, surplus value, socially necessary labor, constant and variable capital, etc.*), a very brief review of the historical development of capitalism, and a description of the process of capitalist production and the role of labor in it. In this study Kautsky neither offered new statistical evidence nor attempted any imaginative extension of Marx's work; it was a summarization and simplification of Marx's sometimes turgid and complicated notions.

*Economic Doctrines* did more than any other single work to establish Kautsky's reputation as heir to Marx and Engels. Over the quarter of a century following its publication, it was reprinted innumerable times in Germany. In a 1907 guide for socialist lecturers, Eduard David, one of Kautsky's ideological opponents within the SPD, wrote of it: "The reading of this book should always precede the study of Marx's original. For most people it may serve as a substitute for [the original]." Within four years of its initial publication, the book was translated into Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Polish, and Czech, and it eventually appeared in eighteen different languages, some in several different translations. For a great many budding young socialists throughout the Western world in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Kautsky's *Economic Doctrines* was their first introduction to the thought of Karl Marx.

By the time the party adopted its new program in 1891, studies like *Economic Doctrines* and the polemical exchanges conducted in the pages of the *Neue Zeit* had established Kautsky as one of the leading theoreticians of German social democracy. His part in drafting the new program further enhanced his reputation, but it was a work of his commissioned by the party executive to explain and amplify the new program that elevated him to the stature of the leading theoretician. This book, called *Das Erfurter Programm* (1892) in German but usually entitled *The Class Struggle* in English translations, became his most famous and most translated work. It was also the first major piece in which he presented his own version of Marxism without tutoring from

## 200 / "Not One Man! Not One Penny!"

Engels. After eleven years of close guidance, however, Kautsky espoused a brand of Marxism that did not differ from Engels' in any essential points.

*Das Erfurter Programm* had five sections. In the first three Kautsky summarized the material he had presented in *Economic Doctrines*, defining terms and describing the process of the development of capitalism. Section four was one of the very few times he tried to offer some suggestions about the nature of postcapitalist society. Like most Marxists, Kautsky hesitated to do this because social development is so complex that specific predictions are difficult to make. He did, however, speculate that wages would tend to equalize and that workers would gain "the freedom from labor."

The last section of *Das Erfurter Programm* dealt with the nature of class relations under capitalism and the tactics available to the workers. Here Kautsky emphasized the need for economic organization and participation in the political arena to advance the interests of the workers. But he cautioned that the party should steadfastly remain independent, maintaining its exclusively working-class character, and that no amount of reform could delay the revolution that would inevitably come with the maturation of capitalism and the industrial proletariat. These themes—the necessity of preserving the purity of the party, the importance of participating as fully as possible in the political process, and the inevitability of the eventual revolution—were the hallmarks of Kautsky's political recommendations for the SPD.

For the next twenty-odd years, Kautsky would continue to add to his reputation as the world's leading Marxist with historical studies and contemporary political and economic analyses. But the great bulk of his efforts were directed at guiding the policies of the SPD in appropriate directions. The key to his success in this task was his partnership with Bebel. The party leader generally gave Kautsky his lead in political matters, while Kautsky's theory gave a sort of intellectual validity to Bebel's positions. Although Bebel frequently used Kautsky's writings to bludgeon political opponents, their relationship was neither crude nor exploitative. Rather, the two men usually cooperated out of shared interests and convictions, but they worked on different levels. Occasionally Kautsky opposed Bebel's positions, and occasionally he won, but most of the time their partnership was mutually supportive and satisfying.

Between 1891 and 1914 four major episodes demonstrated Kautsky's influence and helped define his interpretation of acceptable tactics for the SPD. In 1895, largely because of pressure from the south Germans,

the party took up the question of whether or not it should try to appeal to the peasants and small farmers of the nation for support; Kautsky played a central role in this discussion. From about 1897 to 1903 the major theoretical concern of the party was the debate over Bernstein's revisionism; Kautsky entered the fray somewhat belatedly, but he gradually developed a comprehensive critique. In 1905-1906 the SPD was rent by disagreements on the issues of the mass strike, and Kautsky's position was very revealing. Finally, in 1910 the old issue of budget support came up again, and the aftermath of this debate saw the complete development of Kautsky's centrist position between the reformists on the right and the radicals on the left.

Serious concern for the peasantry among social democrats began shortly after the end of the outlaw period when south German branches of the party realized that they had very nearly reached the saturation point of their popular appeal if they could not attract the votes of rural workers and small farmers. The issue was then further stimulated when, for the first time in German history, a political association of farmers, the Bund der Landwirte, was formed. The ability of this group to rouse political interests among small farmers and its severely antisocialist stands—it was essentially a front organization for the very conservative large landowners of the East Elbe region of Prussia—served to force the issue on the SPD.

Led by Georg von Vollmar, the south German forces gained sufficient support to get the 1894 Frankfurt party congress to pass a resolution calling for the adoption of an agrarian policy to be grafted onto the Erfurt program. Two things about the campaign particularly rankled Kautsky. One was the almost vituperatively antitheoretical posture of the major proponents of the agrarian program. Over and over again these people scornfully rejected any theoretical objections to including peasants and small farmers among party membership and to making special programmatic concessions to try to win their votes. Quite naturally Kautsky resented this attack on his special bailiwick. Kautsky also opposed the suggestion that the exclusively worker character of the party should be violated. This was contrary to what was for him the most important basic political principle of any socialist party.

For a time it seemed that perhaps Kautsky had chosen the wrong side on this issue because Bebel sided with Vollmar and the south Germans. Actually Bebel had never been entirely happy with the exclusively worker party; he had tried to keep *worker* out of the name of both the SDAP and the SAPD to avoid offending possible nonworker followers. But the issue did not come up again in the intervening period, largely

because of the radicalizing impact of the antisocialist law. In 1894 Bebel was securely in control of the party, and the number of issues on which he lost at party congresses was very small.

In the end, however, Bebel, not Kautsky, chose the wrong side this time. Even though a major theoretical dispute on the agrarian question preceded the 1895 Breslau congress at which the new policy was voted on, the issue was not so much one of facts and theories as it was an emotional one. At Breslau the agrarian commission selected the previous year presented its report to the delegates, and Kautsky offered a counterresolution calling for the rejection of the commission's proposal. Vollmar was unable to attend the congress, so Bebel delivered the major attack on Kautsky's resolution, arguing primarily that even if the agrarian program was ineffective, it did not cost the workers anything, and it might win the party some new supporters.

Clara Zetkin and Kautsky both gave strong speeches in favor of preserving the proletarian purity of the party. Zetkin met with prolonged stormy applause when she closed her presentation with a stirring call for the party to reject the agrarian program and thereby "hold firmly to the revolutionary character of our party." Kautsky conceded that the new program might win the SPD some voters but added that such followers would only desert the party "at the decisive moment." He concluded with an emotional appeal to revolutionary solidarity: "We face great and difficult battles, and must train comrades-in-arms who are resolved to share everything with us and to fight the great fight to the end." Such entreaties got a sympathetic response from the delegates, most of whom shared the prejudice of urban dwellers against what Marx referred to in the *Communist Manifesto* as "the idiocy of rural life." By a vote of 158 to 63, Kautsky's resolution passed.

The revisionism controversy, which is dealt with in greater detail below, was for Kautsky at least as much of a personal crisis as it was a theoretical problem. Ever since the early eighties, he and Bernstein had been the closest of friends, and they had conducted a heavy regular correspondence after Kautsky settled in Germany; until 1901 Bernstein was unable to return to his homeland because of an outstanding indictment for lese majesty. This personal relationship was, for Kautsky at least, in large part based on what he thought was a shared commitment to Marxism, which the two men had learned together. To have Bernstein fall away from the fold was a traumatic emotional loss for Kautsky, which explains why he delayed for nearly two years before taking a strong public stand against his friend.

Once again the issues debated did not always reflect what was really

going on in the party. Basically Bernstein called on the SPD to abandon its revolutionary rhetoric and begin to act like a reformist party that accepted the existing system. His position was backed by an elaborate reworking of the basis of Marxism in which a Kantian-derived ethic replaced the Hegelian-based dialectic materialism of the original. In practical terms Bernstein emphasized that legal activities were preferable to illegal ones, that the stronger the movement grew the more its opponents would be forced into illegal acts, and that the major task confronting the party was democratic and economic reform. He also urged that nonproletarian elements be embraced by the SPD to strengthen further its membership and votes.

Much of Kautsky's part in the debate was devoted to refuting Bernstein's objections to the fundamentals of Marxism—value theory, the dialectic, materialism, the class struggle—in fact, virtually everything that made it different from various forms of ethical socialism that were common in the nineteenth century. As to Bernstein's more practical contentions, Kautsky found only one of them objectionable. No one disputed that legal means were better than illegal ones, Kautsky claimed, nor did anyone doubt that the continued growth of the SPD would soon force its opposition into desperate, illegal acts. Above all else democratic political and economic reforms were accepted by the entire party as the most pressing immediate goals. What then, Kautsky asked, was Bernstein proposing that should be resisted?

Kautsky and other critics of Bernstein were on the firmest ground when they rejected his call for the expansion of the party beyond the industrial working class. Despite the growing number of reformists in the SPD—people who were inclined to accept Bernstein's softer approach to politics and who argued that the official rhetoric was sometimes too strong—this issue brought the overwhelming majority of the party to reject revisionism. At the 1899 Hanover congress, Bernstein's theory was rejected by a vote of 216 to 21 when the delegates specifically denied that the SPD should become "a democratic-socialist reform party." Four years later, after revisionism refused to die, the 1903 Dresden congress again rejected it, this time by a 288 to 11 tally.

Of course these votes, like the rejection of an agrarian policy, did not mean an end to the forces of reformism in the party. Bernstein may not have been able to convince the SPD to change its theory, but the party's practice continued to be more like what he favored than not. The apparent paradox here can be explained if we understand the function of the theory within the social-democratic movement. For the most part theory was not looked upon as a specific guide to action, but as an expression of the deeply felt sense of solidarity of the membership. The



very same socialists who favored the party's backing of minor reforms and had a strong attachment to things German, often including even the state, could unabashedly support theoretical statements that emphasized the uniqueness of socialist workers, rejected the state in principle, and foretold the coming of revolution. This sense of solidarity was quite real and widely shared, and it held the party together.

Eventually Kautsky developed a more comprehensive view of what revisionism was. Pointing to the right-wing socialists of France led by Jean Jaurès and to the new progressive party that was gradually replacing the Liberals in England, he concluded that all of Europe was undergoing a "renaissance of bourgeois radicalism." He regarded revisionism as the theoretical expression of this renaissance, which he felt was a "historically necessary manifestation" of maturing capitalism. As their status declined, bourgeois and petty-bourgeois radicals could no longer find comfort in the great liberal and conservative parties, but neither had they yet descended into the proletariat. Thus they found themselves in a theoretically untenable position, which they hoped to rectify by converting socialist parties according to their own confused image. Both privately and publicly Kautsky urged Bernstein to show the courage of his convictions by breaking with the SPD to form a new left-bourgeois oppositional party.

During the course of the revisionism controversy, Kautsky came to comment on nearly every aspect of Marxian theory, which allowed him to clarify many matters. For instance, Bernstein repeatedly criticized Kautsky's brand of Marxism because it supposedly included a collapse theory, that is, the notion that the transition from capitalism to socialism would be the result of a massive business crisis in the former. Bernstein objected to the rigid determinism of this view while also contending that capitalism had already proved itself capable of surviving deep crisis, thus demonstrating its endurance.

Kautsky staunchly denied that he, Marx, or Engels had ever made such a fatalistic suggestion. While not rejecting the notion of recurrent crisis in capitalism, he argued that to tie the transition from capitalism to socialism simply to the economic collapse of the former was a very one-sided view, because "the class struggle remains unmentioned in this description." Despite the historical necessity of recurrent capitalist crisis, he maintained, a second critical part of the transition to socialism was the maturation of the proletariat as a viable political force. The desired change would not come automatically; the proletariat had to engage vigorously in the class struggle in order to seize power.

Two books came out of Kautsky's part in the revisionism debate: the very polemical *Bernstein and the Social-Democratic Program: An*

*Anti-critique* (1899) and *The Social Revolution* (1902). The latter was his most comprehensive discussion up to that time of the path from capitalism to socialism, and in it he forcefully reiterated his orthodox line. *The Social Revolution* was one of his most successful books, selling thousands of copies and going through multiple printings very quickly. The response to it encouraged him to believe that progress was being made against the reformists and revisionists, although he had few illusions about the number of committed Marxists in the party.

By the eve of the party's great debate over the mass strike, Kautsky stood firmly at the head of the radical wing, regularly admonished by the south German reformists and the trade unionists, but with the solid support of Bebel, and therefore the party leadership. With Bernstein's move to revisionism, Kautsky was the undisputed master of social-democratic theory in Germany, and because of the SPD's status in the international socialist movement, he was also the most important Marxist in the world. But the ten or so years before the war were to see an erosion of his place in the party, as a more consistent, though largely powerless, left wing emerged after 1905–1906, and as the reformist forces gained even more influence in the leadership. Faced with these changes, he developed his position as a centrist, fighting a two-front battle in theoretical disputes. Bebel's death in 1913 severely undermined Kautsky's influence in the party, while his opposition to the war eventually brought an end to his affiliation with the SPD.

This erosion was not immediately apparent because Kautsky continued to command the support of most of the party leaders and because even among his intraparty opponents, his prestige still carried a great deal of weight. But in the mass-strike debate he was somewhat reluctantly forced into a position of defending Rosa Luxemburg and the emerging left wing in their stand against the trade unions. When both Kautsky and Luxemburg were outmaneuvered at the 1906 Mannheim congress, the fate of the extreme left seemed to be sealed. In the aftermath of this dispute, Kautsky too had a brief falling out with the party executive. In 1909 his study *The Road to Power* was published by the official party press. When the first edition of five thousand copies sold out in a few weeks' time, the executive refused to authorize a second edition because of what it considered the exaggerated radicalism of the book.

In *The Road to Power* Kautsky emphasized three things. First, he argued forcefully that the ruling clique of Germany could not much longer tolerate the continued growth of the SPD and the trade unions. Very soon, he contended, the state was going to be forced to take some very harsh steps, and when that time came, the party had to be

prepared to take advantage of the situation. Second, he mounted his most persuasive campaign ever in favor of theoretical guidance of practical political action. Whereas the reformists claimed that the minor concessions the party was winning demonstrated the possibility of peacefully growing into socialism, in reality such party victories simply increased class tensions because they clarified party lines. Those who emphasized this "positive work" needed theory to show them the reality that was concealed by appearances. Finally, Kautsky argued that no matter how much they grew, party and trade-union organizations could never hope to include anything more than an elite. Since the remainder of the population was "only revolutionary as a *possibility*, not a *reality*," only effective socialist propaganda, i.e., theory, could convert the possibility into reality.

Trade-union leaders and most of the party bureaucracy quite naturally considered *The Road to Power* a fundamental attack on their positions. Clearly Kautsky was attempting to reassert the superior position of the intellectuals in the party over those who conducted day-to-day affairs. Thus challenged, the functionaries responded by refusing to approve a second edition of the book. Kautsky briefly threatened to leave Germany altogether if he did not receive better treatment. He also used the available appeals channel of the party by taking his case to the control commission, where his close friend Clara Zetkin used her influence to persuade the executive to relent. *The Road to Power* was reprinted, and second and third editions of five thousand copies each quickly sold out.

Kautsky's problems with the party leadership were short-lived, however, as two events in 1910 brought him back into good graces. The first was his final personal split with Luxemburg, a break that had been gradually developing for several years. The actual theoretical disagreement concerned the extent to which the party should support illegal street demonstrations to back its demands for franchise reform, especially in Prussia. Luxemburg favored such demonstrations, while Kautsky thought them dangerous. When he refused to print an article by her on the subject, Luxemburg's alienation was complete.

But Kautsky's dispute with Luxemburg was interrupted when the socialist delegation to the Baden Landtag approved the state budget in July 1910. This was a blatant violation of party discipline, and Bebel immediately called upon Kautsky to forget his quarrel with Luxemburg in order to concentrate on sharp criticism of the Badenese. The conjunction of these events gave the party's chief theoretician a perfect opportunity to articulate the centrist position he had been developing at least since the mass-strike controversy began in 1905-1906. In an

August 1910 article entitled "Between Baden and Luxemburg," he pointed out that on a map Marx's birthplace, Trier, lay between Luxemburg on the left and Baden on the right. So too, he claimed, did the proper course for the SPD lie between Luxemburg's left radicalism and the right, reformist capitulation of the Baden party; fidelity to Marx would bring the party to victory.

After 1910 Kautsky's mature view of the SPD and its place in prewar Germany did not change. Neither the increasingly vocal radicals nor the increasingly dominant reformists had the answers as far as he was concerned. He characterized the SPD as a "revolutionary, not a revolution-making" party, meaning that the socialists should prepare for the revolution by participating in politics sufficiently to heighten class conflict, but should not force confrontations by putschist action in the streets. Rather than pursuing a policy of revolutionary antagonism, he counseled a "strategy of attrition" in which the tried and true methods of the past would continue to yield gains until tensions reached a breaking point at some unspecifiable time in the future. Also, hostility to the state and the proletarian purity of the party had to be preserved, lest the workers be compromised. These tactics would yield a socialist victory, Kautsky argued, because history was on the side of the workers.

Unfortunately for his own views, Kautsky was neither able to nor particularly interested in countering intraparty developments that undermined the SPD's capacity to maintain this position of wearing the enemy down. In part this was simply a personal failing; he lacked the political sophistication to perceive the impact of these developments. In part, too, he was trapped by his long commitment to the movement; given the depth of his attachment to it, he was doomed to take it as it came. But he also had a strong faith in the revolutionary potential of the masses. He was convinced that when the time came, the party of the workers would be forced to take the lead. When that time did finally come, however, his beloved party had been split and almost fatally weakened by the Great War.

