Moving the Social · 68/2022

Journal of Social History and the History of Social Movements

glz. Mitteilungsblatt des Instituts für soziale Bewegungen

KLARTEXT

Moving the Social – Journal of Social History and the History of Social Movements
glz. Mitteilungsblatt des Instituts für soziale Bewegungen 68/2022

Layout and typesetting Satzzentrale GbR, Marburg
Cover design Volker Pecher, Essen
Cover image Damaged Parquet (2022); used with permission of the photographer.
Printing house Totem, ul. Jacewska 89, 88 – 100 Inowrocław, Polen
Publishing and distribution

KLARTEXT
Jakob Funke Medien Beteiligungs GmbH & Co. KG
Jakob-Funke-Platz 1, 45127 Essen
info.klartext@funkemedien.de
www.klartext-verlag.de

Purchase and subscription
Individual: A single copy is 14 €, plus shipping. An individual subscription (minimum two journals per year) is 25 €, incl. shipping within Germany, plus 6 € for foreign countries. Subcriptions include full online access.
Institutional: 140 € per year (minimum two journals per year), including full online access as well as print copies. Institutional online access only: 115 € (minimum two issues per year).
The journal can be ordered via Klartext <info@klartext-verlag.de>, bookstores and the Institute for Social Movements (www.isb.rub.de).

ISBN 978-3-8375-2545-8 ISSN 2197-0386 (Print) ISSN 2197-0394 (online)

We are grateful for the support of the *Verein zur Förderung des Instituts für soziale Bewegungen*

Content

Darcy Ingram

"It Even Makes the Animals Laugh": Contesting Henry Bergh and the Animal Protection Movement in Nineteenth-Century New York*

Abstract

Henry Bergh founded and became president of the first animal protection organization in the United States, the American Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) in New York City in April 1866, the same month in which his efforts to secure modern animal welfare legislation at the state level—also a first—were realized. From then until his death in 1888, Bergh steered his organization and the movement through the streets, the slaughterhouses, the courts, and the halls of that city and the nation. As this article shows, his critics were never far behind. Through a combination of media reportage, annual reports, and correspondence, this article weighs the impact of satire and ridicule directed toward Bergh and the animal protection movement alongside his efforts to reposition such coverage and in some cases to benefit from it. In doing so, it positions Bergh and the animal protection movement relative to issues of frame alignment, leadership, and performance in the context of a rapidly changing media landscape, the negotiation of which was central to the movement's success or failure.

Keywords: *Henry Bergh*; *history*; *social movements*; *animal welfare*; *animal rights*; *animal protection movement*; *American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (American SPCA, ASPCA)*; *framing*; *satire*; *media*

* Acknowledgements: The author would like to thank the journal's editorial team and its two anonymous reviewers for their thoughtful comments and suggestions. This article draws on research supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and on materials collected by student research assistant Tyler Isaacs-DeJong.

DOI: 10.46586/mts.68.2022.5-31 Moving the Social · 68 (2022) · p. 5–31

Henry Bergh founded and became president of the first animal protection organization in the United States, the American Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), in New York City in April 1866. That same month he marked another first, in the realization of his efforts to secure passage of modern animal welfare legislation at the state level. From then until his death in 1888, Bergh steered his organization and the movement through the streets, the slaughterhouses, the courts, and the halls of that city and the nation. And yet, however admirable it may have been to some, Bergh's determination to protect New York and America's animals drew no end of opponents eager to take the ASPCA president down as many notches as his supporters sought to raise him. Viewing that contestation through the lens of social movement scholarship, one cannot help but ask how, in the words of the nineteenth-century New York actress and writer Clara Morris "the jibes, the jeers, the satire that made of him a laughing stock" affected Bergh.[1] Or, to shape our analysis more succinctly: in what ways did Bergh's critics frame him and the animal protection movement? And what, if any, were the responses of Bergh and others who might have attempted to reframe the criticism aimed in their direction? An exploration of these questions situates Henry Bergh and the animal protection movement within a rapidly changing media landscape, the contours of which were key to the movement's success or failure. In an era in which we are currently grappling with the impact of new media technology on social movements, an analysis of Bergh and his critics' approach to the framing of animal protection in the context of post-Civil War America's changing communications infrastructure offers a fresh historical perspective on the opportunities and challenges associated with frame alignment.[2] In particular, it brings forward the subtle, even par-

1 Clara Morris, "The Riddle of the Nineteenth Century: Mr. Henry Bergh," *McClure's Magazine* 18, no. 5 (1902): 418. For key biographical works on Henry Bergh see Ernest Freeberg, *A Traitor to his Species: Henry Bergh and the Birth of the Animal Rights Movement* (New York: Basic Books, 2020); Zulma Steele, *Angel in Top Hat: A Biography of Henry Bergh, Founder of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1942). Important discussions of Bergh and the ASPCA also appear in Bernard Oreste Unti, "The Quality of Mercy: Organized Animal Protection in the United States, 1866–1930" (PhD diss., American University, 2002); James Turner, *Reckoning with the Beast: Animals, Pain, and Humanity in the Victorian Mind*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980). For broader discussions of the history of the animal protection movement in the United States in which Bergh appears see Diane L. Beers, *For the Prevention of Cruelty: The History and Legacy of Animal Rights Activism in the United States* (Athens, OH: Swallow Press, 2006); Janet M. Davis, *The Gospel of Kindness: Animal Welfare and the Making of Modern America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); Susan J. Pearson, *The Rights of the Defenseless: Protecting Animals and Children in Gilded Age America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

2 For a review of perspectives on frame alignment in the context of social movements see Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow, "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment," *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000): 611–639.

adoxical, ways in which humour can become a pivotal factor in the framing of social movements. Added to this in the case of Bergh is the relationship of framing to the dynamics of leadership and performance, both of which are central to understanding Bergh and his critics' response to him. In terms of social movement strategy, the key issue to emerge from this contestation thus hinges on the degree to which Bergh was able to redirect and perhaps even to profit from more than two decades of bad press.

In the context of social movements, a number of studies have pointed to the use of humour as a tool for affecting change, in particular as a framing device to challenge opponents.[3] Even in highly oppressive regimes where social movement activity is limited, humour has served as a means of criticism and resistance, or what James Scott has referred to as the "weapons of the weak."[4] Expressions of humour as strategy to ridicule, dismiss, undermine, or otherwise contest opponents thus appear widely among social movement repertoires, as confirmed in the wide range of humour-based tactics found in Gene Sharp's *198 Methods of Nonviolent Action*.[5] Less attention has been given in social movement analyses, however, to the role of humour that is directed against movements. Inasmuch as such material often takes shape not in the form of a formally organized counter-movement, but through the work of critics and professionals from within the media industry, the lack of sustained critical attention to this issue is not surprising. Perhaps the strongest analysis of these dimensions of media scrutiny is that of Todd Gitlin, whose work on the derogatory views of the mass media on the New Left in 1960s America exposes a media frame that undercut that movement but that also led to New Left activists' increasingly sophisticated awareness of the power of the media and their need to influence the perspectives it offered the world.[6] As such, we might begin by taking apart the feelgood mantra found in practically every contemporary social movement toolbox: first they ignore you, then they ridicule you, then they fight you, then you win. In the case of Bergh, opponents skipped step one, and stuck to step two for more than two decades—Bergh's entire tenure with the ASPCA—stopping only at his death in 1888. Their reasons for this were underpinned by the fantastic tangle of materials with which they had to work. In part, those materials spoke to the ways in which efforts to address the treatment and place of animals in

3 For an excellent overview and range of materials on the subject see Marjolein 't Hart, "Humour and Social Protest: An Introduction," *International Review of Social History* 52 (2007): 1–20, and the subsequent articles that accompany it.

4 Jim Scott, "Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance," *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 13, no. 2 (1986): 6.

5 Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action Vol. 2: Methods of Nonviolent Action*, (Boston: Porter Sargent Publishers, 1973), accessed 22 February, 2021, www.aeinstein.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/198-Methods.pdf.

6 Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

society were easily juxtaposed to comic effect with the treatment and the place of humans. Nowhere, however, did critics find more opportunity to exploit the movement's incongruities than in the character of Bergh himself. A tall, angular figure made all the taller and more angular by his trademark top hat and long coat, Bergh presented to his many supporters a physical appearance that accentuated the gravitas with which he approached his work. For his detractors, however, tall and angular became gawky and ungainly, a physical identity that helped them to undercut the ASPCA president's seriousness and to highlight the many missteps, miscalculations, and misreading of the public that informed his career. From that tangle they teased one paradox after another, creating as an alter ego to New York's selfless champion of animals that of a muddling buffoon.

Given these dynamics, Bergh and the animal protection movement made good copy in the rapidly changing media landscape of nineteenth-century America. By the time of the establishment of the ASPCA and state animal cruelty legislation in April 1866, a combination of technological, economic, and broader socio-cultural developments had transformed the newspaper from its position as a relatively limited political and economic narrative consumed via subscription at the start of the century into something far more diverse. Together the emergence of the penny press in the 1830s, growing literacy rates, and the shift to rapid reportage in the context of changing telecommunications infrastructure and the media contingencies of the Civil War made for a broader narrative spectrum comprised of a wide range of sensational reportage that travelled under the arms of paperboys alongside—or in lieu of—traditional political and economic coverage. Within those pages, an increasingly broad readership encountered a world of fact, fiction, and spaces in-between, a place of crime, murder, deviance, and society gossip, where the lurid details of the coroner's report vied for attention alongside those of the debutantes' ball, the latest protest turned violent, the extremes of poverty, and a steady supply of ethnic, racialized, and gendered tensions.[7]

7 A useful contemporary study of the development of American newspapers is that of *New York Herald* editor Frederic Hudson, *Journalism in the United States, from 1690 to 1872* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1873). On the development of the popular press in the United States see Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines*, 3 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1930). See also James L. Crouthamel, *Bennett's New York Herald and the Rise of the Popular Press* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1989). In broader terms, these changes are a reflection of the historical evolution of the public sphere, as conceptualized in Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 1989). On the relationship of the public sphere to social movements in the nineteenth century see Craig Calhoun, *The Roots of Radicalism: Tradition, the Public Sphere, and Early Nineteenth-Century Social Movements* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012).

In that context, Bergh's movement proved irresistible. For many journalists, newspaper editors and owners, and a considerable segment of the public, Bergh and the ASPCA were exemplary in their efforts to inculcate a greater degree of kindness and sympathy relative to the plight of animals. In those contexts, coverage of animal protection framed Bergh in powerful terms as the defender of defenceless animals against their many foes, from horsecar drivers to dairy and slaughterhouse operators to sport and fight enthusiasts engaged in common pastimes including dog-fighting, cock-fighting, and pigeon shooting. In his efforts to curtail such activities, Bergh enjoyed widespread support despite misgivings over his sometimes extreme positions and pronouncements—a fact made readily apparent in the establishment of like-minded organizations throughout the United States within a few years of the ASPCA's appearance.

Not everyone, however, was so supportive. Before the year was out, his fledgling organization was met with three soon-to-be-legendary ripostes via the New York media. The first of these appeared in the pages of James Gordon Bennett's *New York Herald*—at the time the most widely circulating US paper in the world—on 13 May, less than three weeks after the *Herald* and its competitors had reported on the establishment of the ASPCA. In that issue, the *Herald* devoted nearly an entire page to a sustained satire entitled "Cruelty to Animals" in which the authors presented a meeting of animals in New York's Union Square agitating for their rights while articulating their views on the ASPCA president and his supporters.[8] Before month's end, with that article still reverberating, Bergh became the central character in a narrative very much of his own making that unfolded across the New York media landscape well into the fall of that year. In this case, the issue was Bergh's effort to arrest and prosecute under the state's new animal cruelty laws schooner captain Nehemiah H. Calhoun, who arrived in New York from Florida carrying a cargo of turtles.[9] Finally, in December Bergh set out on another mission, this time against a New York celebrity and media master who was perhaps the only individual in the city more immediately associated in the public mind with animals, the showman P. T. Barnum. At issue this time was the feeding of live animals to the boa constrictors on display at the *Barnum and Van Ambergh Museum and Menagerie Combination* on Broadway between Spring and Prince Streets.[10]

8 "Cruelty to Animals: Great Mass Meeting at Union Square," *New York Herald*, 13 May 1866, 10. See also Darcy Ingram, "Imagining Animal Rights in Nineteenth-century New York: Satire and Strategy in the Animal Protection Movement," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 32, no. 2 (2019): 244–257.

9 American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), *First Annual Report* (New York, 1867) 5–10, 48.

10 For the beginnings of this interaction see Letter from Henry Bergh to Barnum's American Museum, dated New York, 11 December 1866, New York Historical Society, N-YHS Dig-

Through these narratives, Bergh's detractors located quickly the grounds on which to frame a critical repertoire that would shape perceptions of the ASPCA president and his activities for the next twenty years. Located alongside equally compelling media coverage in support of Bergh, it offered at first glance little more than an alternative and often derogatory view of the movement and its leader. In the case of the *Herald*'s satire, the authors amassed a collection of tropes that made a mockery of Bergh, his supporters, the notion of animal rights, and pretty much any other movement agitating for rights in the wake of the Civil War.[11] Inverting the commonplace rationale among supporters that the movement spoke for its voiceless subjects, they imagined what might happen were those subjects indeed able to speak for themselves. Alongside Bergh as the Great Boar who presided over the meeting, "Cruelty to Animals" introduced a cross-section of the city's animal denizens concerned as much with the attitudes and practices of their benefactors as they were with those of the broader public. By the time they were finished, those horses, dogs, cats, and rats had articulated many of the contradictions and controversies that had come to be associated with the movement.

In the case of the turtles, reports emerged in late May and early June that Bergh had attempted unsuccessfully to secure a conviction for cruelty to animals against the schooner captain, on the grounds that the reptiles were being transported on their backs, deprived of food and water, and secured by a cord passed through a hole bored through the fin of each animal.[12] In this instance Bergh lost not only the court case, but seemed also to be in danger of losing in the court of public opinion, as the media piled on to ridicule the ASPCA president's effort to extend anti-cruelty legislation to creatures seen by many to fall outside its scope. "Here we see," proclaimed the *Herald*, which led the media charge against Bergh, "the beginning of a gastronomic revolution that must in the end change the entire system of luxurious diet indulged in by our opulent epicures and connoisseurs of good living […] What are the great gastronomers in all the shades of exuberant and voluptuous life without their green turtle? Where are the members of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals themselves?"[13] In a combative response that ensured the issue remained in the papers well into the fall, Bergh challenged the reluctance of the public and the courts to recognize cruelty in the context of a reptile, including the expert testimony of a doctor who spoke against the view that turtles experience pain. To do so he called on the authority of science,

ital Collections, Henry Bergh Letters, 1866–1884 (http://digitalcollections.nyhistory.org/islandora/object/islandora%3A103373#page/1/mode/2up), accessed 22 February 2021.

11 See Darcy Ingram, "Imagining Animal Rights."

12 For summaries of Bergh's 1866 intervention on the behalf of turtles see also Freeberg, *A Traitor to his Species*, 7–19 and Steele, *Angel in Top Hat*, 43–48.

13 "More Cruelty to Animals: A Queer Gastronomic Revolution," *New York Herald*, 1 June 1866, 4.

specifically the well-known Harvard Zoology professor Louis Agassiz, who replied in strong and sympathetic terms to a letter from Bergh that turtles did indeed suffer from such treatment. While Agassiz turned down Bergh's invitation to speak publicly on the issue in New York, the letter and the authority behind it fuelled Bergh's determination that he had both ethics and science on his side, and he made sure that his exchange with Agassiz make its way to the press.[14]

In the case of Bergh's decision to take on P. T. Barnum over the showman's snakes, we find what was in many ways a continuation of the ASPCA president's determination for a win that would expand the parameters of the law while expanding public perceptions of cruelty more generally.[15] Upon receiving news that the snake exhibit at Barnum's museum featured feedings of live animals to its boa constrictors, Bergh paid the museum a visit.[16] Finding Barnum unavailable, he succeeded in frightening the museum's manager enough to cause the snakes to be moved briefly outside of Bergh's jurisdiction to New Jersey, during which time Bergh wrote directly to Barnum threatening legal action. In his characteristic earnestness, Bergh included in that letter a discussion of the barbarism of feeding the snakes live animals in which he exposed his limited understanding of the species. "It may be urged that these reptiles will not eat dead food," he observed in disbelief, "in reply to this I have only to say—let them starve."[17]

On the surface, it is difficult to see Bergh's engagement with Barnum as anything but a disaster. Capitalizing on Bergh's disbelief, Barnum wrote the following January to the very authority to which the ASPCA president had turned months before: Louis Agassiz. In his response to Barnum, Agassiz confirmed that he "did not know of any way to induce snakes to eat their food otherwise than in their natural manner—that is alive."[18] That done, Barnum further propelled the issue by insisting that Bergh publicly acknowledge Agassiz's comments and withdraw his objection to the museum's handling of the exhibit. When Bergh refused, Barnum went public with their correspondence, which appeared in full in the *New York World* in March 1867,

14 Letter from Henry Bergh to Barnum's American Museum, dated New York, 11 December 1866; ASPCA, *First Annual Report*, 48; "Cruelty to Animals. Interesting Correspondence Between Mr. Henry Bergh and Professor Agassiz About the Sufferings of the Turtle," *New York Herald*, 2 October 1866, 4.

15 See also Freeberg: *A Traitor to his Species*, 63–73 and Steele, *Angel in Top Hat*, 235–239 for discussions of this encounter.

16 Barnum's summary of this exchange with Bergh can be found in P. T. Barnum, *Life of P. T. Barnum: Written by Himself* (Buffalo: Courier, 1888), 322–323.

17 Letter from Henry Bergh to Barnum's American Museum, dated New York, 11 December 1866. While it is now well-established that captive snakes can indeed be induced to eat dead food, this was not the case in Barnum's day.

18 Barnum, *Life of P. T. Barnum,* 323.

thus capping the first year of Bergh's presidency as one of considerable success, but also of relentless ridicule.[19]

"You Take a Kinder and More Gracious View […] than do the Caricaturists of Our Papers": Bergh and the Comic Press[20]

The critical narrative that developed in response to Bergh upon the establishment of the ASPCA received a tremendous boost in the 1870s with the proliferation of popular illustrated newspapers. In short order, Bergh became the subject of some the most influential cartoonists of nineteenth-century America. Challenging the positive perspectives among many New Yorkers in favour of Bergh's very public remonstrations against animal cruelty, the proliferation of these satirical images contributed further to his farcical identity, both in New York and beyond.[21]

Among the first illustrators to address Bergh in satirical form was Thomas Nast. By far the most influential of America's nineteenth-century cartoonists, Nast was best known during his lifetime for his relentless attack on New York's corrupt Tammany Hall leader William "Boss" Tweed that contributed to the latter's downfall in the early 1870s.[22] In August 1871, while in the midst of his campaign against Tweed, Nast turned his attention briefly to another news item ripe for satire. Publication that year of Charles Darwin's *The Descent of Man* returned to the forefront of public attention the question of humanity's biological origins in ways that overlapped neatly with the questions posed by Bergh and others regarding the ethical dimensions of human-animal relations, and Nast lost no time in bringing the two together. In "Mr. Bergh to the Rescue" (see Figure 1), the viewer encounters three figures standing outside the entrance of the ASPCA headquarters. In tears on the left, and pointing to Darwin on the right, is a gorilla who complains to Bergh standing between the two: "That *Man* wants to claim my Pedigree. He says he is one of my Descendants." To this, the ASPCA president replies: "Now, Mr. Darwin, how could you insult him so?" The par-

19 Barnum, *Life of P. T. Barnum*, 322–23.

20 Morris, *The Riddle of the Nineteenth Century*, 416.

21 It is worth noting that in relative terms, Bergh and the ASPCA got off lightly; in collective terms, the cartoonery associated with the satirical illustrated newspapers discussed in this article offers a parade of derogatory racialized, ethnic, and gendered stereotypes that both confirmed and reinforced the widespread presence of such perspectives.

22 Fiona Deans Halloran, *Thomas Nast: The Father of Modern Political Cartoons* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 205–210, 214. In addition to his work against Tweed, Nast is also the source of both the popular depiction of Santa Claus in North America and the emblematic Republican elephant.

Figure 1: Thomas Nast, "Mr. Bergh to the Rescue," *Harper's Weekly*, 19 August 1871, p. 776.

adox at hand—that in the assertion of a biological link between humans and non-human animals it is the latter who bear the brunt of the insult—is clear enough, and fitted into a broader narrative of human-animal reversals that was standard fare among Bergh's critics. Appearing in the same issue as one of Nast's most famous exposés on Tweed, the panel attests to both the comic value ascribed to Bergh and the movement he led as well as to Bergh's currency as a public figure.[23]

23 Thomas Nast, "Mr. Bergh to the Rescue," *Harper's Weekly*, 19 August 1871, 776.

Despite being at the forefront of the cartoonery depicting Bergh, "Mr. Bergh to the Rescue" nevertheless remained committed to a relatively representative visual approach that was typical of Bergh's proponents, and not at all typical of the visual criticism that would follow. During the 1870s there appeared a growing number of illustrated newspapers whose satirical reportage rivalled mainstream graphics-oriented publications such as *Harper's Weekly* or *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* that generally supported Bergh's efforts and fostered the movement's spread across the nation. In publications including *Judge, The Daily Graphic*, and *Puck*, readers encountered a very different Bergh. His head enlarged, his body elongated, top hat tilted, and moustache stretched, Bergh went from character to caricature in cartoonists' efforts to draw attention to the paradoxes and incongruities that informed his actions and to complement the text-based media reportage of them. Given Bergh's enthusiasm and his hands-on approach to animal protection, supporters and critics alike found a wide range of opportunities on which to capitalize, the result being that Bergh seldom left the New York media spotlight. From the parade of images that appeared in these latter newspapers there emerged a number of overlapping themes that further entrenched the critical repertoire established during the ASPCA's first year of operations.

The most obvious of these themes centred on animal agency and elevation to the status of humans. While many instances involved relatively straightforward use of this theme, some of the more critical commentaries saw cartoonists position the city's animal inhabitants as opponents of Bergh and the ASPCA. This takes shape frequently in illustrations of Bergh threatened by some form of animal uprising or reproach. An excellent example is a February 1881 work by *Puck* cartoonist Frederick Burr Opper, the title of which—"Bergh's Latest"—underscores his subject's familiarity to readers (see Figure 2).[24]

In this instance, Opper was responding to Bergh's efforts to secure passage of legislation that would help to prevent the suffering and death of horses in stable fires. The widespread importance of the horse to urban life meant that cities such as New York were home to thousands of horses, and they like their human counterparts occupied an environment in which space was both limited and costly. Bergh's particular concern was the stabling of horses in cellars and on upper floors, which in instances of fires could not be easily evacuated. Aided by the combination of feed, bedding, and the stables' heavy wooden construction, fires spread rapidly in these environments, resulting in some cases in the death of hundreds of horses in a single fire. Such was the fate a year earlier of the stables of the Eighth Avenue Railroad Company, where in November 1879 more than two hundred horses were abandoned to a conflagration

24 Frederick Burr Opper, "Bergh's Latest," *Puck*, 2 February 1881.

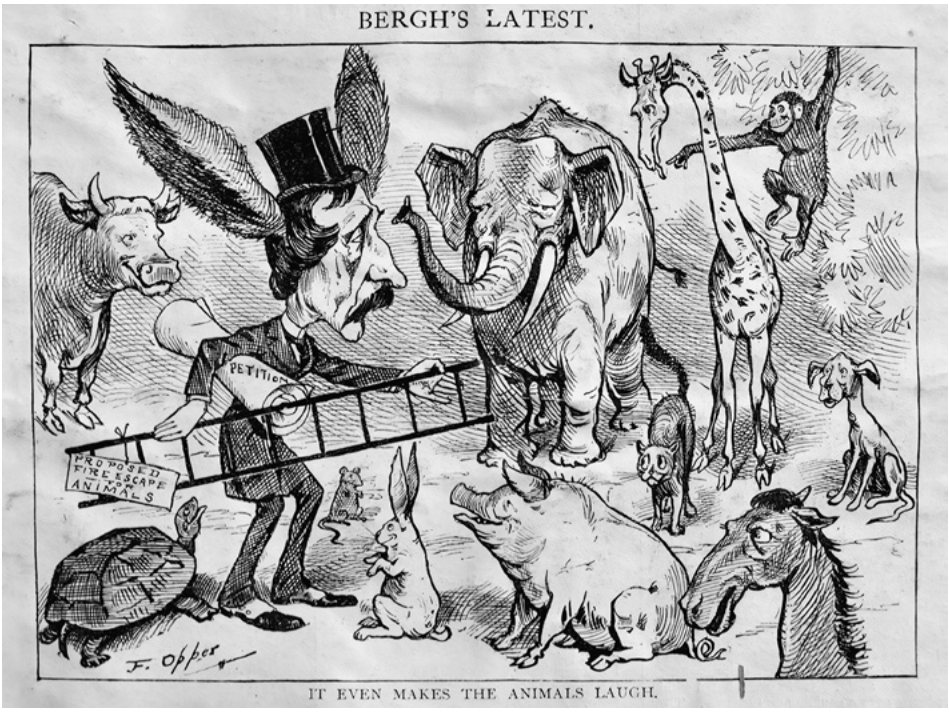


Figure 2: Frederick Burr Opper, "Bergh's Latest," *Puck*, 2 February 1881.

that burned the company's stables on the corner of 49th Street to the ground.[25] In this concern Bergh was not alone, but was part of a broader discussion aimed at tapping both legislation and technology for solutions, including some ingenious systems that would enable stable workers to release animals easily and quickly in the instance of a fire.[26] Opper's response narrowed that discussion to a nine-rung ladder in Bergh's hands, a petition under his arm, and, in a gesture to the foolhardy and naïve King Midas of Greek mythology, whose unpopular opinions proved to be his downfall, the ears of a donkey. Opper's caption—"It even makes the animals laugh"—underscores the absurdity that his surrounding cast of animal characters, and by extension his readers, identify in Bergh's actions.[27]

25 On Bergh's efforts to establish legislation regarding fires in stables during this time see ASPCA, *Fifteenth Annual Report* (New York, 1881),7–8. On the November 1879 stable fire see "The Eighth Avenue Fire," *New York Herald*, 27 November 1879, 5; "A Whole Block Ablaze" *New York Herald*, 26 November 1879, 5; Frank J. Kernan, *Reminiscences of the Old Fire Laddies and Volunteer Fire Departments of New York and Brooklyn. Together with a Complete History of the Paid Departments of Both Cities* (New York: M. Vrane, 1885), 249–51.

26 See for example "Fire-Escape Horse-Stall" *Our Dumb Animals* 13, no. 8 (1881), 63.

27 Opper, "Bergh's Latest."

Figure 3: C. Gray-Parker, "Henry Bergh's Dreadful Dream (The True Cause of His Antipathy to Fox Hunting)," *The Daily Graphic*, 25 October 1882, p. 811.

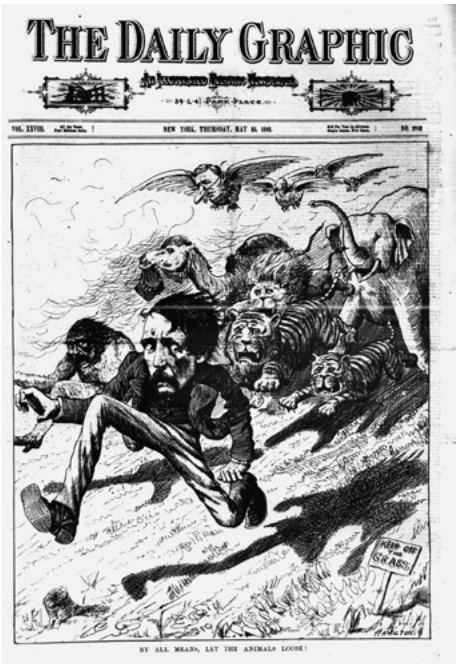


Figure 4: Grant E. Hamilton, "By All Means, Let the Animals Loose," *The Daily Graphic*, 25 May 1882 (cover illustration).

In the seeming simplicity of such work, the cartoonists who engaged Bergh, the ASPCA, and the animal protection movement pared to the core complex ethical debates spanning the breadth of society, from the political and economic to the social and cultural to issues of health, medicine, and the environment. In doing so, they correspondingly shaped viewers' perceptions of the more detailed text narratives that appeared in the media and that worked in similar terms with inversion, paradox, irony, and juxtaposition to ridicule Bergh and the movement. Bergh's effort to challenge a fledgling organization of fox hunters taking to the field in Long Island for example, was met by *The Daily Graphic* in October 1882 with C. Gray-Parker's illustration "Henry Bergh's Dreadful Dream (The True Cause of His Antipathy to Fox Hunting)," in which a transmogrified Bergh—the ASPCA president's head affixed to the body of a fox—runs in desperate flight from a pack of hounds and, behind them, a field of mounted foxes in full pursuit (see Figure 3).[28] His call to close the Central Park

28 C. Gray-Parker, "Henry Bergh's Dreadful Dream (The True Cause of His Antipathy to Fox Hunting)," *The Daily Graphic*, 25 October 1882, 811.

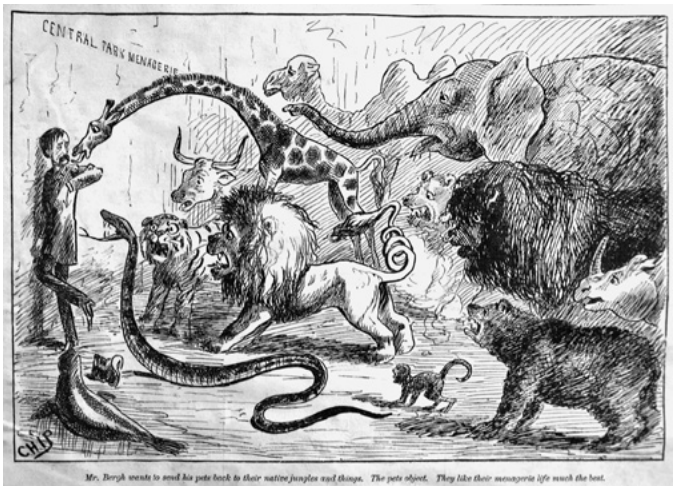


Figure 5: Frank P. W. Bellew ("Chip"), "Mr. Bergh wants to send his pets back…," *Judge*, news clipping, ASPCA Pictorial Scrapbook, May 1880–March 1888, ASPCA Archives, New York, NY.

Menagerie in 1882 met similarly with multiple illustrations of angry animals. On the cover of *The Daily Graphic*, Grant E. Hamilton's "By All Means, Let the Animals Loose," depicts Bergh in flight from the menagerie's newly released inhabitants (see Figure 4), while in the illustration presented in *Judge* by cartoonist Frank P. W. Bellew (aka "Chip") a mostly four-legged mob has Bergh cornered against the menagerie wall in protest. "Mr. Bergh wants to send his pets back to their native jungles and things," Bellew's caption reads. "The pets object. They like their menagerie life much the best" (see Figure 5).[29]

Overlapping this work, a second prominent theme among cartoonists centred on paradoxes associated with violence in the context of Bergh's views of animals and society. In these illustrations, critics honed in on the tension that emerged when Bergh's insistence on kindness toward animals clashed with statements or actions from the ASPCA president that seemed to move in other directions. An excellent example is the cartoon that appeared in the *New York Graphic* on 21 July 1880 (see Figure 6).[30] "A Sad Catastrophe" plays on Bergh's submission to the city of an ordinance that called for the slaughter of the city's stray cats. "A cat is an animal, and the President of the S.P.C.A. is bound to stand between them and all harm," reads the brief accompanying article. "But Mr. Bergh is a man with nerves, capable of irritation by the mewing and the yowling of the cats. He has a right to his night's rest. Indeed, he cannot prevent

29 Grant E. Hamilton, "By All Means, Let the Animals Loose," *The Daily Graphic*, 25 May 1882 (cover illustration); Frank P. W. Bellew, "Mr. Bergh wants to send his pets back…," *Judge*, news clipping in: *ASPCA Pictorial Scrapbook, May 1880-March 1888* (ASPCA Archives, New York). On Bergh's protest over the confinement of animals in the Central Park menagerie see "Items," *Friends' Intelligencer*, 27 May 1882, 240.

30 "A Sad Catastrophe," *New York Graphic*, 21 July 1880.

Figure 6: "A Sad Catastrophe," *New York Graphic*, 21 July 1880.

cruelty to animals at all unless they give him a chance."[31] The illustration appropriately captures a bedraggled Bergh in nightgown and cap, poised to level a boot at the cats who have gathered at his bedroom window—an act with which many nineteenth-century urban inhabitants sleepless under similar circumstances would have readily identified. The "sad catastrophe," of course, is not Bergh's loss of sleep and its impact on the good work he does, but rather his loss of credibility: "He has a right," the accompanying article concludes, "but the public is also at liberty to draw the moral—viz., that sweeping humanitarian principles are mighty nice on paper but will not always work in practice." [32]

Perhaps the most compelling works to approach Bergh from this perspective are those of Joseph Keppler. Another German New Yorker who exerted a significant influence on the cartoon industry in America, Keppler expressed his considerable skills as an artist and political commentator through the illustrated newspaper *Puck*, which he co-founded in 1876, first as a German-language weekly, followed soon by an English edition.[33] During his career Keppler and *Puck* repeatedly met Bergh head-on in terms

31 "Pictures of the Day," *New York Graphic* 21 July 1880. See also "Mr. Bergh and the Cats: How the Philanthropist Proposes to Get Rid of the City's Feline Tramps," *The Sun*, 22 July 1880, 2.

32 "Pictures of the Day."

33 Thorough coverage of Keppler can be found in Richard Samuel West, *Satire on Stone: The Political Cartoons of Joseph Keppler* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1988). On the origins of Puck see pp. 71–76.

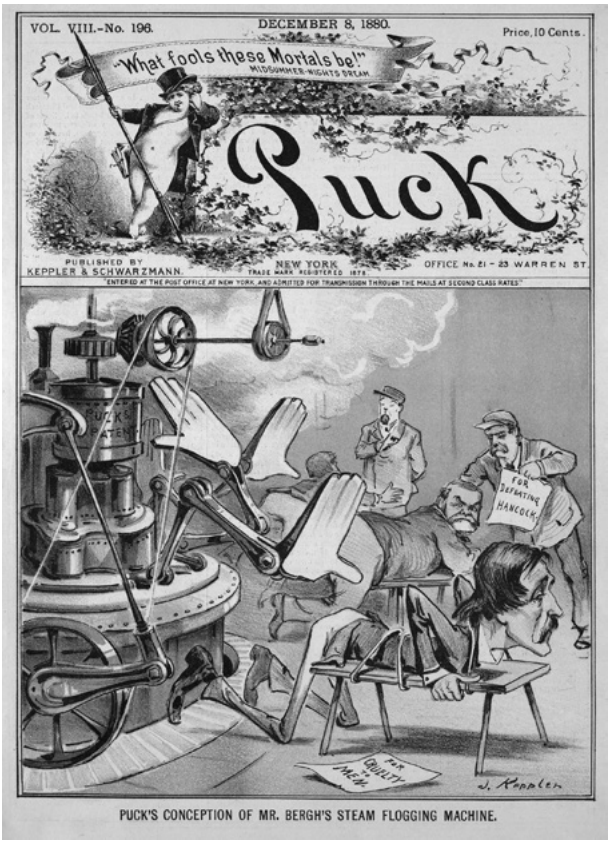


Figure 7: Joseph Keppler, "Puck's Conception of Mr. Bergh's Steam Flogging Machine," *Puck*, 8 December 1880 (cover illustration).

akin to those of the magazine's cover illustration for 8 December 1880, "Puck's Conception of Mr. Bergh's Steam Flogging Machine" (see Figure 7).[34]

Here, Keppler was spurred by comments Bergh made while attending a prison reform meeting the previous week. Albeit not on the meeting's list of speakers, Bergh was spotted in the audience, and was invited to take the stage in light of the many scheduled speakers who failed to attend. His impromptu response floored the meeting's organizers:

> A great deal has been said about improving criminals. Let me tell you how I would improve them. I would abolish all the penitentiaries in the land, and save the expense of running them. In their place I would have whipping-posts everywhere. And to make sure that the lash was laid on feelingly, I would offer a reward for the

34 Joseph Keppler, "Puck's Conception of Mr. Bergh's Steam Flogging Machine," *Puck*, 8 December 1880 (cover illustration).