### Eduard Bernstein

Eduard Bernstein (1850–1932) came to socialism from rather different origins than did Kautsky. Bernstein was the seventh of fifteen children in a petty-bourgeois Jewish family of Berlin; his father was once a plumber but later became a railway engineer, a job that ensured a regular though modest income. Bernstein was forced by material considerations to take up work before finishing the *Gymnasium*, and at

age sixteen he began a twelve-year career as a bank clerk. As a young man he pursued his education on his own, dabbling in poetry and for a time considering a career in the theater, either as an actor or a playwright. However, the more mundane employment as a bank clerk was considerably safer, so he stuck with it until he left Germany in 1878 to become Karl Höchberg's private secretary.

Like so many other young Germans, Bernstein was first attracted to socialism during the Franco-Prussian War. For him it was not just the military expansionism of the war that was repellent; he was also apparently quite shocked by the government's persecution of Bebel, Liebknecht, and other Eisenachers for their opposition to the war. Bernstein felt that the charges were clearly trumped up in order to still opposition. Around the same time he and some friends had formed a discussion group, and shortly after the prominent trade-union leader and socialist Friedrich Fritzsche spoke to the group, Bernstein joined the Eisenachers at the age of twenty-two.

At the time he joined the party, the major theoretical contacts Bernstein had with socialism were Lassalle's *Herr Bastiat Schulze von Delitzsch* and Dühring's *Critical History of National Economy and Socialism*. Within a year or so he also read Marx's *The Civil War in France* and Dühring's *Course of National and Social Economy*. But in fact during these early years he devoted little time to serious theoretical study, concentrating instead on public speeches and debates that dealt with the more practical aspects of the movement. Not until after his move to Zurich did he turn to theory, although this in no way retarded his rise in the socialist ranks. Probably his devotion to and skill at agitation and campaigning accounted for his early prominence. By the time the socialist unity drive was culminating in 1875, he was sufficiently important to serve as an SDAP delegate to the unity conference that preceded the Gotha congress.

After unification Bernstein continued to be very active in the new party as an agitator, campaigner, and member of the control commission. He also helped found a new discussion club and a workers' night school in which he taught some classes. While engaged in these activities, he first met Karl Höchberg. For a short while Bernstein was rather strongly influenced by Dühring, even to the point of establishing personal contacts, but two things brought this to an end. First, in October 1878, he left Berlin for Zurich where he became Höchberg's assistant. Second, in 1879 he studied Engels' *Anti-Dühring*, which turned him against Dühring and toward Marx. Thus at about the time the party was forced into exile by the antisocialist law, Bernstein had

already begun the course toward Marxism which characterized much of the rest of the party's development for the next twelve years.

Bernstein's extensive experience with practical agitation coupled with his obvious intelligence and writing ability made him uniquely qualified for his first major position in German social democracy, the editorship of the exiled official journal the *Sozialdemokrat*. Vollmar had edited the paper for its first years, but when he insisted on leaving the job, some difficulties in finding a replacement ensued. The major problem was that Marx and Engels from the beginning had resented Höchberg's ties with the paper or any other aspect of the party. When Bebel decided that Bernstein, Höchberg's closest associate, should take over the *Sozialdemokrat*, it seemed that Marx and Engels would object.

In order to make peace with the old ones in London and to get them to give their blessing to the new editor, Bernstein and Bebel made a trip to England in December 1880. Although it was the first time either had met Marx or Engels, the encounter was a major success. Not only was Bernstein given the seal of approval, but very quickly Engels, at least, developed a good deal of admiration and even respect for the younger man's work. When after three months on the job Bernstein began to doubt his capacity for the task, Engels encouraged him by writing: "You have edited the paper skillfully from the very beginning; you have given it the right tone and developed the necessary wit. In editing a newspaper, erudition is not nearly so important as a quick understanding of matters in the right spirit, and you have always done that."

Under Bernstein's direction the *Sozialdemokrat* became the handmaiden of Bebel's radical political position and an important factor in the victory of the radicals over the moderates in the outlaw years. As editor of the party's official organ, Bernstein usually found himself in the center of intraparty struggles, and he always sided with Bebel and the radicals. Backed by the regular counsel of Engels, Bernstein orchestrated the exiled social democrats' assault on Bismarck's social policies and took strong objection to the efforts of the moderate members of the Reichstag Fraktion to support the government's steamship subsidy bill in 1885. In March of that year he precipitated a major confrontation when he refused to publish in the *Sozialdemokrat* the following statement by the Fraktion: "The paper does not determine the attitude of the parliamentary party; it is the parliamentary party that must control the attitude of the paper."

Victory in the steamship-subsidy-bill controversy meant that the *Sozialdemokrat* was firmly controlled by the radicals after 1885. Along with Kautsky, Bernstein had also developed into a consistent Marxist

during the early eighties. Because of his journalistic skills and editor's post, Bernstein did not continue to develop his theory as intensely as Kautsky did, but his Marxism was not called into question by anyone. After 1888, when Bismarck finally succeeded in pressuring the Swiss into expelling many of the exiled German socialists, Bernstein and the rest of the editorial staff of the paper moved to London. There Bernstein's ties with Engels grew even closer. This relationship remained very close after the end of the antisocialist law, when the *Sozialdemokrat* came to an end, as Bernstein was unable to return to Germany because of his outstanding indictments for seditious editorial activities.

Having left Germany in late 1878, Bernstein eventually spent twenty-two years in exile, returning to Berlin in early 1901. During this time his only contacts with the homeland were an extensive correspondence with leading party figures and voracious reading of the German press. But twenty-two years is a very long time, and while the facts of changing conditions in the country and the party could be followed from afar, it was much more difficult to remain in touch with the feelings and emotions of the movement. Particularly after the move to London, Bernstein came more and more under the influence of non-German, especially English, sources.

Gradually these influences began to alter his views about the course of modern society and the proper politics of the working-class movement. Once Engels died in 1895, Bernstein was free to reveal publicly the changes wrought in his theories without fear of provoking a corrosive split with an old and respected friend. From 1896 to 1898, Kautsky's *Neue Zeit* carried a series of articles entitled "Problems of Socialism" in which Bernstein first announced his break with orthodox Marxism, and in 1899 a more systematic and convenient presentation was made in his most famous book, *The Presuppositions of Socialism and the Tasks of Social Democracy* (*Die Voraussetzungen des Sozialismus und die Aufgaben der Sozialdemokratie*), which is usually translated into English under the title *Evolutionary Socialism*.

Bernstein hoped in these works to provide German social democracy with a comprehensive, consistent theoretical justification for the practice he perceived it to have been pursuing for years; he did not do so. Although he met with a sympathetic response in many segments of the party, his theories were repeatedly and resoundingly rejected as official doctrine. Furthermore, there is very little evidence that the SPD ever had more than one revisionist—Bernstein himself—in the years prior to World War I. The fact of the matter was that those forces in the party most inclined to agree with his practical conclusions, the south Germans and the trade unionists, were not particularly interested in *any* theory.

These people occasionally defended him from the attacks of radicals, and many of them also read his works, although doing the former did not necessarily imply having done the latter. But few of them accepted Bernstein's formulations as definitive, and he always remained only one among many roughly equal leaders of the right wing.

For the purposes of this chapter, the distinction between reformism and revisionism is an important one. Reformists were plentiful in the SPD, from the radical-moderate splits of the early eighties through the debates over the agrarian question in the mid-nineties to the divisive budget-support disputes that occurred periodically. But even after 1899, reformists rarely if ever used Bernstein's theories to support their demands. While they readily accepted him as an ally, they did not use his writings as any special rationalization of their actions. Bernstein was not to the reformists what Kautsky was to the radicals.

Revisionism, according to Bernstein, was the product of his growing conviction that several of the specific economic predictions of orthodox Marxism were not being realized. In particular he was convinced that the tendency toward ever-increasing concentration under capitalism had only limited validity, that capitalist crises were not becoming more frequent and deeper, that the middle classes were not disappearing, and finally that the proletariat was not becoming increasingly impoverished. These conclusions led him to reject many of the basic philosophical tenets of Marxism, including the dialectic and historical determinism, which in turn led him to certain political contentions that differed from those officially accepted by the party. Specifically, he urged that any notion of revolution be abandoned in favor of a concept of gradual, reformist growth from capitalism to socialism, and that in pursuit of the latter the party should modify its theory and practice to allow nonproletarian elements to be incorporated on a significant scale.

Some of Bernstein's points were based on well-nigh irrefutable facts that proved particularly troublesome for the defenders of orthodoxy to counter. For instance, both the obvious prosperity and stability of capitalism for the two decades before the First World War and the extent to which the vast majority of the workers of the industrialized world shared in this prosperity stumped orthodox Marxists for a long time. Not until the various forms of the imperialism critique began to appear—from Rudolf Hilferding in 1910, Rosa Luxemburg in 1913, and Lenin in 1917—was a reasonably satisfying Marxian explanation offered.

Other of his observations, however, were simply examples of Bernstein's eagerness to see short-term developments as having long-term implications. The most prominent example in this category was the



ardor with which he and his sympathizers seized on the results of the 1895 occupational census in Germany as proof that the agrarian middle sector was increasing, not decreasing. The survey revealed that between 1882 and 1895, the number of middle-sized agrarian holdings increased both absolutely and relatively. This was used both to refute the orthodox theory of concentration and to pressure the party into trying to win a following among this group of farmers. A major debate ensued that lasted until the next occupational census, 1907, revealed that what had seemed a trend twelve years before was only a temporary aberration; in that year the number of middle-sized farms showed a marked decline.

From an intellectual perspective, the major problem of revisionism was its shallowness. Bernstein was primarily an autodidact who was ill-equipped to conduct a rigorous analysis of Marxism and even less able to provide a philosophically satisfying alternative to the dialectic and historical determinism as a basis for socialism. In the first case his contention that the dialectic was only a peripheral element of Marx's thought totally missed the mark, and in the second, his grasp of Kant was never sufficient to allow him to develop a systematic ethical basis for his own theories. Bernstein's thought, as expressed in his revisionist writings, was dominated by skepticism and a very limited common-sense outlook. While both of these qualities are perfectly respectable and useful, together they do not often yield the sort of gratifying, self-contained system that he hoped to provide.

Ironically, Bernstein's insistence that his recommendations for alterations in the program and practice of the SPD be based on a theoretical revision of Marxism undoubtedly cost him a great number of potential supporters. There is little question that the general thrust of his arguments, namely the antirevolutionary, gradual, and compromising aspects, was favored by a majority of the party. But because he set the tone for the revisionism debates by attacking the theory of the party, those within it who rejected theoretical considerations out of hand were not interested in the quarrel. This is strikingly true of the majority of the trade-union leaders, who, despite their own very strong reformist tendencies, simply refused to take sides at all. For the most part they limited themselves to expressions of regret that so much of the party's time was being wasted in fruitless debates over meaningless (for them) theory.

Ultimately neither the validity of the facts he chose to emphasize nor the inadequacies of his theoretical formulations led the SPD to its decisive rejections of Bernstein's revisionism; a party that could live comfortably with the weaknesses of Kautsky's Marxism would not have

been bothered by these failings. Rather, the political conclusions he derived from his theoretical analysis undermined Bernstein's appeal. His urgings to expand party membership to nonproletarian elements met with a hostile reception. On this issue more than any other, the impact of his physical separation from the movement in Germany was most apparent. After more than twenty years in exile, Bernstein lacked identification with the emotions of the socialist-workers when he formulated his revisionism, and even after his return, he never regained the sympathy he had expressed so effectively as editor of the *Sozialdemokrat* in the turbulent eighties.

The reasons for the rejection of revisionism were obviously the same as the reasons for the SPD clung to the old theories. First there was inertia; most German socialists were content to leave things well enough alone, even if they had some specific objections to the party program. Second, the extent to which the Erfurt program captured the enduring spirit of the heroic years when the party had struggled for survival against an extremely hostile state was a powerful argument in its favor. Even though objective conditions may have altered somewhat, the ruling powers of the Reich provided sufficient reinforcement to perpetuate an emotional commitment to hardline opposition.

Finally, the coalition opposed to Bernstein was much too powerful for him to overcome without much more solid and extensive support than he had. Not only was revisionism attacked from within the party by the devoted Marxists, led by Parvus (pseudonym of the Russian Alexander Helphand) and Rosa Luxemburg, but foreigners outside of Germany also joined the assault, with Georgi Plekhanov, the "father" of Russian Marxism, and the very widely respected leader of the Austrian socialist party, Victor Adler, eventually joining the ranks. However, the single most important opponent Bernstein had was not a theoretician at all, but a socialist politician of the first rank, August Bebel. Bernstein was genuinely puzzled by the vehemence of Bebel's opposition, since the party leader seemed so reasonable when it came to practical political matters. But Bebel played a central role in the critique of revisionism because his constant goading kept Kautsky involved when the party theoretician would have liked to let the matter drop.

Despite persistent attacks and repeated official rejections, revisionism would not die. This was because the SPD membership would neither accept it or let it go. Enough intellectuals were attracted by the doctrine to ensure its survival, and enough of its component parts had sufficient general appeal to endure. Bernstein not only remained in the party; he also maintained his role as a leading figure, and shortly after his return to Germany he was elected to the Reichstag, where he

became an influential member of the Fraktion. Although an early supporter of the German war effort, Bernstein eventually joined Kautsky in opposition, and the reunited old friends were among the founders of the splinter party that was formed in 1917 to protest the old party's nearly unqualified support for the war. In the aftermath of defeat and abortive revolution, Bernstein returned to the fold, living to see the SPD become much like what he had suggested it be at the turn of the century. He died in December 1932, only six weeks before Adolf Hitler became chancellor of a Germany that would pervert every value Bernstein had held dear.

Historically, revisionism might be said to have been ahead of itself. The contradictions that characterized Wilhelminian Germany were not sufficiently worked out to allow the SPD to adopt an openly reformist posture or to become a truly mass, people's party. Nonetheless, Bernstein's theory did serve as a whetstone on which the orthodox sharpened their own views. Kautsky in particular modified his conception of the increasing oppression of the proletariat to include a strong political element in response to the revisionist critique; he also wrote one of his least successful books, *Ethics and the Materialist Conception of History* (1906), in an effort to deal with questions raised by Bernstein. But the earliest and sharpest response to him came from the young Rosa Luxemburg, presaging the radical Marxism of which she was to be the major figure in the years after 1905–1906.

### Rosa Luxemburg

Rosa Luxemburg (1870–1919) was one of the most remarkable figures in the history of the SPD and the Second International. She was the only woman in the prewar party to establish herself as a prominent figure without being tied specifically to the women's movement; in a party that honored female equality more in principle than in practice, this was a major achievement. In the Second International she was the only woman to attain a stature similar to that of Jean Jaurès, Victor Adler, Emile Vandervelde, August Bebel, and Karl Kautsky. Rosa Luxemburg is one of only two women, along with Marx's daughter Eleanor, who currently commands significant interest among historians concerned with western European Marxism and socialism.

In the case of Luxemburg, this interest derives from her intellectual brilliance. Hers was perhaps the best mind put to the service of Marxism during the years of the Second International. She was a swift and decisive analyst of history and contemporary affairs; she was a

superb polemicist and debater; and she had sufficient wit and self-detachment to make her an invaluable ally and a formidable opponent. Although she had far more enemies than friends, both in the SPD and outside it, everyone who came into contact with her was respectful of her intellectual capacities, and many were awed by them.

Despite these truly impressive qualities, Luxemburg cannot now be judged an influential figure in terms of shaping policy or molding the character of German social democracy or world socialism; the same traits that were her theoretical strengths—incisiveness, harsh judgments, brutal attacks on opponents—were personal and political weaknesses. She was an unusually intolerant person, who judged friend and foe alike by very rigid standards, and she was rarely inclined to tolerate weaknesses in or show generosity toward others.

Even her closest allies and friends frequently found her exceptionally difficult to get along with. Coupled with this was an almost pathological inability to compromise her standards for the sake of political success. All of these traits resulted in her nearly total isolation from lasting institutional ties in a movement that was heavily based on such ties.

To a certain extent then, Luxemburg's isolation and consequent failure to influence substantially the development of the SPD derived from problems of character and style. However, several other factors that had nothing to do with her real failings reinforced this isolation. First, she was a woman, and though none of her opponents within the party would admit it, this worked against her. Second, she was a foreigner, not a native-born German, and even in a movement that espoused internationalism, it was hard for Luxemburg's opponents to avoid pointing this out during their bitter polemical exchanges. Finally, and of much less importance, she was of a Jewish family. Anti-Semitism was rampant, even encouraged, in Imperial Germany, although generally weak in the socialist-workers' movement. Nonetheless, her rather tenuous connections with Judaism were occasionally another of the barbs hurled at her by ideological enemies.

Luxemburg's rise to the heights of the theoretical ranks of German social democracy was meteoric. Born of assimilated, middle-class Jewish parents in 1871 in Zamosc, Russian Poland, she received a German-oriented education in her early years, but attended a Russian-speaking high school. Her facility in several languages—Polish, German, Russian, and, later French—was to put her in good stead in the international socialist movement. While in high school she became politically involved with a rather primitive illegal socialist-populist revolutionary group, for which she earned a threat of arrest in 1889.

Ostensibly to avoid imprisonment, but also because she sought the university education that was rarely open to women in Russian Poland, Luxemburg went into exile in Zurich in that same year.

Once in Zurich she attended the university, studying mathematics, natural sciences, and, in the faculty of law, social studies. She began in 1890 and finished in 1897 with a doctorate in law, having written a dissertation entitled "The Industrial Development of Poland." She also became active in the exiled Polish socialist community in Zurich, establishing particularly close ties with Leo Jogiches. He was to become Luxemburg's most intimate friend and closest political comrade for years. Her involvement in Polish affairs, where she sided with those who downplayed the need for Polish independence (SDKP, Social Democratic Party of the Kingdom of Poland, later SDKPiL, when "and Lithuania" was added) against the Polish Socialist Party (PPS), which strongly advocated Polish independence, was intense but unsatisfying.

Her introduction to the much larger and more fruitful social-democratic movement of Germany derived from Luxemburg's expertise in Polish affairs. The party had a special branch to deal with the thousands of Polish workers in its country, and competition with the PPS for the allegiance of these people gave the SPD a special need for highly informed polemicists who could effectively counter the Polish party's propaganda. By 1897 Kautsky was relying heavily on Luxemburg as the *Neue Zeit's* expert on Polish questions. Much encouraged by this reception, she was more and more tempted by the promise of Germany as a site from which to pursue her Marxism and the struggles of the exiled Polish movement. A contrived marriage to a young German, Gustav Lübeck, in the spring of 1897 (followed by a divorce five years later) gave her entrée into Germany, and she arrived in Berlin in late March 1898.

Immediately after her arrival in Berlin, Luxemburg established her commitment to the cause beyond a shadow of a doubt by volunteering to agitate among the Silesian Poles for the 1898 Reichstag elections. Although she had little success in winning votes, she did considerably impress the party leadership, which in turn led to much broader contacts within the SPD. This was what she had come to Germany for in the first place, to make a career for herself as a propagator of Marxism. What she sought was not power, but influence in the realm of ideas, forums from which to spread the theories she held to be correct and important. In addition to Kautsky's *Neue Zeit*, she quickly established close ties with the party's two leading left-wing papers, Bruno Schoenlank's *Leipziger Volkszeitung* and Parvus' *Sächsischer Arbeiterzeitung*.

Parvus was the first in the party to launch a full-scale attack on

Bernstein, in an article series in his paper that ran from late January until early March 1898. Once Luxemburg had attracted his attention, he handed to her the stick with which he had been beating Bernstein, and she made her mark in the party by landing some telling blows on the revisionist renegade. By the time of the 1898 congress in October, hardly six months after her arrival in Germany, Luxemburg had already established herself as a force to be dealt with, in theory at least. So rapid was her rise to prominence that for a very brief time, from late September to early November 1898, she was an editor of the *Sächsische Arbeiterzeitung*, following Parvus' expulsion from Saxony for political offenses. But the animosity she had roused in this brief time and her unwillingness to compromise for the sake of harmony doomed this effort at institutional affiliation to failure; three years later a similar episode as coeditor of the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* ended almost as quickly and for the same reasons.

This difficulty with maintaining official positions within the party's organizational structure was one Luxemburg shared with nearly all the other prominent radicals of the SPD, except Clara Zetkin, who served for a long time on the central control commission. One reason for this lack of organizational ties was the isolation radicals often felt when they held official positions. Usually a radical would not have many like-minded colleagues on the various commissions and editorial boards, and since collective authority was the rule, radicals usually had difficulty pushing their policies through. This made them cautious about accepting such positions. Another problem was the inherent tendency for such work to trivialize tasks and viewpoints; petty administrative work destroys daring and imagination. Third, as in most democratic bodies, the SPD and its affiliated organizations were compelled to play to the middle and avoid the controversial in order to maintain the broadest possible allegiances. By definition this was antithetical to the goals of the radicals.

Above all these more practical problems, however, stood the matter of the psychological barriers to effective institutional participation by the radicals. Rosa Luxemburg was an excellent example of a type that could not easily adjust to the give-and-take requirements of political organization. Her tendency to blame theoretical differences of opinion on the personal and moral failings of her opponents and her bitter, frequently vicious attacks on these people made it very difficult for her to mend fences later on. Furthermore, she was so involved in the theoretical aspects of the movement that she often denigrated practical compromises and moderation, even for the sake of tactics, as unacceptable violations of principle. This commitment limited the influence of all

the SPD radicals because their extremism cut them off from the alliances and cooperation necessary to give their positions substance.

As long as the revisionist crisis persisted, Luxemburg's isolation was not apparent, because on this issue she was backed by the party executive. Her *Leipziger Volkszeitung* articles attacking Bernstein appeared in pamphlet form in 1899 with the title *Social Reform or Revolution*. In it she denied that Bernstein was calling on the party to accept in theory what it already was in practice. Anticipating Kautsky's later conclusions, she contended rather that what was needed was for Bernstein to recognize finally that in theory and practice he was not a socialist, but a petty-bourgeois radical. She differed from Bernstein most fundamentally when she argued that the reforms he favored so strongly as means of overcoming the necessity of revolution would in fact make revolution more likely by clarifying class lines in Germany. The basic problem as far as Luxemburg was concerned, the existence of wage capitalism, was not touched by these reforms.

Given what is now generally accepted about the course of development of the SPD, it is ironic that Luxemburg did not propose any change in party tactics during her attack on Bernstein. She was content with the old practices because she felt that as long as they were guided by correct theory, as long as theoreticians could still explain what the practices of the party really meant, the revolutionary consciousness of the masses would steadily mature. In fact, she continued to agitate among the Polish workers in Germany during elections, supporting even the candidacy of one of the most outspoken reformists of the party, Max Schippel. One passage in *Social Reform or Revolution* did, however, permanently alienate her from an important part of the workers' movement. In her discussion of the reforms pursued by the SPD and its allies, she referred to the activities of the trade unions as a "labor of Sisyphus," hopeless efforts to achieve permanent improvements in the lot of industrial workers as long as capitalism lasted. The mutual hostility of Luxemburg and the trade unions never abated.

Realization of the vast gulf that separated Luxemburg from virtually all the party leadership and most of the rank and file was not to come until the mass-strike debates of 1905-1906. When revolutionary activities broke out in Russia in 1905, Luxemburg left Germany for Warsaw in order to participate firsthand. Her experiences there with spontaneous mass action crystallized her views on the role of the party in such a way that her conceptions could no longer be twisted to fit with the practice of the SPD. After 1905-1906 she developed a far-reaching critique of the party and the trade unions, especially the latter, as obstacles to the leadership role socialists should play in such situations.

In what was perhaps her most sweeping and exciting work, *Mass Strike, Party, and Trade Unions* (1906), Luxemburg presented her notion of the potential, nature, and implications of mass strikes, and, in less detail, the relationship between such activity and the party and trade unions. She argued that mass strikes were part of the whole process of the ripening class struggle, not something that was made or could be planned, but something that grew spontaneously out of heightened class tensions. Moreover, she argued that mass strikes were not particularly aimed at either political or economic goals, but at both, at all grievances of the masses blended together. She concluded that the point of increased organization, of the party and the trade unions, was to prepare socialists to channel this spontaneous activity into productive directions and to profit from such outbursts by proving themselves worthy of leadership.

Quite obviously this conception conflicted sharply with the predominant self-image of both the SPD and the trade unions. As already discussed, the leaders of both branches of the workers' movement in Wilhelminian Germany tended to see the steady growth of their organizations as proof of the validity of their tactics. Revolution, when they thought of it at all, was conceived of as a sort of crumbling of capitalism under the mighty weight of workers' organizations. To these people spontaneous action in the streets was anathema because it threatened the solidarity of their organizations. To the extent that any theory at all attracted them, Kautsky's "strategy of attrition" made much more sense than Luxemburg's emphasis on the spontaneous creativity of mass action.

From 1906 on Luxemburg's major preoccupation was attempting to counter the relatively passive policies of the SPD. Whenever possible she called for more vigorous responses to political developments, especially when she detected the stirrings of the masses. In 1909-1910 she hoped to stimulate the party to promote street demonstrations to back demands for Prussian franchise reforms; in 1911 popular protests over the second Moroccan crisis again aroused her to criticize the party's passivity. But she never got very far, as the party executive and the trade-union leadership closed ranks against her. Her slightest call for more vigorous action was countered by a flood of criticism, and her influence over the party declined proportionately.

The major theoretical contributions of Luxemburg dealt with imperialism, especially her 1913 study, *The Accumulation of Capital*. As Peter Nettl, her most thorough biographer to date, correctly pointed out, this work has come to overshadow all her other observations on imperialism. The fact of the matter was that in *The Accumulation of*



*Capital*, Luxemburg set out only to analyze the basic internal causes of capitalism's development to the imperialist stage; this she did by concentrating on the problem of capitalist reproduction that Marx had introduced in the third volume of *Capital*. She concluded that capitalism continued to grow, and therefore exist, despite the exhaustion of internal resources, as long as there were still precapitalist societies to exploit. In this way the process of primitive accumulation started over again several times.

While her study was bolstered by abundant figures and charts, she made no effort to link an almost fastidious, though not necessarily correct, economic analysis to any political conclusions. The politics and tactics, past, present, and future, of German social democracy are not even mentioned in *The Accumulation of Capital*. Thus the book that is usually considered her most impressive theoretical achievement cannot be directly related to her critique of the SPD or to her concept of creative mass action.

This is not to say that Luxemburg did not draw any political conclusions about imperialism, but only that she never felt the necessity of underpinning these conclusions with a new theory. In general she felt that capitalism with imperialism was not much different from capitalism without imperialism, at least in its political implications. She accepted imperialism as a higher stage of capitalism, but not as a new and unique manifestation of it. For her the salient point about imperialism was the extent to which class tensions were increased under it. The greater militarism of imperialism, the frequent and often disastrous foreign entanglements it engendered, and the hostile chauvinism of its defenders simply fanned the flames of the class struggle, as far as she could tell. Her major political conclusion was that the responsibilities of a social-democratic party in an imperialist country were even more pressing than those of a similar party in a capitalist country that had not yet reached the imperialist stage.

Luxemburg's place in the history of German social democracy and world socialism is based on her argument for spontaneous mass action as a creative force in the process of the maturation of proletarian revolutionary consciousness. It is at the same time imaginative, daring, and attractive in its emphasis on overcoming sterile theorizing, in its wedding of action and consciousness. But this cannot properly be termed theory; rather, it was a hope that by mass action the "swamp," as she called it, into which social democracy had fallen would be flushed clean and made vibrant and active again. It was her willingness to act on this view that gave legitimacy to her position; unlike others in the SPD,

Rosa Luxemburg was neither an armchair revolutionary nor a firebrand who expected others to carry out the real struggle in the streets.

Beyond her involvement in the Russian Revolution of 1905–1906, Luxemburg proved her commitment by dying a martyr in January 1919, killed by the counterrevolutionary forces let loose by her former party comrades Gustav Noske and Friedrich Ebert. At the time she was in the forefront of a vain and ill-conceived effort to push the German revolution that had broken out the previous November further than it would go. Just as Noske and Ebert were trapped by the concessions the SPD majority had made to the status quo of Imperial Germany, so too was Rosa Luxemburg trapped by her own search for the chimera of creative mass action she thought had to be in Germany. To the end Luxemburg and her radical supporters blamed the failure on socialist leadership without seriously questioning whether or not the radical potential really existed. After the victory of the Bolsheviks in Russia in 1917, the existence of this radical potential had become an article of faith for the extreme left, notwithstanding tangible evidence to the contrary.

### **The SPD and the Second International**

Nowhere was the intellectual richness of German social democracy so apparent as in its dealings with the Second International. Founded in Paris in 1889, on the one-hundredth anniversary of the outbreak of the great French Revolution, this body claimed to be the successor to the International Workingmen's Association (after 1889 called the First International), in which Marx had played such an important role. The supposed internationalism of the socialist workers' movement was one of its most distinctive features and was equally a matter of principle for the left and the right wings of the movement. Unfortunately for this noble commitment, the violence of the First World War utterly destroyed the myth of internationalism as nationalistic and even chauvinistic passions gripped workers everywhere in Europe.

But prior to 1914 internationalism seemed an important and nearly unique aspect of the working-class parties (there were some other small internationalist organizations not associated with the socialist working-class movement). From the very beginning the movement in Germany showed strong internationalist inclinations. The SDAP was affiliated with the First International from the outset, and while this current was somewhat diluted by the merger with the more nationalistic Lassalleans, the SAPD and the SPD both preserved international

ties. The forced exile of the outlaw period greatly strengthened these ties as leading German socialists met their foreign counterparts in Zurich, Geneva, Paris, London, Brussels, New York, and wherever else they sought refuge from persecution by Bismarck's government.

Even before the end of the antisocialist law, Germans played an important role in the reestablishment of an international socialist body. At the last exile congress, St. Gall in 1887, the SAPD voted unanimously to pursue efforts to revive such an organization. At the 14 July 1889 meeting that succeeded in doing so, the Germans were considerably outnumbered by the French, but superior unity and organization allowed Liebknecht and his comrades to exercise disproportionate influence at this first congress. Along with the "grand old man" of the German movement, who was elected cochairman of this meeting, Bebel, Bernstein, Vollmar, and Zetkin also played major roles.

Inevitably, the SPD continued to play a major role in the Second International. This was inevitable because the Germans had by far the largest, richest, best organized, and apparently the most powerful socialist party in the world. They were the major financiers of the Second International, and they also contributed considerable funds and expertise to help several of the member parties get started and expand. The SPD was not exactly a model for the socialist movements of other nations, since all took on distinctive organizational and ideological characters, but it was an example of what might be striven for elsewhere.

The prestige of the SPD in the Second International was most notable in the realm of theory, largely because the International rarely moved into the realm of action. None of the member parties was ever in power in its own country, and none was in fact ever even a member of a coalition government prior to 1914. Thus the parties had very little effect upon the international affairs of their respective countries, although in some places, notably Britain and France, member parties were able to influence their governments to some degree. This relative powerlessness meant that the Second International was almost exclusively concerned with matters of principle.

German domination of the world socialist body powerfully reinforced this situation. Ironically, exactly those characteristics that made the SPD the most impressive socialist party also made it one of the most conservative in the Second International. While the smaller parties could reasonably consider things like a one-day work stoppage on May Day as a demonstration of international worker solidarity, the SPD had to be more cautious. First, if many of the smaller parties called for such action in their own countries, the result would have been the merest

tokenism, since these parties had little influence within their own working classes. The SPD was in a rather different position, however, since it was much stronger, and in coalition with the German free trade unions, it commanded a considerable following. What was a symbolic act for some other parties in the Second International was a much more serious matter for the Germans.

Furthermore, a great many of the smaller parties had little to lose if their actions offended either their own governments or their own nation's workers. But the Germans, as early as 1890 and even more so in the years that followed, had a good deal to lose; a laboriously developed organization, relatively rich party treasuries, party-owned property, and, above all, the firm support of increasing hundreds of thousands of followers. Therefore, when the Second International, at its very first congress and several successive ones as well, discussed the May Day question, the German delegation attempted to defuse the issue in several ways. In Paris in 1889 Bebel and Liebknecht got a rider attached to the major resolution that made such demonstrations conditional upon the political situations prevailing in each country. At later meetings the Germans tried to prevent discussion of the matter at all.

Prevailing political conditions meant, of course, the power of a repressive state to the Germans. This was probably the most important cause of the SPD's caution in the Second International. Other parties with significant socialist movements—in France, Italy, Holland, and Belgium, for instance—operated in rather freer political environments than did the Germans. These parties usually did not have to worry about governmental persecution for things they said and wrote, while the SPD did. Always fearing a renewal of antisocialist legislation, and restricted by very stringent press laws, the Germans did not want to get themselves into trouble at home for things done at congresses of the Second International. Their commitment to internationalism kept them in the organization, while their fear of repression made them nervous about what happened there.

On the issue of May Day, the SPD took a very pragmatic stand—mass action of this sort constituted a general strike, which in Germany would be met with severe repression. But usually its stands in the Second International were couched in the most sweeping theoretical terms. On these occasions Karl Kautsky was frequently called upon to outline the German position, and in this arena he was at the peak of his influence. Two especially important and controversial issues allowed him to give free reign to his polemical skills and to demonstrate his command of Marxian ideology. At the 1900 Paris congress and again at the 1904 Amsterdam congress, Kautsky pressed for resolutions aimed at pre-

venting compromises with bourgeois political forces, and at the 1907 Stuttgart congress, he sided with the forces opposed to making concessions to the supporters of imperialism. On all these occasions Kautsky represented a middle ground between more extreme leftist resolutions and more compromising right-wing positions.

Behind Kautsky's theorizing, however, stood the vested interests of the German party and the specific political situation in which it found itself. Kautsky's 1900 resolution calling for a prohibition of socialist participation in bourgeois governments except under extraordinary conditions, while more moderate than the left wingers' absolute prohibition, still reflected the inability of the German socialists to enter a government under any but an extreme situation (one of which Kautsky identified as a Russian invasion of Germany), and it paid little regard to the broader possibilities available to socialists in freer countries such as France, Great Britain, or Holland. The immense prestige of Kautsky and his party easily carried the day, but many of the member parties chafed under these restrictive conditions.

Imperialism was an extremely difficult issue for the Second International. On the one hand, the few but vociferous left radicals wanted the International to take a strong stand against imperialism and the related militarism that swept Europe after the turn of the century. On the other hand, the much more numerous moderate socialists hoped to get the International to recognize the need to work for the alleviation of the evils of imperialism, a position that implicitly accepted the colonial domination of non-European peoples by the European capitalist countries. The latter forces were also supported by those, mainly Germans, who feared the leftist position as too antagonistic and who were in fact somewhat sympathetic to the military strengthening of their own countries.

By altering the method of selecting delegates to the Stuttgart congress of the Second International—half were chosen by the trade unions, half by the state or provincial party organizations—the reformists in the German party were certain to be able to block the radical position on imperialism. So successful were they that the colonial commission at Stuttgart presented a resolution calling for qualified support of imperialist activities, although a more hostile minority report from the commission, which Kautsky endorsed with a stirring speech, won the overwhelming backing of the entire congress. Here the bulk of the German delegation worked to suppress strong opposition, while the SPD's semiofficial theoretician used his tremendous influence to promote a centrist position that was neither fish (leftist opposition) nor fowl (rightist support).

While Kautsky was frequently in the vanguard of the majorities at the congresses of the Second International, prominent German theoreticians were also usually significantly involved in the leftist and rightist minorities as well. Zetkin, Georg Ledebour, Karl Liebknecht, and especially Luxemburg were conspicuous among the radicals, while Bernstein, Vollmar, and Eduard David were generally in the vanguard on the right. Whatever the issue, the incredibly rich arsenal of the intellectual branch of the German movement could provide weapons for all sides.

Ultimately the SPD contributed to the Second International in three significant ways. First, its presence guaranteed that the organization was taken seriously by the bourgeois world. Any effort at internationalism among socialist forces prior to 1914 that did not include the Germans would have been a farce. Second, the prominence of the German movement, both the party and the free trade unions, stabilized an otherwise volatile, insecure organization. Without the prestige of the Germans, the wide differences that separated the extreme left from the very conservative right might well have ended the Second International long before 1914. In this the theorizing of the German intellectuals bridged gaps that might otherwise have been fatal. Third, the imposition by the Germans of their more restrictive view of the limits of cooperation with nonsocialist forces undoubtedly retarded the development of reformist socialism, especially in France, while it did not necessarily promote more aggressive opposition to the status quo elsewhere. Kautsky's "strategy of attrition" was transferred from Germany to the International, to the disadvantage of the latter.