Figure 8: Joseph Keppler, "Bergh's Bastinado: A Hint from the Apostle of Humanity," *Puck*, 8 August 1877, pp. 8–9.

> invention of a steam machine that couldn't be bribed with offers of political place or money.[35]

That the nation's leading advocate for the prevention of cruelty to animals supported the application of corporal punishment for humans shocked Bergh's immediate audience, and in turn the many readers who encountered his comments in the widespread media coverage of the meeting that unfolded. For Keppler, Bergh's suggestion of a steam machine offered the potential to package in a single, tidy image the paradox that reverberated among journalists throughout the city. In Keppler's depiction, and with the help of new colour lithography technology that *Puck* helped to popularize, the gangly gears and mechanical hands of the steam machine created a fittingly satirical industrial backdrop for the scene that appeared. Strapped to a bench, a prostrate Bergh features as the machine's subject as Keppler pushes the paradox at hand to

35 "Reformers Much Amazed," *The New York Times*, 1 December 1880, news clipping in: *ASPCA Scrapbook, Vol. 8, August 1878–September 1882*, (ASPCA Archives, New York), 197. See also "Henry Bergh's Pessimism: He Entirely Upsets a Prison Reform Conference by Suggesting Whipping Scamps By Steam," *The World*, 1 December 1880, news clipping in: *ASPCA Scrapbook, Vol. 8, August 1878–September 1882* (ASPCA Archives, New York), 196; "Hard-Hearted Henry Bergh," *The Sun*, 1 December 1880, news clipping in: *ASPCA Scrapbook, Vol. 8, August 1878–September 1882* (ASPCA Archives, New York), 197.

another level, the champion of kindness to animals now being punished, via machinations of his own design, for the crime of "Cruelty to Men."

Keppler's steam flogging device was clearly a response to Bergh's words of the moment, and it landed amidst a flurry of reportage on them. But it also made explicit the larger irony at hand: the far-from-progressive or democratic vision that underpinned Bergh's work. In advocating vociferously for corporal punishment, Bergh underscored his broader belief in a hierarchical conservative social order based heavily on rank, in which his desire to curtail cruelty to animals reflected not the extension of liberal or democratic ethos, but the inclusion of animals in obligations of responsibility and respect among the social ranks. And this, Keppler and others who had watched Bergh with a critical eye for some time understood, was nothing new. Indeed, Keppler emphasized this point in the very first volume of *Puck,* with a two page spread entitled "Bergh's Bastinado. A Hint from the Apostle of Humanity" (see Figure 8).[36] Here, Keppler picked up on Bergh's recently vocalized support for the bastinado (foot whipping), which first-hand observation during a visit to Cairo in the 1840s led him to view as a highly effective deterrent.[37] This time, however, Bergh appears not as the subject of punishment but as its agent, attired in stereotypical eastern garb as he delivers blows to the feet of a group that includes the owners of the *New York Sun* and the *New York Herald*, whose papers routinely castigated him. Throughout Bergh's tenure neither Keppler nor *Puck* would let go of this theme, to the point that it came to encapsulate for critics the very essence of the ASPCA's contradictory character, as presented in "Mr. Bergh's Dual Nature" (see Figure 9).[38] Appearing in February 1881,

Figure 9: "Mr. Bergh's Dual Nature," in: *Puck*, 2 February 1881.

36 Joseph Keppler, "Bergh's Bastinado. A Hint from the Apostle of Humanity," *Puck*, 8 August 1877, 8–9.

37 Keppler, "Bergh's Bastinado," 2.

38 "Mr. Bergh's Dual Nature," *Puck*, 2 February 1881.

Figure 10: James Albert Wales, "The King of New York: a Good Man Gone Wrong," *Judge*, news clipping, ASPCA Pictorial Scrapbook, May 1880–March 1888, ASPCA Archives, New York, NY.

this illustration sets out Bergh's career in kindness to animals on one side, against which his repeated advocation of cruelty toward humans appears on the other. Dividing the two sides in the middle of the panel is an appropriately two-faced Bergh who gestures in both directions.

That focus on a divided identity, of kindness to animals on the one hand and cruelty to humans on the other, or on what the German edition of *Puck* referred to as Bergh's "Doppel-Natur," complemented an equally prominent focus on the ASPCA president's reputation for overzealousness.[39] Noted from the very start of the ASPCA's operations, this view was often well-warranted, inasmuch as Bergh's considered attention to the conditions of animals went well beyond the norms of his era. Be one a carter, an industrialist, a medical scientist, or a public transit rider in New York, one ran the risk of encountering at some point Bergh's fury. As a result Bergh seemed to many a tyrant of some form, relative to the power dimensions that enabled this wealthy New Yorker of independent means and aristocratic bent to bring his values to bear on the lives of so many. To present Bergh in terms of monarchical power was thus an easy trope to employ, as in *Judge* co-founder and cartoonist James Albert Wales' illustration "The King of New York: a Good Man Gone Wrong," which finds a crowned ASPCA president issuing commands to city authorities from his throne, against a backdrop of scenes depicting truncheon-waving ASPCA inspectors—"Bergh's Police"—accosting women and children on the street (see Figure 10).[40]

39 "Mr. Bergh's Doppel-Natur," *Puck*, 2 February 1881, 320; ASPCA, *First Annual Report*, 28–29.

40 James Albert Wales, "The King of New York: a Good Man Gone Wrong," *Judge*, news clipping in: *ASPCA Pictorial Scrapbook, May 1880–March 1888* (ASPCA Archives, New York).

Figure 11: James Albert Wales, "First of May—Make Room for the New Cast," *Judge*, news clipping, ASPCA Pictorial Scrapbook, May 1880–March 1888, ASPCA Archives, New York, NY.

In terms of overzealousness, the most powerful critique of them all came in the brilliant connection made early in Bergh's career that pulled into a single package the ASPCA president's physical features, his excess of devotion, his aristocratic bearing, his Europhilia, his comical naivety, his love of high art in the form of theatre and literature, and the quest-like fervour that seemed to inform his efforts. In a characterization that would endure throughout his presidency, Bergh was set alongside Cervantes' Don Quixote, the naïve and idealistic knight-errant emblematic during the nineteenth century of a social order eclipsed by modernity. Over the years, observers described him as the "brave old Don Quixote of New York"; the "Knight of the Rueful Countenance"; "Don Quixote II"; the knight-errant's "prototype"; and in Bergh's own words "the absurd old *Don*."[41] That connection also gained ground through the work of the city's caricaturists, for whom it took only the exchange of Bergh's top hat for a helmet and his cane for a broken lance to position him as such (see Figure 11).[42] In this instance, Wales casts Bergh not only in terms of his connection to Don Quixote, but also as an instantly recognizable character in one of the myriad panoplies of New York society to appear in the illustrated press that would feature Bergh among caricatures of the city and the nation's leaders, celebrities, and otherwise familiar public figures.

41 "The Only Mourner," *Puck*, 16 July 1879, 23; "Henry Bergh" *Harper's Weekly*, 24 March 1888, 204; Morris, "The Riddle of the Nineteenth Century," 422; "Mr. Bergh's Castle," *New York Herald*, 30 April 1877, 4; Morris, "The Riddle of the Nineteenth Century," 416.

42 James Albert Wales, "First of May—Make Room for the New Cast," *Judge*, news clipping in: *ASPCA Pictorial Scrapbook*, *May 1880-March 1888* (ASPCA archives, New York).

"In Concert with Thoughtless Observers and Flippant Writers of the Press": Bergh and the ASPCA Strike Back[43]

That a portion of the New York press, in both written and illustrated form, had a field day with Bergh is clear. The broader question that informs this study, however, remains: to what extent, if any, did Bergh and the animal protection movement profit from the steady diet of ridicule that the press fed to the public? Did Bergh in fact feed from it, and did he go so far as to cultivate it, in anticipation of the benefits it might provide? Looking closely at the comments of Bergh and others, it seems unlikely Bergh recognized any opportunities at all when he first read the *Herald*'s satirical take on him and the animal protection movement in May 1866, coming so quickly as it did after his successes in the New York legislature and in the establishment of the ASPCA that April, over which he must justifiably have been jubilant. Social movement scholars, however, have observed that the presence of movements in the media hinges often on their capacity to generate attention through spectacle, novelty, drama, and controversy—all strategies that are readily apparent, for example, in the contemporary animal rights movement.[44] In like terms, movement coverage is subject to the demands of the media in terms of its preference to cover events, its interest in the power of visual images, and its reliance on movement leaders, spokespersons, and experts for information.[45] Given the overlap between these considerations and the general character of the animal protection movement, it is not difficult to see how that movement was an ideal target for media attention, one that Bergh had the potential to magnify considerably.

43 ASPCA, *First Annual Report*, 5.

44 On the strategic use of controversy in the contemporary animal rights movement see James M. Jasper and Jane D. Poulsen, "Recruiting Strangers and Friends: Moral Shocks and Social Networks in Animal Rights and Anti-Nuclear Protests," *Social Problems* 42, no. 4 (1995): 493–512; see also Elizabeth Cherry, *Culture and Activism: Animal Rights in France and the United States* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2016); Marie Mika, "Framing the Issue: Religion, Secular Ethics and the Case of Animal Rights Mobilization" *Social Forces* 85, no. 2 (2006): 915–941.

45 For an overview of movement-media dynamics as presented here see Kathleen Rodgers, *Protest, Activism, and Social Movements* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 167–72; see also P. J. Shoemaker and S. D. Reese, *Mediating the Message: Theories of Influence on Mass Media Content*, 2nd ed (New York: Longman,1996); Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching*. Studies that deal with the capacity of the animal protection movement to draw public attention via its controversial dimensions include James M. Jasper and Dorothy Nelkin, *The Animal Rights Crusade: The Growth of a Moral Protest* (New York: Free Press, 1992); Keri J. Cronin, *Art for Animals: Visual Culture and Animal Advocacy, 1870–1914* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2019).

By the end of the ASPCA's first year of operations, a more nuanced understanding of these dynamics had taken shape within the society, to such an extent that the bouts of ridicule associated with that first year proved to be a training ground of sorts for Bergh as he discovered the importance of the media to the movement and the strategies he might employ in order to shape the messages it delivered. Indeed, that satirical coverage contributed significantly to Bergh's ability to emerge from his position in the wings as a wealthy but relatively obscure New Yorker who had spent much of his life in Europe to take the stage as a celebrity in his own right. From there, the next twenty years were witness to a contest of sorts between Bergh and his detractors. To suggest that Bergh was always on top of his game—that what seemed to be missteps or errors of judgement were in fact carefully calculated manoeuvres aimed at generating attention—would go too far. Sometimes, Bergh's missteps and errors of judgement were just that. Nevertheless, there came quickly to Bergh's repertoire an understanding of what in Erving Goffman's terms stands out as the dramaturgical dimensions or the *performance* of his position that included an awareness of his capacity to generate attention through controversy, and within that the potential to redirect and perhaps even capitalize on his own missteps and the critical voices that responded.[46]

On this issue, "Cruelty to Animals" is a good place to start. In choosing to publish "Cruelty to Animals" in May 1866, the *New York Herald* effectively announced to the city and the world the establishment of the ASPCA, giving that event far more coverage than it had received in any newspaper to date. Albeit in satirical form, the *Herald* thus made available a considerable amount of information on the animal protection movement and the various issues it sought to address in the city. What is more, in framing the movement in terms of animal rights, and thus as both radical and ripe for ridicule, the article inadvertently invited heartfelt consideration among its readership of the movement's more modest objective to curtail the extremes of unnecessary or, in the language of the day, 'wanton' cruelty.[47] Within a year of the ASPCA's establishment, Bergh and others in the organization were already taking note of these dimensions, and were making an effort to frame their critics' comments in such terms. In the ASPCA's first annual report in April 1867, secretary William Coventry Henry Waddell devotes considerable attention to the society's relationship to the New York media. Among his observations, Waddell contrasts the "greatest aid and assistance" of the press with "the studied attempts at ridicule on our efforts in the earlier portion of our organization; by elaborate descriptions of meetings of animals in 'Union Square'

46 Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Doubleday,1959).

47 Adam D. Shprintzen observes a similar dynamic in the context of the vegetarian movement in the United States during the middle of the nineteenth century. See Adam D. Shprintzen, *The Vegetarian Crusade: The Rise of An American Reform Movement, 1817–1921* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 95.

and elsewhere, to discuss their views of our proffered aid; and articles of kindred character." [48] At another point, Waddell turns directly to the benefits of such commentary:

> Whilst admitting that these latter cases gave rise to much ridicule among unreflecting persons; nevertheless it is now very generally conceded, that these lively comments, far from being a detriment to our cause, were, on the contrary, a positive advantage; by reason of the greater prominency which was thereby given to the Society in the public mind, by drawing attention thereto; as well as the increased moral consequences resulting from the contemplation of the quality of mercy; as applicable to a class of beings hitherto regarded as being beyond the sphere of the humanities of life.[49]

Marking an effort both to situate the society's critics on the fringe of public opinion and to discourage further criticism by highlighting its positive impacts, those observations speak to Bergh and the ASPCA's growing awareness that their critics just might, in their own way, be doing their movement a favour.

That interpretation squares nicely with Bergh's ongoing willingness to court controversy, and speaks in turn to the degree to which his actions were shaped by a distinct awareness of the benefits to be gained by treating the city as his stage, its inhabitants and the media as his audience. While not all of his actions led to the level of ridicule discussed above, they nevertheless generated constant discussion both positive and negative in the media and among the general public. Similarly Bergh relished more formal dramaturgical or performance-based contexts, among them his routine appearances as prosecutor in the city's courts despite having no formal legal qualifications; his promotional tours and speeches; and his willingness to engage with newspaper journalists, including those who had long criticized his work. It also meshes well with his experiences during the years before he established the ASPCA, as evidenced in the performance-based skills demanded of a diplomat and a member of elite society, and perhaps more importantly in the many times his less-than-mediocre efforts as a poet and playwright—pursuits that stand in themselves as testaments to Bergh's engagement with framing and performance—met with caustic reviews. From that context, a journalist writing for *Scribner's Monthly* in 1879 explained, came a nuanced understanding of the media. "'I will give you a little advice that may serve you well through life,'" Bergh reportedly gleaned from a London publisher years previously upon the rejection of a recent work. "'If you are bound to appear in print, well and good if the newspapers speak in praise of you; but, next to praise, being cut to pieces is the best

48 ASPCA, *First Annual Report*, 30–31, 28.
49 ASPCA, *First Annual Report*, 8.

thing to be hoped for. What we have to fear most is that we won't be noticed at all. Silence is fatal.'"[50]

Such a fate clearly was not in Bergh's purview when it came to the ASPCA. During his long tenure as the society's president, the criticism levelled at him fitted into an ongoing, multi-layered narrative of considerable complexity. For critics, a breaking story on Bergh was often only the first round in a series of attacks and counter-attacks. A typical pattern would run as follows: Bergh initiates an action or recommendation relative to animals; media correspondents respond in positive and/or negative terms; Bergh responds to the media; media correspondents respond to Bergh's responses and to each other; and so on.

In that context, one of the most powerful tools in Bergh's repertoire was the media interview. As with the sudden proliferation of illustrated newspapers, the interview was a new feature in journalism, emerging at around the same time Bergh established the ASPCA, with the *New York Herald* being among the first to employ it.[51] During the 1870s and 1880s interviews became an increasingly common tool both for journalists and for political and intellectual figures keen on publicity, and Bergh made frequent use of them as a communications tool alongside his many speeches that he knew would make their way to the press. Indeed, one cannot underestimate Bergh's efforts to see his voice in print. In addition to arranged interviews and speeches, it was not unusual for the ASPCA president to show up uninvited and unannounced to a public or society meeting, where he would be noticed by one of the organizers and asked to speak. To this, Bergh would respond with a phrase along the lines of "when I came here tonight I had no more idea of being called upon than," followed by a supposedly impromptu narrative that would appear in the next morning's papers, its off-the-cuff guise creating the sense of an informal conversation more akin to an interview than a formal speech.[52]

Bergh's willingness to engage in such exchanges with newspaper journalists, including those who had long criticized his work, alludes to both his awareness of their potential to frame perceptions of the animal protection movement as well as to the dramaturgical dimensions of the interview itself. Consider for example the interview Bergh granted in 1877 to a journalist from his media nemesis, the *New York Herald*. Calling on Bergh at his office, the *Herald* representative asked at one point Bergh's opinion of the paper. Bergh replied:

50 "Henry Bergh and His Work," *Scribner's Monthly* 17, no. 6 (1879), 878.

51 See Christopher Silvester, "Introduction," in *The Penguin Book of Interviews*, ed. Christopher Silvester (London: Penguin Books,1994), 1–48.

52 The example provided appears in "Preserve the Forests: The Citizens Enthusiastically in Favor of the Movement," *The World*, 12 April 1884, news clipping in: *ASPCA Scrapbook, Vol. 9, September 1882–February 1887* (ASPCA Archives, New York), 130.

> It is the greatest paper in the world. It did me, without intending it, the greatest service I have ever had. Twelve years ago it represented me as presiding over an assembly of beasts, and that ridicule awakened the public from its apathy. The next day one million people understood my purpose and in a week twenty millions knew of it. I have travelled many parts of the world, and everywhere I have found the HERALD. The influence of such a paper should be in favor of this society and not against it.[53]

That answer can be read alternately as Bergh's honest interpretation of the positive impact the *Herald*'s criticism had on the animal protection movement or as an effort to discourage such criticism in the future. Most likely Bergh had both objectives in mind. Yet those comments point also to something even more revealing: the degree to which a decade-old article in the *Herald*, the 1866 satire "Cruelty to Animals," was impressed on him. As the two continued their interview, Bergh further confirmed his deep fascination with his opponents in the media: "'Listen to these articles,' and here Mr. Bergh produced an enormous book, apparently filled with critical articles upon his course, which he read aloud with expression and strong emphasis, evidently enjoying those portions which were most severe upon himself. 'This is complimentary,' he occasionally said, 'and therefore I will pass it by.'"[54]

As a final consideration relative to Bergh's awareness of the media, it is worthwhile to turn in more detail to that 'enormous book' mentioned above. Record-keeping by institutions in the form of books of newspaper clippings was common practice during the nineteenth century, and stretched well into the twentieth. The ASPCA archives contain volumes of such scrapbooks covering decades of newspaper reportage, the product during the ASPCA's first twenty years of Bergh's careful perusing, collecting, pasting, and documenting. That Bergh himself handled this task, one more suited to a society secretary than to its president, speaks to a deep engagement with the media and a thorough understanding of the identities it ascribed to him. In reading Bergh's commentary in those newspaper clippings, one also senses the degree to which the narratives he proffered in his many interviews, speeches, and letters were akin to the lines of an actor, repeated over the years as he moved from one audience and venue to the next. What is perhaps most striking about these volumes, however, is their thoroughness and accuracy—together they contain thousands of clippings of all angles and dimensions, their sources and dates carefully recorded in the margins of each volume. In short, there was nothing printed about Bergh or the ASPCA that the ASPCA president did not know about, no one who studied that material more closely, and

53 "Mr. Bergh's Castle," 4.
54 "Mr. Bergh's Castle," 4.

nobody better prepared to respond strategically to it, than Bergh himself.[55]

A fitting point of closure for this discussion is an illustration that speaks in strong terms to the nuances of Bergh's relationship to the media. "A New Don't" appeared in *Puck* on 23 April 1884 (see Figure 12).[56] In it, a dishevelled Bergh appears in the guise of a sandwich man, an occupation and advertising strategy that came of age in urban environments such as New York during the nineteenth century. His message, not surprisingly, is one of protest—in this case protest against the gory 'Crypt' exhibit at the Eden Musée, a Dime museum catering to popular tastes in entertainment and education that had opened on West 23rd Street less than a month previously. From the perspective of cartoonist Eugene "Zim" Zimmerman, the point being made here turns on the paradoxical character of Bergh's comments that week—that in criticizing the Eden Musée, Bergh inadvertently brings more attention to the institution that it might otherwise garner. In other words, Bergh, who is described in Zimmerman's caption as "the benevolent boomer of the 'Chamber of Horrors,'" is in effect publicizing the very institution he wishes to see shut down.

Figure 12: Eugene Zimmerman ("Zim"), "A New Don't," *Puck*, 23 April 1884, p. 114.

In those terms, "A New Don't" fits nicely among the many illustrations of Bergh that appeared during his presidency. But reading the broader media coverage of Bergh and the Eden Musée brings an even greater sense of paradox to Zimmerman's work. Initiated via publication of a letter Bergh wrote to the city's mayor describing the gory exhibit as "an insult to civilization and to the moral sense of the community" akin to that of the bullfight and the gladiatorial arena, the media discussion that ensued saw Bergh turn directly to the press, where he reiterated his message to the mayor while complaining of the unwarranted publication of that letter.[57] It is of course impossible

55 Observations of Bergh's role in producing the ASPCA's scrapbooks are based on the handwriting in them as well as Bergh's deep reading and knowledge of the press's reportage on him and the ASPCA that is reflected constantly in his work.

56 Eugene Zimmerman, "A New Don't," *Puck*, 23 April 1884, 114.

57 Henry Bergh Incensed, "He Visits the Eden Musée and Writes to His Honor the Mayor," *New York Morning Journal*, 9 April 1884, news clipping in: *ASPCA Scrapbook, Vol. 9,*

to believe Bergh had not anticipated that letter's publication—he was in fact well aware just how often such letters made their way to the public via the press. For its part, the management of the Eden Mus**é**e did not see Bergh's comments in the terms ascribed to them by Zimmerman. Instead, the museum superintendent charged that "Mr. Bergh is simply anxious to gain a little notoriety for himself in the newspapers."[58] Read from this angle, it is Zimmerman who wears the metaphorical sandwich board, carrying as did so many of Bergh's critics yet another piece of publicity for the ASPCA president and his movement—in this case, Bergh's message that venues such as the Eden Mus**é**e's Chamber of Horrors desensitized the public to violence and normalized cruelty both toward animals and among humans.

Reading Bergh's relationship to the media in this manner, be it with regard to this specific cartoon or to the many other materials presented above, uncovers a far more sophisticated approach to a rapidly evolving media landscape than one might otherwise anticipate. It has often been observed that social movement actors are quick to grasp and make use of new media technology.[59] As Bergh's case confirms, this has been true for some time. Indeed, while the sweeping changes in communications technology that the world has seen at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first are different from those of Bergh's era, they are perhaps no more transformative than those through which Bergh negotiated the place of the animal protection movement in New York and America. In the space of a few decades, the nineteenth-century media landscape changed dramatically in technological terms, in tone, in reach, in audience, in content, in strategy, in marketing, and in accessibility relative to both production and consumption. At first glance, that changing landscape brought new opportunities for critics to ridicule and correspondingly frame Bergh and the animal protection movement. Key among them, the proliferation of illustrated newspapers gave critics the ability to speak via carefully crafted images to Bergh's activities. In that context, the nation's leading cartoonists soon developed a common graphic repertoire through which they alternately introduced, undermined, derided, problematized, and dismissed in easy-to-access visual terms the oftentimes more complex stories involving Bergh that appeared in print form alongside their caricatures. As

September 1882–February 1887 (ASPCA Archives, New York), 128; "The Crypt of Horrors" *The World*, 10 April 1884, news clipping in: *ASPCA Scrapbook, Vol. 9, September 1882–February 1887* (ASPCA Archives, New York), 130; "Henry Bergh on the Horrible" *New-York Commercial Advertiser*, 9 April 1884, news clipping in: *ASPCA Scrapbook, Vol. 9, September 1882–February 1887* (ASPCA Archives, New York), 129.

58 "The Crypt of Horrors."

59 See for example Manuel Castells, "Communication, Power and Counter-power in the Network Society," *International Journal of Communication* 1 (2007): 238–266. For a contemporary overview see Victoria Carty, *Social Movements and New Technology* (London: Routledge, 2018).

such, the newspapers' critical caricatures alternately summarized those more complex stories in simple but striking terms for readers who chose to look no further while alerting readers interested in learning more of Bergh's most recent escapades to the press's more detailed written narratives.

Upon closer examination, however, that changing landscape appears also to have established conditions through which Bergh was able to put his own skills and experience to work in order to draw media attention, to counter such perspectives, and in some cases to reframe them in terms more favourable to the movement, or at the very least to profit from the publicity they generated. In this regard, the constant presence of a radical, overzealous, or hypocritical Bergh in the media spotlight drew even greater attention in New York and across the nation to the movement's widespread and generally moderate efforts to curb the cruel treatment of animals than it might otherwise have enjoyed. In doing so, Bergh's critics paradoxically helped position the animal protection movement within the mainstream of American society.

Darcy Ingram teaches in the School of University Arts and Sciences at Selkirk College in Castlegar, BC, Canada. His research addresses the historical dimensions of social movements, governance, and modernity, much of which focuses on the environmental and animal protection movements in Canada and the United States.

Will Stratford

Rediscovering Revolutionary Socialism in America: The Marxism of Victor Berger at the Height of the Second International*

Abstract

This article examines the pre-World War I editorials of America's first Socialist congressman, Victor Berger, in order to recover the lost history of early twentieth-century American socialism from the obscuring lenses of Progressivism, Populism, anarchism, scientism, Soviet Communism, and American Exceptionalism. As I argue, talk of a Second Gilded Age today overlooks the vastly different roles "socialism" has played in the respective discourses. Rather than fighting for a stronger national welfare state, even the most conservative Socialists like Wisconsin Representative Victor Berger campaigned for the abolition of wage labour and the overthrow of global capitalism. Recognizing Populism's failure to preserve its political independence as a working-class movement, Berger, like Debs, proposed that the working class should organize itself under the banner of a socialist party to take state power. In order to link the formation of mass parties like the Socialist Party of America to a totalizing philosophy of history and international political revolution, Berger drew from Second-International Marxist dialogue in which it was enmeshed, not indigenous American traditions. The prolific editorial career of Victor Berger, head of the largest English-language socialist daily in the country, demonstrates how pre-war American Socialists did not merely "translate" Second-International Marxism but rather made up a constitutive part of its transatlantic development.

Keywords: *socialism*; *Victor Berger*; *Second International*; *American socialism; Socialist Party of America; capitalism; Marxism; philosophy*

* I would like to thank Dr. Andrew Jewett for his invaluable feedback throughout the process of researching and drafting this paper, Dr. Edward Remus (Northeastern Illinois University), whose presentation at the 2018 Rosa Luxemburg Conference in Chicago, "American Bernstein, American Luxemburg: Views of the SPD's Revisionist Debate and Great Schism from the Socialist Party of America, 1900–1918" initially inspired my work, and the staff of Harvard Library for helping me consult the Victor L. Berger papers and Socialist Party of America papers.

DOI: 10.46586/mts.68.2022.33-65 Moving the Social · 68 (2022) · p. 33–65

Our contemporary moment is often dubbed the "New Gilded Age," but the parallel is hardly precise. Today, while young people feel as positively about "socialism" as they do about "capitalism," economic woes have mainly inspired calls for a more progressive welfare state.[1] By contrast, the original Gilded Age gave rise to massive socialist parties calling for the overthrow of capitalism, through armed uprising if necessary. While the meaning of "socialism" has varied across historical and geographical contexts, the most neglected and misunderstood socialism is that of its "golden age,"[2] after early nineteenth-century utopian socialism but before twentieth-century "actually existing socialism." This was the era of the Second International (1889–1916), a network of socialist parties across dozens of nations that understood itself as a socialist world government in waiting, not merely a federation of autonomous national parties. The International, having purged theoretical anarchism and adopted Marxism as its official doctrine in 1896, was led by the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), which by the early twentieth century was the first million-strong party in the world and the leading democratic force in the German Empire.[3] Lesser but still substantial, the Socialist Party of America (SPA) by 1912 boasted around 120,000 members, circulated over 300 socialist newspapers, elected more than a thousand Socialist candidates to office—including Victor Berger as the first Socialist congressperson and seventy-four Socialist mayors across twenty-three states—and secured over 900,000 votes in the national election, or 6% of the popular vote, with their presidential candidate, Eugene V. Debs.[4]

How have historians understood these developments? For the most part, they have followed the assumption underlying Werner Sombart's question in 1906—"Why is there no socialism in the United States?"—namely, that no genuine socialist movement ever appeared on American soil. As for its theoretical character, even the Socialist Party's recent chronicler Jack Ross asserts that "Debs and his movement remained more influenced by the particularly American movements that culminated in Populism than by Marxism."[5] However, in order to explain rapidly destabilizing social developments and embolden reasonable belief in impending revolution, Socialists turned first and foremost to Second-International "Orthodox Marxism." "Orthodox"

1 Lydia Saad, "Socialism as Popular as Capitalism Among Young Adults in U.S.," *Gallup* (25 November 2019), https://news.gallup.com/poll/268766/socialism-popular-capitalism-among-young-adults.aspx (Accessed 26 September 2021).

2 Leszek Kołakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism: The Founders, the Golden Age, the Breakdown* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1976).

3 Andrew G. Bonnell, *Red Banners, Books and Beer Mugs: The Mental World of German Social Democrats, 1863–1914* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 1.

4 Leon Fink, *The Long Gilded Age: American Capitalism and the Lessons of a New World Order* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 121–122.

5 Jack Ross, *The Socialist Party of America: A Complete History* (Lincoln: Potomac Books, 2015), 40.

Marxism distinguished itself from "revisionist" Marxism by its understanding of capitalism as a self-contradictory crisis of modern society that required political revolution before genuine gradual, progressive social evolution out of capitalism could begin.[6] Historians have obscured the revolutionary Marxist character of the SPA in several ways. Some have assimilated the party to indigenous political movements like Progressivism and Populism. Others have viewed the SPA as an expression of the syndicalist movement that spawned around the same time across industrializing nations. Still others have identified SPA leaders primarily as Darwinians or philosophical pragmatists.[7] Most have projected back categories from the 1917 Russian Revolution and subsequent developments. However, these histories have failed to account for the fact that many Socialist leaders understood themselves to be followers of Marx and were recognized as such by their opponents, including Populists, Progressives, trade unionists, and syndicalists.

How revolutionary were the Debsian Socialists? The preeminent biographer of Victor Berger, Sally Miller, writes:

> [The Socialists] were hardly involved in their society […] they also lacked the option of real responsibility within the American political system. Consequently, the Americans were by circumstances completely at liberty to insist upon orthodox doctrinal purity. They chose to adopt Marxist ideology in position papers and in votes abroad. After all, what possibly could they gain by rejecting Marx?[8]

6 "Orthodox" was first used pejoratively by detractors of Marx' and Engels' "dogmatism" going back to the First International (1864–1876). Karl Kautsky and other SPD leaders eventually adopted the term positively, most notably as a way of disavowing revisionism in the Revisionist Debate.

7 In recent decades, monograph intellectual histories have suggested that Socialist theory, if not absent altogether, reflected an exceptionally American character, particularly in its evangelical, republican, and pragmatist elements. James Kloppenberg, tracing the trans-Atlantic convergence of social democracy and progressivism, treats American history as bereft of socialist party politics and relegates Debs, Berger, and Hillquit to a footnote. Mark Pittenger reconstructs Socialists' intellectual universe as one in which scientism and evolutionary fatalism triumphed over Marxist voluntarism. According to Brian Lloyd, Socialist intellectuals converted Marxism into a positivist and pragmatic philosophy more in line with Thorstein Veblen and Ernst Mach than Karl Marx. James Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory: Social Democracy and Progressivism in European and American Thought, 1870–1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 459; Mark Pittenger, *American Socialists and Evolutionary Thought, 1870–1920* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993); Brian Lloyd, *Left Out: Pragmatism, Exceptionalism, and the Poverty of American Marxism, 1890–1922* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

8 Sally Miller, "Americans and the Second International," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 120, no. 5 (1976): 380. The insistence that the International's radical discourse amounted to hollow "revolutionary gestures" persists widely today, for example in

Along these lines, historians have generally treated SPA Marxism as disingenuous "rhetoric." However, the accusation of Socialists' superficial revolutionism rests on the basis of what came after 1914—namely, the implosion of the Second International and the ensuing triumph of nationalist welfare-statism over socialism. Historians have naturalized the subsequent demise of the American Marxist tradition and applied it retroactively onto the past, insinuating that because the world socialist revolution failed, it must have never really meant to succeed on its own terms. To the extent that this forgotten tradition is recovered, it gets assimilated to today's narrowed political horizons. Berger is celebrated as the "patron saint" of "Democratic Socialism," a tradition which has "survived,"[9] and Debs is equated with Bernie Sanders.[10]

This paper asks, what would it mean to take the early Socialists at their word, at a time when the growth of political Marxism, in the form of mass socialist parties around the world, appeared as an inexorable development? By reexamining the revolutionary rhetoric and political leadership of SPA co-founder and first Socialist congressperson Victor Berger—the living embodiment of SPA "reformism," according to the historiography—I invite a reconsideration of SPA Marxism on its own terms. Of course, we cannot grasp SPA Marxism without understanding how the party refined its ideology through ongoing engagement with the Second International. Focusing on the years around 1912—the electoral peak for the SPA as well as the German SPD—close readings of Victor Berger's popular editorials, viewed in conjunction with the International's contemporary discourse, will help us uncover the international and revolutionary character of the SPA, during and as an integral part of the highpoint of the Second International movement for socialism.

Richard Schneirov, "Social Democracy, the Mix, and the Problem of the Labor Metaphysic," *Platypus Review* 138 (July/August 2021).

9 Sally Miller, *Victor Berger and the Promise of Constructive Socialism, 1910–1920* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1973), 252.

10 Shawn Gude, "You Can Have Brandeis or You Can Have Debs," *Jacobin* (19 February 2019), https://jacobinmag.com/2019/02/you-can-have-brandeis-or-you-can-have-debs (Accessed 21 November 2021); Eric Foner, "How Bernie Sanders Should Talk About Democratic Socialism," *The Nation* (21 October 2015), https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/how-bernie-sanders-should-talk-about-democratic-socialism/ (Accessed 21 November 2021). See also Peter Dreier, "Why Has Milwaukee Forgotten Victor Berger?" *Huffington Post* (6 May 2012), www.huffpost.com/entry/why-has-milwaukee-forgott_b_1491463 (Accessed 17 November 2021).

Victor Berger, Second International Marxist

The case of Victor Berger shows clearly that American socialists were dedicated Marxists, part of a vibrant international movement that distinguished itself sharply from American Progressivism and Populism. Berger, who ran the Social-Democratic Publishing Company in Milwaukee and helped to define the SPA's intellectual and political stance, represented the most widely digestible and politically embedded element of the American socialist movement. Left-wing historians have called Berger a non-revolutionary "reformist" and employed labels such as "right-wing" and "constructivist" to distinguish him from the "left-wing" and "revolutionary" Debs.[11] No doubt, Berger harboured some views that occasionally set him apart from the majority Socialist position, particularly his racism, which had to be subordinated to party discipline more than once. Yet, like Debs, he diverged from contemporary European Marxists less in the content of his thought than in the popular idiom he employed.[12] Berger's corpus reveals matter-of-fact talk about international revolution, class conflict, and the need to arm workers. Like all Second International Marxists, he believed that global capitalism needed to be abolished, not simply modified. Although he viewed reforms more favourably than some Socialist tendencies, he regularly fended off "reformism" by framing reforms as a means to an end—revolution. Like other SPA leaders, he believed that the road map for overcoming capitalism lay in Marx's philosophy of history and critique of political economy. To this end, Berger consistently emphasized the dialectical relationship between capitalism and socialism, the need to subordinate reform to revolution, the centrality of class struggle, the importance of class consciousness, and the call to abolish wage labour.

11 Ira Kipnis, *The American Socialist Movement, 1897–1912* (New York: Greenwood Press, [1952]1968) remains the seminal left-wing account of the SPA. Much has been written about Berger's role in the SPA, his work in Congress, and his indictments during the war years. Berger's alleged pragmatic, "Weberian" contributions to Socialist politics are elaborated in Miller, *Victor Berger*. On Berger's opposition to the First World War, see Philip M. Glende, "Victor Berger's Dangerous Ideas: Censoring the Mail to Preserve National Security during World War I," *Essays in Economic & Business History* 26 (2008). His trial under the Espionage Act and battle to be seated in Congress are reviewed in Edward J. Muzik, "Victor L. Berger: Congress and the Red Scare," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 47, no. 4 (Summer, 1964). For Berger's idealistic, "pre-modern" approach to running an independent publishing house, see James Kates, "Editor, Publisher, Citizen, Socialist," *Journalism History*, 44:2 (2018): 79–88.

12 Brian Lloyd's high intellectual history of leading Socialist intellectuals gives no extended treatment of Berger, suggesting that he did not consider Berger in this ilk. The fact that Berger wrote no extended works but rather only hundreds of editorials seems to have led intellectual histories to downplay his contributions. Lloyd, *Left Out* (1997).

Berger was born in Austria-Hungary in 1860 to a relatively prosperous Jewish family. After brief enrollments at the University of Vienna and the University of Budapest, at the age of eighteen he and his family immigrated to the U.S., settling down in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, which was home to a large German-speaking emigre population of "Forty-Eighters" and an active labour movement. Initially working as a schoolteacher, Berger quickly joined the Socialist Labor Party headed by Daniel de Leon and left teaching to become the editor of two socialist newspapers, *Wisconsin Vorwärts* ("Forward") and *Die Wahrheit* ("The Truth"). In 1895, the year of Friedrich Engels' death, Berger visited the mythic leader of the Pullman Strike and soon-to-be Socialist Party icon, Eugene Debs, during his jail sentence in Woodstock, Illinois, where he lectured Debs on the profundity of Marxism and left him with a copy of *Das Kapital*, converting Debs to Marxism shortly thereafter.[13] Berger and Debs soon helped co-found the Socialist Party of America (1901–1972). By 1910, Milwaukee Socialists were running a model campaign in which Berger's words were distributed in seven languages. They swept the majority of city offices, including Emil Seidel as mayor, Victor Berger as one of seven Socialist aldermen, and Victor's wife Meta Berger on the city schoolboard. Most spectacularly, Berger was elected as the first Socialist representative to Congress, with Rand School founding president William J. Ghent serving as his chief of staff. In terms of temperament, Victor was described by his peers as ambitious, confident and stubborn, and occasionally hot-tempered, though also known for his affectionate devotion to his wife and two daughters, who spoke of his self-deprecating wit and charm.[14]

We know him best for his later trial under the Espionage Act, but during his time in office his main activity was to use his platform to win people over to socialist revolution through unsparing criticism of the capitalist order, exemplifying the intransigent Marxist position of the Second International. The clearest expression of "Orthodox Marxism" came from the Erfurt programme, adopted by the German SPD in 1891, which enshrined Marxism as the official ideological doctrine of the party, and by extension, the International. As its touchstone, Erfurt Marxism put forward an essentially oppositional orientation to capitalist politics, which would never reform itself into socialism. Socialists' main tasks were educational and civil-social: carry the socialist message to the people through ruthless criticism, and organize the working class as an autonomous force in society to eventually take political power. Berger himself was first and foremost a publicist and only incidentally a politician. While the SPA had no official party press at the time, three papers dominated national circulation:

13 See Eugene Debs, "How I Became a Socialist," *Writings and Speeches,* 47. This brief statement first appeared in *The Comrade*, I (April 1902).

14 Morris Hillquit, *Loose Leaves from a Busy Life* (New York: Macmillan, 1934), 53; Kates, "Editor, Publisher, Citizen, Socialist," 81–82; For an abbreviated biography of Victor Berger, see Miller, *Victor Berger*, 17–25.

Berger's *Social Democratic Herald* in Milwaukee, Chicago's *International Socialist Review* run by Berger's intellectual adversary, Charles Kerr, and Julius Wayland's *Appeal to Reason* in Kansas City. In December 1911, Berger's Social-Democratic Publishing Company published its opening issue of its new daily, the *Milwaukee Leader*—whose staff included a young Carl Sandburg—which supplanted the weekly *Social Democratic Herald* by September 1913 and became the largest English-language Socialist daily in the country.[15]

To understand Berger better, we need to start with the fact that he was a dedicated Marxist. While the socialist tradition encompassed a broad variety of anti-capitalist ideologies from the nineteenth century, from anarchism to Lassallean state socialism, Marxism occupied a unique place in the movement, only becoming hegemonic in the decades following Marx's death in 1883. At its Hegelian core, Marxism held that global society was a historical process in which the new constantly cancelled and replaced the old. Accordingly, capitalism was to be understood not as a static economic system but as an epochal category marking a historical crisis of modern "bourgeois society." "Socialism is the name of a phase of civilization," wrote Berger, "just as feudalism was a phase of civilization and as capitalism is the name of the civilization we have now." In typical Erfurt Marxist fashion, Berger defined capitalism as an unsustainable crisis, invoking socialism as the only possible remedy. "Many students of history and of political economy say that Socialism must be the name of the next phase, if civilization is to survive."[16] That is, *humanity* would technically go on without socialism, but—like Friedrich Engels' and Rosa Luxemburg's dictum, "socialism or barbarism"—in a regressive manner. In saying so, Berger was not declaring the next phase of civilization as wholly predetermined and merely a question of *when*. Behind the language of inevitability lay the fact that Second Internationalists genuinely observed the splitting of society into two opposed camps, representing labour and capital. Both mass workers' movements eager for socialist leadership and reactionary anti-socialist alliances were ascending at an unprecedented tempo. Nonetheless, throughout his editorial career, Berger stressed that overcoming capitalism was never inevitable but instead required "continuous and hard work at the present time."[17] Given that "the world's history is always made by men, and is *not a mere* natural process, the idea that because Socialism is bound to come, we do not have to work for it, would be fatalistic, and might prove fatal to civilization," wrote Berger, paraphrasing Marx's maxim.[18]

15 James Weinstein, *The Decline of Socialism in America, 1912–1925* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967), 84–102.

16 Berger, "The Meaning of Socialism—As Summed Up by Victor L. Berger," *Social Democratic Herald (SDH)*, 7 June 1913, 1.

17 Berger, "Give Them Hope," *SDH*, 14 October 1911, 1.

18 Berger, "How to Make the Change," in *Berger's Broadsides, 1860–1912* (Milwaukee: Social-Democratic Publishing Co, 1912), 244, republished in the *SHD* as "Socialism, The Next

Believing that party propaganda should concentrate on "simple realities that anyone could grasp," Berger spent much of his time articulating in the American vernacular key ideas from Second-International Marxist discourse. To link wage labour with the universal exploitation of workers, Berger clarified that money-capital was simply surplus labour in a form that could be exchanged for the purchase of more surplus labour. "Our ruling class says that all wages come from capital. The contrary is true; all modern capital comes from wages that have not been paid."[19] Moreover, he contextualized the interrelated absurdities of over-production and unemployment within the self-destructive core of capitalist production. "The workingmen, on account of their numbers, are the main consumers in every nation, and, not having received the full value of their products—it is clear to see that they cannot buy back this production with their wages. Thus, an artificial over-production is created every year." He continued, "Now, this over-production really means an under-consumption, because the working class cannot consume as much as it should." Why? "The capitalist system is based upon a certain number of workingmen being unemployed at all times," in order "to create a reserve army of the unemployed and to keep down wages." As a result, "not all the goods that have been produced are sold […] This finally results in an industrial crisis (or panic, as it is called) at regular intervals."[20]

In order to unpack Marx's treatment of "estranged" labour as the fundamental self-contradiction of capitalism, Berger pointed to the debasement of labour in Gilded Age America. "A man is not free who is dependent upon another for a job—for a chance to make a livelihood," wrote Berger.[21] In post-Reconstruction America, the labour question had replaced the slavery question, as wage labour no longer operated

Epoch of Society," *SHD*, 9 March 1912, 1; Berger, "Are Socialists Practical?" *SDH*, 25 November 1911, 1; Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852), Section I, in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert Tucker, 2nd ed. (New York: Norton, [1963]1978), 595. Pittenger explains that pragmatist castigations of Socialists as intransigent utopians, like Daniel Bell's, overlook their genuine belief in the imminence of socialist revolution, which arose from what they understood to be rational, scientific knowledge. Pittenger, *American Socialists*, 5. Daniel Bell, *Marxian Socialism in the United States* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, [1952] 1967).

19 Berger, "Labor Day Greetings," *SDH*, 30 August 1913, 1.

20 Berger, "Capitalistic and Jesuitical Politics," *SDH*, 25 March 1911, 1. Louis Boudin's *The Theoretical System of Karl Marx* (1907), a breakthrough among American contributions to socialist theory, was the first English-language original work to expound on a crisis theory of American capitalism. Paul Buhle, "Intellectuals in the Debsian Socialist Party," *Radical America* 4, April 1970, 39.

21 Berger, "Socialism and Liberty," *SDH*, 30 September 1911, 1. Anthony Esposito's monograph, which focuses on Socialists' conception of class struggle, characterizes SPA ideology as the marriage of formal Marxism and informal American republican egalitarianism, rejecting their alleged mutual exclusivity. Anthony V. Esposito, *The Ideology of the Socialist Party of America, 1901–1917* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1997), 3–4.

as a temporary road to economic independence but as a "proletarian" condition of fixed dependency on unstable and exploitative employment.[22] Berger spelled out the historical degeneration of "free labour" into "wage labour" in the capitalist era, touching on the complex overlapping relationship between liberal thought and Marxism. Unlike the twentieth-century dichotomy of liberalism and Communism, contemporary Marxists understood the difference between liberal republicanism and proletarian socialism as historical, not as a clash between two ideal-types. For them, liberalism was a radical leftist tradition of the eighteenth century that had been undermined by the industrial capitalism of the nineteenth century, which rendered liberalism insufficient, if however still necessary, for the problems posed by capitalism. As Berger saw it, "Democracy went into bankruptcy in the service of capitalism."[23] That is, "while we have a democracy in name, we live in a plutocracy *in fact* (*sic*)."[24] After all, "private capital, which was formerly a means of progress, is now impeding progress," since "collective capital, especially as organized in the trusts and big corporations, has practically nullified most of the advantages of political democracy."[25] Socialists maintained that political democracy could be achieved without necessarily touching the "social question" capitalism posed. "What is the difference between a republic and a monarchy as far as the condition of the masses is concerned?" asked Berger. "Whether he has political rights or not, does not, per se, improve his condition in life. But whether he be poor or rich does most materially affect his condition,"[26] wrote Berger, echoing Engels' retort to French socialist Paul Lafargue, "Your republic and our monarchies are all one in relation to the proletariat."[27] In a peculiar sense, Socialists saw themselves as upholding liberal desiderata better than liberals themselves, both in defending civil liberties against the capitalist state more vehemently, as well as recognizing dialectically that the bourgeois liberal ideal—freedom from political coercion—could not be achieved without socialist revolution.

Berger's dialectical treatment of the key issues of trusts, party, and class exemplified the Erfurt Marxism at the core of his writings. According to the Marxian-Hegelian concept of dialectics, historical change developed as a series of successive conflicts,

22 Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), xxxvi.

23 Berger, "A Confession of Their Utter Bankruptcy as Parties," *SDH*, 4 February 1911, 1.

24 Berger, "Democracy Must become Social-Democracy," *SDH*, 23 March 1912, 1, an elaboration of "The Form of Government Is of Little Consequence" (September 1909), in *Broadsides*, 222–227.

25 Berger, "Socialism is Not Communism," *SDH*, 23 December 1911, 1.

26 Berger, "Which Do We Want—A Constitutional Fetich or Majority Rule?" *SDH*, 29 April 1911, 1.

27 Engels to Paul (17 June 1893), in Friedrich Engels, Paul Lafargue and Laura Marx Lafargue, ed. Emile Bottigelli, *Correspondence [of] Frederick Engels [and] Paul and Laura Lafargue* (*ELC*) vol. 3 (Moscow: Foreign Languages Pub. House, 1959), 271–2.

or, "self-contradictions," within the social totality, which eventually come to a head in acute eruptions that introduced a qualitatively different totality. Following Marx, Berger viewed the onset of capitalism as not simply a tragedy but rather the necessary precondition for a higher phase of civilization, socialism. Invoking dialectics, he dispelled the false binary of affirmative versus contrarian positions toward particular historical developments. For instance, Berger insisted that the late nineteenth-century development of trusts, or, multinational corporate monopolies, simply represented an indelible advancement of capitalist society, which explicitly pointed to the need for socialism.[28] Progressives like "trust-buster" Theodore Roosevelt and Wisconsin Senator Robert M. La Follette wanted to break up the massive trusts in order to ensure the primacy of "petty bourgeois" small business. Meanwhile, the official position of the SPA, stemming from Berger's proposed legislation, demanded that the federal government purchase any trust that controlled more than 40 % of its industry—along with all railways, coal mines, and telephone and telegraph companies—in order to render unnecessary a militant socialist confiscation of the economy. For Berger, the trusts represented not the cause but rather "the natural outcome of the capitalist system." Seeing as trusts promoted "concentration instead of division, co-operation instead of competition," they were to be welcomed as the "shadow of socialism." And because "monopoly is here, whether we wish it or not," Socialists needed to be in power to direct the trusts to socialist ends, he believed, or else Republicans, Democrats, or Progressives would only mitigate the excesses of trusts through trust-busting reforms that would only soften capitalism, precisely as a means of maintaining "the co-operation of capitalists only, not the co-operation of the people."[29] Berger treated the issue of class in a similarly dialectical manner. Unlike pragmatists such as Thorstein Veblen, whose condemnation of the "leisure class" grasped the class problem as one of "conspicuous consumption," Berger followed Marx in locating the problem at the level of total global production, compelling Socialists to aspire for "the right of not a few cents more but for the right to the product of all their labour, which they know can only happen by becoming the owners of the means of production," echoing the German party's ob-

28 Pittenger interprets Berger's "ultra-organicist perspective" as an advocacy of capitalist state ownership of trusts rather than a sober acknowledgement of changed circumstances. Marx and Engels embraced Darwin's naturalism, but they did not concede to it as a strategic model for social development. Pittenger's and Lloyd's argument that Socialist political positions fell back on overriding scientific discourse overlooks how many of these issues boiled down to contemporaries' commonsense recognition of irreversible shifts in the structural development of capitalist society. Pittenger, *American Socialists*, 3, 158; Lloyd, *Left Out*, 93.

29 Berger, "Socialism as an Evolutionary Process," *SDH*, 3 February 1912, 1; "Trust Smashing is as Silly as the Bull Against the Comet," *SDH*, 20 May 1911, 1. See also Eugene Debs' speech delivered at Central Music Hall, Chicago, "Competition vs. Cooperation" (29 September 1900).

structionist line, "To this system, no man and no penny."[30] In this same spirit, Berger declared from town halls to the congressional floor, "There can be no social freedom nor a complete justice until there are no more hirelings in the world, until all become both the employers and employed of the world."[31]

Berger's theoretical grounding in Marxism led him to understand capitalist class conflict as an antagonism between the relations and forces of production, and only incidentally between two groups of people. As Berger explained, "We know that the capitalist is just as much a product of the present system as is the proletariat." For this reason, "We shall preach no class hatred. But we will preach class consciousness and class conscience six days in the week […] We shall reach out the brotherly hand to all who want to work with us to free our people from mental, moral, and economic bondage, no matter to what class any man may belong."[32] Marx had pronounced all history the history of class struggle in his 1848 *Manifesto*, but he clarified its modern meaning in the concept of the "Bonapartist" capitalist state, standing over and above society and simultaneously representing the interests of everyone and no one, or, capital—"the only form of government possible at a time when the bourgeoisie had already lost, and the working class had not yet acquired, the faculty of leading the nation […] full-grown bourgeois society had finally transformed into a means for the enslavement of labour by capital."[33] Bonapartism, Marx's fundamental political lesson from the failed Revolutions of 1848, did not refer to the rule of an individual despot. Rather, it denoted the political and social imperatives of the modern capitalist *state*, namely the necessity of a permanent, armed bureaucracy to pacify the warring classes and defend the executive capitalist state against civilian democratic authority.[34] For

30 Berger, "Milwaukee Workingmen Cannot be Fooled," *SDH*, 2 September 1911, 2. Whereas Pittenger's and Lloyd's intellectual histories regard the influence of contemporary social science as crippling the integrity of the socialist movement, Fink's labor history, following Kloppenberg, sees it as a boon to American radicalism, which otherwise lacked a wider middle-class audience and a more practical political orientation. Pittenger, *American Socialists*; Lloyd, *Left Out*; Fink, *Long Gilded Age*; Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory.* See Gary P. Steenson, *"Not One Man! Not One Penny!": German Social Democracy, 1863–1914* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1981).

31 Berger, "Speech of Hon. Victor L. Berger, Representative from Wisconsin" (14 June 1911), in Victor L. Berger and the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, *Victor L. Berger (VLB) papers* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, Microform, 1994), reel 28, frames 245–246. Papers primarily housed in the State Historical Society of Wisconsin and the Milwaukee County Historical Society.

32 Berger, "The Milwaukee Leader," *Milwaukee Leader*, 1, as co-published in *SDH*, 16 December 1911, 1.

33 Karl Marx, "The Civil War in France (1871)," *Marx-Engels Reader*, 631. See also Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852), Section I, 594–603.

34 While Hans-Ulrich Wehler has been one of the few historians to maintain "Bonapartism" as a category of analysis, his characterization of Otto von Bismarck's *Obrigkeitsstaat* ("authori-

Marx, the irreversible new reality of the "Bonapartist" capitalist state revealed the necessity of taking political power as the immediate strategic aim of socialists. As Berger reiterated, it was not the moral corruption of capitalists but the *social* exigencies of industrial capital, *politically* mediated by the capitalist state, that drove manufacturers to mimic the productive conditions of their competitors, as it "compels the employers to pay as little for their labour as possible," along with exploiting more precarious sources of labour, like children.[35] In this way, Berger's Marxist framework cut against a simplistic distinction between "private" as capitalist and "public" or "state" as non-capitalist.[36]

The Second International concretized and elaborated the necessity of political means for gradual social revolution out of capitalism, with temporary proletarian state rule, or, "the dictatorship of the proletariat" forming the pillar of its political orientation.[37] As a strategic response to the preponderance of the Bonapartist state, after 1848 Marx stressed the necessity of seizing the capitalist state by any means, in order to subsequently achieve the elimination of "bourgeois right" and the gradual "withering away of the state." In particular, Marx theorized the necessity of a capitalist-to-socialist transitional regime consisting of working-class control of global capitalism, during which wage labour and the state would still exist, until the eventual realization of socialism, or, the classless society operating on the principle, "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs."[38] This transitional period he termed "the dictatorship of the proletariat," or, the political rule by the proletarian class, as against

tarian state") as "the Bonapartist dictatorship up to 1890" suggests a rather narrow meaning of Bonapartism, centered on the figure of a Napoleon III or a Bismarck rather than the structural exigencies of the global capitalist state. Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *The German Empire, 1871–1918*, trans. Kim Traynor (Leamington Spa, Warwickshire, UK: Berg, [1973]1985), 55.

35 Berger, "Socialism and Liberty," 1.

36 Eric Foner, and Leon Fink following him, invoke this binary and end up reinforcing American exceptionalism. For Foner, appeals to "free labor" occupied a uniquely American public discourse, in contradistinction to the French Third Republic, where the "social solidarism" of a progressive state held more cultural capital than claims to "liberty." Fink argues that America's "mutualist path," typified by its Masonic lodges and mutual aid associations, led not to state institutions but to private commercial ones—implied as "more capitalist." Eric Foner, *The Story of American Freedom* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998), xiii-xiv; Fink, *Long Gilded Age*, 31–32. On America's "mutualist path," Fink cites Jonathan Levy, *Freaks of Fortune: The Emerging World of Capitalism and Risk in America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012), 191–230.

37 Karl Kautsky reinscribed the dictatorship of the proletariat as official SPD and Second International strategy. Karl Kautsky and Wm. E Bohn, *The Class Struggle (Erfurt Program)* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, [1892]1910), 12–13; Kautsky, *The Road to Power*, trans. A. M Simons (Chicago: Samuel A. Bloch, 1909), "Chapter I: The Conquest Of Political Power."

38 Karl Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Program (1875)," in *Marx-Engels Reader*, 531.

the rule of the capitalist class. As Marx stated in a letter to his comrade Joseph Weydemeyer, he considered this theory for the necessity of a political revolution followed by a gradual social revolution to be his greatest contribution as a thinker.[39] Following Marx's lead from the First International, the Second International from 1889 subordinated "social action"—the activities of labour unions, principally the fight for higher wages and a shorter workday—and "political action"—running socialists for office and broadcasting socialist demands—as both means to an end, namely, the strategic goal of seizing the state.[40] Erfurt Marxism located the significance of these civil-social reform struggles in their role as the "school for revolution," not their immediate effects on the capitalist economy or politics, respectively, both of which were negligible. The strategic potential of political action had become only further clarified through the late nineteenth-century development of mass socialist parties and hyper-militarized states, two major changes since the First International, which Engels remarked in 1895 had rendered obsolete "rebellion in the old style, street fighting with barricades." Instead of using the spectacle of citizen insurrection, Second Internationalists saw that popular mass parties could be more effective, both as a tactic for winning over the military and for the overall strategy of eventually taking over the state. As Engels put it, the franchise "became our best means of propaganda."[41]

The SPA tried to square its programme with the Germans' Erfurt Programme, which posited the necessity of a political path through the conquest of the state. On one end of the spectrum, Victor Berger's main Socialist rivals, the "impossibilists," promoted by Charles Kerr's *International Socialist Review*, considered it "impossible" for political participation and reform to ever achieve socialism and instead championed extra-political social action alone. The majority SPA position represented by Berger embraced progressive social reforms more warmly than the impossibilists, but, in line with the Erfurt programme, framed reforms as a means of educating the workers in class consciousness rather than a transitional path to power in themselves. Berger's immediate aim was essentially the same as contemporary Second Internationalists like Karl Kautsky, Rosa Luxemburg and Vladimir Lenin: the socialist seizure of political power. While European Marxists repeated the call for the "dictatorship of the proletariat," American socialists like Berger and Debs used the term "industrial democracy" to express this same idea.[42] Although Berger looked to a future in which

39 Karl Marx, "Letter to Weydemeyer (1852)," *Marx-Engels Reader* 220. For Marx's clearest programmatic statement on the dictatorship of the proletariat, see Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Program," 537–538.

40 See Karl Marx, "Inaugural Address to the First International (1864)," *Marx-Engels Reader*, 512–519.

41 Friedrich Engels, "The Tactics of Social Democracy," *Marx-Engels Reader*, 567.

42 According to Lloyd, the Dutch Marxist Anton Pannekoek coined "industrial democracy" in Pannekoek, "Socialism and Anarchism" (part 1), *New Review*, January 1913, 122–124.

people would produce in common rather than in competition, like Marx himself he remained reticent to elaborate on the exact details of the future socialist society. Berger occasionally used overlapping references to "Collectivism" and "the Co-operative Commonwealth," and his representations of socialism fluctuated between abstract epochal projections—"a step forward toward a higher civilization than history has ever known"—and structural political economic definitions—"collective ownership of the means of production and distribution."[43] More often, he concerned himself with Socialists' ongoing political task of achieving state power so that the transition to socialism could begin in earnest.[44] Though Berger put a lot of faith in democracy, he recognized that in order to carry capitalist society into socialism, "In the Co-operative Commonwealth the industrial democracy must rule."[45] In the editorial, "How to Make the Change," Berger framed the dictatorship of the proletariat as a *means* to socialism and not an end in itself:

> During the transition period the sale of products may take place exactly as at present, only subject to regulation by the government which will be in the hands of the working class […] Why, then, if the proletariat gets political power, should workingmen's associations not be possible, which, instead of the capitalists, will own the factories where the workmen themselves will choose the managers and themselves receive the profits? […] We speak of the transition period. In this transition period, the Socialist government, of course, can lend the necessary capital to the productive societies and furnish suitable guarantees.[46]

Indeed, Berger held out the theoretical possibility of a violent revolution and insisted on the need for an armed citizenry. Significantly, Socialists did not consider the debate between reform and revolution as a division between anti- and pro-violence stances. In the context of mass socialist parties with major societal support, the question of revolution did not hinge on acts of spectacular violence the way it would for the New Left from the 1960s, when urban guerrilla warfare became associated with revolutionary credentials, in the absence of a revolutionary socialist party. Though Berger hoped for a peaceful route to socialism, he wrote, "That all this will take place peacefully, I do not maintain. However, it surely will not come peacefully if the people are not

However, the term was used by American Socialists throughout the preceding decade. Lloyd, *Left Out*, 437n21.

43 Berger, "Socialism is Not Communism," 1.

44 By contrast, Gilded-Age utopian socialists like Edward Bellamy, William Morris, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman put serious energy into speculating on what socialism would look and feel like. Pittenger, *American Socialists*, 64.

45 Berger, "Socialism or Communism" (December 1907), in *Broadsides*, 36.

46 Berger, "How to Make the Change," 242–243.

armed."[47] Berger's attitude mirrored the International's position, which maintained the prospect of using a people's militia to defend legitimately won seats in government, against the revisionist position of Eduard Bernstein, whose sanguine view of the state presumed it would never come to that, at least not in advanced capitalist nations. Like his fellow Erfurt Marxists, Berger upheld the liberal concept of a people's militia, "against all standing armies," since "a standing army means a standing preparation for war," invoking Engels' account of the standing army as a historical outgrowth of the Bonapartist capitalist state in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884).[48] Nevertheless, Berger remained adamant about not making a virtue out of potential necessity and strongly opposed adopting force as a leading strategy. However, not all Socialists felt this way. The "Wobblies" of the anarcho-syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World (IWW, 1905), led by SPA National Committee member "Big Bill" Haywood—who proudly declared, "I've never read Marx's *Capital*, but I have the marks of capital all over me"—rejected Socialist "educationalism" and upheld a "no compromise and no surrender" militancy.[49] The Wobblies soon renounced party politics altogether and preached the general strike as the only road to revolution. The intra-Socialist debate over political versus "sabotage" tactics finally came to a head at the 1912 National Convention, where the majority coalition led by Victor Berger, Morris Hillquit, Job Harriman and John Spargo, and supported by Debs, passed the anti-sabotage clause by a vote of 191 to 90, expelling any member who opposed political action or advocated crime, sabotage, or other violent methods. Haywood was

47 Berger, "How to Make the Change," 244.

48 Berger, "Socialists Advocate Real Citizen Soldiery," *SDH*, 12 July 1913, 1. According to Sally Miller, Berger must have written about the importance of arming the workers in "despair." She claims that after his 1910 election success he never again wrote in this vein. This is false. The citation above is from a 1913 editorial, and he elaborated these ideas in other post-1910 pieces, including "A Confession of Their Utter Bankruptcy as Parties" (1911) and "Let Us Safeguard Our Freedom" *SDH*, 18 May 1912, 1. Relatedly, Ira Kipnis, and Brian Lloyd, following him, conflate Marxism with revolutionist bloodlust, vacuously claiming that by 1910 Berger "simply dismissed Marx as hopelessly out of date" on the basis of his increasingly vocal anti-sabotage sentiments. Pittenger recycles this conclusion, citing Kipnis as well as two articles by Berger. However, in these pieces, Berger simply saw "talk of revolution as outlandish because people aren't adequately armed or prepared for an uprising." Miller, *Victor Berger*, 155n32; Kipnis, *The American Socialist Movement*, 240n109; Lloyd, *Left Out*, 196–197; Pittenger, *American Socialists*, 132n12; Berger, "Do We Want Progress by Catastrophe and Bloodshed or by Common Sense?" (25 September 1909), in *Broadsides*, 228–229.

49 J. Anthony Lukas, *Big Trouble: A Murder in a Small Western Town Sets Off a Struggle for the Soul of America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997), 233; Paul Buhle, *Marxism in the United States: A History of the American Left* (London: Verso, 1987), 97; John Newsinger, *One Big Union of All the Workers: Solidarity and the Fighting IWW* (London: Bookmarks Publications, 2017), 8.

recalled from the National Committee and immediately left the party, taking around 15 % of the membership with him.[50] From Berger's perspective, and ultimately that of IWW-cofounder Debs who left the Wobblies after a few years, the anarcho-syndicalists failed to address the issue of the class struggle for power, namely, the socialist seizure of the state.

Above all, Berger insisted that mere tinkering with the system would fail. Rather than appealing to the state for progressive reforms to improve the condition of working people, the Socialists proposed that the working class should organize itself to take state power. "We should have to drain the swamp—change the capitalist system—if we want to get rid of those mosquitos," Berger declared. "Teddy Roosevelt, by starting a little fire here and there to drive them out, is simply disturbing them."[51] The 1912 election marked a new alignment of the political order, in which the split of Republicans between the Progressive Theodore Roosevelt and the Republican William Howard Taft resulted in the election of the Democrat Woodrow Wilson. Regarding the new alignment of capitalist parties, Berger declared, "They will differ in method as to the administration of government but will, of course, resist with equal ardor any attempt of the working class to emancipate itself […] And this rule holds good for all candidates of non-proletarian parties as far as proletarian issues are concerned."[52] Like Debs, Berger recognized that Populism had failed because it could not preserve its political independence as a working-class movement, a strategy Marx termed "revolution in permanence."[53] Infamously, at a 1906 conference in Noroton, Connecticut where Socialists gathered many of the New York "Millionaire Socialists" in order to gain their financial backing, Berger made a polarizing outburst late in the evening over drinks. Addressing several wealthy supporters of William Hearst and the Municipal Ownership League, he erupted, "They are your laws. We abhor them. We obey them because you have the power to force them on us. But wait until we have the power. Then we shall make our own laws and, by God, we will make you obey them!"[54]

50 Bell, *Marxian Socialism*, 73–77.

51 Berger, "Why the Panic Came" (December 1907), in *Broadsides*, 104.

52 Berger, "Anti-Labor Candidates, Corrupt Bosses and Feeble Platforms Plutocracy's Campaign Offering," *SDH*, 20 July 1912, 1.

53 Marx, "Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League (1850)," in *Marx-Engels Reader*, 501–511.

54 Morris Hillquit, *Loose Leaves*, 58–59; See also Robert D. Reynolds, Jr., "The Millionaire Socialists: J. G. Phelps Stokes and his Circle of Friends" (PhD diss.: Harvard University, 1977).

The International Party

To counter the global capitalist state, manifest regionally as the national state, socialists put forward the international party as a globally responsive institution—the Second International—whose national parties comprised parts of a unified whole.[55] Hardly a case of indigenous American political inertia, the SPA's "symbiotic relationship" with the International was marked by vigorous transnational traffic of ideas and personnel.[56] The concept of an American "translation" of European Marxism misleads us into thinking that Marxism started as a strictly European phenomenon and steadily grew outwards geographically. Marx's own work appraised global capitalism with American developments in mind, as he made explicit at times, and his views were shaped by his correspondence with comrades who had emigrated to the U.S. The project became only more transatlantic with the subsequent expansion of Marxism and the increased emigration of Marxists like Berger. In this sense, there was never German Marxism or American Marxism outside of international Marxism. To conceptualize SPA Marxism as "a class manifestation of the National Question"[57] is to ignore its constitutive internationalism.

If the German Empire offered the most cogent expression of the capitalist *Klassenstaat* ("class state"), Bonapartism in America largely took the form of ideological "nonpartisanship." Midwestern populist organizations like the American Society of Equity (1902) called to completely eliminate political parties, defined as hopelessly corrupt institutions.[58] Berger, as in his dialectical critique of trusts, scoffed at strictly contrarian anti-party advocates, likening them to the English Luddites who mistakenly viewed machines as the problem rather than the capitalist ownership of machines. To Berger, the rampant corruption of party politics marked an expression rather than a cause of capitalist domination. The key was to explicitly frame capitalist politics—political parties and elections—as a *class* issue: "The interest of the proletariat can never

55 Stephen Burwood frames Debsian socialism as a *necessarily* transnational civil-political response to the spread of industrial capital across national borders. Stephen Burwood, "Debsian Socialism through a Transnational Lens," *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 2, no. 3 (2003), 257.

56 Miller, "Americans and the Second International," 372. Miller's essay is ultimately far more cynical, framing the SPA's rapport with Europe as the repeated attempt to use the International to advance its own national interests.

57 Buhle, *Marxism in the United States*, 13.

58 The American Society of Equity was founded to organize farmers' cooperatives as a "Third Power," aiming to compete with capital and organized labour on equal terms. Active in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and North Dakota, Equity directly inspired the Nonpartisan League in 1914, founded by former North Dakota Socialist Arthur C. Townley, whose message resonated among small farmers begrudging corporate interests.

be expressed in a 'non-partisan' manner. It must always be partisan to the working class, and naturally antagonistic to the capitalist interests as expressed either by the Republican or the Democratic party or by a reform 'non-partisan' combination of both of them."[59] Meanwhile, the "capitalist press" was selling "nonpartisanship" as a sham, which "means all parties united against the Socialist party."[60]

In the International's own self-understanding, including the Americans', reform and revolution were not mutually exclusive. Yet, this basic point would be hard to ascertain from the literature, which has overstated the party's revisionist character and white-washed its revolutionary Marxism. Berger's biographer writes of the Bergerite Socialists, "In policy, the tone of the party was revisionist rather than Orthodox Marxist, with the reformist wing succeeding in monopolizing party offices and thereby implementing a gradualist, step-at-a-time political approach."[61] This single statement provides an extremely useful distillation of a common misunderstanding by historians, namely, that Socialists held a zero-sum, nondialectical relationship between reform and revolution, and thus to promote reform was to demote revolution. For Erfurt Marxists, however, there was no such thing as being reformist "in policy," because revolutionary socialism was never against reforms as an immediate tactic.[62] This became most apparent during the German party's "Revisionist Debate" (*Revisionismusdebatte*) (1896–), in which a minority of "revisionists" led by Eduard Bernstein broke with "Orthodox Marxism" by proclaiming the gradual, progressive evolution of socialism out of capitalism and, consequently, the irrelevance of political revolution, prompting a firestorm of rebuttals by Erfurt Marxists such as Luxemburg and Kautsky.[63] When Bernstein declared, "This [final goal of socialism], whatever it may be, is nothing to me; but the movement is everything," Luxemburg replied, "the final goal of socialism constitutes the only decisive factor distinguishing the Social-Democratic movement from bourgeois democracy."[64] The controversy, which engulfed the whole Internation-

59 Berger, "A Confession of Their Utter Bankruptcy as Parties," 1.

60 Berger, "The Nonpartisan Workingman is a Traitor to his Class," *SDH*, 22 July 1911, 1, a repurposed version of "Abolish Parties? What For?" (23 January 1909), *Broadsides*, 188.