Congresses of the Second International gradually took on the air of congresses of the SPD; careful preparation and organization ensured smoothly run sessions with a minimum of surprises. At the same time the sense of pageantry and camaraderie was much heightened by decoration of the meeting halls with symbols of international solidarity and by the organization of affiliated cultural events and excursions. Representatives from the world's socialist parties went away from these assemblies convinced that they were part of a growing and significant movement. To a great extent the presence of the SPD was responsible for this feeling, which masked the serious weaknesses within the Second International.

## 7 / Conclusion

In just over fifty years the German social-democratic movement grew from a tiny sect of an elite of craftsmen into a massive popular party that to a certain extent cut across lower-class lines but generally represented the non-Catholic industrial workers of the nation. Although severely hampered by official persecution until 1890 and plagued with persistent harassment until 1914, the SPD overcame these obstacles to win the political and emotional allegiance of millions of Germans. In fact, this very persecution and harassment played an important role in imposing cohesiveness on an otherwise heterogeneous movement. With that in mind, it is no exaggeration to claim that the party might well have owed its survival to the hostility of official Germany and much of German society.

Not surprisingly, such a movement could not weather the trauma of the First World War with all its disparate parts intact. Common enemies, in this case the state and nonworker society, may make for wide coalitions, but they do not often provide a secure basis for a working political arrangement. Even before the war, the strain of trying to hold together the reformists and the radicals, the south Germans and the Berliners, the trade unionists and the left-wing intellectuals, was beginning to show. As the more moderate and conservative forces within the SPD got stronger, the radicals grew more desperate and strident. The split on the war issue was too much for the party to bear, and in early 1917 the unity of old was shattered by the formation of the Independent Social Democratic Party (Unabhängige sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands, USPD).

From 1917 until the present, this split and the later, even more divisive impact of the formation of a German Communist Party (Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands, KPD, which itself soon underwent various splits) has dominated the historiography of the German workers' movement. Many scholars have emphasized the extent to which the

lack of political unity within the working class played a role in the eventual dissolution of Weimar Germany and the rise of Nazism. With its most powerful potential support badly rent by internecine strife, the Weimar state and society had little chance to survive the dislocation of a lost war, the turmoil of an international economic crisis, and the appeal of demagoguery.

Historians have generally focused on internal weaknesses or failings of the SPD to explain its inability to achieve its espoused ends and to hold the working class together. Some have argued that an opportunistic, reformist leadership sold out the rank and file, betraying socialist principles by not pressing for radical reform in the years before 1914 and by supporting the German war effort from 1914 to 1918. Others have argued that irresponsible elements of the party's left wing needlessly imperiled working-class unity and the prospects for meaningful reform by talking revolution and urging putschist activities that could only result in disaster. Leninist critics have found fault with the party's rather loose organizational structure and its middle-of-the-road theory. More moderate analysts have emphasized the extent to which the radical ideology of the prewar years failed to come to grips with the real gains made by workers during that period.

These arguments all carry some weight. There can be little doubt that, however justified its fears of repression may have been, the reluctance of the SPD leadership to use more aggressive means to pressure for social and political reform severely restricted the ability of the movement to influence developments in Imperial Germany. Similarly, the cumbersome bureaucratic structure that grew up after 1905–1906 clearly isolated the leadership from the sometimes volatile moods of the rank and file. At the same time, if the crisis of interwar Germany was in part the result of the lack of unity in the working class, the problem would only have been exacerbated had the party leadership pursued a more aggressive course earlier; the forces favoring moderation—and they were formidable—would have been unlikely to tolerate such a posture.

Given the ambiguous nature of politics in the Second Reich and the important regional distinctions within the party, as well as the explicit and implicit differences between the party and the trade unions, unity probably could only have been maintained as it was; that is, by studiously avoiding confrontation with the enemy, trying to preserve internal solidarity, and just waiting for the revolution. While there may have been room for tactical variations on specific issues, the general approach of the party could not have been much different. Dieter Groh has quite aptly characterized the party's prewar posture as "*revolutionärer*



*Attentismus*," an expression which is very difficult to translate into English, but which might best be rendered as "revolutionary waiting."

The persistent strong appeal of Lassalle to German social democrats, besides raising questions about the role of mythology and heroes in popular movements, also provides a key to understanding why a movement that was apparently hostile to the state also seemed regularly to look to that state for assistance. The fact was that the hostility derived more from circumstance than it did from conviction; the SPD and its predecessors were hostile to the state because the state was hostile to them. If from the founding of the Reich, and in Prussia from 1863, the state had consistently pursued a policy of winning over the politically conscious workers instead of repressing them, social democracy would never have attained the magnitude it did in Germany.

Bismarck is usually given a good deal of credit for the achievements of Imperial Germany and for masterful manipulation of the domestic political scene to accomplish his own goals. The Iron Chancellor was doubtless a genius of sorts, and he certainly seems to have gotten things his way most of the time he headed Prussian and Reich affairs. If this is so, then it is on Bismarck's shoulders that responsibility must fall for the failure to integrate the emerging working-class movement more fully into the Reich. The workers were there for the taking, but Bismarck lacked the vision and wisdom to capitalize on this potential. The malaise and lack of stability that characterized late Imperial Germany and the Weimar period, and which were largely, though far from solely, responsible for the rise of Nazism, were the fruits of Bismarck's failure.

Successful pursuit of greater integration of the working class into the Reich would have required significant effort on Bismarck's part. For despite his genius, he too was limited by the material with which he had to work. His power base of Junker conservatives and the later enfeebled National Liberals would not have tolerated very extensive concessions to the workers, and in the early years Bismarck might have had to gamble part of this secure base for the possibility of winning over the workers. Since universal suffrage for the Reich was a fraud anyway, intended to cover the reality of Prussian hegemony, if Bismarck had drawn heavily on the working class for his support, he might have been forced to reorganize aspects of the political structure of the new Reich.

As it was, the political coalition on which the Reich government was based was not a particularly flexible one, nor were its members inclined to take the longer view for the good of the Reich. Prussian Junker conservatives were more narrow-minded and intransigent than the most extreme left wingers of the SPD. Even the smallest concession of prerogative, as demonstrated by the 1909 tax reform debates, was

opposed by the Junkers as a life-and-death matter. Their political and social stupidity often frustrated the modest reform efforts of the Reich chancellors. Perhaps because the Junkers realized unconsciously that their entire existence was an anachronism and a charade supported only by force, they resisted even sensible reforms out of fear that any change would bring them down. To the degree that the Reich government rested on the principle of popular sovereignty—and that degree was very slight—the Junkers had nothing but contempt for it.

At the head of this self-serving class stood the kaiser, first Wilhelm I and then his grandson Wilhelm II. Until Wilhelm I died in 1888, Bismarck's preeminence was assured because the kaiser was willing to recognize the new order in the Reich and leave politics to the politicians. But Wilhelm II was much different; an arrogant man with some skills, he was not inclined to recognize either his own personal limitations or the constitutional restrictions placed on him. Wilhelm conducted an irresponsible foreign policy and attempted to ride roughshod over the civilian population, which he felt was inferior to his beloved army. The Zabern affair in 1913, in which the arrogance and unaccountability of the military was made apparent, announced again to all of Germany that the kaiser had little regard for the people he ruled.

Greater worker integration could have been achieved, however, with fairly modest concessions that might have disturbed but would not have disrupted Bismarck's ruling coalition. Cultural, social, religious, and political differences would have prevented comprehensive and sincere embraces by both sides, but a less hostile attitude by the state would have allowed their closer approach. Specifically, the antisocialist law should never have been foisted upon Germany; nothing ever did as much to promote the growth of social democracy, to create the bond of mutual persecution that tied the otherwise diverse factions of the workers' movement together, or to provide the SPD with a heroic legend that fueled the movement by substantiating the radical critique of Imperial society.

To a certain extent these objections ask the Second Reich and Bismarck and his successors to be other than they were. But the development of the SPD prior to 1914, with a steady increase in the moderate forces willing to compromise with the existing system, seeking only piecemeal, limited changes, makes it apparent that a less heavy-handed, more enlightened attitude on the part of the state and police officials would have had a moderating influence on the party. If when confronted with widespread hostility and harassment the SPD developed as it did, how much more might it have compromised if the government had been more conciliatory? Clever politicians could have

exploited the disunity within the movement to win greater support among the workers.

One good example of the potential of this approach by the state was the new association law of 1908. Up to that time prohibitions against political activities by women had played an important role in keeping the female branch of the socialist movement in the hands of the radicals. But the 1908 law made it legal for women to take part in political organizations throughout the Reich, although it did not enfranchise them. Nonetheless, this relatively minor concession to the sensitivities of the political left, most of which sought fuller participation for women, moderated the stance of the women's socialist movement by bringing it under the influence of the more conservative forces of the larger party. Similar concessions in other fields, such as more support for workers' festivals and voluntary associations or fewer restrictions on socialist meetings and the press, might well have had a similarly moderating influence.

Concessions of the latter sort probably would have had to begin before 1890 to have been very effective. By that time attitudes had so hardened that such governmental actions might have served to stimulate social democracy by making its success seem more likely. Such piecemeal reforms also often have a logic of their own that makes further changes nearly inevitable. For instance, once women were allowed to participate in political organizations, it made less and less sense to restrict the franchise to males. Had not the war ended the Reich, pressure might have continued to build for the female franchise, and the Imperial government would have been forced into this further concession, which actually came in the new Weimar constitution after the war.

This matter of the need for more compromise and moderation was not all one-sided. Quite possibly the SPD could have forced more concessions from the state by adopting a more conciliatory posture, especially in its rhetoric, and by cooperating more broadly with other oppositional forces in the Reich, however limited they were. But had it done so, it would have gravely imperiled its position as political representative of the workers. The electoral success that came to the SPD as a result of its publicly perceived intransigence was a strong argument for continuation of that stance. Furthermore, as an oppositional party the SPD's moral obligation for such action was less compelling than was the government's; the party's first obligation was to represent its constituency, while the government's first obligation was to provide for the welfare of the nation. In the long run, the failure of the established system of Imperial Germany to provide for greater integration

of the working-class movement was not in the best interests of the nation.

Just as the SPD had an ambiguous attitude toward the state, appealing to it in practice but rejecting it in theory, so too was the party torn on the issue of reform versus revolution, and the roots of this ambiguity may also be found in the nature of the party's political opposition. Reform implies a good measure of compromise, since the beneficiaries of the old way must somehow be convinced to accept the new way; revolution implies considerably less compromise, since the new way is backed by force. While the majority of the SPD—at least by the turn of the century—favored reform, the first significant political changes in Germany did not come until the incomplete revolution of 1918–1919. The reluctance with which the socialist leaders accepted the revolution suggests that it was forced upon them because reform was not a viable alternative before 1914.

Revolution was forced on the SPD by the obstinacy of the ruling clique. Carl Schorske recognized this when he summarized his analysis of the struggle for Reich tax reform with these words: "It is hard to escape the conclusion that purely party action would have been insufficient to induce the Conservatives to surrender their seats of power. They could understand only the threat of force, could respond in the last analysis only to fear." When the socialists were confronted with opponents like these, their desires on the matter of reform or revolution made little difference. Unless they were to abandon altogether their hopes for a freer, more representative Germany, some form of revolution was the only possibility.

### **The SPD as Model**

German social democracy has long served as a subject of social-scientific investigation. Two of the founders of modern sociology and political science, Max Weber and Robert Michels, recognized the SPD as a new kind of organization representative of the developments of modern technological society. The studies of these and other scholars have focused on the party as a mass democratic body, on its large bureaucracy, and on the role of leaders in the movement. The work of Michels has provided especially useful insights into the nature and function of various aspects of the SPD.

As a model the social-democratic party of the Second Reich is most impressive in what it demonstrates about bureaucracy. The self-serving, self-perpetuating, and conservatizing qualities of the post-1905 bureaucracy are so obvious that no close observer can fail to note them.

The isolation of the leaders from the rank and file by the interposition of successive layers of national, state, and local bureaucracies made the party increasingly less responsive to the mercurial moods of the masses. This provided a large measure of stability but also greatly limited the party's capacity to take advantage of the rapidly changing political scene.

Furthermore, to the extent that the bureaucracy was the party, the vaguely articulated but strongly held political, economic, and social goals traditionally identified with the SPD were gradually and almost invisibly replaced by the much narrower goals of membership growth and increases in the vote count. Of course, tendencies in this direction existed before the creation of a large socialist bureaucracy, but the countervailing radicalism that had previously served as a balance was gradually submerged with the increase in the number of salaried party functionaries. Such positions simultaneously attracted and created people who were concerned only with their own special assignments and not with the larger goals of the party as a whole.

What happened to the party as its bureaucracy developed is well documented, but what gave rise to this development is less apparent. For one thing, simply the continued growth of membership and votes, both in numbers and geographical extent, made imperative a more systematic and uniform method of dealing with the increases. The SPD also gradually acquired more and more property in the form of buildings, newspapers, printing presses, etc., and had to pay the work force to run and maintain them. All this required more extensive and sophisticated finances and bookkeeping.

In a word, the very success of the party led directly to an undermining of its more radical and activist traditions. By late in the twentieth century, this turn of events has occurred so often as to be hardly worth mentioning. The world over, movements that were once revolutionary have grown into bureaucratized bastions of the status quo—in Mexico, China, the Soviet Union, Egypt, Argentina, and elsewhere. But in the early years of the century, this international emasculation of leftist workers' movements was unknown. The SPD was not only the first modern mass party; it was also the first to suffer from its own success.

However, in the case of German social democracy, too much can be made of the bureaucracy as a subversive force, because its impact corresponded very closely to the desires of large portions of the party. The bureaucracy's inclination to concentrate on mundane matters and to emphasize growth for its own sake harmonized nicely with the views of the reformists of the south and the trade-union moderates. These people were quite content to have the energies of the party turned more

to these things than to the radical rhetoric, strikes, and street demonstrations they hated and feared. So the development of a large bureaucracy was not so much subversive of the entire party as it was prejudicial to the hopes of the radicals.

Radical forces in the party, even after their somewhat belated recognition of the problem, were almost totally incapable of dealing with the dilemma raised by the growth of the bureaucracy. Because of their profound commitment to a mass, democratic party, radical intellectuals like Kautsky and Luxemburg could do little but appeal to the vigorous traditions of the past and hope that their faith in the masses would be vindicated. Not until the extreme frustration of the war years did some of the radicals break with the old party and call for direct action by small elite groups; until then the Leninist concept of the party as the vanguard was foreign to the Germans.

Another aspect of the Wilhelminian SPD that has long fascinated scholars is the comprehensive nature of its organizations and activities. Scorned and shunned by the larger society and viewing itself as distinct in world view and goals for the future, the party endeavored to provide its members with alternatives in nearly all aspects of daily life outside the workplace. From newspapers to youth groups to sports, leisure, and recreational activities to cultural affairs to politics to insurance groups to local restaurants and inns, socialists throughout Germany were able to focus nearly all their free time on activities sponsored by and affiliated with the party. Prior to the even more comprehensive undertakings of the post-1917 communist parties in Europe, the world had seen nothing like the SPD.

To a certain extent these organizations and activities of the socialists simply mirrored elements of the larger society, but in many important respects they did not. For one thing nearly all such socialist groups were democratically organized, with the members themselves exercising direct or freely delegated control over finances and other affairs. Second, sexual integration was much more widespread than in any other German associations at that time. Third, the class exclusiveness and the comprehensive scope of the socialist bodies set them apart from similar groups.

Probably no aspect of the socialist movement was more strikingly different from its nonsocialist counterparts than the political party proper. None of the many other parties in Germany could begin to match the organizational intensity of the SPD, and very few of the other parties had the sort of formal membership and dues requirements the socialists did. The SPD was also the only German party with extensive press holdings of its own; most other parties had their own newspapers,

but these were usually owned by individuals affiliated with the particular parties. Likewise, only the socialist party owned its own printing and distribution houses and newspaper stalls and bookstores and ran its own educational programs. Save for Prussia and one or two other states, the SPD had the most extensive and sophisticated propaganda machine in the nation.

Whether or not this complex of socialist organizations formed a subculture or a counterculture within the larger German society was a widely discussed issue even before 1914, although these terms were not used. Most nonsocialist contemporary observers viewed the socialists as a group apart, as not truly German, as enemies of the dominant state and society. However, more detailed and detached study has revealed that the SPD did in fact reflect many of the complexities of Germany as a whole, especially the strong regional allegiances, but also an intense nationalism. The most obvious lesson of August 1914 was that German socialists were really Germans first and socialists second.

More than in any other sphere, the cultural activities of the SPD prior to 1914 reveal how like the rest of the Germans its members were. The party never managed, and apparently never sought, to develop an authentic socialist-workers' culture. In most of its cultural activities the party simply adapted broader German forms to the specific needs of its members. Socialist authors and composers were rarely given favored status in the movement, and when left to choose for themselves, the members largely read books that were popular among nonsocialists as well. That a socialist-workers' culture was not actively pursued by the party can be explained partially by the emphasis placed on political and economic activities. But that such a culture did not develop spontaneously in the over fifty years from the founding of the ADAV to the outbreak of World War I challenges the viability of the concept of the workers as a unique class.

All this leads back to one of the most difficult questions about the prewar social-democratic movement in Germany—just what was the relationship between its ideology and its practice? To what extent were the claims of the Marxists concerning the uniqueness of the proletariat justified? Was the ideology developed by Marx and his German followers an artificial construct of detached intellectuals, or did their theories tap into a profound current within the industrial working class that substantiated the theoretical assertions?

Reformist party members at the time, and many commentators since have agreed, emphasized the disjunction between the party's practice and its theory, and both groups have insisted that the reformist practice

gave the lie to the radical rhetoric. But what is to be made of the constant and somewhat startling growth of the SPD from 1878 on? Everyone in Imperial Germany, socialist and nonsocialist alike, knew about the radical rhetoric, but only the most astute observers, some inside and some outside the party, thought they saw a gap between the theory and the practice. This means that the new voters and members of the party, few of whom were politically and intellectually sophisticated, must have been attracted by the radical rhetoric. Certainly the opponents of the SPD did their utmost to stress the radicalism, even when the party tried to play it down, as during the 1907 Reichstag elections.