61 Miller, "Americans and the Second International," 373.

62 In a related move, Jack Ross reduces the Socialist "revolutionary Left" to a monolithic "path" of anti-reformism and pro-violence, in order to claim that there were "no revolutionary socialists in the SPA." Ross, *Socialist Party of America*, 60–61.

63 See Henry Tudor and J. M. Tudor, ed., *Marxism and Social Democracy: The Revisionist Debate, 1896–1898* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

64 Eduard Bernstein, *Evolutionary Socialism: A Criticism and Affirmation* (NY: Schocken Books, [1899]1961), xviiff, originally published as the article, "Der Kampf der Sozialdemokratie und die Revolution der Gesellschaft: 1. Polemisches, 2. Die Zusammenbruchstheorie und die Kolonialpolitik," *Neue Zeit* (1898), 556; Rosa Luxemburg, *Reform or Revolution* (1899), "Introduction," www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1900/reform-revolution/intro.htm (Accessed 7 April 2022).

al, was not a debate over policy—Kautsky and Luxemburg never denied the tactical significance of reform—but rather a question of emphasis on means versus ends. By misrepresenting the Revisionist Debate as a division between pro- and anti-reform positions, historians have exhibited a slippage between revisionist *gradualism* (from capital-ruled capitalism to labour-ruled capitalism) and the dictatorship of the proletariat's *transitionalism* (from labour-ruled capitalism to classless socialism).

The SPA's own reconciliation of reform and revolution is unthinkable without the precedent set by the International. Historians have underestimated how the SPA's position was shaped by the SPD's Erfurt Programme of 1891 and Karl Kautsky's adjoining theoretical commentary, *The Class Struggle* in particular. As the official statement of Second-International Marxism, the Erfurt Programme sought to mediate the dialectic of objective historical conditions and subjective revolutionary will, advancing both supra-legal revolutionary indignation and the need for a reformist *tactic* during a long non-revolutionary period. It insisted on its distinctive crisis conception of capitalism, which would develop "ever more stark the opposition between exploiters and the exploited, ever more bitter the class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat," thus making necessary the proletariat's abolition of private property in the means of production.[65] Ten years later, the Americans at the Socialist Unity Convention (July 1901) established the SPA's founding platform, written by a committee of seven delegates including Berger, which mimicked Erfurt's emphasis on inevitable class crisis, the need for socialist political independence, the strategic goal of proletariat self-abolition, and the tactical use of elections for setting up the conditions for socialist revolution:

> Private ownership of the means of production and distribution is responsible for the ever-increasing uncertainty of livelihood and the poverty and misery of the workers, and it divides society into two hostile classes—the capitalists and wage workers […] But the same economic causes which developed capitalism are leading to Socialism, which will abolish both the capitalist class and the class of wage workers […] While we declare that the development of economic conditions tends to the overthrow of the capitalist system, we recognize that the time and manner of the transition of Socialism also depends upon the stage of the development reached by the proletariat. We, therefore, consider it of the utmost importance for the Socialist Party to support all active efforts of the working class to better its position and to elect Socialists to political offices in order to facilitate the attainment of the end…But in making these demands as steps in the overthrow of capital and in the establishment of the Cooperative Commonwealth, we warn the

65 SPD, *The Erfurt Program*, trans. Thomas Dunlap (1891), www.marxists.org/history/international/social-democracy/1891/erfurt-program.htm (Accessed 14 November 2021).

> people against the public ownership demands made by capitalistic political parties, which always result in perpetuating the capitalist system through compromise or defect of the Socialist revolution.[66]

In order to consolidate the proletariat's class interest, Berger believed that they needed a change of consciousness that could only come from the socialist party, whose primary role it was to instil class consciousness in the working masses. Erfurt Marxism formally laid out the need for the disciplined and uncompromising socialist party led by professional revolutionaries, based on the Second International's theory of "socialist consciousness," or, "consciousness from without." First formulated by Karl Kautsky, the leading theorist of the SPD (and by extension, the International), the concept related to his "merger formula," which conceptualized the party as the merger of the working class and the radical bourgeois intelligentsia. According to Kautsky, workers' struggles in themselves would be restricted to "trade union consciousness"—immediate demands for short-term, sectional gains for some workers, limited to the immediate horizons of possibility within capitalism. Only under the party intellectuals' educative and disciplining influence "from without" could workers subordinate their daily struggle to the needs of "socialist consciousness," aimed at the achievement of the future classless society—socialism.[67] American leaders like Berger similarly contended that the party gave workers a tangible goal beyond capitalism, by linking their daily struggles to the long-term goal of socialism. At the level of ideology, wrote Berger, "the most formidable obstacle in the way of further progress—and especially in the propaganda of Socialism—is not that men are insufficiently versed in political economy or lacking intelligence. It is that *people* are without *hope*" (*sic*).[68] Religion would not do the trick either. While Berger made no secret of his antipathy for the Catholic Church—"Between capitalist exploitation and Roman Catholic exploitation, we prefer the former, no matter how bitterly we must fight it"—he ultimately believed that socialism could capture the hearts of Americans without necessarily impeding their religious practices, since "religion is a private matter as far as socialists are concerned."[69] Though Communism would later be pegged as strictly anti-religious, Berger exhibited the militant commitment to civil liberties characteristic of the older Marxist tradition.

While the previous generation of socialist leaders such as Wilhelm Liebknecht (1826–1900) had recognized the need for reciprocity between the unions and the par-

66 SPA's founding platform, republished in "The Socialist Party," *SDH*, 17 August 1901, 2–3.

67 The argument for "socialist consciousness" comes from Karl Kautsky, draft program of the Austrian Social-Democratic Party, *Neue Zeit* XX, I, no. 3 (1901–02), 79, quoted and cited in Vladimir Lenin, *What is to be Done?* (1902), "Chapter 2: The Spontaneity of the Masses and the Consciousness of the Social-Democrats," 14.

68 Berger, "Give Them Hope," 1.

69 Berger, "As to the 'Militia of Christ,'" *SDH*, 12 August 1911, 1.

ty, the spike of both union and socialist membership at the turn of the century exacerbated the competition for workers' support. Since the International's 1896 London congress, its official policy held that socialist unionists should not be obligated to join explicitly socialist unions, compelling the SPA to instate "dual unionism." At the 1907 Stuttgart congress, SPA delegates overwhelmingly favoured the German-Austrian position of "cooperative autonomy"—a reaffirmation of the 1896 position—against the Swedish and Belgian proponents of overlapping affiliations. Berger's corporeal metaphor of a "two-armed theory" reflected the International's majority position: "I believe in a two-armed labour movement—a labour movement with a political arm, which is the Socialist party, and an economic arm, which is the industrial organization. But I want each arm to fulfil its own mission. I don't want the two arms to interfere with each other. I want them to help each other out, as they do in the human body."[70] Berger was not a "pro-AFL socialist," as he made explicit.[71] "I do not agree with the political methods of [the American Federation of Labor's] leaders and have vigorously opposed them," he wrote. "The leadership has become a cog in the Democratic machine."[72] Against the craft unionism of Samuel Gomper's AFL, Berger declared, "We stand for industrial unionism to combine all those working for the same employer in the same industrial organization, and at almost every convention of the American Federation of Labor I have introduced resolutions looking toward that end and was voted down regularly by trade union leaders of the old style."[73] Though it remained a subject of controversy within the party, official dual unionism meant that Socialists would not split the trade union movement monopolized by Gompers' AFL. In hindsight, given the political success in 1917 of Lenin's Bolsheviks, who time and again acted on the calculated risk that "a split in the workers' movement for socialism is a precondition for revolution,"[74] we can at least hypothesize that the SPA might have benefitted in the long-run from a hard split with the AFL.

The American party both benefitted from and instrumentalized the rich transatlantic exchange of discourse and personnel. Prominent American leaders like Berger, as well as young Socialists without party positions, habitually found their way to Europe, where they opened up national debates to the international arena. For instance, Berger sought to hurt Gompers' reputation among American workers by undermin-

70 Berger, "Victor L. Berger Gives His Views of Sabotage Crowd," *SDH*, 23 August 1913, 1.

71 Esposito, *Ideology of the Socialist Party of America*, 175.

72 Berger, "Address to Mr. Chairman of the Committee on Labor," *VLB papers*, n.d. ca. 1912, reel 28, frames 264–265. See also Berger, "Address to the President and fellow delegates," *VLB papers*, n.d. ca. 1912, reel 28, frames 256–257.

73 Berger, "Victor L. Berger Gives His Views of Sabotage Crowd," 1.

74 James Robertson, "Lenin & the Vanguard Party: In Defense of Democratic Centralism" (speech at a conference of the West German Spartacus, February 1973), www.bolshevik.org (Accessed 9 October 2021).

ing his international credibility. In 1909, Berger arranged to speak to a Berlin crowd whom Gompers had just addressed, in order to deliberately repudiate his speech and convince German workers of the AFL's conservative, non-revolutionary bent. In his Berlin speech, Berger called out the American trade unions for functioning as capitalist rackets, which only served to secure high tariffs "for some clique of manufacturers" and never for the whole of the working class. He further reprimanded the AFL for "the prevention of strikes and for the PROMOTION OF 'HARMONY BETWEEN CAPITAL AND LABOR' […] for the purpose of protecting the class struggle," rather than pushing to abolish it altogether.[75] SPA members regularly visited the headquarter of the International Socialist Bureau (ISB), the International's permanent executive and information body since 1900, based in Brussels. In November 1909, Berger spent time at the ISB to help plan the agenda for the International's 1910 Congress in Copenhagen. The Americans always prioritized the International's congresses, held every three or four years, and attended each one with increasingly large delegations. The Americans were even willing to undergo the burdensome effort of hosting the International's first ever congress outside Europe in 1917, a prospect soon undercut by the war.

Berger's Milwaukee, "the most German city in America," boasted all the features of socialist cosmopolitanism: a distinct immigrant culture of artisanal and skilled labourers, the weak hold of religious institutions characteristic of German cities since the mid-century, and a dense network of civil-social organizations (*Vereine*) resembling those of the SPD.[76] Second Internationalists straightforwardly considered reading and writing to be part of the mortal struggle to overthrow capitalism. To this end, Milwaukee Socialists engaged in a major cross-fertilization of ideas with their comrades abroad. Many were assiduous readers of the German socialist press. Socialists encouraged international solidarity with contemporary struggles across the world, whether major events like the 1905 Russian Revolution—an American-sponsored ISB resolution called for the commemoration of the 1905 revolution, to the chagrin of the right-wing of the German party—or discrete strikes and protests.[77] European socialists' provision of theoretical support, including prefaces and translations of each other's works, forged an acute sense among Americans of belonging to an international movement. During World War I, Lenin publicly celebrated Eugene Debs as the

75 Berger, "Victor L. Berger in Berlin," *SDH*, 6 November 1909, 2.

76 Stan Nadel, "The German Immigrant Left in the United States," in *The Immigrant Left in the United States,* ed. Paul Buhle and Dan Georgakas, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 45–46, 53, 63–64. For the SPD *Vereine*, see Vernon L. Lidtke, *The Alternative Culture: Socialist Labor in Imperial Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

77 Georges Haupt, *Bureau Socialiste International: Comptes Rendus Des Réunions Manifestes Et Circulaires* (Paris: Mouton, 1969), 189.

"American Bebel."[78] As for Berger, his popular writings epitomized the Marxist conviction that workers from different nations had more in common than with employers within their own nation. Editorials like "We Will Apply the Philosophy of International Socialism to a Local Situation" belie historians' construction of a homegrown American socialism. The very letterhead of his *Social Democratic Herald*, "A Journal for the Coming Civilization," spoke to the internationalism of Milwaukee socialism. In this spirit, upon the election of Socialist Emil Seidel as mayor of Milwaukee in 1910, Berger proclaimed, "Thus the battle won November the 8th in Milwaukee has an international significance […] this party was not started and built up solely for the purpose of getting political jobs for fifty or for five hundred. This party was started for the emancipation of the working class."[79] Reflecting on why Milwaukee became "the American vanguard," of the socialist movement, he noted that, unlike earlier utopian socialists such as Albert Brisbane, after whom Milwaukee's city hall was named, and unlike contemporary progressives and anarchists, "we are Marxists."[80]

Organizing American Civil Society for the Dictatorship of the Proletariat

The continual growth of the SPA, like other Second International parties before 1914, exacerbated internal differences and sparked a crisis of the movement's purpose. In the SPD, what had started as a dispute between Eduard Bernstein and Erfurt Marxists fed into the "great schism" between reformist and revolutionary elements running from 1905 through the rest of the party's history, gradually engulfing the entire International.[81] While the German party officially rejected revisionism and reinscribed Erfurt Marxism as its official doctrine, the de facto Revisionist Debate only intensified, as the growth of the Free Trade Unions (*Freie Gewerkschaften*) outpaced that of the German party, dissolving the Erfurt union of revolution and reform by tilting the scales toward the latter in practice. This ongoing Revisionist Debate was inflected by two main factors: the steady growth of socialist parties and the question of socialist militancy, the

78 Lenin, "On the Appeal of the German Independents" (February 1919), *Lenin Collected Works* (*LCW*) 42, 2nd English ed. (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1971), 126b–127a.

79 Berger, "What Makes Us Willing to Work and to Sacrifice," *SDH*, 3 December 1910, 1. See also Berger, "We Will Apply the Philosophy of International Socialism to a Local Situation," *SDH*, 9 April 1910, 1.

80 Berger, "Workingmen of Milwaukee, You Form the American Vanguard" (4 September 1909), in *Broadsides*, 216–222; Berger, "It is a Worthy Accomplishment," *SDH*, 11 February 1911, 1.

81 Carl E. Schorske, *German Social Democracy, 1905–1917: The Development of the Great Schism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, [1955]1983).

latter raised first by the mass strikes of the 1905 Russian Revolution and then intensified by the growing anticipation of war from 1907. To be sure, polarization within the International was a crisis of success, a function of the growing popularity of the socialist movement. External to the party, socialist momentum produced a crisis of capitalist politics. The SPA's remarkable electoral victories from 1910 to 1912 prompted its 1912 convention crisis as well as a crisis within the American political system. In Lenin's article on the 1912 election, "The Results and Significance of the U.S. Presidential Elections," he observed, "the significance of the elections lies in the unusually clear and striking revelation of bourgeois reformism as a means of combating socialism."[82] The mounting backlash only served to reinforce Erfurt Marxism's crisis theory of capitalism, which said that capitalist crisis arose not from supra-human economic forces but from the conscious organization of the working class for socialism, since, according to Kautsky, "our 'positive' work, as soon as it strengthens the proletariat, by just that very fact, sharpens the antagonism between it and other classes."[83]

As for the party's "'positive' work," what exactly was Berger's position on revisionism? It was certainly more complicated than the historical consensus reducing him to a revisionist. More accurately, Berger was "as willing to exploit Bernstein's revisionism as Marxist orthodoxy."[84] Like most Socialists, Berger polemicized vehemently against political alliance with progressives, keeping in line with Karl Kautsky, who maintained that revisionism undermined the party's strategic political independence from capitalist politics.[85] In the SPA's official capacity, all the American delegates voted in support of rejecting revisionism at the International's 1904 Congress in Amsterdam. Within American dialogue, the Revisionist Debate took shape through a debate in the *International Socialist Review*, when an avowed Bernsteinian writing under the pseudonym "Marxist" sparred in a series of article with Ernest Untermann, whom Paul Buhle has described as "the most learned of the American Socialist intellectuals" and who later served as Foreign Editor of Berger's *Milwaukee Leader*.[86] The revisionist "Marxist" implored socialists to devote themselves fully to daily trade union tasks, while Untermann stressed socialists' duty to "educate the proletariat into class consciousness for the purpose of voting itself into political power."[87] Berger absolutely identified with

82 Lenin, "The Results and Significance of the U.S. Presidential Elections" (9 November 1912), *LCW* 18, 402–404.

83 Kautsky, *The Road to Power*, Ch. 8, "The Sharpening of Class Antagonisms."

84 Miller, *Victor Berger*, 24

85 Dick Geary, *Karl Kautsky* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), 12–13. According to Peter Nettl, "The German Social Democratic Party, 1890–1914, As a Political Model," *Past and Present* 30 (April 1965), 69–74, the Revisionist Debate implicated the party's organizational orientation, namely, whether their strategic isolation from the rest of capitalist society was natural and desirable, or, for revisionists, a historical contingency to be ameliorated.

86 Buhle, "Intellectuals in the Debsian Socialist Party," 37–38.

87 Ernest Untermann, "Evolution or Revolution," *ISR* 1, no. 7 (1901).

Untermann against the revisionist "Marxist." However, Berger eventually published excerpts of Bernstein's writings in his own *Herald* from 1901, leading some to call him the "American Bernstein."[88] Nevertheless, while Berger made no secret of his sympathies to Bernstein's views, championing "practical work" to which "all the force of party activity should be put," he did not dogmatically adopt a revisionist position, writing, "Indeed many of his [Kautsky's] charges against Bernstein are just. Bernstein has injected new ideas into the party, but he gives no suggestions for a new and better programme."[89] Quite apart from Bernstein, Berger insisted that socialists' progress did not gradually negate the need for revolution in a zero-sum manner, but rather, "The economic-evolutionary principle—which, by the way, does not exclude so-called revolutionary exploits, but rather includes them—is the best legacy of Karl Marx."[90] Ultimately, Berger found value in the questions that revisionism brought to the surface, and especially for posing the question of the movement's substantive results.

Of course, Socialist Party activity primarily consisted of civil-social organizing, and only intermittently of election campaigns and reform proposals. Historians' notion that the SPA "favoured immediate demands and piecemeal reforms, framed, to be sure, within the language of the Marxist class struggle" misconstrues the fact that the American party, like the German SPD, implemented hardly any political reforms at all, instead concentrating its activities on facilitating the working class' self-organization as an independent constituency in civil society, united for the goal of taking state power.[91] If the economic arm of Berger's two-armed strategy consisted of union activity, then the "political arm" referred mainly to the party's *social* activity of carving out an autonomous space within society, where a truly robust network of Socialist clubs and organizations appeared as a "state within a state," to use Max Weber's characterization of the SPD. Socialist organizations and services included publishing houses, childcare, youth clubs, adult education lyceums, legal counsel, Socialist academies, Sunday Schools, an Intercollegiate Socialist Society, women's organizations, drinking groups, choirs, sports clubs, and more.[92] Socialist newspapers like Berger's would post notices of party meetings and social events, along with labour news and commentary. Party members also ran Socialist encampments in the American heartland, modelled after religious revivals and Populist iterations, bringing hundreds of thousands of beleaguered rural citizens together for music, classes, speeches, and discussions primed

88 Berger, "Not 'Revolutionary Humbugs,' *SDH*, 22 April 1905, 1.
89 Berger, "The Bernstein Doctrine for America," *SDH*, 12 October 1901, 1.
90 Berger, "Edward Bernstein," *SDH*, 19 October 1901, 1.
91 Miller, "Americans and the Second International," 379.
92 See: Kenneth Teitelbaum, *Schooling for "Good Rebels": Socialist Education for Children in the United States, 1900–1920* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993); Max Horn, *The Intercollegiate Socialist Society, 1905–1921: Origins of the Modern American Student Movement* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1979).

by texts like Walter Thomas Mill's *The Struggle for Existence* and Oscar Ameringer's *The Life and Deeds of Uncle Sam*, the latter of which sold half a million copies and was translated into fifteen languages.[93] The party ran all of these activities completely independent of the state. Therefore, to claim that "The Americans [the Socialist Party] were hardly involved in their society as was the SPD"[94] is to impose onto the pre-war era a constricted definition of politics from the neoliberal era, based on appeals to the state and largely circumscribed to single-issue policy advocacy and election canvasing.

Second Internationalists' self-contradictory attitude toward democracy—participating in the state in order to abolish it—was more a matter of Marxist-Hegelian determinate negation than the term "ambivalent parliamentarians"[95] might suggest. As Engels' had put it, "universal suffrage, intelligently used by the workers, will drive the rulers to overthrow legality, that is, to put us in the most favorable position to make revolution."[96] In the German context, this obstructionist tactic included the refusal of the empire's largest party to vote for a national budget in parliament or participate in the *Hoch* ("hail") to the Kaiser. American Socialists likewise used parliaments largely negatively as platforms for agitation rather than positively as legislative organs. Berger's career reflected this strategy of "pure opposition" and agitation, as he dedicated much more time and energy into churning out socialist propaganda in his presses and speeches than he did trying to ram through policy proposals. Ultimately, Berger viewed contingent political structures—including democracy—dialectically, not as ends in themselves but as a means for capitalism's self-overcoming. Thus, "while the ballot itself will not make us free, it will put the means into our hands of achieving our freedom."[97] Strategically, once enough Socialist politicians were elected to Congress, they could eventually change the structure of the American political process to make it more amenable to socialist revolution. Therefore, Berger fought to update the U.S. constitution, "framed at a time entirely different from ours."[98] As he wrote in the edi-

93 For a description of the Socialist encampments, see John Graham, ed., "*Yours for the Revolution": The Appeal to Reason, 1895–1922* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 196–7.

94 Miller, "Americans and the Second International," 380 repeats this claim from Gerhart Niemeyer, "The Second International: 1889–1914," in *The Revolutionary Internationals, 1864–1943,* ed. Milorad M. Drachkovitch (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Publications, 1968), 107–108.

95 James Joll, *The Second International, 1889–1914* (New York: Harper & Row, 1955), 329. Lloyd, following Kipnis, overstates the "poverty of American Marxism" by anachronistically pitting the pre-war SPA against a Third International rubric of economic rupture and "revolutionary spirit of Marxism." Lloyd, *Left Out: Pragmatism, Exceptionalism, and the Poverty of American Marxism*, 197.

96 Engels to Paul, *ELC* vol. 3 (12 November 1892), 211.

97 Berger, "Labor Day Greetings," 2.

98 Berger, "Which Do We Want—A Constitutional Fetich or Majority Rule?" 1.

torial entitled, "Political Reforms are of Minor Importance," "Of the political reforms a new constitution is the most important."[99]

Victor Berger's political behaviour at the municipal and national levels pursued the International's dialectic of organizing a particular set of workers for a universal socialist revolution. During elections, Milwaukee Socialists' municipal platform called to provide free public concerts and lectures, enhance parks, use schools as community centres, liberate saloons—"the proletarian's club house"—eliminate police regulation of workers' dance halls, offer free public education, medical, legal, and educational services, public ownership of utilities, equitable taxation, and public works projects including adequate water and sewer service, spawning the nickname "Sewer Socialists."[100] The ascent of the city's movement drew major figures into its fold, like left-wing celebrity Oscar Ameringer, the "Mark Twain of American Socialism," who moved to Milwaukee in 1913 to work as a columnist and editor on Berger's *Milwaukee Leader* and serve as a county organizer for the party.[101] On the national stage, Berger's fellow congressmen generally received him quite cordially despite his radicalism. This would not last after the Russian Revolution and the failed revolutions across central Europe from 1918–1923 that it inspired, after which anti-socialism dominated America's political culture. As a lone Socialist in Congress in his first 1911–1913 term, Berger promulgated such longstanding SPA positions as the abolition of the Senate, presidential veto and Supreme Court power of judicial review, and the establishment of the democratic referendum and right of recall. He also proposed legislation to nationalize railroads and telephone lines, and to issue loans to municipalities for the purpose of providing full employment to all willing workers.[102] In his first ever resolution, he called for the withdrawal of American troops at the southern border poised to intervene in the Mexican Revolution. Most significantly, along with proposing for the first time in Congress an old-age pension bill, he passed a resolution to investigate and sponsor hearings on the 1912 "Bread and Roses" strike by textile workers in Lawrence, MA. The hearings won national sympathy for the strikers and earned Berger praise from all factions of socialists, including Bill Haywood and the Wobblies.

Civil-social organizing, as opposed to top-down bureaucratic compulsion, was the key to the party's success in regions as different as Milwaukee and the rural Southwest. In terms of the national terrain of the movement, a San Francisco order of 150,000 of Congressman Berger's speeches in September, 1912 gives some indication of his

99 Berger, "Political Reforms are of Minor Importance," *SDH*, 16 September 1911, 1.

100 See Elmer A Beck, *The Sewer Socialists: A History of the Socialist Party of Wisconsin, 1897–1940* (Fennimore, WI: Westburg Associates, 1982).

101 Oscar Ameringer, *If You Don't Weaken: The Autobiography of Oscar Ameringer* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, [1940]1983), 285.

102 House of Representatives 25680 (10 July 1912), *VLB papers*, reel 28, frame 218–219.

geographical reach.[103] While Milwaukee served as a leading example of Socialist urban momentum, in the early years the SPA was concentrated in agrarian and mining areas of the American West and Southwest, where Populism had thrived in the late nineteenth century. Before 1912, Oklahoma, Louisiana, and Arkansas claimed more dues-paying Socialist members than New York. Like Berger's Milwaukee, the Southwest movement was more of an educational than a political force, organizing battered rural workers under the banner of a common global proletariat political struggle. Even the most "grassroots" of Socialists cultivated "the German form of organization," bringing many former populists under party discipline and establishing coordination between the local, state, and national offices. Oklahoma Socialists grew especially rapidly by adapting the "Milwaukee system": disciplined political tactics—electoral campaigns with committeemen placed in most of the state's voting precincts—and the slow building of an autonomous Socialist civil-social milieu—"Little Red School Houses" sponsoring debates on evolution and revolution, party picnics, Sunday Schools, and collective meeting spaces for working class fraternization. Oklahoma party secretary Otto Branstetter forged close personal ties with the Milwaukee organization and the National Executive Committee. Still, Berger was not afraid to criticize regional reform policy if it threatened to liquidate Socialist independence from progressive welfare-statism. With the National Executive Committee behind him, Berger criticized the Southwest delegates' farm programme and moved to table their 1910 platform, since its guarantee to tenants of the right to public land in perpetuity aimed toward "permanent private property" rather than socialism.[104] Berger chastised the programme as "state socialism," warning that it would funnel right into Teddy Roosevelt's New Nationalism calling for government protection of welfare and property.[105]

To understand the party's lesser inroads in the South, we must confront the party's official relationship to disenfranchised groups along with the prejudices of individual Socialists like Berger. Since the party's founding Unity Convention, which featured three black delegates out of 125, the Debsian party vehemently denounced Southern anti-black racism and took a staunchly racial integrationist line, declaring black workers' interests to be united with those of all workers.[106] The SPA's pre-war membership boasted many of the most prominent female and black civil leaders of the day, including Margaret Sanger, Hellen Keller, Grace Campbell, and racial segregationist Kate O'Hare, along with W.E.B. Du Bois, Hubert Harrison, Wilfred Adolphus Domingo,

103 Miscellany, 1910–ca. 1927, *VLB papers*, reel 31, frame 480.

104 James R. Green, *Grass-Roots Socialism: Radical Movements in the Southwest, 1895–1943* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978), xi, 39, 83, 233.

105 Socialist Party, *Proceedings of First National Congress* (Chicago: H. G. Adair, 1910), 228–229, 235.

106 Ross, *Socialist Party of America*, 58. See Eugene Debs, "The Negro in the Class Struggle," *ISR* 4, no. 5 (November 1903); "The Negro and His Nemesis," *ISR* 4, no. 7 (January 1904).

A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen, the latter two who in 1917 transformed a black unionist monthly into *The Messenger*, "the only radical Negro magazine in America," advising its black readership to vote Socialist on the basis of its representing all workers. Since their 1901 founding platform, Socialists called for "equal civil and political rights for men and women." Women made up 1/10 of party membership and played a visible role in party affairs, including strong party leaders like Bertha Hale White, the first female Executive Secretary of the SPA, and Lena Morrow Lewis, the first woman on the National Executive Committee.[107] Women made up almost half of party journalists and a majority of copy editors and staff people. 6–10 % of female Socialists served as delegates, compared to the Republican and Democratic parties that featured virtually none (0–1 % pre-1914).[108]

Though Erfurt Marxism preached equality across all genders and races, it did not immunize all Socialists from commonly held cultural prejudices during the historical peak of social Darwinism and scientific racism. While it is important to question the common argument today that racism is a primary motivation for those who exhibit it, Victor Berger was nonetheless a startling case-in-point of contemporary prejudice. His intermittent defence of "whiteness" expressed a deep-seated cultural prejudice conflating economic and racial explanations of social difference. Berger was particularly influenced by Lewis Henry Morgan's notion of cultural evolution, which posed that societies evolved through a series of linear stages—savagery, barbarism, and civilization—defined by advanced technologies and property relations. "For the next twelve generations no one can organize Chinamen on a Caucasian basis," wrote Berger. "Scientists tell us that the anatomy of the Jap is different from ours—it is more simian (ape-like) […] we cannot change our anatomy in many generations." Debs, the face of the party, assured the membership that such views had "no proper place in the socialist movement."[109] To be sure, Socialist leaders rarely voiced such blatant racism. Most were appalled by Jim Crow, and several Socialists were instrumental in the founding of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), including Massachusetts abolitionist Mary White Ovington and socialist intellectual William English Walling, who founded the National Women's Trade Union League in 1903.

107 Other prominent female Socialists included Anna Louise Strong, Ida Crouch-Hazlett, Anna A. Maley, Jessie Wallace Hughan, Rose Pastor Stokes, Mary Marcy, Elizabeth Chambers Morgan, Leonora O'Reilly, Pauline Newman, Theresa Malkiel, Josephine Conger-Kaneko, and Wilfred Adolphus Domingo. See Mari Jo Buhle, *Women and American Socialism, 1870–1920* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1981).

108 Sally Miller, *Race, Ethnicity, and Gender in Early Twentieth-Century American Socialism* (New York: Garland, 1996), 97–98.

109 Berger, "We Will Stand by the Real American Proletariat," *SDH*, 12 October 1907, 1.

If the party could not erase Berger's racist convictions, it could subordinate them to the party line in practice. Thus, Berger's political behaviour represented the interests of blacks, however beside the point it was for him personally. Despite his prejudice, Berger supported black suffrage when the issue was before the House of Representatives, and he endorsed a bill for federal supervision of southern primaries. He also introduced measures benefitting D.C. residents that would have aided the city's large black population.[110] The national and international party also exerted a disciplining force on the immigration question, about which the Americans were especially concerned. In the SPA's early years, Berger and Untermann, chair of the Committee on Immigration, had expressed their staunch anti-Asian immigration stance on an explicitly racial basis. The National Congress's reprimands in 1910 made them backpedal and stress the environmental rather than the racial basis of their reasoning:

> Any argument which ignores the difference in the environment of European and Asiatic immigrants, any insinuation that we exclude these Asiatics ON ACCOUNT OF THEIR RACE (*sic*), misses the main point of the position of the majority report […] This does not mean that any one race is physically inferior to another … But it does mean that races separated by centuries of economic evolution cannot jump in a few years over chasms of race peculiarities emphasized and ossified by peculiar economic conditions.[111]

Thus, Berger could claim a Lamarckian understanding of the heritability of acquired characteristics rather than overt biological racism. Reframing his anti-Chinese sentiment as cultural rather than racial discrimination, Berger came to rely on a purely economic justification for excluding cheap Chinese labour, on the basis of their exploitation as low-paid workers, strike-breakers and contract workers, all of which diluted organized labour and lowered the working-class standard of living. Here too, the Second International congresses provided a platform for adjudicating the issue. At Stuttgart in 1907 and Copenhagen in 1910, New York City Socialist Morris Hillquit, serving as Vice President of the International's Commission on Emigration and Immigration, proposed the Americans' majority position calling for exclusionist restriction of "artificially stimulated immigration" from nations whose low industrialization

110 Sally Miller, *Race, Ethnicity, and Gender*, 37.

111 Ernest Untermann, "A Reply to Debs," *SDH*, 20 August 1910, 2. Berger published similar remarks in Untermann, "The Immigration Question," *SDH*, 10 December 1910, 2. Lloyd overstates the case of Berger, who allegedly "insisted that socialism was an issue more of race than of class." Pittenger illuminates how Berger and other Socialists drew upon the movement's characteristic scientism to harmonize racist attitudes with socialist commitments. Lloyd, *Left Out*, 94; Pittenger, *American Socialists*, 168–170. For the 1907–1908 immigration dispute within the party, see Kipnis, *American Socialist Movement*, 276–288.

precluded their receptivity to the labour movement, singling out East Asians while denying prejudice. However, the castigations by other internationalists, including the American Louis Boudin, shot down an exclusionist programme decisively, instructing the Americans to condemn exclusion and simultaneously to vocalize opposition to capitalists' deliberate importation of cheap labour.

Ultimately, the political consequences of Berger's racism were bound to the better instincts of the national and international movement. More significant than Berger's bigoted sentiments themselves was the fact that the international socialist party, as a non-state, transnational actor, could exert a deleterious influence on them, and likewise, that the SPA was sufficiently incorporated in the International to force a realignment on their immigration stance. Moreover, it speaks to the embeddedness of Erfurt Marxism in the American party that one of its greatest leaders would transgress Marxism's liberal line on racial equality before abdicating the core tenets of proletariat political independence from progressives and the subordination of reform to socialist revolution more peculiar to Marxism. The fact that the party attracted some open bigots reveals that the historical socialist movement was constituted by concerted political aspirations rather than ethical positions. Today, for better or worse, the preponderance of moral discourse and absence of mass socialist parties speaks to an inverse condition.

Conclusion

In the United States, as elsewhere, World War I destroyed the Second International from the inside and out.[112] With the advent of the Great War, Berger and the Socialists maintained strict opposition to American entry in what they understood to be an

112 Ever since Daniel Bell's Weberian condemnation of Socialists' ideological obstinance, it has been the consensus view that the American socialist movement dissolved due to its uncompromising Marxist sectarianism, citing the SPA's opposition to the American entry in World War I as a losing position in popular opinion. Conversely, for Kipnis, the SPA failed from being *insufficiently* Marxist, by virtue of its "vote-getting" and "sewer socialism" typified by Berger's Milwaukee, and the 1912 expulsion of the anarcho-syndicalists was the main culprit leading to the 1919 Communist split. Relatedly, David Shannon chalked up the Socialists' failure to an absence of class consciousness in American culture. Jack Ross' recent monograph, following James Weinstein, attributes the SPA's war-time crackup to the expulsion of Haywood's "left-wing" element but also emphasizes the role of Wilsonian state repression as a contributing factor. Pittenger and Lloyd locate the failure at the level of ideology, namely, the deleterious influence of American pragmatism and positivism on Marxism. None of these accounts quite grasps the transnational rubric that Socialists set for themselves. By their own standard, what failed was not "American socialism" but socialism, which they understood as a global political project. Bell, *Marxian Socialism*; Kipnis, *American Socialist Movement*; David Shannon, *The Socialist Party of America: A History* (New York: Macmillan,

imperialist war.[113] Shortly after America entered the war in April 1917, the Wilson administration passed the Espionage Act of 1917 and the Sedition Act of 1918, the first federal law to criminalize seditious speech since the late eighteenth century. Having made criticism of the war or the president a crime, they quickly moved to suppress Berger and the Socialists. The Wilson regime banned all SPA publications, disqualified Socialists from elections, and removed their state representatives from office, backed by a Supreme Court decision that deemed the SPA a membership organization as opposed to a political party. The federal government revoked the *Milwaukee Leader*'s mailing privileges and sentenced Berger to a twenty-year prison sentence, vacated only after a long legal battle. Following the 1918 election, he was denied a duly elected seat in Congress, even after winning it again in a second vote.[114] The Supreme Court eventually overturned the verdict in 1921, and Berger was elected to three successive terms from 1922 to 1928, when he was defeated by William Stafford and returned to Milwaukee to resume his career as a newspaper editor. A year later, while crossing the street outside his publishing office, he was struck by a streetcar and died within weeks at the age of sixty-nine. Meyer London, the only other Socialist congressperson, died in a separate car accident that same year.

For historians, the challenge remains to understand Berger and the early SPA on their own terms. Why has the historiography of the past 60 years misrepresented Berger as a welfare-statist, grassroots municipal leader? We can only speculate that left-leaning scholars have looked back to the older tradition through the lens of their own historical moment, spotlighting only those aspects of the past that conform to a post-New Left political imagination. Without being able to step outside of our own biases today, it is crucial to try to trace the contours of the Socialist movement as it stood, recognizing the vigorous international traffic in ideas and the fundamental distinctions between socialists and competing contemporary projects. American Socialists actively debated the validity of trade unionism, the structure of the capitalist state, and the necessity of working-class state rule as a transitional path to socialism. Not only was Berger a political representative of the most numerically vast and organizationally advanced socialist movement in American history, but as an ideological leader who helped build and disseminate Second-International Marxism in a popular idiom, he contributed to socialists' propensity to meaningfully differentiate themselves from

1955); Ross, *Socialist Party of America*; Weinstein, *The Decline of Socialism in America*; Pittenger, *American Socialists*; Lloyd, *Left Out*.

113 Ross overstates the extent to which Berger was "radicalized" by the war. Berger simply maintained the SPA's longstanding Marxist position on imperialist war, re-formalized in the party's St. Louis Platform in 1917, while others like Meyer London abandoned the platform. Ross, *Socialist Party of America*, 220.

114 See Eric Thomas Chester, *Free Speech and the Suppression of Dissent during World War I* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2020).

progressives and liberals. Any "right-left-centre" labelling of Socialists must accommodate the fact that even "right-wing" Socialists like Victor Berger identified as Marxists and aggressively rejected the equation of socialism with Progressivism and Populism. Accordingly, Berger based his efforts on the conviction that mass socialist parties such as the SPA would steer the world-historic overthrow of capitalism. Although the exact meaning of "revolution" for Socialists merits further scrutiny, it is clear that it signified a total social transformation bent on abolishing wage labour, at minimum.

By contrast, today's nominal socialists, inspired by Bernie Sanders' 2016 and 2020 Democratic presidential campaigns, by seeking a more robust welfare state to bust up neoliberal monopolies and redistribute wealth, resemble the politics of Gilded Age progressives like newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst and "trust-buster" Theodore Roosevelt, more than they do Socialist politicians like Berger. It is easy to forget that the most progressive welfare states in the world relinquished basic civil liberties in order to curb the democratically organized socialist movements of their day, from Otto von Bismarck's Anti-Socialist laws (1878–1890) to Woodrow Wilson's terrorism against the SPA. As historic welfare state repressiveness demonstrates, and as observers at the time well knew, the construction of mass socialist parties under the Second International, in the United States as elsewhere, represented a fundamental challenge to the established order. Throughout Berger's electoral campaigns and his work in office, by insisting that "the ultimate aim of our party is not reform, it is a revolution," Berger, like Debs, was not a Populist prophet of an American movement but a genuine Second International Marxist.[115] The revolutionary Marxist credentials of the SPA's most "right-wing" leader in the late *liberal* era throw critical relief on "socialists" in the late *neoliberal* era, who by comparison appear to mark the complete absence of a socialist movement altogether, at least by historical Socialists' own standards. To be able to begin asking why this is the case, we must start by acknowledging that a historical discrepancy exists in the first place.

Will Stratford is a PhD candidate in History at Boston College. He is currently working on his dissertation, tentatively entitled, *Pursuing Contradiction: Dialectics of German Social Democratic Marxism, 1890–1914*. He has been a Graduate Fellow at the Clough Center for Constitutional Democracy for the 2020–2021 and 2021–2022 academic years. His writings on politics, history, and the left have appeared in *Weekly Worker*, *Sublation Magazine*, and *Platypus Review*.

115 Berger, "What Makes Us Willing to Work and to Sacrifice," 1.

Vilmos Erős

The "Prussian Way" versus the "Third Road": Peasant-History in Hungary in the 1950s and 1960s—the Case of István Szabó

Abstract

The following article analyses the pivotal moments that allowed Marxist-Stalinist historiography became the official approach in the Hungarian historical profession in the late 1940s. One of the main targets of Communist/Marxist historians were István Szabó (1898–1969), a professor at the University of Debrecen, and his followers, who were under continuous attack from Marxist historians. It will be argued here that the main motivation behind these attacks was the fact that István Szabó challenged the "master-narrative" of contemporary Hungarian Marxist historiography, namely the concept of "second serfdom," which was also linked to a conception of the development of the Hungarian economy and Hungarian society that had "turned away" from the development of Western Europe and followed an Eastern-European path instead. Szabó challenged this account, and instead argued for Hungary's "transitional" position between Western and Eastern Europe. His ambition was to offer a "alternative third road" between capitalism and socialism. In this endeavour, he relied heavily on the legacy of the so-called "populist" writers and thinkers of the interwar period (such as László Németh, István Bibó, István Hajnal).

Keywords: *rural history*; *homogenization/Gleichschaltung*; *Marxist-Stalinist historiography*; *"Second serfdom;" "Prussian way;" "East-Central European development;" "third way"*

The professionalization of Hungarian historiography took place in the second half of the nineteenth century, in the period of the so-called Austro-Hungarian Dualism.[1] Although political-ideological motives (such as the rise in institutionalization) played a significant role in this process, the era was nonetheless deeply marked by an at-

1 On Hungarian historical writing in the age of Dualism in English, see Steven Béla Várdy, *Clio's Art in Hungary and Hungarian America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

DOI: 10.46586/mts.68.2022.67-81 Moving the Social · 68 (2022) · p. 67–81

mosphere of freedom in academia, in tune with the general liberal political attitude of the century. For most of the period between the two World Wars, this tendency continued. The academic climate of the period was characterized by openness; only immediately before and during the Second World War were some historians forced to emigrate.[2] All this changed significantly in 1945, and then especially after 1948. Between 1945–1948, many historians (András Alföldy, József Deér, Károly Kerényi, Gyula Miskolczy) chose the path of emigration, and in 1948, the Stalinist-Communist takeover engendered an entire "Gleichschaltung," or homogenization, of historical scholarship. This process included many components, among them the removal of several "bourgeois" historians from the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, an ideological-political reckoning with the representatives of the so called "Geistesgeschichte," the over-emphasis on the history of labor movements (mainly that of the Communist Party), the so-called "citatologie" (namely the constant citation of the classics of Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism,[3] instead of rigorous source criticism), and the forcible emphasis on the impact of Slavic-Russian influences on Hungarian history.[4] A further crucial phenomenon, beginning in the second half of the 1940s, was the oppression of non-Marxist historians of rural history,[5] chief among them István Szabó.[6] The purpose of the following study is to account for the key moments in this process.

2 See Steven Béla Várdy, *Modern Hungarian Historiography* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976). It should be noted that many Hungarian (mostly Jewish) scholars (many of whom later gained international renown) were forced into emigration, but none of them were outstanding historians. See Tibor Frank, *Double Exile: Migrations of Jewish Hungarian Professionals through Germany to the United States* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2009). To a certain extent, Henrik Marczali's complaints in 1927 may have been justified, since he was marginalized because of his alleged role in the events of the 1918/1919 revolutions. See Henrik Marczali, "Hongrie," *Histoire et historiens depuis cinquante ans: Méthodes, organisation et résultats du travail historique de 1876 á 1926*, ed. Christian Pfister (Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1927), 209–218.

3 See Vilmos Erős, and Ádám Takács, ed., *Tudomány és ideológia között: Tanulmányok az 1945 utáni magyar történetírásról* (Budapest: ELTE Eötvös Kiadó, 2012).

4 About these phenomena, see Deák, István, "Historiography of the Countries of Eastern Europe: Hungary," *American Historical Review* 97, no. 4 (1992). Árpád von Klimó, "La statalizzazione della Storia (I tentativi di creare una storia ungherese nazionale 1948–56)," *Le Carte e la Storia* 5, no. 2 (1999). For an account of similar tendencies in other Eastern-European communist countries, see Maciej Maria Górny, "Historical Writing in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary," *Oxford History of Historical Writing*, Vol. 5, ed. Axel Schneider, Daniel Woolf (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 243–265.

5 On Hungarian rural history, see Steven Béla Várdy, "Domanovszky and the Hungarian Civilization or Kulturgeschichte School," in *Modern Hungarian Historiography*, ed. Várdy (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 161–174.

6 István Szabó was born in Debrecen in 1898, the son of a poor artisan. He went to school and studied at the university in his hometown and in Szeged, where he first became a journalist, then Assistant Professor at the Institute of History. In 1928, he moved to Budapest,

Attacks against Szabó in the 1940s

Major attacks against Szabó began in 1948. The basis for these charges were Szabó's two books, published the same year: one, entitled *Debrecen, the Capital City of the War of Independence of 1848–49* (fought against the Habsburgs) was only edited by him, and depicts and analyses in detail the most important events of this Revolution in Debrecen to commemorate the centenary of The Hungarian Revolution of 1848/49.[7] The volume's concept sparked fierce assaults in the pages of journals such as *Társadalmi Szemle* and *Valóság*, in the leading history journal *Századok* and a number of local newspapers.[8] These harsh reactions often came from non-professional historians, such as Tibor Balázs, Vera Balázs, Tibor Csabai, although later well-known "professional" historians slandered the book as well, including György Spira, Pál Sándor, and Péter Hanák.[9] In short, these critics argued that the volume was merely a positivist compilation of numerous events of the Revolution, without a sincere elaboration of the role and interests of working-class people. Furthermore, they held that the authors did not sufficiently highlight the role and importance of the Jacobins/the Left Wing Party in the Revolution, and sometimes even went as far as to mock the Jacobins. Conversely,

and worked at the National Archives of Hungary until 1943, when he returned to Debrecen and soon became Professor. In Budapest, he edited the most important journal for archival studies in Hungary, the Levéltári Közlemények, from 1937 onwards, and became a member of the so-called "Ethnohistory School" of Elemér Mályusz. After the Second World War, together with his students and colleagues, he founded a well-known school in rural history at the University of Debrecen, which represented a social-history approach, in opposition to the demands of the Communist era. After his continuous denigration in 1948–49, he was forced out of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. He (and his students) took part in the revolutionary events in Debrecen in 1956, and he became co-president of the Revolutionary Committee at the University. In 1958, he retired, and in the last decade of his life, edited three large volumes about the history of peasantry in Hungary in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He died in 1969. In 1989, his membership in the Hungarian Academy of Sciences was returned, and he was also posthumously awarded the "Széchenyi Prize." See Várdy, *Modern Hungarian Historiography*, 112–113.

7 István Szabó, *A szabadságharc fővárosa, Debrecen: 1849 január-május* (Debrecen: 1948).

8 Vilmos Erős, ed., *A harmadik út felé: Szabó István történész cikkekben és dokumentumokban* (Budapest: Lucidus, 2006), 401–404.

9 Századok 82 (1948). 343–344 and 348. One wonders whether the main impetus behind the attacks against Szabó was a generation gap, since Szabó could have been regarded as an elderly historian after the Second World War, and even more so in the 1950s. However, this argument does not hold true, as similarly aged historians were among the attackers (Erzsébet Andics, Pál S. Sándor), and there were several younger scholars (János Varga, Jenő Szűcs, to some extent Károly Vörös, and later Vera Zimányi) who shared Szabó's views. A special case is Péter Hanák, who later became significantly more appreciative of Szabó's ideas.

the authors were not critical enough, apologetic toward or even positively biased towards the "traitors" of the Revolution, namely the politicians of the so-called "Peace Party," who were working towards a rational compromise with the Habsburg regime.[10] These kinds of arguments coincided with an attack against Szabó's second 1948 volume published by the so-called "Teleki Institute" (at that time already known as a "bourgeois" institution within the historical profession). The chief authors of these critical texts were again György Spira, Pál Sándor, Péter Hanák, Pál Pach Zsigmond, writing for *Századok* and *Társadalmi Szemle*. Szabó's book, entitled *Studies in the History of the Hungarian Peasantry* [Tanulmányok a magyar parasztság történetéből.] mostly encompassed previously published essays about the history of peasantry in Hungary (from the Middle Ages to early modernity to nineteenth century).[11] The collection came under attack mainly due to its analysis of the aforementioned Revolution of 1848/49. Szabó maintained that the revolutionary laws of 1848/49 concerning serfs attempted to abolish this social class in the most progressive way in Eastern/rather East-Central Europe.[12] Szabó claimed that Kossuth was therefore right when he championed this policy, which sought to establish the so-called "free land property."

According to his critics, Szabó's evaluation represented the interests of landlords and nobility, while they contended that the best solution for social problems would have been a general "land-distribution," which would have provided land and property for all liberated serfs, and at the same time would have eradicated all other remnants of "feudal" contracts that were disadvantageous for serfs (this was the policy of the "radical left.").[13]

10 For Szabó's response, see Vilmos Erős, "Szabó István körül,"*Aetas* 15, no. 3 (2000), 110–126.

11 István Szabó, *Tanulmányok a magyar parasztság történetéből* (Budapest: Teleki Pál Tudományos Intézet, 1948).

12 See "A jobbágybirtok problémái 1848/49-ben [Problems of the Serf's Plot in 1848/49]" in Szabó, *Tanulmányok a magyar parasztság történetéből* (Budapest: Teleki Pál Tudományos Intézet, 1948), 311–396.

13 See György Szabad, "Szabó István a felszabaduló jobbágyság földtulajdonlási igényéről," in *Szabó István Emlékkönyv*, ed. Rácz István (Debrecen: Kossuth Egyetemi Kiadó, 1998), 302–309.

Attacks in the 1950s and 1960s

The polemics surrounding Szabó's work were not finished, and, in some historians' opinion, the representatives of the Marxist-Stalinist historiography who gained absolute power in these years even regarded him as their primary adversary, standing for the obsolete and abject "bourgeois" view of rural history.[14] One of the most striking elements of the attempts to undermine him was that in the 1950s, the editorial responsibilities of the so-called "Peasant Fontes" series and volumes were taken out of his hands (he was deprived of the opportunity to edit the volumes—although he was the one who came up with the idea of the series immediately after the Second World War).[15] The volumes in question were eventually published as edited by Éva H. Balázs (*Letters of the Serfs*), Endre Varga (*Landlord Tribunal Papers*) and Ferenc Maksay (*Urbarial Papers/Contracts*), respectively.[16] The main accusation against Szabó was that he portrayed the relationship between landlords and serfs in these source-collections as "patriarchal," peaceful and even reciprocal: he did not emphasize the "class struggle" between the fundamentally antagonistic social classes.[17]

The most severe offensive against Szabó was launched by Pál Sándor in 1954,[18] who on the same basis, also challenged the tenets of the so-called "Hungarian Civilization History School" of Sándor Domanovszky (which existed between the two World Wars in Hungary[19]). Here too the argument was raised that this school depicted relations between landlords and serfs as too "patriarchal" and peaceful.[20] Szabó was still

14 Ignác Romsics, *Clio bűvöletében. Magyar történetírás a 19–20. században—nemzetközi kitekintéssel* [Under the Spell of Clio. Hungarian Historiography in the nineteenth-twentieth Centuries—with an European Outlook] (Budapest: Osiris, 2011); István Balogh, "Alkotás és tudományszervezés a politika szorításában,"in *Szabó István Emlékkönyv*, ed. Rácz István (Debrecen: Kossuth Egyetemi Kiadó, 1998).

15 MTA KIK, Ms 5439/12 István Szabó, Pro memoria to the Source Collection: "Iratok a magyar parasztság történetéhez."

16 See Vilmos Erős, ed. *A harmadik út felé (Szabó István történész cikkekben és dokumentumokban)* [Towards a Third Way. The Historian István Szabó in Articles and Documents] (Budapest: Lucidus, 2006), 341–347.

17 See Éva H. Balázs, "A 'jobbágylevelek' ügyében," *A harmadik út felé: Szabó István történész cikkekben és dokumentumokban*, ed. Vilmos Erős (Budapest: Lucidus, 2006), 411–412.

18 Sándor Pál, "A magyar agrártörténeti irodalom kritikája," *A harmadik út felé: Szabó István történész cikkekben és dokumentumokban*, ed. Vilmos Erős (Budapest: Lucidus, 2006), 408–410.

19 Várdy, "Domanovszky and the Hungarian Civilization or Kulturgeschichte School," *Modern Hungarian Historiography* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 161–174.

20 See Ignác Romsics, *Clio bűvöletében. Magyar történetírás a 19–20. században—nemzetközi kitekintéssel*, [Under the Spell of Clio. Hungarian Historiography in the nineteenth-twentieth Centuries—with an European Outlook, (Budapest: Osiris, 2011), 318.

bombarded for his perceived position on the events of 1848/49, a criticism that had already emerged in 1948: that he dismissed the "land-distribution" policy as a topical/relevant and real alternative, thus he could not even be deemed a representative of the so-called "populist ideology"[21] and peasant party (which was at that time regarded as semi-progressive, and formed a coalition with the Communist Party), but could rather be seen as supporting and even justifying the reactionary and fascist "Horthy régime" with its slogans of "unity and community of all Hungarians."[22]

Also, another case can be mentioned from the 1950s, relating to his abovementioned view on Kossuth's serf policy in 1848/49.[23] The starting point of this dispute was that Szabó received a request (by the Hungarian Historical Society) to write a paper about Kossuth's views regarding this question. Szabó's manuscript was read with hesitation, entailing a lengthy editing process, as the editors were preparing the volume to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the world-famous statesman.[24] The editors sought once again to persuade Szabó to criticize Kossuth for erroneously advocat-

21 Gyula Borbándi, *Der ungarische Populismus* (Mainz: Hase&Koehler, 1976); Steven Béla Várdy, "The Populists and Their Criticism of Geistesgeschichte," *Modern Hungarian Historiography*, ed. Steven Béla Várdy (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 129–135.

22 István Szabó, "Nemesség és parasztság Werbőczi után," in *Úr és paraszt a magyar élet egységében*, ed. Sándor Eckhardt (Budapest: Magyarságtudományi Intézet, 1941), 44–80.

23 See *Emlékkönyv Kossuth Lajos születésének 150.évfordulójára, I-II*, ed. Zoltán I. Tóth (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1952). In 1954, Szabó engaged in a fierce debate with György Székely, who, in his 1950s works, often criticized the so-called "bourgeois" historians, frequently Szabó himself, claiming that they did not sufficiently emphasize the significance of the serfs' and the peasantry's class-struggle. The debate between Szabó and Székely stemmed from their contrasting interpretations of the laws of 1351. During the debate, Szabó argued (repeating his conclusions from 1938) that these laws were not so much about the serfs' opportunities to move, but about the tribunal authority of the landlords, and thus also not about the serfs' tax burdens, the so-called "nona," but about the obligation of the nobility and landlords to levy those taxes. Following the plague epidemics of 1348, numerous landlords could afford to waive this tax imposed on the serfs; a favour intended to attract as many serfs as possible to their properties. The lower nobility could not do without the taxes on their serfs, which is why they passed the 1351 law in the national assembly, where they were in the majority. In conclusion, Szabó argued that there had been a severe struggle between the classes, but not so much between the ruling classes and the peasantry as between the nobility and the landlords. (At that time, the situation of peasants was even improving—according to Szabó.) See György Székely, "A jobbágyság földesúri terheinek növelése és az erőszakapparátus további kiépítése," in *Tanulmányok a parasztság történetéhez Magyarországon: a 14.században*, ed. György Székely (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1953); György Székely, "A jobbágyköltözés, mint a paraszti harc egyik jellemző formája,"in Ibid. (1953); Erős Vilmos, "A magyarság létét tápláló népi forrás: Szabó Istvánnak a magyar parasztság középkori történetével kapcsolatos munkái," *Agrártörténeti Szemle* 58, no. 1–4 (2017).

24 György Szabad, *Kossuth politikai pályája ismert és ismeretlen megnyilatkozásai tükrében* (Budapest: Kossuth, 1977).

ing his "free land property" program. According to Kossuth's (and Szabó's) critics and Marxist-Stalinist historiography, a "land distribution" program would have allowed him to rely much more on the peasantry and the people, therefore he might have been more successful in the fight against the feudal enemy, i. e. the Habsburgs. Szabó agreed to modify his manuscript to a certain extent, however, he was unwilling to change his basic position, therefore, the editors eventually declined to publish his study in the Kossuth-volume. As a result, it only appeared in the journal "Századok"(1952), and the crucial last chapter in the Yearbook of the Institute of History of the Kossuth Lajos University of Debrecen in 1959.[25]

Szabó was not exempt from criticism under the "Kádár régime" either. In 1960, for instance, Szabó published a study in French about the historical demography of Hungary in the late Middle Ages. On this occasion, a session was held in the Hungarian Institute of History, where Szabó's essay was denounced for its "narodnik/populist" inclinations.[26] There was also a lot of hesitation concerning the volumes of "The History of Peasantry in Hungary in the Age of Capitalism"in 1965[27], as some members of the Institute of Historical Studies of Budapest withdrew their contributions from this project (or simply rejected Szabó's call for papers). One of the contributors, Sándor Gyimesi entered into an escalating debate with his reviewer, Miklós Szuhay[28]. Szuhay criticized Gyimesi's view of the role of cooperatives, and claimed that the author ignored the class struggle between the different strata of peasant society, which had been left out of the whole project anyway. Gyimesi was labelled a non-Marxist historian by Szuhay.[29]

25 István Szabó, "Kossuth állásfoglalása a parasztkérdésben 1848/49-ben," *Acta Universitatis Debreceniensis*, ed. Zoltán Varga (Debrecen: KLTE, 1959), 29–46.

26 István Szabó, *La répartition de la population de Hongrie entre les bourgades et les villages dans les années 1449–1526* (Budapest: MTA, 1960), 6 and 25. The critics were probably embarrassed by Szabó's statements, reiterating his previous views about the role of the market-towns as a platform for the improvement of the peasant's lot from the Middle Ages onwards. At the same time, we can detect the ethnic motives behind Szabó's assertions as he contrasts the "free royal towns," inhabited by foreigners, with the market towns in question, downplaying the significance of the former in the social-economic development of Hungary.

27 *A parasztság Magyarországon a kapitalizmus korában (1849–1914) I–II*, edited by István Szabó (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1965).

28 Sándor Gyimesi, "A parasztság és a szövetkezeti mozgalmak," in *A parasztság Magyarországon a kapitalizmus korában (1849–1914) I–II, II*, ed. István Szabó (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1965), 616–652.

29 MTA KIK, Ms 5440/86. Miklós Szuhay's review about the study of Sándor Gyimesi. Budapest, 1963.

"Second serfdom," "Prussian way," "turning off"

Yet the question rightfully arises: in the end, what was the background of these nearly unceasing assaults on István Szabó?

In my view, the most striking and important drive behind these debates was the question of the so-called concept of a "second serfdom" (closely connected to the "Prussian way"), which gained absolute dominance and even became a "master narrative" in Hungarian historiography after the Communist/Stalinist political takeover in 1948/49.[30] This narrative borrowed many of its arguments from the "Hungarian Civilization History School" of Sándor Domanovszky, which existed between the two World Wars and first applied the theoretical model and concept of "Grundherrschaft" and "Gutsherrschaft."[31] In contrast to the "Geistesgeschichte" interpretation of Hungarian history that put much greater emphasis on the Western European influences on Hungarian development,[32] this concept held that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the so-called "Gutsherrschaft" came to the fore again in Eastern European regions, i. e. the "domain/demesne" where the landlord had had his property cultivated on his own, and as a consequence, a socio-economic structure evolved that was different from that of Western Europe.[33]

After 1948, Marxist historiography took up this theory and stretched it to its extremes, speaking not simply of a "turning away" from Western development, but expressis verbis elaborating on a unique and comprehensive Eastern European pattern.[34]

30 From the international literature, see *Grand domaine et petites exploitations en Europe au Moyen Age et dans les temps modernes: Rapports nationaux*, ed. Péter Gunst-Tamás Hoffmann (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1982).

31 See Imre Wellmann, "Mezőgazdaságtörténetünk új útjai," *Domanovszky-Emlékkönyv,* ed. Imre Wellmann (Budapest: Egyetemi Nyomda, 1937), 1–51.

32 On "Geistesgeschichte" see Vilmos Erős, "In the Lure of "Geistesgeschichte": The Theme of Decline in Hungarian Historiography and Historical Thinking Between the Two World Wars," *European Review of History / Revue européenne d'histoire* 22, no. 3 (2015), 411–432. There is no exact English translation for the original German term, "Geistesgeschichte," while the Hungarian expression used in the interwar period is a kind of "mirror translation" thereof. At the same time, it is worth pointing out that "Geistesgeschichte" is not at all the equivalent of the "history of ideas," as it must be taken into consideration that the latter does not suggest such a complete and coherent message in epistemology, ontology of history, political philosophy, nor does it involve such a scepticism towards modern culture as "Geistesgeschichte" does. See furthermore Várdy, *Modern Hungarian Historiography*, 62–101.

33 On the Domanovszky school, see Tamás Csíki, *Társadalomábrázolások és értelmezések a magyar történeti irodalomban (1945-ig)* (Debrecen: Ethnica, 2003).

34 Pál Pach Zsigmond, *Die ungarische Agrarentwicklung im 16–17. Jahrhundert: Abbiegung vom westeuropäischen Entwicklungsgang* (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1964).

This model placed great emphasis on the overwhelming role of the property retained under the landlord's management/"domain" (Gutswirtschaft), where the landlord had his property cultivated by relying on the ever-expanding services of his serfs. At the same time, the serfs' situation began to deteriorate swiftly: the ranks of the so-called "corvée" serfs (forced to labour on the property of landlords, with nothing in exchange) began to swell radically, an "expelling" of the serfs from their tenancies ("Bauernlegen"), the scope of the lords' monopoly on the so-called "ius regalia"– such as wine producing, meat selling, milling, etc.—proliferated.[35]

Szabó had manifold connections with the abovementioned "Domanovszky school" and continuously rebutted these contentions of Marxist historiography. Already in many of his studies appearing in the second half of the 1940s[36], but especially in his volume published in 1948, he elaborated on the idea that the situation of Hungarian serfs in the Middle-Ages can be located somewhere in *between* Western and Eastern European developments.[37] For instance, he argued that the phenomenon of "desertification/depopulation" in that period was caused not so much by the gradually increasing exploitation of the serfs, but rather by the "sweeping effect" of market towns, which offered a possibility to improve serfs' social position. This was eventually also the root cause of the Peasants' Rebellion of 1514.[38]

Szabó held similar views in 1947–48, concerning circumstances in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries,[39] asserting that although after the rebellion of György Dózsa in 1514, István Werbőczy imposed "eternal serfdom" and decreed that the serfs were "bound to the soil," his laws could not have been enforced as serfs had the option to flee from the properties of the landlords. Furthermore they gradually gained more and more opportunities to own and establish their own properties, such as vineyards, cleared, pawned and rented lands, etc.[40] Szabó explicitly objected to and challenged the thesis of a "second serfdom" in the 1950s. In his abovementioned debate with György Székely, his reviewer's opinions about university textbooks, and his letters to

35 See Ferenc Maksay, "Gutswirtschaft und Bauernlegen in Ungarn im 16. Jahrhundert," *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 51, no. 1 (1958).

36 Étienne Szabó. "Les grands domaines en Hongrie au début des temps modernes." [Large Estates in Hungary in the Early Modern Ages] *Revue d'Histoire Comparée* 5 (1947): 167–192; István Szabó (1947). *A jobbágy birtoklása az örökös jobbágyság korában* [Possessing Serfs in the Age of Perpetual Serfdom] (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1947).

37 Étienne Szabó, "Du serf perpétuel au paysan libre" [From Perpetual Serfdom to Free Peasantry], *Nouvelle Revue de Hongrie* 63: 382–387; (1940): 382–387; Szabó, "Les grands domaines en Hongrie."

38 "A középkorvégi parasztlázadások. 1437–1514," *Tanulmányok a magyar parasztság történetéből, ed. Szabó, István* (Budapest: Teleki Pál Tudományos Intézet, 1948), 31–63.

39 Szabó, "Les grands domaines," 188–189.

40 Szabó, "Les grand domaines"; Szabó, *A jobbágy birtoklása az örökös jobbágyság korában.*

other historians, such as Ferenc Maksay among others,[41] serve as major evidence for his position.

In these documents Szabó consistently asserts that the phenomenon of a "second serfdom" did not exist in Hungarian social history as there had not even been a first one.[42] The position of serfs (including their standard of living) was improving, the peasant society was at least somewhat stratified (it included several social layers/levels), and there were hardly any among them who had been deprived of their belongings. In terms of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, the concept of a "second serfdom" are doubtful, to say the least, as the "Gutswirtschaft" and "domain" did not exclusively prevail, the number of "corvée" serfs was not continuously growing (the state and the Habsburgs—Maria Theresa, Joseph II—sometimes even offered serfs significant protections[43]), large estates depended on serf-tenants to a considerable extent, thus the landlords had no interest in banishing them from their property (their revenues also came largely from serfs' taxes and services), the "Bauernlegen" was basically unknown and therefore non-existent.[44] Serfs had numerous chances to improve their social status in this period as well, including becoming a "hajdú,"[45] or rise though the ranks of soldiers in the military fortresses

41 MTA KIK Ms 5440/17; Ms 5440/16; Ms 5440/14; *A harmadik út felé*, 310–319, 356–360, 362–368. Szabó's reviews on the first volume of the university textbook.

42 For the Marxist literature on "second serfdom," see Johannes Nichtweiss, "Zur Frage der zweiten Leibeigenschaft und des sogennannten preussischen Weges der Entwicklung des Kapitalismus in der Landwirtschaft Ostdeutschlands," *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1, no. 5 (1953).

43 See Stefan Szabó, "Ungarisches Bauerntum," *Ungarn* 1 (1940): 219–227. See an excerpt from Szabó study in German. "Allein selbst bei dem Tiefstand des gesellschaftlichen Verfalls der ungarischen Leibeigenen wurde es nicht zur Regel, dass der Hörige selbst oder seine Familie dem Fronherrn innere persönliche Dienste leistete, wie dies in mehreren Teilen Osteuropas Sitte war. Stets bewahrte der ungarische Bauer einen Rest von Selbsständigkeit; er behielt seinen Charakter als Landwirt und sein Bewusstsein, das ihn zum Gefühl seiner Menschlichkeit erzog, blieb unberührt. Auch die eigenartigen Formen der ungarischen Bauernautonomien blühten zu dieser Zeit auf verheerten Boden in den durch Zuwanderungen aus verwüsteten Dörfern angeschwollenen Marktflecken des Tieflandes empor." Szabó, "Ungarisches Bauerntum," 225. The author has a so-called "colligation" of Szabó's works on the Hungarian peasantry, arranged by Szabó himself after 1954. Szabó probably intended this "colligatum" for publication, an assumption supported by the fact that he maintained the ideas mapped out here throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

44 *A harmadik út felé*, 356–362. And István Szabó's editors' review on the introduction of Urbarial Volume edited by Ferenc Maksay. MTA KIK, Ms 5440/16; István Szabó's letter to Ferenc Maksay. MTA KIK. Ms 5438/111.

45 István Szabó, "A hajdúk 1514-ben," *Századok* 84, no. 1–4 (1950). I suppose that the British Communist historian, Eric Hobsbawm, painted a somewhat distorted picture about "hajdú-s," labelling them as outlaws and proponents of "social banditism" (Hobsbawm 1959). For the immense (more reliable and credible) Hungarian literature on this social segment/stratum, see *A hajdúk a magyar történelemben III. Hajdú Bihar Megyei Múzeumok*

on the Ottoman Hungarian frontiers, they could obtain citizenship in market towns, they could even become nobles (gentry), or break out of their lower serf-positions via the so-called manumissio, exemptio, inscriptio, taxa, etc.[46]

It is another question whether Szabó agreed with the concept of the so-called "Prussian way," which is closely related to the "second serfdom" theory and mainly refers to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, coming to the fore in Szabó's research in the 1960s.[47] (According to Zsigmond Pál Pach, Gábor Gyáni, and József Köbli, the two concepts are basically identical.[48]) In the volumes edited by Szabó in

Közleményei XXVIII ed. Dankó Imre (Debrecen: Déri Múzeum, 1975). As a rule, the studies in this volume follow in Szabó's footsteps.

46 See Szabó, "A jobbágy megnemesítése," Turul 55 (1941): 11–21. Similar views in János Varga, *Jobbágyrendszer a magyarországi feudalizmus kései századaiban 1556–1767* (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1969).

47 István Szabó, ed., *A parasztság Magyarországon a kapitalizmus korában (1849–1914) I–II* (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1965); István Szabó, ed., *Agrártörténeti Tanulmányok* (Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó, 1960).