In the context of German politics, little action was required to establish the SPD's reputation for radicalism, and in fact there was precious little room for action in the political system. At the same time many examples of apparently conciliatory activity, especially on the state level, did almost nothing to reduce the party's radical image. Even after the very cautious stand taken by the party leadership in November 1918, bourgeois forces were still very reluctant to accept the SPD as a legitimate political force in the nation. Far fewer people would have been persuaded by any of the socialists' prewar positions that they were anything but radicals.

The conclusion is therefore inescapable. The great strength of the SPD up to 1914 was its ability to give the workers what they needed—a sense of unity, power, and significance. Of all the theoretical factions, the Marxists did the most to intensify this sense, and the fact that the party did not always act in strict accordance with the advice of the radical intellectuals had little to do with the SPD's ability to appeal to new voters and members and to hold the allegiance of old members. The radical rhetoric was constantly reinforced by an odurate state and the socialists' other political opponents, while reformists practice rarely won concessions from anyone. In early August 1914 the SPD was still as isolated as it ever had been.

But Marxism did not have all the answers in Germany, because in the end nationalist sentiments overwhelmed the radical commitment of much of the party. Many of the socialists caught up by war fever had never been much attracted by Marxism, of course, and many more were genuinely frightened by the prospect of a Russian invasion. On the other hand, the wartime climate must have allowed many workers who had been attracted to the radical theory to embrace the nation and its government in a way they could not have done during peacetime. Thus the sense of strength and belonging that had previously been found in the party was then provided on an even larger, more comprehensive



level. The all-important psychological function of the SPD declined in significance, the movement split, and the once bright promise of democratic Marxism dimmed considerably.

Another strength of the SPD was its remarkably stable leadership. Once the two workers' parties united in 1875, death was virtually the only cause of turnover among the national leaders who sat on either the executive or the party control commission. The most obvious and important reason for this was the way in which people rose to leadership positions in the movement. All had to prove themselves first on the local level as agitators and organizers or, less often, as administrators. Because of the pariah status of the party, opportunists interested only in advancing their own careers were unusual in German social democracy; this is a feature the socialist party of the Second Reich does not share with many other popular movements. Thus those people who were honestly committed to the cause and served the movement on the grassroots level formed the pool from which most of the leaders were taken.

One of the most important ways in which this process ensured that leaders would last a long time was the premium it placed on public speaking. Nearly all the national party leaders were superb speakers who had learned their trade in the most demanding of environments—on street corners and at mine and mill gates. Police hostility was the norm in these settings, but caution and even fear among the intended audience bred a still more incisive style of oratory. At the annual congresses the speakers representing the leadership were almost always able to guide the delegates in the desired direction. They were able to elicit cheers, jeers, and laughter from their audiences at will, and they generally did so without demagogic appeals to base emotionalism or gross exaggeration. Such skills assured most party leaders of regular reelection.

Second, many of the people who held national party positions for so long earned their spurs during the difficult years before and during the outlaw period. There was about them, as far as rank-and-file members were concerned, an aura of heroism and dignity. Under these conditions it was exceedingly difficult for less experienced party members to challenge the authority of the established leaders, as the *Jungen* discovered in the early nineties. When this sort of prestige was coupled with the abilities of men and women like Auer, Bebel, and Zetkin, their positions were nearly impregnable.

Certainly it is true that the party leaders exercised considerable influence over the membership. But they did so in large part because

they were very sensitively attuned to the moods of the party as a whole, a trait that is indispensable in a democratic organization. Whereas it often seemed that the major figures, especially Bebel, could manipulate the party as they chose, in fact this ability rested on an intimate knowledge of the changing moods of the membership. Party leaders never raised an issue at national congresses or even at local gatherings without first having sounded out the rank and file informally. Thus the leadership rarely lost on important matters and was hardly ever surprised by issues raised at such meetings. In other words, the party executive and the control commission usually led by following.

Bebel was the outstanding SPD figure for nearly forty years. As a speaker he had few peers in the party, and as a leader he had none. His ability to identify the mood of the membership and then mold it into official policy was remarkable. Although he is now frequently remembered as a somewhat grandfatherly, benign figure, he was a fiery, aggressive leader who assaulted party opponents as sharply as anyone else could. But at the same time—and this is an important part of his leadership abilities—he was generous in his praise for the achievements of others. He could simultaneously praise and criticize all factions of the movement. Bebel's performance at the 1906 Mannheim congress, where he managed to reverse himself and the entire party on the question of the mass strike, was a masterpiece of rhetoric and leadership. While it is doubtful that the party would have acted much differently had Bebel survived longer, his death in August 1913 left a lacuna that none of his successors could fill entirely.

Finally, regional developments of social democracy emphasize the extent to which the party was susceptible to a responsive political situation. In south Germany, particularly Bavaria, it actually took very small concessions from the established government to elicit further compromise from the socialists. The failure of significant results to emerge from this situation was not entirely the fault of the socialists. However much they may have complained about the limits of most reforms offered by the government and what they called the ruling classes, when these measures involved real reforms that had an impact on the lives of the working classes, they were reluctantly accepted.

The extent to which even the radicals in Prussia and Berlin were intent upon changing the Prussian franchise laws shows better than almost anything else that what the SPD sought in the Second Reich was access to political power rather than political power itself. Behind this distinction, of course, was the party's conviction that with access would come power, since its numbers were overwhelming, but in addition

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many party figures believed that access to power would also provide the workers with the time and experience necessary for them to mature politically.

This perception was critical because it molded the image of the party held by most major German socialists before the war. They saw the party not as an activist vanguard in the sense developed by Lenin after 1903, but as a more passive instrument of the maturation of the working class. In this respect the reforms sought by the SPD were not intended primarily to bring down the existing system in an aggressive manner; rather, they were intended to remove the props that were preventing the system from crumbling of its own accord. So pervasive was the conviction that history was on their side that most SPD members felt no need to risk life and limb in vigorous, violent action at the barricades: Groh's concept of “*revolutionärer Attentismus*” captures this dominant view very nicely.

**Appendices**

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## Appendix A / National Party Congresses, 1869–1913

SDAP	1869 Eisenach 1870 Stuttgart 1871 Dresden	1872 Mainz 1873 Eisenach 1874 Coburg
SAPD	1875 Gotha 1876 Gotha 1877 Gotha 1880 Wyden	1883 Copenhagen 1887 St. Gall 1890 Halle
SPD	1891 Erfurt 1892 Berlin 1893 Cologne 1894 Frankfurt 1895 Breslau 1896 Gotha 1897 Hamburg 1898 Stuttgart 1899 Hanover 1900 Mainz 1901 Lübeck 1902 Munich	1903 Dresden 1904 Bremen 1905 Jena 1906 Mannheim 1907 Essen 1908 Nürnberg 1909 Leipzig 1910 Magdeburg 1911 Jena 1912 Chemnitz 1913 Jena

# Appendix B / National Party Programs

## Nürnberg Program

Adopted by the Fifth Congress of the ADAV, September 1868

The fifth congress of the German Workers' Leagues, assembled in Nürnberg, announces its agreement with the program of the International Workingmen's Association in the following points:

1. The emancipation (liberation) of the working classes must be won through the struggles of the working classes themselves. The struggle for the emancipation of the working classes is not a struggle for class privileges and monopolies, but rather for *equal rights* and *equal responsibilities* and for the abolition of all class rule.

2. The economic dependence of the worker on the monopolist (the exclusive owner) of the means of production is the basis of all forms of subjection, of social misery, intellectual degradation, and political dependence.

3. Political unity is the necessary prerequisite for the economic liberation of the working classes. The social question is *inseparable* from the political; the solution of the former requires the solution of the latter and is possible *only* in a *democratic state*.

Whereas all attempts at economic emancipation have failed because of the lack of solidarity (unity) among the many branches of labor in each country and the absence of a fraternal bond of unity among the working classes of the various countries; [and] the emancipation of labor is neither a local nor a national but a social problem (task) that involves all modern countries, and its solution depends on the practical and theoretical participation of the most advanced countries; the fifth congress of the German Workers' Leagues decides to agree to the efforts of the International Workingmen's Association.

## Eisenach Program (Programs and Statutes of the Social Democratic Workers' Party)

Adopted by the General German Social Democratic Workers' Congress in Eisenach, August 1869

1. *The Social Democratic Workers' Party seeks to establish the free rule of the people.*

II. Every member of the Social Democratic Workers' Party promises to support the following basic principles:

1. The existing political and social conditions are unjust to the greatest degree and are therefore to be fought with the utmost effort.
2. The struggle for the liberation of the working classes is not a struggle for class privileges and advantages, but rather for *equal rights* and *equal responsibilities* and for the abolition of all class rule.
3. The economic dependence of the worker on the capitalist is the basis of all forms of subjection, and the social democratic party therefore seeks, through comradely activity, to win for every worker the full value of the worker's labor by abolition of the existing means of production (system of wages).
4. *Political freedom* is the necessary prerequisite for the economic liberation of the working classes. The social question is *inseparable* from the political; the solution of the former requires the solution of the latter and is possible *only* in a *democratic state*.
5. Whereas the political and economic liberation of the working class is only possible when it struggles as a united body, the Social Democratic Workers' Party establishes a unified organization, one which however allows each member to make his own contribution for the good of all.
6. Whereas the liberation of labor is neither a local nor a national but a social task that involves all modern countries, the Social Democratic Workers' Party considers itself a member of the International Workingmen's Association, as agreeing to its efforts, to the extent permitted by the laws of association.

III. In the campaigning of the Social Democratic Workers' Party, the *immediate* demands are:

1. Granting universal, equal, direct, and secret vote to all males over 20 years of age for elections to the [national] parliament, the legislatures of the individual states, the county and town, and all other representative governing bodies. The elected representatives should receive adequate compensation.
2. Introduction of direct legislation (i.e., initiative and veto right) by the people.
3. Elimination of all privileges based upon social rank, property ownership, birth, and religious belief.
4. Establishment of a popular militia in the place of a standing army.
5. Separation of church and state and separation of education from the church.
6. Compulsory education at the level of primary schools and free instruction in *all* public educational institutions.
7. Independence of the judiciary, introduction of the jury system and courts of trade disputes, [and] introduction of public and oral court proceedings and free legal aid.
8. Elimination of all indirect taxes and introduction of a single direct progressive income and inheritance tax.



9. Elimination of all laws regarding the press and the right to free association; introduction of a standard working day; limits on women's work and prohibition of child labor.
  10. State support for cooperatives and state credits for independent producers' cooperatives with democratic guarantees.
- IV. Every member of the party is to contribute monthly one dime (in south Germany  $3\frac{1}{2}$  Kreuzer, in Austria 5 Kreuzer, elsewhere 12 centimes) to the party. Party members who can prove that they currently subscribe to the official party publication are not required to pay monthly dues. The executive may decide to permit lower dues in specific towns.
  - V. The dues are to be sent with sufficient postage monthly to the party executive.
  - VI. Anyone who does not fulfill the commitments to the party for three months is no longer to be considered a member of the party.
  - VII. A party congress will be held at least *once* each year; [it] will discuss and decide all questions about the party, location of the headquarters of the party, the control commission, and the next party congress. The remuneration of executive members is to be decided by the congress.
  - VIII. Extraordinary congresses will be convened upon the call of the *absolute* majority of the executive or of the control commission or of one sixth of all party members.
  - IX. The preliminary agenda for every congress is to be published by the executive in the official party publication at least six weeks prior to the congress. All resolutions proposed by party members within ten days of the publication of the preliminary agenda must be published as part of the final agenda at least fourteen days before the congress. Resolutions made at the congress will be debated only if one third of the delegates approves the value of the debate.
  - X. Each delegate has *one* vote. All of those party members who vote [for congress delegates] in one congress election district may elect no more than five voting delegates for the congress. Party members who are not delegates have only an advisory vote.
  - XI. Within three weeks after the close of the congress, the published proceedings of the congress must be made available to all party members at cost. All congress decisions that involve a change in the statutes and the principles and political positions of the party or their direction must be submitted to all party members for their approval within six weeks after the congress. A simple majority of those voting constitutes approval. The result of the voting is to be printed in the official party publication.
  - XII. The conduct of party business is delegated to an executive of five, which has a chairman and a deputy, a secretary, a treasurer (who must post a reasonable bond), and one other member. All executive members must live in the same town or city, or within one mile of that place, and are to be elected in separate elections by an absolute majority of party members residing in the headquarters town or city. No member of the editorial staff or distribution system of the official party publication may be a member of the executive.

Should a vacancy occur on the executive during the year, the headquarters site members are to elect a replacement in the same manner that they elected the other executive members, with the exception of those cases specified in paragraph 7.

XIII. The executive must be elected within fourteen days after the party congress. Until the election, the former executive continues to conduct business, unless the congress provides otherwise.

XIV. The executive makes its decisions in common session; three members constitute a quorum for a regularly convened meeting. The executive sets its own agenda.

The executive is responsible to the party congress for all of its decisions.

XV. To prevent irresponsible, independent actions by the executive, the party establishes a control commission of eleven members, to which all complaints neglected by the executive should be sent; it also has the responsibility of overseeing the conduct of the executive.

XVI. The control commission is elected by the party members residing in the town or city, or within a distance of one mile, selected by the party congress as the seat of the commission. The commission is elected by secret ballot within at least fourteen days after the congress.

XVII. The control commission must examine the conduct, documents, books, treasury, etc. of the executive at least every three months. It has the right, given just cause and the refusal of the executive to cooperate, to suspend individual members or the entire executive and provide for the interim conduct of business. Such decisions require a two-thirds majority. If more than one half of the executive members is suspended, a party congress is to be called within four weeks to decide the matter.

XVIII. The party establishes as its organ the newspaper the *Volksstaat*. The organ is published in Leipzig and is property of the party. Personnel and salaries of the editorial staff, the distribution system, and the print shop and the price of the paper are determined by the executive. Disputes on such matters are settled by the control commission, with the right of appeal to the party congress. The position of the paper is to be bound to the party program. Contributions by party members that correspond to the program are to be published, without remuneration, to the extent that sufficient space allows. Complaints about refusals to publish contributions or their presentation in a one-sided manner are to be reported to the executive, with the right of final appeal to the control commission.

XIX. Party members promise to work to establish social-democratic workers' associations based on the party program throughout Germany.

## **Gotha Program**

### **Adopted at the Socialist Unity Congress, Gotha, 1875**

I. Labor is the source of all wealth and culture, and since generally useful labor is possible only through society, the collective product of labor belongs to society, that is, to all of its members on the basis of a universal duty to work

and according to equal right, each sharing according to his reasonable needs.

In contemporary society the means of labor are the monopoly of the capitalist class; the consequent dependence of the working class is the cause of all forms of misery and servitude.

The emancipation of labor demands the transformation of the means of labor into the common property of society and the cooperative regulation of collective labor to be utilized for the public good and with fair distribution of the proceeds of labor.

The emancipation of labor must be the work of the working class, in contrast to which all other classes are but one reactionary mass.

II. Proceeding from these principles, the Socialist Labor Party of Germany strives with every legal [dropped in 1880] means for the free state and the socialist society, the destruction of the iron law of wages through the abolition of the system of wage labor, the abolition of exploitation in every form, and the elimination of all social and political inequality.

The Socialist Labor Party of Germany, although working primarily within the national framework, is conscious of the international character of the labor movement and is resolved to fulfill every obligation that this imposes upon the workers in order to bring about the brotherhood of man.

In order to pave the way for a solution to the social question, the Socialist Labor Party of Germany demands the establishment of socialist producers' cooperatives with state help under the democratic control of the working people. The producers' cooperatives are to be called into being for industry and agriculture on such a scale that the socialist organization of all labor will arise from them.

The Socialist Labor Party demands as the foundation of the state:

1. Universal, direct, equal suffrage, with secret ballot and obligatory voting for all citizens over twenty years of age in all elections in state and municipality. The election day must be on a Sunday or holiday.
2. Direct legislation by the people. Decision on war and peace by the people.
3. Universal military training. People's militia in place of the standing army.
4. Abolition of all exceptional laws, especially the laws on the press, association, and assembly; in general, of all laws that limit the free expression of opinion, free investigation, and thought.
5. Administration of justice by the people. Free administration of justice.
6. Universal and equal public education by the state. Universal obligatory school education. Free instruction in all educational institutions. Declaration that religion is a private matter.

Within the present society the Socialist Labor Party demands:

1. The furthest possible extension of political rights and liberties in the sense of the above demands.
2. A single progressive income tax for state and municipality, in place of the existing [taxes], especially the indirect taxes that burden the people.

3. Unlimited right of combination.
4. A normal working day corresponding to the needs of society. Prohibition of all Sunday labor.
5. Prohibition of child labor and all female labor that is harmful to health and morals.
6. Protective laws for the life and health of the workers. Sanitary control of workers' dwellings. Inspection of mines, factories, workshops, and domestic industry by officials elected by the workers. An effective employers' liability law.
7. Regulation of prison labor.
8. Complete self-administration of all workers' aid and assistance funds.

### **Erfurt Program**

#### **Adopted at the Party Congress, Erfurt, 1891**

The economic development of bourgeois society leads by natural necessity to the downfall of small industry, whose foundation is formed by the workers' private ownership of his means of production. It separates the worker from his means of production and converts him into a propertyless proletarian, while the means of production become the monopoly of a relatively small number of capitalists and large landowners.

Hand in hand with this monopolization of the means of production goes the displacement of the dispersed small industries by colossal great industries, the development of the tool into the machine, and a gigantic growth in the productivity of human labor. But all the advantages of this transformation are monopolized by capitalists and large landowners. For the proletariat and the declining intermediate classes—petty bourgeoisie and peasants—it means a growing augmentation of the insecurity of their existence, of misery, oppression, enslavement, debasement, and exploitation.

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

The gulf between the propertied and the propertyless is further widened through the crises, founded in the essence of the capitalistic method of production, that constantly become more comprehensive and more devastating, that elevate general insecurity to the normal condition of society, and that prove that the powers of production of contemporary society have grown beyond measure and that private ownership of the means of production has become incompatible with their intended application and their full development.

Private ownership of the means of production, which was formerly the means of securing to the producer the ownership of his product, has today become the means of expropriating peasants, manual workers, and small traders, and enabling nonworkers—capitalists and large landowners—to own the product of

the workers. Only the transformation of capitalistic private ownership of the means of production—the soil, mines, raw materials, tools, machines, and means of transport—into social ownership and the transformation of production of goods for sale into socialistic production managed for and through society, can bring it about that the great industry and the steadily growing productive capacity of social labor shall for the hitherto exploited classes be changed from a source of misery and oppression to a source of the highest welfare and of all-around harmonious perfection.

This social transformation means the emancipation not only of the proletariat but of the whole human race, which suffers under present conditions. But it can only be the work of the working class, because all the other classes, in spite of mutually conflicting interests, take their stand on the basis of private ownership of the means of production, and have as their common object the preservation of the principles of contemporary society.

The battle of the working class against capitalistic exploitation is necessarily a political battle. The working class cannot carry on its economic battles or develop its economic organization without political rights. It cannot effect the passing of the means of production into the ownership of the community without acquiring political power.

To shape this battle of the working class into a conscious and united effort, and to show it its naturally necessary end, is the object of the social-democratic party.

The interests of the working class are the same in all lands with capitalistic methods of production. With the expansion of the world transport and production for the world market, the state of the workers in any one country becomes constantly more dependent upon the state of the workers in other countries. The emancipation of the working class is thus a task in which the workers of all civilized countries are concerned in like degree. Conscious of this, the Social Democratic Party of Germany feels and declares itself *one* with the class-conscious workers of all other lands.

The Social Democratic Party of Germany fights thus not for new class privileges and exceptional rights, but for the abolition of class domination and of the classes themselves, and for the equal rights and equal obligations of all, without distinction of sex and parentage. Setting out from these views, it combats in contemporary society not merely the exploitation and oppression of the wage workers, but every kind of exploitation and oppression, whether directed against a class, a party, a sex, or a race.

Setting out from these principles the Social Democratic Party of Germany demands immediately:

1. Universal, equal, direct suffrage and franchise, with direct ballot, for all members of the Empire over twenty years of age, without distinction of sex, for all elections and acts of voting. Proportional representation; and until this is introduced, redivision of the constituencies by law according to the numbers of population. A new legislature every two years. Fixing of elections and acts of voting for a legal holiday. Indemnity for the elected representatives. Removal of every curtailment of political rights except in case of tutelage.

2. Direct legislation of the people by means of the initiative and referendum. Self-determination and self-government of the people in Empire, state, province, and commune. Authorities to be elected by the people; to be responsible and bound. Taxes to be voted annually.

3. Training of all to be capable of bearing arms. Armed nation instead of standing army. Decision of war and peace by the representatives of the people. Settlement of all international disputes by the method of arbitration.

4. Abolition of all laws that curtail or suppress the free expression of opinion and the right of association and assembly.

5. Abolition of all laws that are prejudicial to women in their relations to men in public or private law.

6. Declaration that religion is a private matter. Abolition of all contributions from public funds to ecclesiastical and religious objects. Ecclesiastical and religious communities to be treated as private associations, which manage their affairs quite independently.

7. Secularization of education. Compulsory attendance of public primary schools. No charges to be made for instruction, school requisites, and maintenance in the public primary schools; nor in the higher educational institutions for those students, male and female, who by virtue of their capacities are considered fit for further training.

8. No charge to be made for the administration of the law, or for legal assistance. Judgment by popularly elected judges. Appeal in criminal cases. Indemnification of innocent persons prosecuted, arrested, or condemned. Abolition of the death penalty.

9. No charges to be made for medical attendance, including midwifery and medicine. No charges to be made for death certificates.

10. Graduated tax on income and property, to meet all public expenses as far as these are to be covered by taxation. Obligatory self-assessment. A tax on inheritance, graduated according to the size of the inheritance and the degree of kinship. Abolition of all indirect taxes, customs, and other politico-economic measures that sacrifice the interests of the whole community to the interests of a favored minority.

For the protection of the working class, the Social Democratic Party of Germany demands immediately:

1. An effective national and international legislation for the protection of workmen on the following basis:
  - a. Fixing of a normal working day with a maximum of eight hours.
  - b. Prohibition of industrial work for children under fourteen years.
  - c. Prohibition of night work, except for such branches of industry as, in accordance with their nature, require night work, for technical reasons, or for reasons of public welfare.
  - d. An uninterrupted rest of at least thirty-six hours in every week for every worker.
  - e. Prohibition of the truck system.
2. Inspection of all industrial businesses, investigation and regulation of labor relations in town and country by an Imperial department of labor,

district labor department, and chambers of labor. Thorough industrial hygiene.

3. Legal equalization of agricultural laborers and domestic servants with industrial workers; removal of special regulations affecting servants.
4. Assurance of the right of combination.
5. Workmen's insurance to be taken over bodily by the Empire; and the workers to have an influential share in its administration.

## Appendix C / Organizational Statutes of the National Party

### Statutes Adopted in 1890

1.

Any person who acknowledges the principles of the party program and actively supports the party [*die Partei nach Kräften unterstützt*] will be considered as belonging to the party.

2.

Anyone who has seriously violated the principles of the party program or who is guilty of dishonorable actions cannot belong to the party.

The members of the individual locals or the Reichstag election precincts decide on membership in the party.

Anyone rejected may appeal this decision to the party leadership and the party congress.

#### *Vertrauensmänner*

3.

The party members in the individual Reichstag election precincts elect one or more *Vertrauensmänner* in an open meeting, for the protection of party interests. The manner of selection of these *Vertrauensmänner* is the concern of the members living in the individual precincts.

4.

The election of the *Vertrauensmänner* occurs yearly, specifically in conjunction with the preceding party congress.

The *Vertrauensmänner* promptly inform the party leadership of their election along with a statement of their correct address.

5.

If a *Vertrauensmann* resigns or if a vacancy otherwise occurs, the party members have to hold a new election immediately, and in accordance with section 4, paragraph 2, inform the party leadership.

6.

Wherever on legal grounds the stated conditions in the above paragraphs are impossible, the party members make appropriate arrangements for local conditions.



## Party Congress

## 7.

A party congress takes place annually; it is called by the party leadership.

If the preceding party congress has made no determination of the locality in which the next party congress should be held, the party leadership comes to an understanding about it with the Reichstag representatives.

## 8.

The call for a party congress, with a statement of the provisional agenda, must appear in the official party organ at least four weeks before the meeting of the same. The invitation of delegations to the party congress is to be repeated at least three times at appropriate intervals.

Proposals of party members for the agenda of the party congress are submitted to the party leadership, which has to note them in the official party organ at least 10 days before the party congress.

## 9.

The party congress is the highest representative of the party. Entitled to participate in it are:

1. the delegates of the party from the individual election precincts, with the limitation that as a rule no precinct may be represented by more than 3 persons.

Insofar as women are not found among the elected representatives of the election precincts, female representatives may be elected in special women's meetings.

2. members of the Reichstag Fraktion.
3. members of the party leadership.

Members of the Reichstag Fraktion and the party leadership have only an advisory vote in all questions concerned with the parliamentary and business affairs of the party.

The party congress rules on the legitimacy of its participants, elects its leadership, and determines its own agenda.

## 10.

The duties of the congress are:

1. Receiving the reports of the business of the party leadership and of the parliamentary activity of the representatives.
2. Determination of the place in which the party leadership is located.
3. Election of the party leadership.
4. Decisions on party organization and all questions concerning the life of the party.
5. Decisions on all submitted proposals.

## 11.

An extraordinary congress can be called:

1. by the party leadership;
2. by proposal of the Reichstag Fraktion;
3. by proposal of at least 15 election precincts.

In case the party leadership refuses to accept a proposal for the calling of an extraordinary party congress, it is to be called by the Reichstag Fraktion. A geographically most favorably situated locale is to be designated as the meeting place of an extraordinary congress.

12.

The calling of an extraordinary party congress, with a statement of the agenda, must appear in the official party organ in three successive numbers at least 14 days before the date of the meeting.

Proposals of party members are to be published in the official party organ at least 7 days before the meeting of the party congress.

In other respects, the same conditions prevail for an extraordinary party congress as for an ordinary party congress (secs. 8-10).

**Party Leadership**

13.

The party leadership consists of 12 people, specifically, 2 chairmen, 2 secretaries, 1 treasurer, and 7 control people.

The election of the party leadership is done by the party congress by means of ballots.

After successful election, the party leadership organizes itself and announces this in the official party organ.

The party leadership disposes of funds on hand according to its own judgment.

14.

The members of the party leadership may be paid a salary for their activity. The level of this will be set by the party congress.

15.

The party leadership conducts party business, controls the principled positions of the party organs, calls the party congresses, and reports to the same on its activities.

16.

If one of the chairmen, secretaries, or the treasurer withdraws, the vacancy is to be filled by a new election undertaken by the control people.

**Party Organ**

17.

The *Berliner Volksblatt* is designated as the official party organ. From 1 January 1891 on it has the title:

*Vorwärts*

"Berliner Volksblatt"

Central Organ of the German Social Democratic Party

All official announcements are to be published in a prominent place in the editorial section.

### Changes in Organization

#### 18.

Changes in the organization of the party can be made only by a party congress, but the absolute majority of representatives present must vote for them.

Proposals for changes in organization can be deliberated only if they come to the public knowledge of the party members within the periods that are prescribed in sections 8 and 12.

A deviation from the previous regulation is allowed only if at least  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the present representatives at a party congress support the deviation.

### Statutes Adopted in 1905

#### Party Membership

1. Any person who acknowledges the principles of the party program and supports the party regularly with funds will be considered as belonging to the party.

2. Anyone who has seriously violated the principles of the party program or is guilty of a dishonorable act cannot belong to the party.

3. With death, withdrawal, or exclusion from the party, the former party member loses all rights against the party, against the party executive, against the control commission, or against individual party members that he had acquired from his party membership.

#### Structure

4. For every Reichstag election precinct, the social-democratic clubs, to which every party member living in the precinct has to belong insofar as pressing reasons do not prevent him from it, form the basis of organization. If the precinct covers a number of localities, in all localities in which party members live and other conditions allow it, local units of the social-democratic club may be formed.

5. The social-democratic clubs form into district bodies as well as into state organizations, which control the independent conduct of party business according to their own statutes; these statutes, which are reported to the party executive, may not contradict the organizational statutes of the whole party. The [state] executives have to report their successful election to the party executive.

6. The establishment of membership dues is left to the district bodies and the state organizations. The election precincts have to pay to the central fund at least 20 percent of their income produced by dues. In case of need, the party executive is authorized to leave to the individual election precincts in excess of 80 percent of this income amount for their own use.

#### *Vertrauenspersonen*

7. Where on legal grounds the provisions given in sections 4 and 5 are not

possible, the party members have to organize themselves in another way appropriate to the state laws.

8. In all elections in which no club organization exists, the party members have to elect one or more *Vertrauenspersonen* whose address is sent immediately to the party executive. The manner of election is left to the party members.

The *Vertrauenspersonen* are empowered to receive voluntary contributions and to give a receipt with a special mark.

#### **Reporting**

9. The chairman of the social-democratic club, whose election follows each time in conjunction with the preceding party congress, has to submit a report to the party executive annually through 15 July. The report must include statements of: the nature and extent of agitation used, the number of organized party members in the election precinct, the amount of party contributions raised by the members, the amount of the total income, the manner of utilization of the money remaining in the election precinct.

The executives of the district bodies and the state organizations have to submit the same annual report with regard to their activity and the utilization of the money turned over to them by the [central] party executive.

Where no club organization exists, the same regulations are sensibly applied by the election precinct, district, and state *Vertrauenspersonen*.

#### **Female Vertrauenspersonen**

10. Systematic agitation among the female proletariat will be conducted by female *Vertrauenspersonen*, who as much as possible will be elected in all locals in accordance with party procedure.

#### **Party Congress**

11. The party congress is the highest representative of the party. Entitled to participate in it are:

1. The delegates of the party from the individual Reichstag election precincts, with the limitation that no election precinct may be represented by more than three persons. Insofar as women are not found among the elected representatives of the election precincts, female representatives may be elected in special women's meetings.
2. The members of the Reichstag Fraktion.
3. The members of the party executive and the control commission.

The members of the Reichstag Fraktion, in all parliamentary questions, and the members of the party executive, in all questions of business matters, have only an advisory voice.

12. The party congress itself determines the legitimacy of its participants, elects its leadership, and determines its agenda.

An absolute majority of those in attendance is required for validation of decisions of the party congress.

13. A party congress, which is called by the party executive, takes place annually.

If the preceding congress has made no determination of the locality in which the next party congress should be held, the party executive comes to an understanding about it with the control commission and the Reichstag Fraktion.

14. At least four weeks before the meeting of the same, the call for a party congress, with a statement of the provisional agenda, must appear in the central party organ. The invitation of delegations to the party congress is to be repeated at least three times at appropriate intervals.

Proposals of party members for the agenda of the party congress are submitted to the party executive, which has to note them in the central organ of the party at least three weeks before the holding of the party congress.

15. The duties of the party congress include:

1. Accepting the reports of the business activity of the party executive and the control commission as well as of the parliamentary activity of the Reichstag representatives.
2. Determination of the place in which the party executive is located.
3. Election of the party executive and the control commission.
4. Decisions on party organization and all questions concerning the life of the party.
5. Decisions on all submitted proposals.

16. An extraordinary congress may be called:

1. by unanimous decision of the party executive;
2. by proposal of the majority of the Reichstag Fraktion;
3. by proposal of at least 15 election precincts;
4. by unanimous proposal of the control commission.

In case the party executive refuses to accept a tendered proposal for the calling of an extraordinary congress, it is to be called by the Reichstag Fraktion. A geographically most favorably situated locale is to be designated as the meeting place of an extraordinary congress.

17. At least 14 days before the date of the meeting, the call for an extraordinary congress, with a statement of the agenda, must appear in the central organ of the party in three successive numbers.

Proposals of party members are to be published in the central organ at least 5 days before the meeting of the congress.

In other respects, the same conditions prevail for an extraordinary party congress as for an ordinary party congress (sections 11 and 12).

#### **Party Executive**

18. The number of members of the party executive will be determined by the party congress. The party executive consists of two chairmen, a treasurer, a secretary, and two at-large members, who are authorized to act as substitutes.

The selection of the chairmen, the treasurer, and the secretary is done by the party congress by means of ballots in an election and by an absolute majority. If

a candidate does not receive the absolute majority of votes cast, then a runoff takes place between the two candidates who received the most votes. Tie votes are decided by lot.

The selection of the two at-large members is done by the control commission.

After successful election, the party executive organizes itself and announces this in the central organ of the party.

19. If a member of the party executive withdraws, then the vacancy is filled by a new election held by the control commission.

20. The members of the party executive may be paid a salary for their activity. The level of this will be set by the party congress.

21. The party executive disposes of funds on hand according to its own judgment.

The party executive or the control commission may bind the individual members or the party by no sort of legal transaction. Also, no party member or anyone else acquires through agreements with the party executive or the control commission an actionable right against them or their members.

22. No party member has, without the explicit consent of the party congress, an actionable right to examine the books or papers of the party executive, the control commission, or the party, or to make copies or extracts from them or to demand the particulars or a summary of the condition of the party means.

The right of the delegates to examine the books during the meeting of the party congress will not be affected by the above.

23. The party executive conducts party business and controls the principled positions of the party organs.

The party executive resolves differences between the organization of an election precinct and the district body or the state organization that follow from the nomination of Reichstag candidates.

24. The party congress selects a control commission of nine members for supervision of the party executive as well as appeals of grievances against the party executive.

The election of the control people is by simple majority. Tie votes are decided by lots. For the conduct of its business the control commission elects a chairman, who determines the location and time of meetings, insofar as the control commission does not decide on that.

Supervision [of the executive] must occur at least quarterly.

All submissions to the control commission are directed to the chairman, who announces his address in the central organ of the party.

Joint sessions take place by proposal of the control commission or the party executive.

#### Central Organ of the Party

25. The central organ of the party is the *Vorwärts*, "Berliner Volksblatt." Official announcements are to be published in a prominent place in the editorial section.

26. For supervision of the principled and factual content of the central organ

as well as for the administration of it, the party members of Berlin and its suburbs elect a press commission, which may consist of at most two members for each represented Reichstag election precinct.

The press commission decides, in cooperation with the party executive, on all affairs of the central organ, especially on the appointment and discharge of the personnel of the editorial staff and administration. On possible differences of opinion between the party executive and the press commission, the control commission, the party executive, and the press commission decided in a manner of equal rights, so that each of these three organs has one vote.

#### **Expulsion**

27. In case of section 2, an arbitration committee, which the party executive convokes, decides on continued membership in the party. The proposal for the appointment of such an arbitration committee can only be made through a party organization.

The arbitration committee consists of seven persons. The accused chooses half the members, the proposing organization the other half; in doing so selection is limited to the party members of the district organization to which the accused belongs. The party executive designates the chairman.

In an election precinct in which business of the party is conducted by a club organization, the expulsion of a member from an affected organization is equally considered expulsion from the whole party on the basis of section 2. The expulsion may proceed, therefore, only in the manner of the above established procedure of arbitration.

28. Against the decision of the board of arbitration the concerned is due appeal to the control commission, within four weeks of delivery of the written judgment, and against its decision to the next party congress.

If a party member against whom an expulsion motion is being brought waives the arbitration committee proceedings, or if he fails to name arbiters for it within a period determined by the party executive, but of at least four weeks, then he is forthwith considered expelled.

The delivery of a written judgment as well as announcement of the resulting expulsion of a member comes from the party executive.

#### **Readmission**

29. The readmission of one expelled from the party can be done only by the party congress.

The proposal for readmission is announced by the party executive early enough that it can be published with the rest of the proposals presented to the party congress. Before the decision, the organization that previously had proposed expulsion as well as the organization of the latest place of residence are to be heard.

#### **Changes in Organization**

30. Changes in organization of the party can be made only by a party congress.

Proposals for changes in organization can be deliberated only if they come to the public knowledge of the party members within the periods that are prescribed in sections 14 and 17.

A deviation from the last regulation is allowed only if at least three quarters of the representatives present at a party congress support the deviation.