48 See Pál Pach Zsigmond, "A magyarországi és oroszországi poroszutas agrárfejlődés egyező és eltérő vonásairól a 19. század második felében,"in *Közgazdasági Szemle* 5, no. 1 (1958): 79–90; József Köbli, "'Porosz utas' volt-e gazdaságfejlődésünk?," *Medvetánc* 2–3 (1985); Gábor Gyáni, *Történészdiskurzusok* (Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2002), 231–261; Tamás Krausz, "A magyar történetírás és a marxizmus. Megjegyzések a 'kelet-európaiság' problémájához," *Eszmélet* 94, (2012). The latter represented a still extant Marxist point of view, adhering to the old ideology which holds that Hungary belongs to the Eastern-European development and region; Vilmos Erős, "Egy 'polgári' történész viszontagságai az 1950-es/1960-as években," *Múltunk*, 4 (2020). In English, see Béla Király, "Neo-Serfdom in Hungary," *Slavic Review* 34, no. 2 (1975). In his study, Király—although from the diaspora—basically supports the concepts of "second serfdom" and the "Prussian Way," though he underscores that the Habsburgs, especially Maria Theresa and Joseph II played a positive role in protecting the serfs against their landlords. Still, he stresses that from the second half of the eighteenth century, the peasantry's position began to deteriorate again, and talks about a "neo-serfdom," a theory identical to that of the Marxist approach. Király refers to Szabó as well, but mainly in relation to the pre-1514 period and to the stratification of the peasantry at that time. Király, who had a pivotal role in the Revolution of 1956, conceived his view abroad, but probably acquired his knowledge on these issues before 1956 (he refers to the Marxist/Stalinist Imre Szántó and György Spira several times). After 1956, he echoed only the Marxist "clichés," ignoring the trailblazing new studies produced by János Varga and György Szabad, whose approaches were very close to Szabó's. For more on Szabad, see Zoltán Dénes Iván, ed., *Kitörés a kánonból: Szabad György történetírói munkássága* (Budapest: Ráció, 2018). An excerpt from Király's study: "In the particular case of Hungary, neo-serfdom is to be seen as an economic, political, and social evolution in which the political power of the nobility, especially that of the gentry, grew considerably; the demesne lands of the lords disproportionately increased at the expense of the serfs' rustical lands; the lords' seigneurial jurisdiction over their peasants increased; and the lords' management of their economy shifted from receiving rents to producing for markets. It was a system of social stagnation in which the evolution of cities

this period,[49] we often come across approving sentences about the "Prussian way," and Szabó even uses the term oncen in a positive context. At the same time, many studies in these volumes challenged this theory, such as those by István Orosz about market towns in Tokaj-Hegyalja[50] and by Gyula Varga on a village-community of free peasants in Kismarja.[51]

Among all of these arguments, I consider Szabó's interpretation of the role of farms in Hungarian socio-economic history decisive, on which he had already published a significant study in 1929,[52] then returned to the issue again in the 1960s on several occasions.[53] Szabó regarded farming as an alternative to free-peasant development, which was a major challenge to the "Prussian way" alternative, and for him epitomized an alternative to the "American way" of development.

and an urban middle class, a potential counterbalance to the nobility, was made impossible, and the serfs had no way out of their degrading environment and status. These conditions developed rapidly after the suppression of the Dózsa revolt of 1514, the greatest peasant movement of discontent in Hungary. As a result, the peasants were bound to the soil. The national Diet of 1547, however, enacted the serfs' right of migration, a freedom which was re-enacted several times more." Király, "Neo-Serfdom in Hungary," 269. Here, Király refers to orthodox Marxists/Stalinists such as Imre Szántó, and borrows material from them. In the 1950s, Szabó, in a fierce review, disagreed with Imre Szántó's views and even refuted his numbers. See Vilmos Erős, "A 'porosz utas' fejlődés 'lassú' változata. Szabó István opponensi véleménye 1955-ből Szántó Imre könyvéről," *Aetas* 4 (2019). On Béla Király, see Béla Király, "Emlékkönyv," *Háború és társadalom. War and Society. Guerre et Société. Krieg und Gesellschaft*, ed. Jónás Pál, Peter Pastor, Péter Tóth Pál (Budapest: Századvég 1992).

49 See Szabó, *Agrártörténeti Tanulmányok*.

50 István Orosz, "A hegyaljai mezővárosok társadalma a XVII. században, Különös tekintettel a szőlőbirtok hatásaira," in *Agrártörténeti Tanulmányok*, ed. István Szabó (Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó, 1960), 3–70. On Szabó's conception of market-towns, see Szabó, *La répartition de la population de Hongrie*, which reinforce that he maintained his position into the 1960s.

51 Gyula Varga, "Kismarja. Egy szabad paraszt közösség a feudalizmus bomlásának korszakában," *Agrártörténeti Tanulmányok*, ed. István Szabó (Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó, 1960), 71–138.

52 István Szabó, "A debreceni tanyarendszer kialakulása," in *Föld és Ember* 9, no. 5 (1929): 214–244.

53 István Szabó, "Kísérletek az alföldi tanyarendszer megszüntetésére az 1780-as és 1850-es években," *Agrártörténeti Tanulmányok* ed. István Szabó (Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó, 1960), 139–207.

"Third way," Populists, István Hajnal

How can we then summarize all this and what was the political message of Szabó's view? I have little doubt that in the background of Szabó's previously explained interpretation of Hungary's socio-economic development we can detect a so-called "third way" theory, which can be associated with the "Populist" ideology[54] and political movement well-known in twentieth century Hungarian history.

A further, more detailed scrutiny of the notions of this "third way" concept (or indeed, even an elaboration on its focal ideas) is beyond the scope and of this article, but it can be established that the theory included a certain geographical argument,[55] according to which there are many common features between Czech-Polish and Hungarian socio-economic development throughout history, thereby Hungary constitutes an autonomous region in Europe, located between East and West. Besides, the "third way" offers a political and cultural/socio-political alternative to the contrasting West-East binary as well, positing itself as a *transitional form* located mainly between capitalism and socialism,[56] but also between individualistic and collectivist principles, between liberalism and the omnipotence of the state-power (totalitarianism) [in 1943, László Németh even considered the idea as a potential alternative between German and Soviet orientations/approaches[57]], e. g. between the autonomous system of farms and the cooperatives, and in a special case, between physical and intellectual work.[58] It is crucial to point out that after 1945, the most important and best known representative of this idea was István Bibó,[59] and via his influence, it also served as a theoretical/ideological background for the Hungarian Revolution of 1956.[60] The previously sketched out views of István Szabó (shared by his many of his colleagues and students), that is his efforts to distance Hungarian historical development from the

54 For the "Third Way" theory in Hungary, see Borbándi, *Der ungarische Populismus*; Konrád Salamon, *A harmadik út küzdelme: Népi mozgalom 1944–1987* (*Budapest:* Korona, 2002). In Europe, see Gérard Raulet, ed. *Historismus, Sonderweg und dritte Wege* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2001).

55 See "Kell-e nekünk Közép-Európa?" *Századvég*, Special issue (1989); *Éva Ring, ed. Helyünk Európában. Nézetek és koncepciók a 20. századi Magyarországon I–II (Budapest: Magvető, 1986).*

56 Gábor Kovács, "Harmadik utas magyar gondolkodók," *Liget*, 15, no. 8 (2002): 64–75.

57 See Gyula Juhász, *Uralkodó eszmék Magyarországon 1939–1944* (Budapest: Kossuth, 1983).

58 Zoltán Dénes Iván, *Eltorzult magyar alkat: Bibó István vitája Németh Lászlóval és Szekfű Gyulával* (Budapest: Osiris, 1999).

59 Tibor Huszár, "Bibó István—a gondolkodó, a politikus," *Válogatott tanulmányok, I–III*, ed. István Bibó (Budapest: Magvető, 1986), 385–534.

60 See Péter Kende, ed., *Bibó Nyugatról—éltében, holtában. Külhoni magyarok írásai Bibó Istvánról* (Bern: Európai Protestáns Magyar Szabadegyetem, 1989).

Eastern European alternative, therefore represented a harsh protest against the Soviet system, Stalinism, and totalitarian dictatorship.[61]

To this point of view, the relevance of István Szabó's—essentially third-way—position can be connected via the following statement: although the concept of the "third way" may not be accepted as an alternative way of overcoming the contemporary political, socio-cultural, etc. difficulties, in the 1950s, and 1960s (and even the 1970s), it conveyed a positive message. Namely, by offering itself as a kind of "counter-history" and historical position, the "third way" hindered the total "Gleichschaltung" (homogenization)[62] of the Hungarian historical profession, and its total subjugation by state power, as it kept aspects of social (and also not rarely those of "professional"[63]) history on the agenda, and it found connections with modern Western European historical schools (such as the "Annales")[64] much more easily than the reigning Marxist-Stalinist historiography. It was not by chance that the institution which in many respects epitomized the efforts to catch up with Western-European tendencies (that is the "István Hajnal-Circle,") was also built on this tradition that prevailed between the two World Wars in Hungary. This was apparent even in the choice of its name: István Hajnal,[65] who was, after all, one of the main conceptual allies of István Szabó, even after 1945.

61 Tibor Filep, *A politikai rendőrség Hajdú-Biharban 1957–1989. III/III* (Debrecen: 2011). According to the sources in this volume, a secret Communist Party agent labelled the so-called "István Szabó School" as counter-revolutionary, even in the 1970s. See pages 313. 139. 485.

62 Romsics "A magyar történetírás gleichschaltolása, 1945–1949," [Részletek] *Rubicon* 26, no. 5 (2011): 9–11.

63 For reprofessionalization see Romsics, Clio bűvöletében, 397–422; Vilmos Erős, *Modern historiográfia—Az újkori történetírás egy története* [Modern Historiography. A History of Modern Historical Writing] (Budapest: Ráció, 2015), 374–375.

64 On the "Annales" school in Hungary, see Gábor Klaniczay, "Georges Duby et les Annales en Hongrie," *Rencontres Intellectuelles franco-hongroises*, ed. Péter Sahin-Tóth (Budapest: Collegium Budapest, 2001), 106–117.

65 See László Lakatos, *Az élet és a formák. Hajnal István történelemszociológiája* (Budapest: Új Mandátum, 1996). Jenő Szűcs, who many historians hold to be the greatest figure in Hungarian historiography after 1945, had a view similar to Szabó's "third way." It was not by chance that he had also been marginalized during the Communist era. At the same time, it should be added that Szűcs developed his insights on Hungarian society in the Middle Ages; in the 1980s, Péter Hanák extended Szűcs's theory to apply to the nineteenth century as well. See Jenő Szűcs, "The Three Historical Regions of Europe: An outline," *Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 29, no. 2–4 (1983). For Hanák, see Romsics, *Clio bűvöletében*, 582–583. It should be added that the so-called "Volksgeschichte," in the vein of Elemér Mályusz (historian István Hajnal's closest ally and friend)—which had decisive influence on István Szabó in the first stages of his career, did not share the 'populist' conception of the "third road," and instead reflected the "cultural superiority" ideology, preferred by the official administrations in Hungary between the two World Wars. For Mályusz's "Volksgeschichte," see Elemér Mályusz, "Visszaemlékezések," *Recollections*, ed. István Soós (Budapest: MTA Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont/Történelmi Intézet, 2021), 251–343.

Sources

All archival material are from the Manuscript Collection of The Library of The Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Budapest: MTA KIK (Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Könyvtár és Információs Központ).

Vilmos Erős is Associate Professor at Institute of History at the University of Debrecen, where he teaches Hungarian and European historiography, Theory of History and History of Political Ideas. Most recently, he published a general historiographical synthesis (2015, in Hungarian) and is now working on a compendium of Hungarian historical writing (in English).

Tom Palmer

"For Your Freedom and Ours": Poland's Solidarność and the British Left, 1980–1989

Abstract

Across Western Europe the emergence of Poland's Solidarność, the first independent trade union in a communist state, elicited varied responses. While the assistance provided to Polish workers from continental European has been addressed, the solidarity effort in Britain is scarcely understood. Building on Stefan Berger and Norman LaPorte's previous work, this article investigates the response of the British labour movement across the UK. While the British Left's response is typically considered lukewarm, this article exposes the discrepancy between the efforts of rank-and-file labour activists and the leadership of key institutions. Drawing upon oral histories with contemporaneous activists, trade union archives, and prominent left-wing publications, it is apparent that this distinction was present in the Trades Union Congress, large trade unions, and the Labour Party. Understanding British solidarity with Solidarność ultimately elucidates the permeability of the Iron Curtain and contributes to an understanding of the role East-West socio-political interactions played in the demise of the Soviet Union.

Keywords: *Solidarność*; *Solidarity*; *Poland*; *British Left*; *British labour movement*; *trade unions*; *East-West relations*

"If the machine's there, let's go and get it," declared Lech Wałęsa, the leader of the recently legalized Polish trade union, Solidarność (Solidarity)—the first independent of a communist state in the Soviet sphere of influence.[1] Wałęsa had just been informed that John Taylor, a British political tourist, had located an offset-lithographic printing machine. Captivated by the events unfolding at the Gdańsk shipyard in August 1980, Taylor, a Labour Party member from Dudley, had travelled to Poland on a two-week

1 John Taylor, *Five Months with Solidarity: A First-Hand Report from Inside Hotel Morski* (London: Ashgate Publishing, 1981), 62.

DOI: 10.46586/mts.68.2022.83-114 Moving the Social · 68 (2022) · p. 83–114

tourist visa.[2] He sought to use his unique position as a foreigner to obtain for Solidarność printing equipment which was near-impossible to acquire in a communist state keen to control the distribution of information at a time of national upheaval. Indeed, equipment from Western European trade unions had been intentionally held up at customs.[3] Taylor had discovered the printer while attending an exhibition in Poznań. After deceiving the authorities into thinking the purchase was for export, Taylor, with help from three Polish companions, delivered Solidarność their first piece of duplicating equipment in October 1980.[4]

Given that Solidarność was officially a trade union, the labour movement conducted a significant portion of solidarity action in Britain. John Taylor personified the British Left's sympathy with the new Polish union. The assistance provided throughout the 1980s was a story of solidarity, caution, and hypocrisy. No other cause garnered sympathy from both the British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, and a Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) branch in Cardiff.[5] It was because of this diversity in support, however, that Solidarność proved testing on the loyalties of some on the Left. Pro-Soviet apologists in the British labour movement complicated assistance. That the Polish trade union was hailed by Thatcher who suppressed the very trade union rights for which Solidarność fought was enough to turn some off.[6] For others, the desire to expose the Prime Minister's hypocrisy motivated activism.[7] Hypocrisy was not reserved to the Right, however. The nationalist nature of Solidarność and its affinity with the Catholic Church troubled some British socialists.[8] The same critics, however, without embarrassment, would champion Catholic nationalism in Northern Ireland.[9]

2 Phone interview with John Taylor, 18 January 2021, London UK; John Taylor, "On the Campaign Trail," in *For Our Freedom and Yours: A History of the Polish Solidarity Campaign of Great Britain, 1980–1994,* ed. Giles Hart (London: Polish Solidarity Campaign, 1995), 107.

3 Taylor, *Five Months*, 67.

4 Ibid., 63–64.

5 Phone interview with Wanda Kościa, 27 January 2021, London UK. Kościa was a prominent PSC activist.

6 Jim Denham et al., "An Open Letter to Frank Chapple," *Socialist Organiser*, no. 25 (13 September 1980), 3.

7 Eric Heffer, "Thatcher is a Hypocrite!," *Socialist Organiser*, no. 379 (10 November 1988), 6.

8 "A Workers' Poland, Yes! The Pope's Poland, No!," *Spartacist Britain*, October 1980, 5.

9 Jo Quigley, "Solidarity in the West Midlands," in *For Our Freedom and Yours: A History of the Polish Solidarity Campaign of Great Britain, 1980–1994*, ed. Giles Hart (London: Polish Solidarity Campaign, 1995), 113.

Despite the fact that the British Left's relationship with Solidarność provoked controversy and exposed political fissures, it has received little scholarly attention.[10] Since the turn of the century, research into the assistance provided by Western European labour movements has been pioneered by Idesbald Goddeeris.[11] Analysis of the British Left's support has enjoyed the publication of only one chapter.[12] Stefan Berger and Norman LaPorte's chapter therefore provides a useful but by no means complete platform from which to further research the relationship between Solidarność and the British labour movement. Given that the chapter focused largely on the Trades Union Congress' (TUC) slow response, and it being the sole piece of secondary literature, primary sources provide the basis for further investigation. While the British trade union archives at the Modern Records Centre underpinned Berger and LaPorte's work, the scholars, writing in 2010, were unable to access Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunications and Plumbing Union (EEPTU) and National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) documents due to the unions' thirty-year rule on release.[13] Now open, sources from these archives shed light on the contrasting levels of support provided by the two unions. Indeed, the EEPTU General Secretary, Frank Chapple, was among the most vocal trade unionists championing Solidarność, while the story of NUM support—given its President, Arthur Scargill, declared Solidarność "anti-so-

10 English language accounts emerged in the 1980s. See Neal Ascherson, *The Polish August: The Self-Limiting Revolution (*Middlesex: Viking, 1981); Timothy Garton Ash, *The Polish Revolution: Solidarity, 1980–1982* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1983); Neal Ascherson, *The Struggles for Poland* (New York: Random House, 1987); Denis MacShane, *Solidarity: Poland's Independent Trade Union* (Nottingham: Spokesman, 1981); Taylor, *Five Months*; Colin Baker and Kara Weber, *Solidarność: From Gdansk to Military Repression* (London: International Socialism, 1982).

11 Idesbald Goddeeris, ed., *Solidarity with Solidarity: Western European Trade Unions and the Polish Crisis, 1980–1982* (Lanham: Lexington, 2010); Idesbald Goddeeris, "The Transnational Scope of Western Labour's Solidarity with Solidarność," *Labour History Review* 75 (2010): 60–75; Idesbald Goddeeris, "Western Trade Unions and Solidarność: A Comparison from a Polish Perspective," *The Polish Review* 52, no. 3 (2007): 305–329; Idesbald Goddeeris, "Lobbying Allies? The NSZZ Solidarność Coordinating Office Abroad, 1982–1989," *Cold War Studies* 13, no. 3 (2011): 83–125. See also Stefan Berger, "Solidarność, Western Solidarity and Détente: A Transnational Approach," *European Review* 16, no. 1 (2008): 75–84.

12 Stefan Berger, Norman LaPorte, "Great Britain: Between Avoiding Cold War and Supporting Free Trade Unionism," *Solidarity with Solidarity: Western European Trade Unions and the Polish Crisis, 1980–1982*, ed., Idesbald Goddeeris (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2010), 129–157.

13 Ibid., 151.

cialist"—presents a more complex picture.[14] Internal TUC documents have also been consulted.

An investigation into the assistance provided by the British Left to Solidarność must begin, however, with the contribution made by grassroots solidarity campaigns given their role in influencing the policy of the trade union movement and Labour Party. The Polish Solidarity Campaign (PSC) was the most prominent campaign group and featured briefly in Berger and LaPorte's account. I conducted interviews with prominent PSC activists (and other key actors) which serve as the basis for analysis of their efforts.[15] Just as Jack Bloom conducted oral histories with Solidarność activists in Poland, so do solidarity activists in Britain have their story told.[16] Where possible, interviewee accounts have been used in conjunction with archival documents. By recording the experiences of historical actors, the intention is to add to the historical record for what is a lightly studied field.

Reviewers of Goddeeris' edited volume have charged the British labour movement with being among the most reluctant to assist Solidarność relative to Western European counterparts; Anita Prazmowska wrote that "when Solidarity leaders looked to Margaret Thatcher for support, they cut themselves off from any dialogue with British labour leaders."[17] As Berger and LaPorte outlined, the response of the TUC was cautious, and the same was true of the Labour Party. This article, however, seeks to demonstrate that the slow response of the leadership of major labour organizations was not mirrored at a grassroots level, or in individual trade unions. Far from avoiding Solidarność because of its support from the Right, the new Polish union was understood by many on the Left for what it was—a worker's movement demanding the right to exist as a trade union independent of the state.[18] Genuine grassroots links developed between the British and Polish working classes at a regional, industrial and even workplace level. Given the dichotomy between the view of the leadership and the rank and file, the labour movement cannot be considered monolithic. Also, support or otherwise for Solidarność was not static but fluctuated across the decade, deter-

14 John McKinlay, "Scargill Angers Unions with Solidarity Attack" *Glasgow Herald*, September 8, 1983, 1.

15 I conducted 13 interviews in total.

16 Jack Bloom, "The Solidarity Revolution in Poland, 1980–1981," *Oral History Review* 33 (2006), 33–64; Jack Bloom, *Seeing Through the Eyes of the Polish Revolution: Solidarity and the Struggle Against Communism in Poland* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

17 Anita Prazmowska, "Solidarity with Solidarity: Western European Trade Unions and the Polish Crisis, 1980–1982," *Cold War History* 12, no. 4 (2012), 714.

18 Solidarity Warsaw Inter-Workplace Workers' Committee, "Open Letter from the Polish Workers to the Western Trade Unions and Workers' Parties," *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe* 5, nos. 5–6 (1982–83), 25, Private Papers of Paul Hubbert (Labour Party) [in author's possession, Leeds, UK].

mined by the severity of the situation in Poland (with support increasing considerably after the proclamation of martial law), and the British political context.

To demonstrate the grassroots sympathy with Solidarność, this article will first consider the role of solidarity campaigns in mobilizing support from the labour movement. Before building on Berger and LaPorte's analysis of the slow response of the TUC, it will document cases of grassroots trade union solidarity with Polish workers, as well as the efforts of individual trade unions. The NUM will then be used to further demonstrate that the view of an organization's leadership often contradicted that of its membership, and that support for Solidarność could fluctuate over time. After briefly detailing the support of Trotskyist groups, the so far unstudied response of the Labour Party will finally be considered, which, similar to the TUC, presents a case of misalignment between its slow-responding leadership and active membership.

It is in detailing the assistance provided by the British Left to Solidarność that the importance of this investigation lies. That is, understanding how ideological, political, and institutional considerations determined the varied and fluctuating levels of support over time. This understanding supplements literature on the factionalism that plagued the British Left throughout the decade.[19] Solidarność was one battleground among many in which grassroots members clashed with their leaders, and where divisions within the leadership of organizations were exposed. An analysis of the labour movement's solidarity with Solidarność also contributes to the historiography on the development of trade union internationalism during the 1970s and 1980s.[20] Just as working-class solidarity with Polish workers was considerable, so it was with workers in Augusto Pinochet's Chile and apartheid South Africa.

A comprehensive understanding of the British Left's assistance to Solidarność can most significantly be situated in and compared with the historiography detailing the action of other Western European labour movements which, relative to the British

19 See final three chapters in Eric Shaw, *Discipline and Discord: Politics of Managerial Control in the Labour Party, 1951–87* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988); John Golding, *Hammer of the Left: The Battle for the Soul of the Labour Party* (London: Biteback Publishing, 2016); John Callaghan, *The Far Left in British Politics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), 204–215; Andrew Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1997) 202–229; Peter Shore, *Leading the Left* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1993), 137–152; Eric Heffer, *Never a Yes Man: The Life and Politics of an Adopted Liverpudlian* (London: Verso Books, 1991), 183–218.

20 Andrew Cumbers, "Embedded Internationalisms: Building Transnational Solidarity in the British and Norwegian Trade Union Movements," *Antipode* 36, no. 5 (2004): 829–850; Roger Southall, "The Development and Delivery of 'Northern' Worker Solidarity to South African Trade Unions in the 1970s and 1980s," *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 32, no. 2 (1994): 166–199; Ann Jones, *No Truck with the Chilean Junta! Trade Union Internationalism, Australia and Britain, 1973–1980* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 2014).

case, have been studied far more. While this article corroborates Goddeeris' conclusion that there lacked a multilateral character to solidarity activity with Solidarność, at appropriate points comparisons are made between the efforts of the British Left and other European labour movements, contributing to Berger's call for the "Europeanization of history writing."[21]

Above all else, this study of solidarity with Solidarność elucidates the permeability of the Iron Curtain and contributes to an understanding of the role East-West socio-political interactions played in the demise of the Soviet Union.

Solidarność and British Solidarity Campaigns

In August 1980, strikes broke out at the Gdańsk shipyard occasioned by a rise in food prices and the mistreatment of workers. Led by electrician Lech Wałęsa, workers forced the Polish authorities to sign the Gdańsk Agreement on 31 August 1980, the first point of which guaranteed the right to establish "free trade unions independent of the Communist Party."[22] And so Solidarność was founded, counting over ten million members at its height in September 1981.[23] The implementation of martial law on 13 December 1981 forced Solidarność to operate clandestinely, which it did so until the end of the 1980s.

"For today and the days that lie ahead," appealed the Solidarność Warsaw Inter-Workplace Workers' Committee after the implementation of martial law, "we are depending on you for help and solidarity."[24] That Solidarność sought international labour movement support was evident.

Polish Solidarity Campaign (PSC)

Such calls were heeded across Britain as the events in Poland stimulated grassroots sympathy. The earliest manifestation of public solidarity can be found in London-based PSC. Upon hearing of strike action in Gdańsk, a public meeting was orga-

21 Goddeeris, *Transnational Scope*, 65; Berger, *Solidarność, Western Solidarity and Détente*, 83.

22 The 21 Demands, in *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe* 4, no 2–3 (1980), 9.

23 Aleksander Smolar, "Towards 'Self-limiting Revolution': Poland 1970–89," *Civil Resistance and Power Politics: The Experience of Non-Violent Action from Gandhi to the Present*, ed. Adam Roberts, Timothy Garton Ash (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 127.

24 Open Letter from the Polish Workers to the Western Trade Unions and Workers' Parties, in *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe*.

nized at Conway Hall, London, on 26 August 1980.[25] With over one hundred people in attendance, from left-wing activists to members of the Polish community, PSC was established.

PSC was a non-partisan democratic organization of volunteers. Within a year its membership had reached over one hundred, peaking at 1,200 in early 1982 after the implementation of martial law.[26] The only pre-requisite for membership was to share the group's aims to mobilize popular support for Solidarność and to lobby labour institutions—namely, the TUC and Labour Party—to support Solidarność and terminate "all organizational, political and social links [with] the ruling political parties and state-controlled puppet trade unions in all Warsaw Pact countries."[27] The latter proved to be the most testing demand for the Left, and necessitated a determined campaign on the part of PSC activists. Through *PSC News* the group published reports from Poland to an English-speaking audience.[28]

"A few days after the proclamation of martial law," historian and activist E.P. Thompson recalled, "I attended the most mournful political event of my life […] a day as bitter and cold as were our hearts."[29] Despite snow beating down unrelentingly, over fourteen-thousand people marched in Hyde Park, London, on 20 December 1981 to protest the proclamation of martial law in Poland.[30] The demonstration was the apex of popular sympathy with Solidarność in Britain, receiving national coverage as details were read out on BBC News beforehand.[31] Organized by PSC, it was the pinnacle of their mobilization efforts. Politicians who supported PSC events ranged from Labour Member of Parliament (MP) Eric Heffer to Conservative MP Sir Bernard Braine.[32] To some on the Left, that pro-Solidarność events were addressed by Conservative MPs only strengthened their scepticism as the Conservative government did little in defence of Chilean workers against Pinochet's regime, or in condemning

25 Giles Hart, "A Brief History of the Polish Solidarity Campaign," *For Our Freedom and Yours: A History of the Polish Solidarity Campaign of Great Britain, 1980–1994* (London: Polish Solidarity Campaign, 1995), ed. Giles Hart, 13.

26 Edward Switalski, "More About PSC," *For Our Freedom and Yours: A History of the Polish Solidarity Campaign of Great Britain, 1980–1994*, ed. Giles Hart (London: Polish Solidarity Campaign, 1995), 72.

27 Appendix 1: "Aims and Objectives of PSC," *For Our Freedom and Yours: A History of the Polish Solidarity Campaign of Great Britain, 1980–1994*, ed. Giles Hart (London: Polish Solidarity Campaign, 1995), 117–118.

28 "Polish Solidarity Campaign News," *PSC News* 5 (1982), 7.

29 Edward Palmer Thompson, *Double Exposure* (London: Merlin, 1985), 123.

30 Naomi Hyamson, "Fifteen Thousand March in Solidarity," *PSC News* 5 (1982), 2.

31 Lucy Hodges, "Hyde Park Protest: Thousands Hear Appeals for Food and Medicine," *The Times*, 21 December 1981, 5.

32 Ibid., 36.

South African apartheid. Wiktor Moszczynski, PSC chairman between 1982–1983, explained how PSC avoided platforming politicians with double standards.[33]

Aside from organizing public rallies, the primary occupation of PSC activists was as speakers at trade union and Labour Party branch meetings mobilizing support for Solidarność. An impressive feat, between 1981 and 1983 Moszczynski spoke at 130 meetings.[34] Wanda Kościa, another prominent PSC member, toured trade union branches in 1982 as an interpreter for visiting Solidarność representatives.[35] Accounts of the reception PSC activists received at meetings provide an insight into the labour movement's perception of Solidarność. Moszczynski recalled being introduced at a Labour Party branch meeting as a PSC representative and local councillor. When asked which party he represented, "everyone suddenly breathed easily" when he answered the Labour Party.[36] Evidently, some leftists were sceptical of Solidarność, assuming that Moszczynski's politics would mirror those of the Polish unions' right-wing supporters. In the opposite vein, Kościa found parts of her experience "very moving." At a meeting of miners in South Wales, she witnessed "real working-class solidarity," with "people who had very little sharing that very little" with Solidarność.[37] PSC, with considerable success, made the case for Solidarność to the British Left.

PSC activity within the labour movement was not confined to grassroots meetings. They also challenged the inaction of the TUC and Labour Party leaderships. Activists picketed executive meetings and conferences, including the September 1980 TUC Congress, the TUC International Committee meeting in February 1981 at which it was agreed that assistance be sent to Solidarność, and the Labour Party National Executive Committee (NEC) meeting in July 1982 which decided to sever links with Eastern European communist parties.[38] Trade union archives reveal that PSC activists also wrote to the TUC in an attempt to elicit material support for Solidarność.[39]

PSC played a significant role in defining the relationship between Solidarność and the British Left. From August 1980 PSC activists mobilized grassroots support within and without the labour movement, worked to quell scepticism of Solidarność, and

33 Phone interview with Wiktor Moszczynski, 22 January 2021, London UK.

34 Hart, "A Brief History," 21; Wiktor Moszczynski, "Extracts from Wiktor Moszczynski's PSC Diary," *For Our Freedom and Yours: A History of the Polish Solidarity Campaign of Great Britain, 1980–1994*, ed. Giles Hart (London: Polish Solidarity Campaign, 1995), 94.

35 Phone interview with Wanda Kościa, 27 January 2021, London UK.

36 Phone interview with Wiktor Moszczynski, 22 January 2021, London UK.

37 Phone interview with Wanda Kościa, 27 January 2021, London UK.

38 Berger and Laporte, "Between Avoiding Cold War," 133; Hart, "A Brief History," 15; Moszczynski, "Extracts," 96.

39 Wiktor Moszczynski to Tom Jackson (Chairman of TUC International Committee), 17 February 1981, in: Modern Records Centre (MRC), University of Warwick, TUC Collection, MSS.292D/943.8/1; Robin Blick to TUC, February 1981, in MRC, TUC Collection, MSS.292D/943.8/1.

lobbied for more concrete action from the TUC and Labour Party. That the latter both eventually supported Solidarność can in part be attributed to PSC efforts.

Other Grassroots Solidarity Campaigns

Expressions of solidarity with Solidarność were not just a London phenomenon. Regional solidarity committees, not affiliated to but modelled on PSC, were set up in various cities, from Birmingham to Manchester, Cardiff to Edinburgh.[40] Unlike PSC which encompassed a range of political views, regional committees were founded within the labour movement. The Greater Manchester Polish Solidarity Campaign, for example, was established by leftists to deny the right of "Thatcher to parade unchallenged" as a supporter of Solidarność.[41] The largest solidarity organization outside London was the Glasgow Polish Solidarity Committee, founded by a local Trotskyist group.[42] The Glasgow committee, as did other regional committees, held a rally in support of Solidarność in January 1982, to which over 800 people attended.[43] They played a comparable role in Scotland as did PSC in London by campaigning to improve the slow response of the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC); indeed, the General Secretary of the STUC, Jimmy Milne, a CPGB member, proclaimed the crisis an internal Polish affair, a common copout used by those sceptical of Solidarność.[44] The Stalinist presence in the Scottish trade union movement was a recurrent problem for pro-Solidarność activists.[45]

Just as the Glasgow Polish Solidarity Committee was founded from within the local labour movement, so the Leeds Polish Solidarity Committee was at a meeting held in February 1982.[46] The Leeds Polish Solidarity Committee sought to "organise practical and political support for Polish workers" and established links with the Pol-

40 "Defence Committees in Britain," *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe* 5, nos. 1–2 (1982), 39–40.

41 Greater Manchester Polish Solidarity Campaign "National Labour Movement Conference Solidarity with Solidarnosc," *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe* 5, nos. 3–4 (1982), 37.

42 Phone interview with Marek Garztecki, 14 February 2021, London UK.

43 Martin Meteyard, "Glasgow Rally Backs Solidarność," *Socialist Challenge*, no. 230 (28 January 1982), 5, https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspape/socialist-challenge/index.htm For Socialist Challenge, henceforth see this URL.

44 Des Tierney, "Scottish Workers Back Solidarność," *Socialist Challenge*, no. 230 (28 January 1982), 5.

45 Stan Crooke, "Scots Stalinists Give Johnstone a Rough Reception," *Socialist Organiser*, no. 73, February 18, 1982, 5.

46 Brain Dale, "Leeds Polish Solidarity Committee," February 1982, Paul Hubbert Papers. Brian Dale was a councillor in Leeds and the secretary of the Leeds Polish Solidarity Committee.

ish city of Wrocław, evidencing the more general phenomenon in which the grassroots labour movement made regional links with Solidarność.[47]

The city of Leeds exemplifies the contrasting ways in which the British public supported Polish workers, with the Leeds Polish Solidarity Committee not alone in its expression of solidarity. Leeds Solidarity with Solidarność, chaired by Janek Niczyperowicz, illustrates the way in which Polish communities provided decentralized support to Solidarność on a humanitarian, as opposed to a political, basis. The group was established within the Leeds Polish Catholic Centre to coordinate the collection of goods to be sent to Poland.[48] Niczyperowicz acted as an interpreter for one delivery of clothes and medicines to Kraków in July 1983.[49] Much as John Taylor personifies the political assistance provided to Solidarność by the Left, so Niczyperowicz exemplifies the effort made by the Polish community to provide humanitarian assistance. The Leeds example notwithstanding, a full investigation into the non-political, humanitarian support to Solidarność from the Polish community in particular, and the British public in general, is beyond the scope of this article.

None of the aforementioned groups were considered official representatives of Solidarność. This was reserved for the Solidarity Trade Union Working Group in the UK (STUWG), founded in December 1981, which encompassed Solidarność members stranded in Britain after the implementation of martial law—they faced arrest upon returning to Poland.[50] Boasting one hundred members, STUWG possessed an authenticity PSC lacked, and so its members were called on regularly to represent Solidarność.

From 1983, the STUWG was superseded by the Solidarity Information Office in London, headed by Marek Garztecki who ran the Solidarność branch of the Polish Jazz Society but was stuck in London.[51] Aware of the importance of international representation, underground-Solidarność leaders in Poland authorized the establishment of branches in key Western European capitals as official representatives under the auspices of the Brussels-based Solidarność Coordinating Office Abroad.[52] The Information Office in London enjoyed the support of pro-Solidarność trade unions. The EEPTU printed the *Voice of Solidarity*, an English-language publication edited by Garztecki providing news of events in Poland.[53] Accommodation for the Office

47 Ibid.
48 Phone interview with Janek Niczyperowicz, 17 January 2021, Bradford UK.
49 Phone interview with Janek Niczyperowicz, 17 January 2021, Bradford UK.
50 The composition of STUWG has been covered elsewhere. See Berger and Laporte, "Between Avoiding Cold War," 142.
51 Phone interview with Marek Garztecki, 14 February 2021, London UK; Hart, "A Brief History," 23.
52 Goddeeris, "Lobbying Allies?," 84.
53 Hart, "A Brief History," 23.

was first provided by the National Union of Journalists until the introduction of a pro-Soviet leadership in 1984, and after by Kate Losinska, President of the Civil and Public Servants Association (CPSA) and a high-profile pro-Solidarność trade unionist.[54] Aside from media appearances, a key operation of the Information Office was the organization of the 'Adopt a Prisoner' scheme in which assistance was provided to detainees and their families in Poland. Details of Solidarność internees featured in various left-wing publications and facilitated grassroots solidarity action.[55]

As members of the new Polish trade union, the STUWG expended much of its effort seeking support from the British trade union movement. As part of a speaking tour in 1982, Garztecki and Piotr Kozlowski, a Solidarność shop steward at the Ursus tractor factory near Warsaw also stuck in Britain, attended hundreds of meetings at trade union branches and workplaces.[56] Garztecki recalled the "phenomenal" impression Kozlowski made on the British working class; despite orating in Polish, Kozlowski was able to provide an authentic working-class voice.[57] *Socialist Challenge* reported the "great impact" Kozlowski had "upon miners, steelworkers, union officials and labour movement activists."[58] Kozlowski was important for those among the British working class reluctant to support the Polish union given its right-wing supporters.