## Appendix D / State Organizational Statutes

### Statute of the State Organization for Prussia, 1907

1. To promote the common party interests a state organization for Prussia is established pursuant to paragraph 5 of the organizational statutes of the larger party.

2. Organs of the state organization are: the state commission and its executive board, the district committees (the campaign commission of the district groups), and the executive committees of the election district organizations.

3. The state commission is composed of one member from each district group in Prussia; each committee selects the member and selects a replacement when necessary.

The chairman, secretary, and treasurer of the party organization of Greater Berlin serve as the executive board of the state organization.

4. The state commission and its executive board conduct the business of the party in agreement with the chairman of the Social Democratic Party of Germany, who is invited to all commission meetings.

The state commission usually meets once a year. Further, the executive board must give adequate prior notice to the state commission before undertaking any important action involving all of Prussia.

5. The highest representative of the state organization is the Prussian party convention. It is held every two years and is called by the state commission. The following are permitted to attend:

- a. the delegates from the electoral district organizations, although no district may have more than three delegates;
- b. the delegation of the social-democratic women of Prussia.
- c. the social-democratic Reichstag and Landtag representatives from Prussia;
- d. the state commission and the executive board; [and]
- e. the party executive.

6. The tasks of the convention include:

- a. examining the delegates' credentials;
- b. accepting the reports of the state commission, the executive board, and the Prussian Landtag representatives;

- c. debating and voting on all matters relating to party life in Prussia;
- d. voting on all proposed resolutions; [and]
- e. selecting the site of the next convention.

7. At least six weeks before the calling of the convention, the state commission must report on its own activities and send a provisional agenda to the individual electoral district groups and district committees. Notification is to be repeated at least twice at suitable intervals.

All resolutions for the convention are to be submitted at least three weeks prior to the meeting of the state commission, which is required to publish them at least two weeks before the convention on two successive occasions.

They are to be published in the *Vorwärts*.

8. An extraordinary convention can be called by a majority vote of the state commission.

At the request of seven district committees, the state commission must call for such a convention within four weeks. If the state commission refuses, the convention is called by the chairmen of the petitioning district committees.

The time limits do not apply to extraordinary conventions.

9. The parliamentary representatives and the state commission may not vote on matters regarding their parliamentary activity or conduct of party business.

10. The costs of the regional delegations for attending the convention are to be paid by the regions, and those of the meetings of the state commission by the districts. The costs of the executive board are paid by the districts in proportion to the number of members in each.

11. The chairmen of the regional groups and the district committees must report their addresses to the executive board of the state commission and inform it of any change.

## **Statutes of the Social Democratic Party of Bavaria, 1906**

### **Membership**

1. The social democrats of Bavaria form a state organization that has the name "Social Democratic Party of Bavaria" and independently conducts the business of the party.

Organs of the state organization are: the social-democratic locals, the regional groups, and the state executive.

2. Paragraphs 1-3 and 27-29 of the organizational statutes of the larger party, in accord with the Bavarian laws on associations, determine the terms of membership.

### **Locals**

3. The basis of the organization in each Reichstag election district is the social-democratic local, to which every party member living in the district belongs, unless there are compelling reasons to the contrary.

If the election district includes several towns, each with many party comrades, if other circumstances permit, town locals (sections) may be established,

which remain organs of the large district local. If an election district local is composed of several town clubs, each comrade must belong to the local in the town in which he resides. If town locals in a district cannot agree upon a headquarters, it will be selected by the regional executive. If there are many party comrades in a town without its own local, they shall select one of their number as a steward to maintain contact with the district local.

Locals with a large membership may, for administrative and campaign purposes, divide themselves along town lines into sections, which remain organs of the larger local.

In cities with more than one Reichstag district, a joint local may be formed.

The Reichstag election district locals may transfer their duties to the regional executive. The regional executive may, according to need, as a general assembly of the Reichstag election district locals call a delegates' conference (Reichstag election district conference). Attendance is determined according to the provisions of paragraphs 12 and 13.

4. Each local determines its particular rules, which however may not contradict the statutes of the state organization or the statutes of the whole party.

The elections to the executive are to be held annually, before October; the result is to be reported to the executive of the region and the state.

The business year of the party ends on 30 June. By 10 July at the latest, the locals must submit their annual reports, which must include information on: the kind and extent of campaigning, the number of organized party comrades in the election district, the amount of dues paid by members, the total income, and the manner in which the money retained by the district was spent.

The locals' reports submitted to the regional executives are to be forwarded to the state executive.

5. The selection of candidates for the various elected positions is in principle the right of the organization of the election district. The names of the candidates are to be reported to the regional executive before they are announced publicly.

If serious objections are raised to a candidacy, the regional executive may protest. If the proposing organization insists upon its candidate, the state executive decides the matter.

If a Reichstag candidacy is involved, and the proposing organization is not satisfied with the decision of the state executive, the issue is to be settled according to the provision of paragraph 23/2 of the statutes of the larger party.

#### **Regional Groups**

6. Regional groups with one or more election districts are established: first, for upper Bavaria, lower Bavaria, and Swabia, with its seat in Munich; second, for the Rhenish Palatinate, with its seat in Ludwigshafen; [and] third, for Franconia and the upper Palatinate, with its seat in Nürnberg.

#### **Regional Executive**

7. The regional executive is composed of nine members. They are elected at a regional convention if that body does not give this right, entirely or in part, to the regional seat.

The regional executive is responsible for leading the campaigning, the staging

of rallies, the appointment of speakers, and the publication of handbills. The regional executive decides whether to establish new newspapers.

The locals must keep in constant contact with the regional executive and must report to it regarding their internal rules, their bookkeeping, and their activity in general.

At the beginning of an election campaign, the regional executive assumes the role of the central election committee.

#### **Regional Conventions**

8. As need requires, and at least every two years, the regional executive calls for a regional convention to clarify internal regional matters. The summons to regular and extraordinary regional conventions and the selection of delegates proceed in the same manner as in the case of the state convention.

The state executive may send a representative to the regional conventions, who is to be given a voting seat.

#### **State Executive**

9. The general direction and political representation of the party are the responsibility of the state executive, which may take any directive in the interest of the party.

The state executive maintains close contact with the regional executives. In particular, they may make semiannual reports to it regarding their activities and the condition of the party in their regions. Locals that feel mistreated by their regional executives may appeal to the state executive.

10. The state executive is composed of seven members: the chairman, the treasurer, the secretary, and four others. They are elected by the state convention. The state convention may elect to transfer this right to the seat of the state executive.

The state executive convenes its meetings at its pleasure. When considering very important party matters, the state executive can decide, with the agreement of the regional executives or at their request, to meet together with representatives of the regional executive and one representative from each of the party papers published in Bavaria.

#### **State Party Congresses**

11. Every two years a regular state party congress is called for by the state executive. In urgent cases it may call for an extraordinary congress. This must be done if requested by one fifth of the locals.

The tasks of the congress are: hearing the report of the state executive on its activity and the status of the party and the report of the Landtag Fraktion, deciding changes in the organization, drafting the Landtag election platform and determining tactics, adjudicating disputes over the performance of the state executive and the regional executives, [and] settling all Bavarian party matters.

12. The congress and preliminary agenda are announced in the party press at least six weeks before the meeting.

Eight days before the congress, delegates are to be sent a report of the state

executive and a report on the parliamentary activity of the Landtag Fraktion.

Resolutions received by the state executive at least three weeks before the convention are to be published in the party press fourteen days before the congress.

13. Those allowed to vote at the congress are the elected representatives of the locals that have paid the regional dues, the Bavarian Landtag and Reichstag delegates of the party, the state executive, and one member of each regional executive. The members of the Landtag Fraktion have only an advisory vote in parliamentary matters, the members of the state executive the same in those regarding the business aspects of the party.

The representatives are elected by the local members of each election district with the provision that groups with fewer than fifty members have one representative, those between fifty and one hundred two, but no town can have more than ten. The number of members allowed to vote is determined by the amount of party dues paid to the regional executive in the previous quarter.

#### **Party Dues**

14. The local monthly dues are 15 Pfg. Of this amount 3 Pfg. (20 percent) go to the executive of the whole party. 5 Pfg. are for the regional executive and 2 Pfg. for the state executive.

To pay for local costs, an additional amount of at least 5 Pfg. is to be levied.

The financial needs of the state organization must in principle be fulfilled out of local funds. An appeal to the treasury of the whole party is permitted only under exceptional circumstances. Therefore, requests by the locals for advances, as well as requests for a total or partial return of the portion of the dues owed to the whole party, may not be made without first informing the regional executive, and requests by a regional executive for a one-time or continuing advances from the whole party are not to be made without the notification and agreement of the state executive.

#### **Legal Status**

15. The state executive, the regional executives, and the local executives freely dispose of their funds. They can enter into no legally binding obligations for individual members or the party. Further, upon entering into contracts with the state executive, the regional executive, or the local executives, neither a party member nor a third party acquires the right to legal recourse against them or their members.

No member has the legal right to examine the account books and papers of the state executive, the regional executive, or the local executive or make copies or excerpts or demand information about the status of the party's finances without the expressed approval of the party congress, the regional convention, or the general assembly of his local.

This provision does not eliminate the right of delegates or members to examine the books during the meeting of the party congress, the regional convention, or the general assembly of the local.

The new statutes take effect on 1 July 1906.

# Suggestions for Further Reading

## I. General

An extremely useful bibliography of works on German social democracy is available: Hans-Josef Steinberg, *Die deutsche sozialistische Arbeiterbewegung bis 1914. Eine bibliographische Einführung* (Frankfurt, 1979). For further information, see it.

Far and away the most valuable single source for the history of the SPD is Dieter Fricke, *Die deutsche Arbeiterbewegung 1869–1914. Ein Handbuch über ihr Organisation und Tätigkeit im Klassenkampf* (Berlin, 1976); it is filled with lists and statistics that would otherwise require days and weeks to track down. To supplement Fricke's treasure store, Franz Osterroth's *Biographisches Lexikon des Sozialismus* (Hanover, 1960) provides brief summaries of the lives and careers of many major figures from the prewar period.

The party's *Protokoll* of annual congresses and its newspapers are indispensable primary sources; both are readily available in many places in the United States. Of the hundreds of official party journals, three that were nationally circulated and one more local newspaper are especially important. The national papers are the official organ, the *Vorwärts*, which was published in Berlin and also served as the official organ of the Prussian and the Berlin local parties; *Die neue Zeit*, published in Stuttgart beginning in 1883, and after the turn of the century the official theoretical journal of the national party; and the *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, also a theoretical journal, but one with close ties to the party's reformists and the virtual mouthpiece of Bernstein and his followers. These three items are widely available in this country, but unfortunately the same cannot be said for the most interesting of the SPD's local journals, the *Leipziger Volkszeitung*. This was the only major party paper controlled for a long time by the radicals; the consistently high quality of its polemical and political articles make it a very useful source.

Of sweeping secondary studies, two of the best are also the oldest. For the views of a very intelligent convert and insider, see Franz Mehring, *Geschichte der deutschen Sozialdemokratie*, 4 vols. in 2 (Stuttgart, 1906). Though the first edition of this work appeared in the late 1880s, and though it only covers the years up to the Erfurt program, Mehring's intimate knowledge of the move-

ment and his erudition make it very valuable still. One older study in English deserves special mention also: Bertrand Russell, *German Social Democracy* (London, 1896). It was an amazingly prescient study, and many of Russell's insights have been substantiated by later works.

Many general histories have been done by Germans more recently. The two best are Hedwig Wachenheim, *Die deutsche Arbeiterbewegung 1844 bis 1914* (Cologne, 1967), and Helga Grebing, *Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung* (Munich, 1966); Grebing's work has the additional advantage of having been translated into English in abridged form (London, 1969). Two other studies in English cover the entire period of the present volume but are thematic rather than historical. Guenther Roth is a sociologist who introduced the notion of negative integration into the study of the SPD in his *The Social Democrats in Imperial Germany* (Totowa, N.J., 1963); Douglas A. Chalmers, a political scientist, has provided an insightful work, *The Social Democratic Party of Germany* (New Haven, 1964).

Studies that are chronologically more restricted yet still broad in focus include Gerhard A. Ritter, *Die Arbeiterbewegung im Wilhelminischen Reich 1890-1900* (Berlin, 1963), and Carl E. Schorske, *German Social Democracy, 1905-1917* (New York, 1955). Ritter's work is quite brief, but it deals with a critical period of the party's history and outlines most of the major characteristics of the movement. Schorske's work is a masterpiece, even though his central thesis—that the party split in 1917 was the product of a growing schism beginning in 1905—can now be accepted only with major modifications.

Detlef Lehnert's *Reform und Revolution in den Strategiediskussionen der klassischen Sozialdemokratie* (Bonn, 1977) deftly handles a central problem in the development of the SPD. Gerhard A. Ritter has written two essays that deal in general terms with the development of the socialist-workers' movement: "Die sozialdemokratische Arbeiterbewegung Deutschlands bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg" (pp. 21-54), and "Der Durchbruch der Freien Gewerkschaften Deutschlands zur Massenbewegung im letzten Viertel des 19. Jahrhunderts" (pp. 55-101; with Klaus Tenfelde). Both appear in Ritter's *Arbeiterbewegung, Parteien und Parlamentarismus* (Göttingen, 1976).

A great deal of the correspondence among major SPD figures has been published. The following list includes those collections especially useful to me:

- Adler, Victor. *Briefwechsel mit August Bebel und Karl Kautsky*. Friedrich Adler, ed. (Vienna, 1954).
- Blumenburg, Werner, ed. *August Bebels Briefwechsel mit Friedrich Engels* (Hague, 1965).
- Eckert, Georg, ed. *Wilhelm Liebknechts Briefwechsel mit deutschen Sozialdemokraten*, vol. 1, 1862-1878 (Assen, 1973).
- Ettinger, Elzbieta, ed. and trans. *Comrade and Lover: Rosa Luxemburg's Letters to Leo Jogiches* (Cambridge, 1979).
- Hirsch, Helmut, ed. *Eduard Bernsteins Briefwechsel mit Friedrich Engels* (Assen, 1970).

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- Kautsky, Benedikt, ed. *Friedrich Engels' Briefwechsel mit Karl Kautsky* (Vienna, 1955).
- Kautsky, Karl, Jr., ed. *August Bebel's Briefwechsel mit Karl Kautsky* (Assen, 1971).
- Liebknrecht, Wilhelm. *Briefwechsel mit Karl Marx und Friedrich Engels* (Hague, 1963).

Finally, on the more general topic of German social history, two books by Hans-Ulrich Wehler provided a particularly helpful background for the study of the SPD: *Sozialdemokratie und Nationalstaat. Nationalitätenfragen in Deutschland 1840-1914* (2nd ed., Göttingen, 1971), and (Wehler, ed.) *Moderne deutsche Sozialgeschichte* (Cologne, 1966). From the latter Werner Conze's article "Vom 'Pöbel' zum 'Proletariat.' Sozialgeschichtliche Voraussetzungen für den Sozialismus in Deutschland" (pp. 111-36) is especially good. Very useful charts and statistics appear in Gerd Hohorst et al., *Sozialgeschichtliches Arbeitsbuch. Materialien zur Geschichte des Kaiserreich 1870-1914* (Munich, 1975).

### II. Chapter One: German Social Democracy to 1890

In addition to many of the general works listed above, a great deal of more specific material on the early years of the movement is available. Fortunately for the English-reading student, one of the very best studies of this period is by Vernon L. Lidtke, *The Outlawed Party: Social Democracy in Germany, 1878-1890* (Princeton, 1966). This study matches Schorske's in scholarship and thoroughness; it is very reliable and carefully thought out. However, the same cannot be said about another study by an American, Richard W. Reichard, *Crippled From Birth: German Social Democracy, 1844-1870* (Ames, Iowa, 1969). Although Reichard is meticulous and exhaustive in the compilation of his data, he cripples his own work by burdening it with an untenable thesis: namely, that even before it was organized, before it had any political clout at all, German social democracy was doomed to failure because of internal weaknesses.

These early years can be studied from some primary sources readily available in the United States. The protocols of the SDAP have been reprinted (Glashütten, 1971), as have two important newspapers: Liebknrecht's *Demokratisches Wochenblatt*, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1969), which appeared from January 1868 to the end of September 1869, and the exiled official organ of the outlaw years, the *Sozialdemokrat*; both these newspapers have been relied upon heavily in the present work. Easily the most valuable of the memoirs are those of August Bebel, *Aus meinem Leben*, 3 vols. (Berlin, 1910-1914); they have also appeared in abridged form in English (London, 1912). Other important early materials include the memoirs of Wilhelm Bloss, *Denkwürdigkeiten eines Sozialdemokraten*, 2 vols. (Munich, 1914-1919), and two sets of recollections by early social democrats: *Die Gründung der deutschen Sozialdemokratie* (Leipzig, 1903), and Ignaz Auer, ed., *Nach 10 Jahren. Material und Glossen zur*



*Geschichte des Sozialistengesetzes*, 2 vols. (London, 1889–1890). Finally, Wilhelm Liebknecht's *Der Leipziger Hochverratsprozess* (Leipzig, 1874; 2nd ed., Berlin, 1911) recounts the most famous of the movement's legal battles in the beginning, providing excellent background material in the process.

Secondary sources on this early period are plentiful, although virtually all in German. While no good biography of Bebel has been done, Shlomo Na'aman's *Lassalle* (Hanover, 1970) is superb, and Vadim Chubinskii's *Wilhelm Liebknecht* (Berlin, 1973; translated from the Russian original), though polemical, is adequate. The most interesting study of Bebel's and Liebknecht's early years in the workers' movement is Karl-Heinz Leidigkeit, *Wilhelm Liebknecht und August Bebel in der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung 1862–1869* (Berlin, 1957). Karl Birker, *Die deutschen Arbeiterbildungsvereine 1840–1870* (Berlin, 1973), provides an excellent background on this important aspect of the origins of social democracy.