The same applies to the activity of solidarity campaigns more generally. Collectively, the above groups made the case for Solidarność to elicit grassroots solidarity with Polish workers, to dispel any association of Solidarność with its right-wing supporters in the British government and the US administration, and to disprove the pro-Soviet idea that the Polish authorities were the legitimate representative of the Polish working class. They illustrate the spontaneous mobilization of sympathy for Polish workers both within and without the labour movement, in contrast with the dithering response of larger labour movement organizations like the TUC. That these groups lobbied the Left successfully was evident in the grassroots solidarity that manifested, with the Coventry Massey Ferguson tractor plant providing an apt case study.

54 Phone interview with Marek Garztecki, 14 February 2021, London UK; Hart, "A Brief History," 23; Berger and Laporte, "Between Avoiding Cold War," 142.

55 "Adopt a Prisoner," *PSC News* 6 (1982), 8–9; "Defence Committees in Britain," 39–40.

56 Phone interview with Marek Garztecki, 14 February 2021, London UK; Penny Duggan, "Build Labour Movement Support for the Polish Workers," *Socialist Challenge*, no. 230, January 28, 1982, 6; "Birmingham Backs Solidarność," *Socialist Challenge*, no. 230, January 28, 1982, 4; "Solidarity in Scotland," *Socialist Challenge*, no. 228, January 14, 1982, 7; Meteyard, "Glasgow Rally Backs Solidarność."

57 Phone interview with Marek Garztecki, 14 February 2021, London UK; Berger and LaPorte, "Between Avoiding Cold War," 138.

58 Helen Slydmovics, Barry Wilkins, "South Wales Workers Pledge Support to Solidarność," *Socialist Challenge*, no. 242 (22 April 1982), 4.

Solidarność and the British Trade Union Movement

"In a tremendous display of working-class solidarity," relayed Les Hartopp, a worker at the Massey Ferguson factory in Coventry, "the meeting wholeheartedly supported the recommendation" to boycott Polish parts.[59] Piotr Kozlowski had appealed to Massey Ferguson workers throughout January 1982 to express solidarity with their Polish counterparts by refusing to handle components from Ursus tractor plant where he worked.[60] After hearing Kozlowski's plea, over three-thousand Massey Ferguson workers unanimously voted to support it.[61] Similar action was taken at the Manchester Massey Ferguson factory.[62] This was an act of genuine working-class solidarity between British and Polish workers as grassroots links developed at the workplace level.

Massey Ferguson workers were not alone in their expression of solidarity. The adoption of internees after the implementation of martial law was a central means through which organizations on the Left supported Solidarność activists. Workers at the British Leyland's Albion plant in Scotland, for example, adopted prisoners, providing material assistance to the internees' families.[63] Unions would often adopt their detained Polish counterparts. The National Union of Students raised funds for the Polish Independent Students' Association (Niezależne Zrzeszenie Studentów, NZS), the student branch of Solidarność, and adopted Jarosław Guzy, its President who was imprisoned at Białołęka detention camp.[64]

Twinning arrangements between British trade unions and regional branches of Solidarność provide another example of grassroots solidarity.[65] In 1987, the National and Local Government Officers' Association (NALGO) twinned with the Szczecin branch of Solidarność, paying legal fees and supporting the families of the imprisoned.[66] This phenomenon was reflected on the European continent. In France, the Regional Paris Union (Union Régionale Parisienne) made links with the Mazowsze region of Solidarność, and

59 Massey Ferguson, "Workers Black Polish Parts," *Socialist Challenge*, no. 230, January 28, 1982, 6.
60 Ibid.
61 Ibid.
62 Joe Singleton, "British Labour Movement Response to the Military Coup in Poland," *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe* 5, nos. 1–2 (1982), 38–39.
63 Singleton, "British Response," 38–39.
64 Chris Serge, "Solidarity with Poland in the British Student Movement," *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe* 5, nos. 3–4 (1982), 38.
65 Vladimir Derer: "What You Can Do to Help," *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe* 4, nos. 4–6 (1981), 2; "What Your Union/Labour Party/Students Union Can Do," *Socialist Challenge*, no. 228, January 14, 1982, 7.
66 Berger and Laporte, "Between Avoiding Cold War," 147.

the Paris branch of Workers' Force (Force Ouvrière) with Gdańsk.[67] Given that British trade unionism was organized on an industrial basis while Solidarność took a geographical form, regional links were less common. That said, the aforementioned tie between the Leeds Polish Solidarity Committee and Wrocław provides an example of localized links between British and Polish workers through which personal connections formed.

Many high-profile trade unions expressed solidarity with Solidarność early on and were quick to condemn martial law in December 1981. The General and Municipal Workers' Union called on the TUC, whose support had so far been sluggish, to maximize its assistance to Solidarność, and, after martial law, expressed specific concern for the fate of Bogdan Lis, the vice-chair of the Founding Committee of Solidarność who had attended the union's congress in 1981.[68] Similarly, NALGO wrote to the Polish ambassador concerned for Mieczysław Kukuła, a Solidarność member who had attended their 1981 congress.[69] This concern for specific individuals is representative of the personal ties that formed between grassroots British trade unionists and Solidarność members as solidarity surpassed the political to take a personal form.

The EEPTU is often cited as the British trade union most ardent in its support for Solidarność. Indeed, John Lloyd in his *History of the EEPTU* considers the support "unrivalled."[70] Frank Chapple, the union's General Secretary, was among the most vocal supporters of Solidarność. EEPTU archives reveal the union's willingness to support Solidarność. After Wałęsa expressed an urgent need for office equipment in December 1980, the union's Executive Council unanimously agreed to "respond to the appeal."[71] As mentioned, the EEPTU also printed Garztecki's *Voice of Solidarity*.[72]

That Solidarność enjoyed Chapple's support was not always a blessing, however. Chapple, considered an anti-socialist 'right-winger' presiding over an undemocratic trade union, was a divisive figure in the labour movement and his support damaged the perception of Solidarność.[73] This confrontation within the trade union movement provoked by Solidarność influenced, in contrast to the efforts of grassroots activists and individual trade unions, the cautious approach taken by the TUC whose affiliates encompassed the whole spectrum of political opinion on the Left.

67 Andrzej Chwalba and Frank Georgi, "France: Exceptional Solidarity?," *Solidarity with Solidarity: Western European Trade Unions and the Polish Crisis, 1980–1982*, ed. Idesbald Goddeeris (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2010), 198; Goddeeris, "Transnational Scope," 66.

68 Singleton, "British Response," 38–39.

69 Berger and Laporte, "Between Avoiding Cold War," 137.

70 John Lloyd, *Light & Liberty: A History of the EEPTU* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson 1990), 607.

71 EEPTU Executive Council Minutes, 15 December 1980, in: MRC, Electrical Trades Union Collection, MSS.387/1/4/32.

72 Lloyd, *Light and Liberty,* 607; Hart, "A Brief History," 23.

73 Jim Denham et al., "An Open Letter to Frank Chapple," 3; Tom Marlowe, "Solidarity Needed From the Left," *Socialist Challenge*, no. 227, January 7, 1982, 2.

Trades Union Congress (TUC)

"Who's he? What's that?," was the reaction of Magda Wójcik, who made up half of the International Department of Solidarność, to a letter received in January 1981 from Len Murray, the General Secretary of the TUC.[74] That Solidarność knew nothing of the British trade union confederation four months into existence exemplifies the TUC's slow response which was in contrast to that of other countries. Solidarność enjoyed instant backing from all the major French trade union confederations, for example, and the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO).[75] The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and the European Trade Union Confederation, of both the TUC was a member, also made immediate statements of support.[76] In contrast, the TUC at its annual congress held in September 1980, just one week after the foundation of Solidarność, was embroiled in a dispute over the new Polish trade union. Although Berger and LaPorte have narrated the development of TUC support for Solidarność, various arguments are worth reiterating with new evidence, while novel points need making.

The years of détente that preceded the foundation of Solidarność saw the development of good relations between the TUC and communist trade unions in Eastern Europe, including the official Polish Central Council of Trade Unions (*Centralna Rada Zwiazkow Zawadowych*, CRZZ).[77] The Economic Department of the TUC had a scheduled trip to visit Poland as a guests of the official union in late-September 1980.[78] With Solidarność discrediting the claim made by the CRZZ to represent Polish workers, this begged the question, as the *Guardian* reported, "should the TUC go to Warsaw?."[79] In the event, the visit was cancelled by the CRZZ. This episode, however, laid the groundwork for the unclear position taken by the TUC during the Polish unions' first six months of existence.

74 Taylor, *Five Months*, 6; Phone interview with John Taylor, 18 January 2021, London UK.

75 Idesbald Goddeeris: "Introduction: Solidarity, Ideology, Instrumentality and Other Issues," *Solidarity with Solidarity: Western European Trade Unions and the Polish Crisis, 1980–1982*, ed. Idesbald Goddeeris (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2010), 2–3; on AFL-CIO support, see Gregory Domber, "The AFL-CIO, the Reagan Administration and Solidarność," *The Polish Review* 52 no. 2 (2007): 277–304; Arthur Rachwald, *In Search of Poland: The Superpowers' Response to Solidarity, 1980–1989* (Stanford: Hoover Press, 1990), 50.

76 MRC, TUC Collection, MSS.292D/943.8/1, International Confederation of Free Trade Unions Executive Board, 27–28 November 1980.

77 Berger and Laporte, "Between Avoiding Cold War," 129.

78 Phone interview with Tom Jenkins, 25 January 2021, London UK; MacShane, *Solidarity*, 144.

79 "Should the TUC Go to Warsaw?," *Guardian*, 22 August 1980, 10.

Following the cancellation of the trip, the TUC Congress passed an ambiguous motion which "expressed hope that talks taking place in Poland would reach a solution satisfactory to all those involved."[80] This was far from unequivocal support for Solidarność, but instead characteristic of the TUC's attempt to toe a cautious line between maintaining friendly relations with communist trade unions while upholding their belief in free trade unionism.[81] An internal document reveals that, while the TUC sought to establish contact with Solidarność, it felt that "the CRZZ should be informed."[82] It is telling of the TUC's ambiguous response that, while recognizing that Solidarność was struggling for independent labour representation, they remained courteous to the CRZZ who by extension ceased to be true representatives of the Polish working class.

That said, while the TUC's outward support for Solidarność was feeble in comparison to other trade union confederations, there were internal conversations considering how best to assist Polish workers, albeit not in the summer of 1980 but at the start of 1981.[83] Tom Jenkins, who held the Eastern Europe remit within the TUC International Department, recalled his frustration with the presentation of the TUC as failing to support Solidarność.[84] Jenkins had received a letter in February 1981 from Robin Blick, PSC Secretary, which claimed that Solidarność had "had no support from the British TUC."[85] Jenkins noted his irritation, scribbling on the letter that "PSC should check their facts" as the TUC had established contact with Solidarność.[86] In an institution the size of the TUC, however, that leading figures were sympathetic was not enough to determine central policy as decision-making procedures were cumbersome. In an interview, Jenkins was also keen to stress that, for the small TUC International Department, Poland was one among a miscellany of issues that occupied time in the working day.[87]

It is beyond doubt, however, that, in comparison with the AFL-CIO and Western European equivalents, the TUC's approach to Solidarność during the Polish unions'

80 MRC, TUC Collection, MSS.292D/943.8/1: Poland: Trade Union Developments, 6 October 1980.

81 Berger and Laporte, "Between Avoiding Cold War," 150.

82 MRC, TUC Collection, MSS.292D/943.8/1: Poland: Trade Union Developments, 6 October 1980.

83 MRC, TUC Collection, MSS.292D/943.8/1: Poland: Trade Union Developments and Contacts, 2 February 1981.

84 Phone interview with Tom Jenkins, 25 January 2021, London UK. For depictions in the press of the TUC failing to provide assistance See John Patten, "An Eerie TUC Silence on Poland's Strikes," *Guardian*, 25 August 1980, 10.

85 MRC, TUC Collection, MSS.292D/943.8/1: Solidarity with Polish Workers Leaflet, enclosed in Robin Blick to TUC, February 1981.

86 MRC, TUC Collection, MSS.292D/943.8/1: Robin Blick to TUC, February 1981.

87 Phone interview with Tom Jenkins, 25 January 2021, London UK.

incipient months was lukewarm at best, in stark contrast to the backing given by the individual British trade unions and grassroots labour activists. Before detailing the increase in TUC support following the visit by leading Solidarność member Bogdan Lis, it is worth considering why the TUC response differed so markedly from other trade union confederations.

Central to Berger and LaPorte's analysis was that the TUC sought to balance intra-union tensions with the desire to maintain cordial relations with communist Eastern Europe, all while upholding the ideal of free trade unionism.[88] Denis MacShane relayed an image of the TUC as "a carthorse lugging around a huge trade union movement."[89] The range of political viewpoints within the TUC, from pro-Soviet communist party members to fervent anti-communists like Chapple, meant policy decisions took time and necessitated compromise. This goes some way to explain the TUC's initial ambiguity.

That the TUC was the sole British trade union confederation was significant. Unlike elsewhere in Europe, a lack of competition with other confederations left no incentive for the TUC to distinguish itself in terms of level of support. Solidarność featured more prominently as an issue in countries with multiple trade union confederations like Belgium, France and Italy.[90] The aforementioned intra-union tensions were only so problematic because the TUC, as the only trade union federation, encompassed such wide-ranging political opinion.

For those within the TUC already suspicious of Solidarność given Chapple's support, that Thatcher also looked favourably at developments in Poland provided another cause for scepticism.[91] In January 1981 Solidarność adviser Dr Janik Strzelecki met with Conservative MPs at the Conservative Central Office.[92] That he visited the TUC at Congress House on the same day epitomized the unique ability of Solidarność to receive interest from groups which, in their domestic context, were opponents. Alongside Thatcher and Chapple, that US President Ronald Reagan supported Solidarność did not bode well given the anti-Americanism present in British left-wing culture. Given the internal tension Solidarność provoked, the TUC appeared initially content with leaving solidarity activism to the ICFTU as a substitute for its own action, a decision also taken by ambivalent trade union confederations in West Germany and Sweden.[93]

88 Berger and Laporte, "Between Avoiding Cold War," 150.
89 Phone interview with Denis MacShane, 27 January 2021, London UK.
90 Goddeeris, "Introduction," 10.
91 Berger and Laporte, "Between Avoiding Cold War," 135.
92 "Polish Sociologist in Talks with MPs and TUC," *The Times*, 21 January 1981, 2.
93 Kim Christiaens and Idesbald Goddeeris, "Beyond Western European Idealism: A Comparative Perspective on the Transnational Scope of Belgian Solidarity Movements with Nic-

A genuine desire to maintain affable relations with the CRZZ and other trade unions across the Iron Curtain was another factor identified by Berger and LaPorte to have influenced TUC policy.[94] That the TUC's initially cautious policy was partly driven by the desire to not aggravate Cold War tensions was evident in Bogdan Lis' analysis of his visit to London in February-March 1981. Speaking to Denis MacShane in Gdańsk, Lis relayed his frustration at the frequency with which Len Murray referred to the "TUC's concern about the dangers to world peace if anything should go wrong in Poland."[95]

Yet to be considered as a further explanation for the TUC's lukewarm response, however, are the personal relationships that developed between British and communist state trade unionists during this time of increased interaction. Friendships formed at various social engagements and on holidays. MacShane identified that "well-intentioned pro-détente union leaders" were placed in an uncomfortable position when they had to question whether their hosts at "plush Black Sea resorts" actually represented Eastern European workers.[96] An analysis of comments made by Bill Sirs, the General Secretary of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation (ISTC) and member of the TUC General Council, are elucidative of the complacency among some in the TUC leadership towards unrest in Eastern Europe. That Sirs supported the right of Polish workers to free trade unions was evident; he sponsored a campaign to boycott Soviet goods in 1981.[97] Yet, upon listening to and broadly accepting Wiktor Moszczynski's criticisms of the CRZZ, Sirs was keen to ensure that the assessment was not extended to his opposite number in Poland, of whom he was personally fond.[98] Similarly, in a BBC interview in August 1980, Sirs expressed sympathy with his Polish colleagues for their problems.[99] Sirs is representative of a culture among the trade union leadership who, while broadly sympathetic to the demands of Polish workers, remained naively sympathetic to those with whom they had personal relations.

In a similar vein, some of the older generation in the British Left possessed a natural sympathy towards the Soviet project. While for some this was ideological, others reminisced favourably of the contribution made by the Soviet Union in the defeat of

aragua, Poland and South Africa in the 1980s," *Journal of Contemporary History* 50, no. 3 (2015), 644.

94 Berger and Laporte, "Between Avoiding Cold War," 150.

95 MacShane, *Solidarity*, 118.

96 MacShane, *Solidarity*, 115.

97 Davy Jones: "Solidarity with Solidarność" *Socialist Challenge Pamphlet*, April 1982, 12, https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/img/img-pamphlets/solidarity.pdf.

98 Phone interview with Wiktor Moszczynski, 22 January 2021, London UK.

99 Christopher Booker, "Stealing the Clothes of Poland's Heroes," *Daily Telegraph*, 3 October 1981, 10; John O'Mahony, Tony Richardson "Fighting to Break Links with Police State 'Union,'" *Socialist Organiser*, no. 79, 1 April 1982, 12.

Nazism. This mindset of older activists was not uncommon at Labour Party and trade union meetings.[100]

Overall, the TUC's sluggish response can be explained by their intention to keep at bay the intra-union tensions and concern that the Polish crisis might threaten European stability. That leading British trade unionists had personal affinity with their Polish communist counterparts only compounded this desire to tread cautiously.

The TUC's non-committal policy towards Solidarność remained in place until the end of February 1981. An official visit by Bogdan Lis was a turning point which saw the TUC formally establish links with Solidarność.[101] Just as Piotr Kozlowski had a profound impact on the British working class, so Lis did on trade union leaders. Jenkins, who was involved in the organization of the trip, described Lis as a "good operator."[102] Lis was a young, charismatic engineer who had an instant compatibility with fellow working-class trade unionists, unlike the Polish intellectuals who had thus far been the only personal contact between the TUC and Solidarność. Like Jenkins, Eugeniusz Smolar, who interpreted for Lis during the trip, recognized the importance of Lis presenting a working-class face of Solidarność, noting the rapport Lis established with trade unionists.[103] Smolar recalled the TUC's shock when Lis revealed that he was a member of ruling the Polish United Workers' Party (*Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza*, PZPR), showing trade union leaders that, far from an anti-communist organization, Solidarność was a genuine workers' movement encompassing communists and non-communists alike.[104] At a press conference Lis sought to ease concern as to the nature of the demands of Solidarność. He expressed an awareness that "the geopolitical conditions […] are such that we [Solidarność] have to retain a level of common sense and moderation in our demands."[105] This helped both to appease the TUC's worry that the rise of Solidarność threatened the stability of Europe, and to reassure the broader labour movement that Solidarność was first and foremost a trade union seeking to defend the right to independent labour representation.

That the visit had the intended effect of gaining TUC support was evident given that assistance considerably increased thereafter with £20,000 being made available for office and printing equipment, as well as trade union education courses for Solidar-

100 Phone interview with Wiktor Moszczynski, 22 January 2021, London UK; interview with John Taylor, 18 January 2021, London UK.

101 MRC, TUC Collection, MSS.292D/943.8/1: Draft: Visit of Solidarity Representatives, 27 February 1981; Draft: Address of Welcome for Mr. Bogdan Lis, 27 February 1981.

102 Phone interview with Tom Jenkins, 25 January 2021, London UK.

103 Phone interview with Eugeniusz Smolar, 20 January 2021, Warsaw Poland.

104 Ibid.

105 Christian Tyler, "TUC Advisers for Polish Solidarity," *Financial Times*, 3 March 1981, 9.

ność members.[106] As mentioned, the donation of printing equipment was particularly important given the difficulty to obtain independent means of printing in the Eastern bloc. Lis' visit was one among many by Solidarność representatives across Western Europe to establish the new Polish union within the world trade union movement.[107] While it is often assumed that Western activists initiated support for oppressed people in the Second World, in fact the reverse was often true; it took Solidarność activists like Lis to visit Western Europe to elicit support from the more cautious labour movement organizations.[108]

While assistance from the TUC picked up following Lis' visit, it was not until the implementation of martial law that support became absolute.[109] The increased severity of the situation in Poland occasioned a shift in policy across Europe. The TUC International Committee met on 21 December 1981 and advocated "full freedom for Solidarity," while the General Council stated its "full support for Solidarity."[110]

Resolutions were passed in support of Solidarność at every TUC Congress from 1981 to 1987.[111] Yet, even following martial law, the TUC were not immune from attacks in the press for certain policy peculiarities.[112] They seemed to seesaw in their participation in various international solidarity initiatives. The ICFTU's 'International Day of Action' on 31 January 1982 was among the first expressions of international solidarity with Solidarność, yet the TUC ignored the call to organize a demonstration, leaving it to PSC and individual trade unions to coordinate.[113] Michael Walsh explained that the TUC refrained from organizing demonstrations on international issues.[114] The TUC used the considerable grassroots solidarity activity to excuse itself from public demonstrations, suiting their cautious approach.

It seemed, however, that by the end of 1982 the TUC were more willing to express public solidarity, likely given the reassertion of support for Solidarność at their September congress. In November 1982, only three months after failing to support a demonstration in August, the TUC encouraged its members to partake in a march

106 Phone interview with Tom Jenkins, 25 January 2021, London UK. For the initial assistance provided by the TUC, see Taylor, *Five Months*, 6; Tyler, "TUC Advisers for Polish Solidarity," *Financial Times*, 9; Robert Porter, "TUC Decides to Back Solidarity," *Daily Mail*, 3 March 1981, 2.

107 MacShane, *Solidarity*, 118.

108 Christiaens/Goddeeris, "Beyond Western European Idealism ", 652–653.

109 "Support for Solidarity Pledged," *Financial Times*, 15 December 1981, 10; Berger and Laporte, "Between Avoiding Cold War," 137.

110 Singleton, "British Response," 38–39.

111 Berger and Laporte, "Between Avoiding Cold War," 137.

112 Robert Taylor, "TUC is Odd Man Out on Solidarity," *The Observer*, 29 August 1982, 2.

113 Goddeeris, "Western Trade Unions and Solidarność," 317; Berger, *Solidarność, Western Solidarity and Détente*, 82.

114 "TUC is Odd Man Out on Solidarity," 2.

organized by PSC, and asked its affiliated unions to join the call by the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITWF) to boycott Polish shipments on 10 November.[115] While solidarity with Solidarność took a predominantly bilateral form, initiatives like those undertaken by the ICFTU and the ITWF were an exception to the rule.[116] Christiaens and Goddeeris, however, note that the transnational initiatives originated in the offices of international labour organizations, and the extent of multilateral grassroots solidarity was limited.[117]

The TUC's support for Solidarność became unequivocal as the decade progressed. In September 1983 the International Committee declared Solidarność the "only organisation in Poland which we recognise," while in November 1986, TUC General Secretary Norman Willis moved the application of membership for Solidarność at the ICFTU congress.[118] Upon his visit to London in 1989, Wałęsa expressed his gratitude to the TUC for their support.[119] That said, despite PSC efforts, at no point did the TUC break links with the CRZZ. The TUC insisted that the link provided a unique opportunity to lobby the Polish authorities on behalf of Solidarność. Tom Jenkins, however, admitted that the links were not all that deep and lacked much efficacy as leverage in hindsight.[120]

That the TUC eventually provided unequivocal support for Solidarność yet maintained links with the CRZZ was representative of their attempt throughout the decade to reconcile support for free trade unionism with a desire to maintain cordial East-West relations. The personal affinities that developed between leading British and official Polish trade unionists compounded the reluctance to provide support. The degree of support fluctuated over time, determined by an interplay of forces from internal political considerations to the severity of the situation in Poland. The ambiguity that defined the TUC's position in the early 1980s was the antithesis of that taken by various individual trade unions and the grassroots labour movement. Yet, as the decade progressed the TUC began to reflect the feeling of the movement more broadly.

115 "TUC to Back Solidarity Rally," *Financial Times*, November 2, 1982, 11; Berger and Laporte, "Between Avoiding Cold War," 144.

116 Goddeeris, "Transnational Scope," 65.

117 Christiaens and Goddeeris, "Beyond Western European Idealism," 645–646.

118 "Total Support for Solidarity is Underlined," *Financial Times*, September 9, 1983, 10; Robert Taylor, "Willis Backs Solidarity in Western Union" *Observer*, November 23, 1986, 2.

119 Hart, "A Brief History," 46.

120 Phone interview with Tom Jenkins, 25 January 2021, London UK.

National Union of Mineworkers (NUM)

Much as the TUC failed to reflect the grassroots sympathy felt by the trade union movement towards Solidarność, the case of the NUM serves as a microcosm for the way in which the view of an individual union's leadership did not necessarily mirror the feeling of its membership. The opinion of Arthur Scargill, NUM President, risks the union being lumped on the pro-Soviet side of the Solidarność debate. In a letter to *News Line*, the daily paper of the Workers' Revolutionary Party, Scargill stated his opposition to Solidarność, deeming it "an anti-socialist organisation which desires the overthrow of a socialist state."[121] "British Scargill Denounces the Polish Scargills," the *Socialist Organiser* aptly described the ordeal.[122] Featured in the NUM 1983 Annual Report, Scargill's response to the backlash noted that the letter was his "personal view."[123] Yet, it was signed off with his title as NUM President and sent with NUM-headed paper.[124]

Scargill's views should not be taken as that of the union's leadership as a whole. Mick McGahey, Vice-President of the NUM, spoke on behalf of Scottish miners in support of Solidarność.[125] That he was a CPGB member was no contradiction. Of the Eurocommunist faction which emerged in the 1970s, he sympathized with the efforts of Polish workers to obtain democratic workers' control. Moreover, Scargill's criticism of Solidarność was not shared by NUM members. The union sent a delegation to the Polish Embassy in February 1982 demanding the release of Josef Patyna, a Polish miner who had visited the NUM in 1981.[126] In so doing, the delegation mirrored the

121 "Arthur Scargill to Michael Banda, 21 July 1983," *News Line*, September 7, 1983, enclosed in Scargill, Solidarity & Workers' Revolution Party Pamphlet, 8, Private Papers of Simon Pirani (former SWP activist). Scargill was responding to "An Open Letter to Arthur Scargill: Withdraw Attacks on Polish Workers," in *News Line* (16 July 1983), enclosed in: Scargill, Solidarity & Workers' Revolution Party Pamphlet, Simon Pirani Papers.

122 "The British Scargill and the Polish Scargills," *Socialist Organiser*, no. 145, 15 September 1983, 2.

123 MRC, National Union of Mineworkers Collection, MSS.429/NUM/4/38, Arthur Scargill, Appendix XII, Media and Press Smear Campaign—President's Reply, 15 September 1983, enclosed in: Annual Report and Proceedings, 1983.

124 Arthur Scargill to Michael Banda, 21 July 1983, in *News Line*, 7 September 1983, enclosed in: 'Scargill, Solidarity & Workers' Revolution Party Pamphlet,' 8, Private Papers of Simon Pirani.

125 Marlowe, "Solidarity Needed from the Left," 2.

126 Wiktor Moszczynski, "Solidarity and the TUC," *PSC News* 7 (1982), 12; Singleton, "British Response," 38–39.

particular sympathy felt by British leftists towards Polish trade unionists with whom they had personal contact.[127]

That Scargill was isolated in his criticism of Solidarność was evident in the reaction it provoked.[128] Annesley NUM branch proposed a vote of no confidence in the President's leadership, evidencing the disenchantment felt by grassroots members.[129] Sid Vincent, leader of the NUM Lancashire branch, proclaimed that "miners have always been supporters of Solidarity."[130] Other trade union leaders were quick to dismiss Scargill's comments to avoid British trade unionism from being associated with them, particularly given reports of their use by the Polish authorities' as evidence of the condemnation of Solidarność by British trade unions.[131] Evidently, the 'NUM stance' on Solidarność cannot be defined by that of its leader. Instead, as was also the case with the TUC, there was variation within the organization. This was reflected in the Austrian Trade Union Federation (*Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund*) leadership who, after claiming that Polish refugees posed a threat to Austrian workers, were challenged from within.[132]

A little over a year later with the miners' strike in Britain underway, the doubts sown into the Left by the likes of Scargill as to the working-class nature of Solidarność were dispelled. "To the striking miners of Great Britain," read a statement made in June 1984 from the Solidarność Committee in the Upper Silesia mining region, "Solidarity miners send you fraternal greetings and our […] solidarity for your struggle."[133] The statement represents the industry-based links between grassroots trade unionists in Britain and Poland—the political support provided to Solidarność by NUM members since 1981 was reciprocated three years later. Not only was this embarrassing for Scargill, but it also exposed the hypocrisy underpinning Thatcher's support for Solidarność. Thatcher's government were in conflict with the NUM who enjoyed the sup-

127 Singleton, "British Response," 38–39.

128 Robert Taylor, "Now Scargill Upsets NUM Rank and File," *Observer*, 11 September 1983, 4; "Miners: He's Gone Too Far This Time," *Daily Mail*, 9 September 1983, 9; Bryan Carter, David Norris, "Fury at Scargill Letter," *Daily Mail*, 8 September 1983, 1.

129 David Amos, "The Nottinghamshire Miners, the Union of Democratic Mineworkers and the 1984–85 Miners' Strike: Scabs or Scapegoats?," PhD dissertation, University of Nottingham (2012), 45–55.

130 Philip Bassett, "Scargill Attacked by Union Leaders," *Financial Times*, September 8, 1983, 1.

131 McKinlay, "Scargill Angers Unions"; Robert Porter, Bryan Carter "Moscow Plays Scargill's Tune," *Daily Mail*, September 9, 1983, 9.

132 Oliver Rathkolb, "Austria: An Ambivalent Attitude of Trade Unions and Political Parties," *Solidarity with Solidarity: Western European Trade Unions and the Polish Crisis, 1980–1982*, ed. Idesbald Goddeeris (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2010), 279; Goddeeris: "Transnational Scope," 62.

133 "Solidarność Miners' Statement in Solidarity with the NUM" *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe* 7, no. 2 (1984), 25.

port of Solidarność. Moreover, her government, to break the miners' strike, increased coal imports threefold from the Polish regime she had condemned after martial law.[134] Trade unionists were quick to point out Thatcher's double standards.[135] When the Prime Minister visited Poland in November 1988 even her Private Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Charles Powell, noted the exposure to accusations of hypocrisy. That the proposed closure of the Lenin Shipyard in Gdańsk coincided with Thatcher's visit was no accident—according to Powell, the Polish authorities were saying to the Polish people who lined the streets to greet the Prime Minister, "we are being Thatcherite. See how you like it."[136]

The miners' strike, however, brought its own problems for NUM-Solidarność relations. Indeed, sympathy for Solidarność was not static throughout the 1980s. In comparison to the support provided by sections of the NUM in the early 1980s, by the summer of 1985 sympathy had abated somewhat. Marek Garztecki received no response from the NUM head office, the Yorkshire region, or the South Wales branch to his plea to 'adopt' imprisoned Polish miners' leader Tadeusz Jedynak.[137] Given the recent defeat in the miners' strike, NUM apathy towards Jedynak's plight can partly be explained by their diverted attention and likely strained funds. Yet, a *Sunday Mirror* article published in July 1984 in which Wałęsa appeared to criticize Scargill's approach to the miners' strike while praising Thatcher likely soured perceptions of Solidarność for the NUM.[138] The article, in the context of Scargill's popularity reaching its zenith among trade unionists during the miners' strike, reignited vocal opposition to Solidarność among sections of the Left.[139] Both the British political context and the dwindling prevalence of the Polish crisis as an international issue determined the fluctuations in NUM support for Solidarność.

The trade union movement in general were central to the British Left's assistance to Solidarność. The rank-and-file labour movement and various individual trade unions displayed considerable spontaneous sympathy. Members and regional leaderships often diverted from the position of the central leaderships, as was the case with the NUM and TUC. Both the NUM and TUC also exemplify that the level of support for Solidarność fluctuated over time, influenced by an interplay of domestic political factors and the severity of the situation in Poland.

134 Brendan Keenan, "Poles Turn Down Short-Term Coal Supply Plea," *Financial Times*, 17 May 1984, 12; John O'Mahony, "Workers' Unity East and West," *Socialist Organiser*, no. 200, 11 October 1984, 10.

135 Heffer, "Thatcher is a Hypocrite!," 6.

136 National Archives, Kew, Records of the Prime Minister's Office, PREM/19/2385, Charles Powell to Margaret Thatcher, 31 October 1988.

137 Marek Garztecki to Chris Ford, 3 July 1985, Private Papers of Chris Ford.

138 Robert Eringer, "Why Scargill is Wrong—By Lech," *Sunday Mirror*, 29 July 1984, 7.

139 O'Mahony, Workers' "Unity East and West," 10.

Solidarność and British Left-wing Organizations

The landscape of left-wing British politics in the early 1980s was fraught with factionalism. Following the 1979 election defeat, the emergence of Solidarność coincided with a battle raging for control of the Labour Party between the Left and the centre. Solidarność provided another channel through which the enmity that plagued the Left could manifest. This domestic political context goes some way to explain the Labour Party's cautious policy towards the new Polish union which, like the TUC, dithered behind the considerable solidarity activity of both grassroots members and individual MPs. The CPGB also found the Polish crisis problematic, with a debate taking place between pro-Soviet elements sceptical of Solidarność and Eurocommunists keen to distance themselves from Soviet communism. Small Trotskyist groups were also immediate supporters of Solidarność.[140] The degree of support for Solidarność from the left-wing organizations was shaped both by ideology and the domestic political context.

When discussing who was most forthcoming in support of Solidarność, Nina Smolar, a Polish émigré living in London, stated "the Trotskyists—because they saw the imperative of struggling against the dictatorship of the bureaucracy."[141] It is unsurprising, therefore, that Trotskyist-influenced publications backed Polish workers. *Socialist Organiser*, a weekly circulated within the Labour Party by the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory, and *Socialist Challenge*, the publication of the Trotskyist International Marxist Group, were central in calling for left-wing leadership of the solidarity campaign in Britain, complaining that the Right occupied the space.[142] Trotskyist influence was also evident in *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe*, a journal founded in 1977 to provide Marxist analysis of political developments in Eastern Europe.[143] They too argued for "unconditional solidarity with Solidarity on the part of the British labour movement."[144] It was around such publications that aforementioned regional solidarity committees formed.

140 "Poland: Round 1 to the Workers," *Socialist Challenge*, no. 162, September 2, 1980, 1.