Four investigations of the relationship between bourgeois radicals and the nascent workers' movement in Germany deserve special mention. Gustav Mayer's *Die Trennung der proletarischen von der bürgerlichen Demokratie in Deutschland (1863–1870)* (Leipzig, 1911) is old, but also very insightful. Wilhelm Schieder, "Das Scheitern des bürgerliche Radikalismus und die sozialistische Parteibildung in Deutschland," in Hans Mommsen, ed., *Sozialdemokratie zwischen Klassenbewegung und Volkspartei* (Frankfurt, 1974), pp. 17–34, discusses the major issues succinctly. Two more localized studies offer convincing substantiation of the national model: Hugo Eckert, *Liberal-oder Sozialdemokratie. Frühgeschichte der Nürnberger Arbeiterbewegung* (Stuttgart, 1968), and Wolfgang Schmierer, *Von der Arbeiterbildung zur Arbeiterpolitik. Die Anfänge der Arbeiterbewegung in Württemberg 1862/63–1878* (Hanover, 1970).

The development of the socialist press before 1878 and its precarious survival during the time of the antisocialist law form one of the most interesting aspects of this early period. For the pre-1878 years, Adolph Held's *Die deutsche Arbeiterpresse der Gegenwart* (Leipzig, 1873) is especially useful, but Ludwig Kantorowicz, *Die sozialdemokratische Presse Deutschlands* (Tübingen, 1922), and Kurt Koszyk, *Die Presse der deutschen Sozialdemokratie* (Hanover, 1966), also supply background. Certainly the most exciting and romantic aspect of the outlaw years was the smuggling into Germany of the *Sozialdemokrat*, and Ernst Engelberg, *Revolutionäre Politik und Rote Feldpost 1878–1890* (Berlin, 1959), has told the story well. Jürgen Jensen's *Presse und politische Polizei. Hamburgs Zeitungen unter dem Sozialistengesetz 1873–1890* (Hanover, 1966) is a detailed account of press activities in a socialist stronghold.

Special topics from this period are also covered well in secondary sources. Two works in English look at different aspects of the young movement: Vernon L. Lidtke, "German Social Democracy and German State Socialism, 1876–1884," in *International Review of Social History*, 9:2 (1964), pp. 202–25, and Roger P. Morgan, *The German Social Democrats and the First International, 1864–1872* (Cambridge, Eng., 1965). Jochen Loreck has written an intriguing though somewhat unapproachable study in *Wie man früher Sozialdemokrat*

wurde. *Das Kommunikationsverhalten in der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung und die Konzeption der sozialistischen Parteipublizistik durch August Bebel* (Bonn, 1977); the author's penchant for obfuscatory terminology beclouds his thesis. Last but not least, the conjunction of the birth of the German nation-state and German socialism is discussed in two works: Dieter Groh and Werner Conze, *Die Arbeiterbewegung in der nationale Bewegung. Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie vor, während und nach der Reichsgründung* (Stuttgart, 1966), and Hans-Josef Steinberg, "Sozialismus, Internationalismus und Reichsgründung," in Theodor Scheider and Ernst Deuerlein, eds., *Reichsgründung 1870/71* (Stuttgart, 1970), pp. 319–44.

### III. Chapter Two: The Party and the Reich

Press and protocol discussions of election strategy and tactics are the most important sources on national politics. Patterns of representation and specific statistics on a district-by-district level are from Friedrich Specht and Paul Schwabe, *Die Reichstag-Wahlen von 1867 bis 1907* (Berlin, 1908), and Max Schwarz, *MdR: Biographisches Handbuch der Reichstage* (Hanover, 1967). An excellent summary of the nature of representation and distribution in the Reichstag is Alfred Milatz, "Reichstagswahlen und Mandatsverteilung 1871 bis 1918," in *Gesellschaft, Parlament und Regierung* (Düsseldorf, 1974), pp. 207–23. For summaries of the contemporary analysis of elections, see Adolf Neumann-Hofer, *Die Entwicklung der Sozialdemokratie bei den Wahlen zum deutschen Reichstage 1871–1903* (Berlin, 1903), and Paul Hirsch and Bruno Borchart, *Die Sozialdemokratie und die Wahlen zum deutschen Reichstage* (Berlin, 1912). Erich Matthias and Eberhard Pikart, eds., *Die Reichstagsfraktion der deutschen Sozialdemokratie 1898 bis 1918* (Düsseldorf, 1966), gives useful information on party organization in the Reichstag.

Detailed discussions of specific elections are in Michael Stürmer, *Regierung und Reichstag im bismarckstaat 1871–1880* (Düsseldorf, 1974); George D. Crothers, *The German Elections of 1907* (New York, 1941); and Jürgen Bertram, *Die Wahlen zum deutschen Reichstag vom Jahre 1912* (Düsseldorf, 1964). The very brief biography in Heinrich Gemkow, *Paul Singer* (Berlin, 1957), provides a clear and impressive account of one of the SPD's most outstanding Reichstag figures.

By far the most significant foreign policy issue for the socialists was the matter of colonialism or, as it was called after the late 1880s, imperialism. The most comprehensive secondary study is Hans-Christoph Schröder, *Sozialismus und Imperialismus* (Hanover, 1968), but also useful is Gerda Weinberger, "Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie und die Kolonialpolitik," in *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, 15:3 (1967), pp. 402–23. Two older studies offer rather different views: Kurt Mandelbaum, *Die Erörterungen innerhalb der deutschen Sozialdemokratie über das Problem des Imperialismus (1895–1914)* (Frankfurt, 1927); and Max Victor, "Die Stellung der deutschen Sozialdemokratie zu den Fragen der auswärtigen Politik, 1869–1914," in *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, 60 (1928), pp. 147–79. The contemporary,

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polemical view of the party's right wing is summarized in Gustav Noske, *Kolonialpolitik und Sozialdemokratie* (Stuttgart, 1914).

### IV. Chapter Three: The Party and the Trade Unions

Again the presses of the two branches of the workers' movement and debates in the congresses are the best sources on this topic. But there are also several valuable secondary studies: Siegfried Nestriepke, *Die Gewerkschaftsbewegung*, 3 vols. (Berlin, 1923–1925); Paul Merker, *Sozialdemokratie und Gewerkschaften 1890–1920* (Berlin, 1949); Heinz J. Varain, *Freie Gewerkschaften, Sozialdemokratie und Staat* (Düsseldorf, 1956); and Wolfgang Schröder, *Partei und Gewerkschaften* (Berlin, 1975). Two recent collections of essays are important as well: Heinz O. Vetter, ed., *Vom Sozialistengesetz zur Mitbestimmung. Zum 100. Geburtstag von Hans Böckler* (Cologne, 1975), and Frank Deppe, Georg Fülberth, and Jürgen Harrer, eds., *Geschichte der deutschen Gewerkschaftsbewegung* (Cologne, 1977).

Ulrich Engelhardt's "*Nur vereinigt sind wir stark.*" *Die Anfänge der deutschen Gewerkschaftsbewegung 1862/63–1869/70*, 2 vols. (Stuttgart, 1977) is an exhaustive investigation of the origins of German trade unionism. John A. Moses, "Das Gewerkschaftsproblem in der SDAP 1869–1878," in Halle Universität, Institut für deutsche Geschichte, *Jahrbuch*, 3 (1974), pp. 173–202, takes a close look at early party–trade union relations.

For the last twenty-five years I have covered, the dominant figure of German trade unionism was Carl Legien. Theodor Leipart, a close colleague of Legien, wrote a hagiographic memorial volume, *Carl Legien; ein Gedenkbuch* (Berlin, 1929). A more balanced and analytical account of Legien is found in John A. Moses, *Carl Legiens Interpretation des demokratischen Sozialismus* (n.p., 1965). Another prominent trade unionist who wrote interesting memoirs is Paul Umbreit, *25 Jahre deutsche Gewerkschaftsbewegung 1890–1915* (Berlin, 1915).

Most of the important party positions in the mass-strike debate of 1905–1906 are represented in Antonia Grunenberg, ed., *Die Massenstreikdebatte* (Frankfurt, 1970). Dieter Fricke gives a careful analysis of the impact of the mass-strike issue in "Auf dem Weg nach Mannheim. Zum Verhältnis zwischen der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands und den freien Gewerkschaften zu Beginn der Epoche des Imperialismus," in *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, 25:4 (1977), pp. 430–50. Werner Ettlert and Hans-Dieter Krause, *Der Kampf um eine marxistische Gewerkschaftspolitik in der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung 1868 bis 1878* (Berlin, 1975), is a highly polemical work, but it nonetheless presents valuable material.

### V. Chapter Four: State Within the State

Two sources overwhelm all others for this chapter. First, the protocols of the annual congresses provide a wealth of material on organizational, cultural, educational, and bureaucratic activities of the party. Second, Vernon Lidtke

spent years collecting information on the SPD's cultural activities, and he has now carefully analyzed and organized his data in the as yet unpublished manuscript "The Culture of Social Democracy in Imperial Germany." This is an exceptionally valuable work, both for its facts and its conclusion.

Other works pertinent to the party's functions as a state within the state, in addition to the appropriate sections of Fricke's *Handbuch*, include: Hans-Josef Steinberg, "Workers' Libraries in Germany before 1914," in *History Workshop Journal*, 1 (Spring 1976), pp. 166–80; Dieter Langewische and Klaus Schönhoven, "Arbeiterbibliotheken und Arbeiterlektüre im Wilhelminischen Deutschland," *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, 16 (1976), pp. 135–204; Dieter Fricke, "Die sozialdemokratische Parteischule 1906–1914," in *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, 5:2 (1957), pp. 229–48; Heinz Timmerman, *Geschichte und Struktur der Arbeitersportbewegung 1893–1933* (Marburg, 1969); and Peter von Ruedan, *Sozialdemokratisches Arbeitertheater 1848–1914* (Frankfurt, 1973). James S. Roberts, "Wirtshaus und Politik in der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung," in Gerhard Huck, ed., *Sozialgeschichte der Freizeit. Untersuchungen zum Wandel der Alltagskultur in Deutschland* (Wuppertal, 1980), pp. 123–39, discusses the important role played by working-class taverns and inns in the process of politicizing the workers. For contemporary efforts by the socialists themselves to discover what was being read by the rank and file, see the following in *Die neue Zeit*: J. S. and E. F., "Was lesen die organisierten Arbeiter in Deutschland," 13:1 (1894–1895), pp. 153–55; Advocatus, "Was liest der deutsche Arbeiter?" 13:2 (1894–1895), pp. 814–17; and Konrad Haenisch, "Was lesen die Arbeiter?" 18:2 (1899–1900), pp. 691–96.

The women's movement within the SPD has only recently begun to receive the attention of serious scholars. Richard J. Evans, *Sozialdemokratie und Frauenemanzipation im deutschen Kaiserreich* (Berlin, 1978), and Jean H. Quataert, *Reluctant Feminists in German Social Democracy, 1885–1917* (Princeton, 1979), have done fine jobs of analyzing an issue that created considerable discomfort within the party. *Clara Zetkin* (Berlin, 1957), by Louise Dornemann, is a sensitive but polemical study of one of the most remarkable of prewar social democrats. Fricke offers background material on both the women's and the youth movements within the party. More detailed information on the youth movement comes from Karl Korn, *Die Arbeiterjugendbewegung. Einführung in ihre Geschichte* (Berlin, 1922), and Alex Hall, "Youth in Rebellion: The Beginnings of the Socialist Youth Movement, 1904–14," in Richard J. Evans, *Society and Politics in Wilhelmine Germany 1889 to 1918* (London, 1977).

For an account of the rise of a party bureaucrat, not only to the top of his party, but eventually of the nation too, see Waldemar Besson, *Friedrich Ebert* (Göttingen, 1963). And for a subtle analysis of the machinations within the bureaucracy, see Kenneth R. Calkins, "The Election of Hugo Haase to the Co-chairmanship of the SPD and the Crisis of Prewar German Social Democracy," in *International Review of Social History*, 13 (1968), pp. 174–88. The masterpiece on the party bureaucracy, however, remains Robert Michels, *Zur Soziologie des Parteiwesens in der modernen Demokratie* (Leipzig, 1911).

## VI. Chapter Five: Patterns of Regional Development

Statistics for the introductory portions of this chapter are from Fricke, *Handbuch*, and Wolfgang Zorn, ed., *Handbuch der deutschen Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte*, vol. 2, *Das 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart, 1976). Other sources for the general background on the south Germans include: Helmut Hesselbarth, *Revolutionäre Sozialdemokraten, Opportunisten und die Bauern am Vorabend des Imperialismus* (Berlin, 1968); James C. Hunt, *The People's Party in Württemberg and Southern Germany, 1890-1914* (Stuttgart, 1975); Jörg Schadt, *Die sozialdemokratische Partei in Baden (1868-1900)* (Hanover, 1971); Jürgen Thiel, *Die Grossblockpolitik der Nationalliberalen Partei Badens 1905 bis 1914* (Stuttgart, 1976); and Heinrich Wetzker, "Die Wahlgesetze der deutschen Bundesstaaten," *Die neue Zeit*, 18:2 (1899-1900), pp. 308-12, 339-45, and 375-79.

Reinhard Jansen's *Georg von Vollmar* (Düsseldorf, 1958) is a brief but very careful account of the most powerful figure in the prewar Bavarian party. A much clearer picture of the forces at work within the Bavarian branch comes, however, from the protocols of the Bavarian state party congresses (various places, 1892-1910); these are available at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University. Parvus [pseud.], "Keinen Mann und keinen Groschen! Einige Betrachtungen über das bayerische Budget," *Die neue Zeit*, 13:1 (1894-1895), pp. 80-87, gives the reader an excellent taste of the sorts of vituperative attacks made by northern party radicals on the southerners.

Several secondary sources provide useful material on Bavaria and its socialist party. Although primarily concerned with the war years and after, Franz Schade, *Kurt Eisner und die bayerische Sozialdemokratie* (Hanover, 1969), has some very good data on the structure of the working class. The early movement is presented by Willy Albrecht, "Die frühe organisierte Arbeiterbewegung in Bayern," in *Das andere Bayern. Lesebuch zu einem Freistaat* (Munich, 1976). And statistics on and analysis of local elections are available in Dietrich Thranhardt, *Wahlen und politische Strukturen in Bayern 1848-1953* (Düsseldorf, 1973).

Perhaps because of its size and importance, studies of Prussia are usually less specific, and therefore less useful, than studies of smaller states. Eduard Bernstein dealt with an important aspect of Prussian history in his three-volume study *Die Geschichte der Berliner Arbeiterbewegung* (Berlin, 1907-1910; reprinted, Glasshütten, 1972); this account stops with the mid-1890s. But once again it is the protocols of the state party organization (Berlin, 1904-1910) that give the best picture of power relations and major interests. Two other party publications—*Der preussische Landtag. Handbuch für sozialdemokratische Landtagswähler* (Berlin, 1908), and *Weckruf zur Preussenwahl* (Berlin, 1913)—present valuable summaries of party activities and positions. In addition to Schorske's account, for further information on the franchise reform efforts of the Prussian party, see Hans Dietzel, *Die preussischen Wahlrechtsreformbestrebungen von der Oktroyierung des Dreiklassenwahlrechts bis zum Beginn des Weltkrieges* (Emsdetten, 1934).

## VII. Chapter Six: Theory and Intellectuals

Obviously this chapter is based on the writings of the people discussed. Fortunately, for most students, however, help is at hand in the form of secondary works. Hans-Josef Steinberg's *Sozialismus und deutsche Sozialdemokratie. Zur Ideologie der Partei vor dem I. Weltkrieg* (Hanover, 1967) is the best single-volume introduction to the variegated theory of the party. But to get the proper feel for the richness of the intellectual activities of the SPD, one must go to the sources, especially journals like *Die neue Zeit* and the *Sozialistische Monatshefte*.

There are also biographies in English of the major intellectuals. Peter Gay's classic study of Bernstein, *The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism: Eduard Bernstein's Challenge to Marx* (New York, 1952), is still very useful for an understanding of revisionism. J. P. Nettl's *Rosa Luxemburg*, 2 vols. (London, 1966) is an exhaustive study of a fascinating and complex person. Gary P. Steenson's *Karl Kautsky, 1854-1938: Marxism in the Classical Years* (Pittsburgh, 1978) gives further details on the man who was occasionally called "the pope of socialism." Na'aman's biography of Lassalle cited above is also very good, though it is not available in English. The section on the Second International drew on the party press and James Joll, *The Second International* (New York, 1960).

## VIII. Chapter Seven: Conclusion

Only two books need to be added to those mentioned above. Dieter Groh's *Negative Integration und revolutionärer Attentismus. Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie am Vorabend des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Frankfurt, 1973), though overorganized and tedious in places, is a splendid survey of the state of the party at the end of the period treated here. Groh has also contributed an intriguing characterization of the predominant posture of the party vis-à-vis the established state, "revolutionärer Attentismus." Susanne Miller, *Das Problem der Freiheit im Sozialismus. Freiheit, Staat und Revolution in der Programmatik der Sozialdemokratie von Lassalle bis zum Revisionismusstreit* (Frankfurt, 1964), surveys a major theme in the history of socialism, and in so doing provides a readable and satisfying survey of a long period of the German social-democratic movement.



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HIST

# "Not One Man! Not One Penny!"

German Social Democracy, 1863–1914

Gary P. Steenson

This general introduction to the origins and development of German social democracy up to the First World War draws upon protocols of the German Social Democratic party, the party press, correspondence of leading figures, and recent scholarly research. Intended for American graduate and undergraduate students of German and modern European history, it is a synthesis of the state of our knowledge on a broad and important subject.

Mr. Steenson approaches his subject topically. The first chapter describes the succession of events that brought the party to the end of the twelve-year rule of the antisocialist law in 1890, and the next five chapters treat major aspects of the movement's development from that time to the outbreak of war in 1914. The result is a distinctive and original conception of the nature and operation of the party.

The book contains many biographical sketches of prominent party officials. The appendices, consisting of key party programs, some of which have not been available in English before, provide a valuable supplement; and a biographical essay discusses the author's sources and guides interested students to further reading.

"This is a fine piece of work. . . . There is nothing like it at all in English; even in German there is nothing with exactly the same scope or that is so up-to-date and well written."—Richard Hunt

Gary P. Steenson is currently writing a comparative study of pre-1914 European socialist movements. It was said of his previous book, *Karl Kautsky, 1854–1938: Marxism in the Classical Years*, that this "well researched, concise, and judicious . . . exposition of Kautsky's theoretical and historical writings . . . will be essential reading for those working on the history of socialist thought before and after the First World War."—*The American Historical Review*.

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