141 James Mark, Anna von der Goltz, "Encounters," *Europe's 1968: Voices of Revolt*, ed. Robert Gildea, James Mark, Anette Warring (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 156–157.

142 "Polish Workers: Birth of Our Power," *Socialist Organiser*, no. 24, August 30, 1980, 1; Zbigniew Kowalewski, "A Matter for Workers Everywhere," *Socialist Challenge*, no. 227, January 7, 1982, 3.; Penny Duggan, "Socialist Challenge says Solidarity with Solidarność," *Socialist Challenge*, no. 228, January 14, 1982, 7; Marlowe, "Solidarity Needed From the Left," 2.

143 Bent Boel, "Western Trotskyists and Subversive Travelling in the Soviet Bloc Countries, 1956–1989," *Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe* 25, no. 2 (2017), 244.

144 "Socialists and Solidarity," *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe* 5, nos. 1–2 (1982), 1.

The above Trotskyist publications performed a key role in keeping Poland in the minds of the labour movement. *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe*, for example, dedicated whole issues to events in Poland.[145] Nina Smolar, and particularly her husband, Eugeniusz Smolar (Deputy Director of BBC Polish Section from 1982) played a significant role in providing publications with translated material from Poland.[146] Eugeniusz Smolar, with colleagues at the BBC Polish Section, founded the Information Centre for Polish Affairs as a means to distribute information from their Polish informants to the British labour movement, the Foreign Office, and the British press.[147]

The Labour Party fell victim to criticisms of inaction waged by the above publications. As a large institution encompassing a range of political views, the party shared with the TUC the problems created by the emergence of Solidarność. While the Labour Party did not have communist party members, there were pro-Soviet elements who approached the Polish union with suspicion. As such, the Labour Party's initial policy towards Solidarność was also defined by ambiguity and caution. Persistent calls were made by pro-Solidarność activists for the party to sever links with official communist parties in Eastern Europe and to cease inviting communist delegates to conference.[148] That is not to say that individual high-profile Labour MPs or the party's membership did not support Solidarność.[149] It is important, therefore, as was the case with the trade union movement, to distinguish between the official policy of the Labour Party leadership and that of its membership and personnel.

Despite the prominence of Solidarność in the press in the early 1980s, it was never discussed at a Labour Party shadow cabinet meeting, and was raised only briefly as any other business at a meeting of the Parliamentary Labour Party in December 1981.[150] This is reflective of the party's general ambivalence towards Solidarność. While trade union congresses across Europe were passing resolutions on Poland during 1981, at the Labour Party Conference in September Solidarność received little attention; a resolution on Poland moved by Acton Constituency Labour Party (CLP) was rejected by

145 *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe* 4.1–3 (1980); *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe* 4, no. 4–6 (1981).

146 Phone interview with Eugeniusz Smolar, 20 January 2021, Warsaw, Poland.

147 Alban Webb, "The BBC Polish Section and the Reporting of Solidarity, 1980–1983," in *Diasporas and Diplomacy: Cosmopolitan Contact Zones at the BBC World Service (1932–2012),* ed. Marie Gillespie and Alban Webb (London: Routledge, 2013), 97; "Uncensored Poland News Bulletin, 23 October 1980," *Information Centre for Polish Affairs*, Private Papers of Eugeniusz Smolar.

148 Naomi Hyamson, "Labour Party Rally," *PSC News* 7 (1982), 15.

149 Hart, "A Brief History," 36; Dale, "Leeds Polish Solidarity Committee."

150 "Shadow Cabinet Minutes, 1980–1985," British Online Archives (BOA), British Labour Party Papers, 1330/SC/1980/81(82)(83)(84)(85); BOA, British Labour Party Papers, 1330/PM/1981/82, Minutes of Party Meeting, 17 December 1981.

the Conference Arrangements Committee.[151] Strong criticisms were levelled against the party leadership for inviting delegates from the Czech and Soviet communist parties to the 1981 conference. By also inviting Czech dissident Rudolf Battěk, who was unable to attend given his detention by the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, *PSC News* remarked that the Labour Party had paradoxically invited "the jailers and the jailed."[152]

In contrast to the TUC, the Labour Party's ambiguous approach to Solidarność did not turn into unequivocal support with the proclamation of martial law. The emergence of Solidarność coincided with the party's key decision-making body (the NEC) being firmly under the control of the Left, with some representatives expressing scepticism towards the new Polish union.[153] A meeting of the NEC less than a week after martial law laid bare the internal fissures within the leadership. Eric Heffer proposed that the NEC lobby the Polish authorities to "rescind the state of emergency [and] release all detainees."[154] Heffer's motion was defeated, receiving only two votes in its favour from Neil Kinnock MP and Tony Saunois, the Young Socialists' representative.[155]

For Saunois, his support was underpinned by a Trotskyist analysis of the events in Poland, considering Solidarność a working-class organization challenging the Stalinist bureaucracy.[156] To understand why the Labour Party failed to express support for Solidarność before martial law, and why Heffer's motion was rejected immediately after, the party's ambiguous approach must be placed in its political and historical context.

Similar explanations as were posited for the TUC's sluggish response can be extended to the Labour Party. During the 1970s the Labour Party formed closer relations with the communist parties of Eastern Europe given its "Left can talk to the Left" tradition.[157] Also, given the inextricable link between the Labour Party and the trade union movement, the same trade union leaders who, as previously mentioned, had formed personal relations with their counterparts in communist unions were often on the Labour Party NEC. Like the TUC, the Labour Party was a large institution encompassing a wide range of political viewpoints rendering decision-making proce-

151 AM Fisher: "PSC at Brighton Conference," *PSC News* 4 (1981), 9–10.

152 Ibid.

153 On the period of left-wing control of the Labour Party NEC, see Shaw *Discipline and Discord*, 222–224.

154 "News from Labour's National Executive Committee," *PSC News* 5 (1982).

155 Fisher, "PSC at Brighton Conference," 9.10. It is worth noting that Heffer was a member of the CPGB until 1948. Firmly on the Left of the Labour Party, he opposed the expulsion of Militant from the party.

156 Phone interview with Tony Saunois, 19 February 2021, London UK.

157 On the development of relations between the Labour Party and the communist bloc see Brian White, *Britain, Détente and Changing East-West Relations* (London: Routledge, 1992), 135–136.

dures slow and cautious. This reluctance and even inability to take a strong position was compounded by the factional war taking place. The 'Gang of Four' split with the party in April 1981 to form the Social Democratic Party (SDP). Given that Solidarność enjoyed support from Thatcher, right-wing trade unionists like Chapple, and the recently departed SDP, it is not surprising that the Left who controlled the NEC were reluctant to partake. Despite calls from the Trotskyist Left for the Labour Party to take a lead in support of Solidarność and to expose the hypocrisy in Thatcher's backing, the debate became entangled in the turbulent political context.

The first expression of concrete support for Solidarność from the Labour Party was moved at a meeting of the NEC International Committee in January 1982.[158] Again proposed by Heffer, the meeting resolved to urge the labour movement to "refrain from any fraternal contact with the Polish United Workers' Party […] whilst the military regime continues."[159] The meeting also outlined the party's intention to hold a public meeting in support of Polish workers which was held on 16 March 1982.[160] The Labour Party demonstration, however, was dubbed "the secret rally" given the party's failure to publicize it adequately.[161] A call was made in the *Socialist Organiser* for its readers to attend lest a poor turn-out be used by the party as "an excuse for further inaction on Poland."[162] In the event, and despite the appeal of high-profile speakers like Denis Healey, then Deputy Leader of the Labour Party, only seventy people attended.[163] Peculiarly, Roy Evans of the ISTC also addressed the crowd, despite him having opposed Heffer's NEC motion in December 1981.[164]

The rally was followed by a series of declarations of solidarity with Solidarność. Under pressure from PSC, the NEC decided in July 1982 to sever links with the PZPR.[165] The September 1982 Labour Party Conference passed a resolution calling on the Polish government to "end martial law, release […] political prisoners, and to honour the Gdańsk […] agreement."[166] The motion was moved by Heffer, and seconded by Sam McCluskie, the General Secretary of the National Union of Seamen.[167] That McCluskie, who had opposed Heffer's NEC motion twenty-one months earlier,

158 "Labour Rally," *Socialist Organiser*, no. 70, January 28, 1982, 5.
159 "Labour Party News," *PSC News* 6 (1982), 15.
160 Singleton: "British Response" 38–39.
161 "Labour Party News," *PSC News*; Hyamson, "Labour Party Rally," 15.
162 "Labour Poland Rally," *Socialist Organiser*, no. 76, 11 March 1982, 13.
163 Hyamson, "Labour Party Rally."
164 Ibid.
165 Moszczynski, "Extracts," 96.
166 "Labour on Poland," *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe* 5, nos. 5–6 (1982–83), 26.
167 Ibid.

seconded the conference resolution reflects the way in which the increased severity of the situation in Poland shifted the perceptions of some.

As with the TUC and NUM, the ambivalence of the Labour Party leadership was not reflected in its grassroots membership, or even in individual MPs. It appears that, given the divisive effect of Solidarność, as well as other competing commitments, the party leadership were content with allowing individual MPs to express support, delaying the need for any official statement. Heffer was the most prominent Labour MP supportive of Solidarność.[168] He inadvertently contributed to the fundraising efforts of PSC by sporting a Solidarność T-shirt at the 1981 Labour Party Conference. While the *Mirror* criticized the Shadow Minister for Europe for taking "informality too far," by printing Heffer's photo and the details of PSC, the newspaper facilitated the sale of over one thousand T-shirts.[169] Heffer recalled in his memoirs that "some NEC members were annoyed" at him for having worn the T-shirt to conference, further demonstrating the ambivalence of the party leadership towards Solidarność.[170] It is worth noting, however, that Solidarność was not a relationship-defining issue on the Left. For example, Heffer recognized that Scargill "did not support Solidarity" but noted that "in the great miners' strike we had to put that aside."[171]

Heffer was not alone in his support for Solidarność. Other high-profile Labour Party MPs campaigned for Solidarność including Neil Kinnock (before he was party leader) and Peter Shore, Shadow Chancellor between 1980 and 1983.[172] In his memoirs, Denis Healey recalled being "deeply moved by the rise of the Solidarity movement in Poland."[173] By receiving support from Kinnock, considered a moderate in the party, and Heffer on the left wing of the party, the ability of Solidarność to unite those with quite different politics was as much the case in the Labour Party as in British politics more broadly.

The supposed silence on Solidarność from Tony Benn MP was used both by the Right to discredit the inaction of the Left, and by the grassroots Left who complained of a lack of left-wing leadership in support of Solidarność.[174] Indeed, E. P. Thompson remarked that Solidarność had "become a football kicked between small leftist sects and the conservative Right."[175] Berger and LaPorte dubbed Benn a "prominent

168 Hart, "A Brief History," 10.
169 "Eric Goes for the Informal," *Daily Mirror*, 30 September 1981, 15; Hart, "A Brief History," 20.
170 Heffer, *Never a Yes Man*, 208.
171 Heffer, *Never a Yes Man*, 204.
172 Hart, "A Brief History," 35.
173 Denis Healey, *The Time of My Life* (London: Penguin, 1990), 527.
174 "Boot-licker Benn is Poles Apart," *Daily Mail*, July 17, 1986, 6; "Poland: Where Do Labour Leaders Stand?," *Socialist Organiser*, no. 68, January 14, 1982, 1.
175 Thompson: *Double Exposure*, 124.

doubter of Solidarność," citing a diary entry from July 1986.[176] While Benn did have his doubts, he was supportive of Solidarność, albeit to fluctuating degrees throughout the decade. As early as February 1981 Benn issued a statement for the 'Hands Off The Polish Workers' campaign which read, "All democratic socialists should support the efforts of 'Solidarity' to introduce real democratic accountability into Poland."[177]

That said, claims that Benn was sceptical of Solidarność are not completely unfounded. In a similar vein to the diary entry cited by Berger and LaPorte, Benn, in September 1984, expressed his "anxiety about Solidarity" privately to interviewers from *Socialist Organiser*.[178] Accepting that the Polish workers' demands were genuine, Benn questioned whether the Left was "wise to be widely enthusiastic about it [Solidarność]."[179] This mindset is characteristic of the increased scepticism towards Solidarność on the Left given its right-wing supporters, and particularly following the publication of the aforementioned article in which Wałęsa appeared to attack Scargill while praising Thatcher.[180] Indeed, Benn's disquiet for this article featured in the *Socialist Organiser* interview.[181] The fluctuation in Benn's support for Solidarność reflected that of the NUM, with oscillations determined by the British political situation.

Much as the sluggish response of the TUC was not reflected by grassroots trade unionists, so the Labour Party's weak response was not shared by its membership. Fringe events at Labour Party conferences were organized on the topic of Poland.[182] Militant, a Trotskyist group who had entered the Labour Party in the 1970s, were supportive of Solidarność.[183] Motions passed at CLP meetings provide a useful measure of grassroots support. The shadow cabinet received a resolution from Westbury CLP arguing that the "Labour Party has a vital role to play in highlighting the complexity and danger of the Polish situation to the British people."[184] CLPs also supported local solidarity initiatives; Leeds North-East CLP, for example, supported the foundation of the Leeds Polish Solidarity Committee.[185] Young Labour Party members appeared

176 Berger and Laporte, "Between Avoiding Cold War," 138.
177 "Hands Off The Polish Workers Advert," *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe* 4, nos. 4–6 (1981), 2.
178 Tony Benn, *The End of an Era: Diaries 1980–90* (London: Arrow, 1994). For the 1986 diary entry cited by Berger and LaPorte, see 461. For the 1984 entry, see Benn, 378.
179 Benn, 378.
180 Eringer, "Why Scargill is Wrong—by Lech," 7.
181 John Bloxam, Martin Thomas, "Labour and the Miners: Phone interview with Tony Benn," *Socialist Organiser*, no. 199, October 4, 1984, 6–7.
182 "EESC Meeting at Labour Party Conference2, Labour Focus on Eastern Europe 5, nos. 3–4 (1982), 38.
183 Michael Crick, *Militant* (London: Biteback, 2016), 88.
184 BOA, British Labour Party Papers, 1330/SC/1981/82: Minutes of Parliamentary Committee Meeting, 21 April 1982.
185 Dale, "Leeds Polish Solidarity Committee."

to be naturally sympathetic towards Solidarność. Hamilton Labour Party Young Socialists in Scotland, for example, adopted Tadeusz Jedynak, the aforementioned imprisoned Solidarność miners' leader.[186] Young socialists had less affinity with the Soviet project than did older labour movement activists who, as mentioned, possessed natural sympathy towards the Soviet Union for their contribution to the war effort. That said, youth support for Solidarność was not guaranteed. A motion at the 1982 National Organisation of Labour Students Conference moved to sever links with their Polish counterpart was narrowly defeated by three votes.[187] While naturally sympathetic towards Solidarność, left-wing youth organizations were not immune from the factionalism that defined the Left in the 1980s.

Labour Party members were evidently more forthcoming in their support for Solidarność than the party's leadership. There was likely considerable overlap in personnel, with the grassroots activists campaigning for Solidarność in the Labour Party also doing so in their union. As was the case throughout the labour movement, grassroots activists and supportive individuals provided the impetus in support of Polish workers, while the official line of the leadership typically trailed behind.

Conclusion

Za wasza wolność i nasza (for your freedom and ours). This had long been a defining motto for Poles supporting liberation struggles globally, whether in solidarity with the Russian Decemberists in the nineteenth-century, or as part of the International Brigades fighting for Republican Spain in the twentieth. Come 1980, the Polish tradition of international solidarity was reciprocated as Polish workers were supported politically and materially by labour movements across Western Europe. It was with this slogan that John Taylor concluded his book urging the British labour movement to adopt the mantra and support Solidarność.[188]

The relationship between the British Left and Solidarność was one of delay from major labour organizations in contrast with genuine expressions of solidarity from rank-and-file activists. Grassroots solidarity campaigns like PSC lobbied tirelessly for the leadership of the British Left to throw its political weight behind the oppressed Polish workers and to cease friendly relations with their oppressors. Solidarność members stranded in Britain after the implementation of martial law played an invaluable

186 Marek Garztecki to Chris Ford, 3 July 1985, Private Papers of Chris Ford.

187 Steve Davies, "The National Organisation of Labour Students and Poland," *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe* 5, Nos. 5–6 (1982–83), 45.

188 Taylor: *Five Months*, 108.

role as representatives, presenting a human and working-class face to sceptical elements in the labour movement.

The cautious approach of both the TUC and Labour Party can be explained. As organizations encompassing a range of left-wing thinking, both had to reconcile their policy on Solidarność with the maintenance of political unity. That Solidarność enjoyed the support of Thatcher and the conservative Right only heightened the potential for internal discord. As such, ambiguity ruled. The Labour Party's response to Solidarność became entangled in the factionalism that defined the 1980s. For both the Labour Party and TUC, the cordial relationships that had developed in the preceding decade with official communist parties and trade unions in Eastern Europe in the interests of peace and mutual understanding prompted caution.

While the TUC provided material support to Solidarność from March 1981, it was only after the severity of the situation in Poland increased with the proclamation of martial law that unequivocal support was granted. The same applied to the Labour Party, only with a slight delay. The lukewarm response of the leaderships of key left-wing organizations have lumped the British labour movement as among the weakest supporters of Solidarność in Western Europe. By documenting the grassroots support, however, this generalization has been challenged.

Genuine grassroots links developed between the British and Polish working classes; indeed, various British trade unions and regional branches expressed personal concern after martial law for the fate of Solidarność members with whom they had specific contact. Twinning arrangements developed between British and Polish workers at a regional, industrial and workplace level. No institution was monolithic. Rank-and-file trade unionists, as well as Labour Party members and elected representatives expressed considerable sympathy for Polish workers despite the ambiguity of their institution. That said, provided above is not a survey of grassroots attitudes towards Solidarność as indeed many did express scepticism. Instead, this article simply demonstrates the presence of considerable rank-and-file sympathy for the Polish union. As well, support or otherwise for Solidarność was not static, but fluctuated over the decade, determined by the domestic political context and the severity of the situation in Poland.

It would be redundant to speak of the success of the British Left's activity in solidarity with Solidarność. Their contribution to the eventual achievement of freedom in Poland was incomparable to the sacrifice made by Polish workers. That said, the efforts of grassroots solidarity campaigns certainly influenced the TUC and Labour Party's policy shift. The provision of material and political support from the British labour movement contributed to the international solidarity effort which no doubt was an important lifeline for Polish workers following martial law. While the British Left contributed to the international solidarity effort, this article corroborates God-

deeris' conclusion that there lacked a multilateral dimension to solidarity activity.[189] Only a comparative study of grassroots solidarity campaigns with Poland across Europe will decipher why groups like PSC, along with their French equivalent, Solidarité France-Pologne, dealt with Poland bilaterally, and why Solidarność did not enjoy a transnational movement on the scale of the anti-apartheid movement in the same decade.[190]

This article further facilitates a transnational analysis to be taken of solidarity with Solidarność. While *Solidarity with Solidarity* began documenting national studies, the British case hitherto lacked historiographical work outside of Goddeeris' volume. There is room for further study of the British Left's assistance to Solidarność in trade union archives, and particularly in the Labour Party and PSC archives. Just as Christiaens and Goddeeris compared the Belgian solidarity efforts with Poland, Nicaragua and South Africa in the 1980s, the mobilization for Poland in Britain should be compared with movements in support of other oppressed peoples, whether the Chile Solidarity Campaign, or the support for South African workers.[191] Finally, there is scope to compare how sympathy from the British Left with Eastern European dissidents in 1980 compared with 1956 and 1968 to consider how different Cold War contexts impacted the extent of solidarity. In so doing, the origins of pro-Solidarność activism can be traced to better understand the rise in transnational consciousness in Western Europe from the 1960s.[192] Above all, an understanding of East-West grassroots and institutional political interactions facilitates a clearer understanding of the permeability of the Iron Curtain and the end of the Cold War. While it is impossible to analyse the contribution of the above events in ending the Cold War, as a case study of East-West grassroots and institutional political interactions it facilitates a clearer understanding of the permeability of the Iron Curtain.

Tom Palmer is currently reading for an MSt in Modern European History at the University of Oxford. He completed his undergraduate studies in International History and Politics at the University of Leeds in 2021.

189 Goddeeris: "Transnational Scope," 65.
190 Goddeeris: "Transnational Scope," 71.
191 Christiaens and Goddeeris, "Beyond Western European Idealism," 633.
192 Ibid.

Stefan Berger

What's New in the History of Social Movements?

A Review Article

Louise Miskell, ed., *New Perspective on Welsh Industrial History* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2020).

Wilfried Reininghaus, *Der Arbeiteraufstand im Ruhrgebiet 1920. Quellenkritik und Edition der zeitgenössischen Darstellungen von Carl Brenner, Josef Ernst, Arthur Zickler, Gerhard Colm, Willi Cuno und Siegfried Schulz* (Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 2020).

Uwe Fuhrmann, *‚Frau Berlin'. Paula Thiede (1870–1919). Vom Arbeiterkind zur Gewerkschaftsvorsitzenden* (Konstanz: UVK, 2019).

Guntram Müller-Schellenberg, *Die Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Buchdruckergehilfen 1440–1933. Mit Blick auf die Wiesbadener Verhältnisse* (Taunusstein: Schellenberg'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 2020).

Steve J. Shone, *Women of Liberty* (Leiden: Brill, 2020).

Sebastian Haunss and Moritz Sommer, *Fridays for Future—Die Jugend gegen den Klimawandel. Konturen der weltweiten Protestbewegung* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2020).

Julian Schenke, *Student und Demokratie. Das politische Potenzial deutscher Studierender in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2020).

Martin Wilk, *Fragile kollektive Identitäten. Wie sich soziale Bewegungen radikalisieren* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2020).

Christian Jansen, Henning Borggräfe, *Nation, Nationalität, Nationalismus,* second edition (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2020).

Florian Finkbeier, *Nationale Hoffung und konservative Enttäuschung. Zum Wandel des konservativen Nationenverständnisses nach der deutschen Vereinigung* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2020).

DOI: 10.46586/mts.68.2022.115-133 Moving the Social · 68 (2022) · p. 115–133

Detlef Pollack, *Das unzufriedene Volk. Protest und Ressentiment in Ostdeutschland von der friedlichen Revolution bis heute* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2020).

Klaus Dörre, *In der Warteschlange. Arbeiter:innen und die radikale Rechte* (Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot, 2020).

Gabriele Dietze and Julia Roth, eds., *Right-Wing Populism and Gender. European Perspectives and Beyond* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2020).

Visiting Welsh industrial museums, one is often struck by the claims of Wales being the "first industrial nation" in the world. This nationalist message is one taken over from the much earlier claim of Britain being the "first industrial nation."[1] As Britain is progressively dissolving into its constituent three or four nations, visitors to the small island on the margins of Europe are now being confronted with several "first industrial nations," England, Scotland, Wales, and, to a much lesser extent, Northern Ireland. Focusing on Wales, the research in economic history has been dominated to a large extent by the coal industry of South Wales (plus the much smaller North-Wales coalfield), as Louise Miskell points out in the introduction to her insightful collection of articles. Her volume sets out to correct this view, and it makes huge strides in surveying a much broader field of industrial activity, including the Welsh steel industry (older research has focused predominantly on the earlier iron industry). Thus, the editor herself contributes a fascinating article on iron ore mining in Mauritania undertaken by the Steel Company of Wales between 1952 and 1960. Chris Evans puts the Welsh copper industry into its proper transnational context—demonstrating its many links with the British empire, in particular with transatlantic slavery. His path-breaking article follows his pioneering work in the transnational history of Welsh iron.[2] Carys Howells provides an intriguing insight into employment in the domestic services industry in Wales between 1871 and 1921. Of course, there remain many areas of the Welsh economy that could also have been included, e. g. the Welsh woollen industries, the slate industry, lead mining and the retail industry, but this volume is surely opening the door to further studies that will underline the diversity of the Welsh economy and move increasingly away from its previous focus on coal and iron. It is testimony of that strength of a research tradition that we also find in the volume a

1 Peter Mathias, *The First Industrial Nation: The Economic History of Britain, 1700–1914* (London: Methuen, 1969).

2 Chris Evans and Göran Rydén, eds., *The Industrial Revolution in Iron: The Impact of British Coal Technology in Nineteenth Century Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005).

brilliant essay by Trevor Boyns on the importance of the coal trade between Wales and France in the nineteenth century.

In the past, the history of the Welsh labour movement, in particular the history of the South Wales Miners, has been explored in considerable depth by Welsh historians.[3] It is another virtue of this volume that it makes a successful plea to the historians of Wales to make use of business archives more than they have done in the past. Thus, Steven Thompson provides a spell-binding analysis of employee welfare provided by Welsh employers between 1840 and 1939. And Bleddyn Penny underlines that Welsh industrial relations were not always about the oppressive force of Welsh employers. The industrial disputes she examines in the Port Talbot steelworks between 1945 and 1979 convincingly show that the steelworkers successfully used the three decades of relative prosperity after the end of the Second World War in order to gain major advances in terms of pay, leisure time and working conditions. Their solidarity was not necessarily directed against capitalism as such, but more at gaining a fairer share of its spoils.

Other important articles in the collection highlight the importance of state action in promoting Welsh industries. This is a strong theme in Leon Gooberman's and Ben Curtis's article on the rise and fall of manufacturing in South Wales' between 1945 and 1985, and it is even more at the fore in yet another strong piece by Leon Gooberman and Trevor Boyns on the role of the Welsh Development Agency in attracting industrial investments into South Wales between 1976 and 2006. The focus of these two articles on South Wales is replicated in the volume in other articles as well, and even if industrialization was undoubtedly most prominent in South Wales, it would merit the future attention of economic historians to look at the development of industries in other parts of Wales as well. Such a focus would further decentre the attention lavished on South Walian coal and iron in the past. For the time being, anyone interested in the economic history of Wales will be extremely glad to have Louise Miskell's wonderful introduction to this volume which lucidly sets out the themes in economic history as they developed in the historiography of Wales over time, showing different approaches and highlighting diverse trends. The book overall will be a milestone in Welsh industrial history for many years to come.

The history of South Wales and the history of the Ruhr mark important periods in the reviewer's life, which is only one reason why it is timely to follow up the review of Louise Miskell's volume with a review of the incredibly productive Wilfried Reininghaus who has provided us with an impeccable edition of some of the most important

3 Dai Smith and Hywel Francis, *The Fed: A History of the South Wales Miners in the Twentieth Century* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1980); Chris Williams, *Capitalism, Community and Conflict: The South Wales Coalfield, 1898–1947* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998); Ben Curtis, *The South Wales Miners, 1964–1985* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013).

witness accounts of the workers' rising in the Ruhr in 1920. There is no agreement in the existing literature on how to call this event: "March revolution," "Ruhr rising," "Ruhr struggle" are among the most popular, indicating quite distinct perspectives on the formation of a Red Ruhr Army in the wake of the right-wing Kapp-Lüttwitz putsch on 13 March 1920, which aimed to destroy the parliamentary democracy of the Weimar Republic. The trade unions declared a general strike as a response to the putsch which quickly collapsed within a four-day period. However, in the Ruhr considerable numbers of armed workers refused to be disarmed and demanded more social and economic reforms. What exactly their aims were, and how to interpret events in the Ruhr in March and April of 1920 has been the subject of heated controversies among contemporaries and historians alike. Reininghaus points out that the newspapers were full of reports and opinion pieces during the events and immediately after. Furthermore, during the Weimar Republic, a whole host of reports were written by those directly involved in the events and by observers. They were mostly written to justify one or the other side in the conflict. In the wake of this literature two contrasting views emerged on the events in the Ruhr in the spring of 1920. On the one hand, there were those who justified the military defeat of the Red Ruhr army as maintenance of law and order on behalf of a legitimate government against a rising aimed at destroying the republic. On the other hand, there were those who saw in the event a communist-led attempt at a socialist transformation that continued the 1918 November revolution that allegedly had been betrayed by the Social Democrats. In the German Democratic Republic Communist historians sought to underpin the latter position with scholarly arguments after 1949,[4] but they could only do this by ignoring considerable evidence that pointed in different directions. In the Federal Republic, historians began to examine the rising in the 1960s and 1970s, often emphasizing the aim of the armed workers to push the social and economic reforms that some had demanded in the context of the 1918/9 revolution further.[5]

Reininghaus provides the reader with a lucid historiographical account of the most important publications on the Ruhr struggle until the present before turning to seventeen selected texts that provide different perspectives on the events from different political positions. After carefully positioning the author, he asks about the reasons for authoring the texts and the sources on which the authors could rely. Subsequently he gives a brief summary of the texts before proceedings to apply a source-critical analysis to them. Finally, he analyses the reception of the texts. The many perspectives that are presented here and the historians' attempts to provide a historical contextualization of

4 Erwin Könnemann, Brigitte Berthold, Gerhard Schulze, eds., *Arbeiterklasse siegt über Kapp und Lüttwitz* (Berlin-Ost: Akademie-Verlag, 1971).

5 The classic account is Erhard Lucas, *Märzrevolution 1920*, 2 vols (Frankfurt/Main: Verlag Roter Stern, 1973/4).

these perspectives underlines the futility of any scholarly attempt to arrive at a definitive version of the events. Instead Reininghaus concludes that it is impossible for the historian to avoid taking a perspective on the events, and interpreting them in a way that can always be contested by other interpretations. However, he also points out that it is possible for the historian to highlight contradictions in particular perspectives on the basis of a thorough knowledge of all available sources. He also usefully formulates a number of research questions that future historians of the Ruhr struggle could address. They include greater attention to the question of the regional reach of the Ruhr struggle, an attempt to locate the events in a wider history of political violence in the early years of the Weimar Republic,[6] greater recognition of the importance of the positioning of the political parties that were not on the left of the political spectrum, in particular the Centre Party which was very influential in the Ruhr area both before and after the First World War,[7] and the search for sources that would allow a better view on the viewpoints of ordinary soldiers and members of the Freikorps.

Three-fourths of the book are subsequently taken up by the seven selected texts on the Ruhr struggle. The emphasis here is on texts that have never been published before or that were published before but are no longer available and easily accessible. This means that some of the best-known texts that are still readily available are not included here, e. g. the books by Carl Severing and Hans Spethmann.[8] Reading those texts that Reininghaus selected confirms the readers' impression of the possibility of a wide variety of different perspectives on the Ruhr rising, depending on where the authors stood politically and how they experienced the events either first-hand or through the extensive reporting on the events in the media. An exhaustive bibliography and a chronology of important events during the Ruhr rising in the Rhineland, Westfalia and Berlin concludes the volume, which will be required reading for anyone interested in the Ruhr struggle of 1920.

The Red Ruhr army was comprised only of men, but women who shared the political ideals of those fighting in this army organized medial units in which they served as medical personnel, thereby, in their view, contributing to the struggle for a more socially just society. An outstanding example of a woman striving for greater social justice and liberty is the subject of Uwe Fuhrmann's excellent biography of Paula Thiede. Born to working-class parents in 1870 in Berlin, she began working in the printing

6 Locating the history of the German revolution in a broader history of political violence has been the aim of Mark Jones, *Founding Weimar. Violence and the German Revolution of 1918/9* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

7 Thomas Mathias Bredohl, *Class and Religious Identity: The Rhenish Centre Party in Wilhelmine Germany* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2000).

8 Carl Severing, *1919/20 im Wetter- und Watterwinkel. Aufzeichnungen und Erinnerungen*, Bielefeld 1927; Hans Spethmann, *Die rote Armee and Rhein und Ruhr: aus den Kapp Tagen 1920* (Berlin: R. Hobbing, 1930).

trade and was married at 19, having two children by the age of 21. When her husband died prematurely she had to fend for herself, losing her younger child to illness when she was still a baby. Like many poor working-class families in Berlin around 1900 she was forced to move to a cheap flat which was still wet. The owners of these buildings moved people into such flats unfit for living for profit but also so that they dried out more quickly and could then be rented out to other tenants for a higher price, while the previous ones often moved to the next wet flat.[9] As Fuhrmann emphasizes in his engaging book, both the workplace and the neighbourhood were vital in politicizing Thiede, whose maiden name ironically was Berlin. She lived through the infamous printworkers' strike of 1891/2, in which workers demanded a nine-hour day. It failed, but also mobilized many, including Thiede. She joined the union as the result of the failed strike. But she also lived in a block of flats and a neighbourhood where many working-class activists lived and shared an everyday life space which again led to her politicization. Fuhrmann lucidly contextualizes Thiede's political positioning between a commitment to gender equality and class justice. Confronted with a deeply patriarchal society she was intrigued by the debates around a "birth strike,"[10] and she became active herself as a trade union organizer who was to rise to become the first female chairwoman of the Association of Print Workers which organized both men and women. She was a Social Democrat and an internationalist taking part in congresses of the Socialist International. She managed to hold the union together amidst many internal quarrels, and she was capable of giving the union a strong voice and direction, not the least through a union newspaper that she helped to set up. Under her leadership, the union fought successfully for improved working conditions and higher wages, for both men and women, and she even managed to forge the first wage agreements between workers and industrialists in the printing trades. Her leadership style, Fuhrmann emphasizes, was characterized by conciliation and fairness paired with clear principles and ideals. She often had a strong position on issues at hand but was willing to accept other opinions and compromise if necessary. Her energy as an organizer, her rhetorical talent and her solidarity with her fellow workers allowed her to emerge as one of the leading trade unionists of her age. After her premature death in 1919 she remained a well-known figure in labour movement circles well into the 1920s, but the National Socialist dictatorship tried everything to erase the memory of figures like Paula Thiede, and her legacy and memory were also not revived in the post-war Germanies. Hence, she literally had to be rediscovered by Fuhrmann whose biography can be described as a labour of love. He could not draw on a body of per-

9 Lutz Niehammer and Franz-Josef Brüggemeier, "Wie wohnten die Arbeiter im Kaiserreich?," in: *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 16 (1976), pp. 61–134.

10 Edward Ross Dickinson, *Sex, Freedom and Power in Imperial Germany 1880–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

sonal papers and much of the information presented in just over 150 pages of text had to be pieced together from snippets of information derived from many different archives and libraries. This biography is thus a truly pioneering work which highlights the importance of women in the early German labour movement.

Thiede's occupational life was lived among printworkers. It is thanks to Guntram Müller-Schellenberg that we now have a social history of German print workers' assistants, with special focus on their situation in the German city of Wiesbaden between the 1830s and 1933. Their profession was a highly organized one. In Imperial Germany their union managed at times to organize up to 95% of the print workers' assistants. They always remained at a slight distance from the Social Democratic milieu and prided themselves of their party-political neutrality. Instead they very much thought in artisanal and estates-based values and ideals. Women members were not allowed in this trade union for a long time, which remained characterized by a rather conservative outlook.[11] Müller-Schellenberg provides a good introduction to the beginnings of the labour movement in Wiesbaden into which he situates the emergence of the print workers' assistants union. The search for better working conditions and better pay stood at the centre of the activities of the union. The author pays much attention to the internal organization of the union, its attempts to support its members, as well as its strike history and the history of industrial bargaining, as well as its educational activities. Yet he also situates the history of the union in the wider political history reflecting, for example, on the impact of the Anti-Socialist Laws on the organization, the situation of the union during the war, or the impact of the revolution of 1918/9. He describes comprehensively the working conditions in the printing profession, as well as their housing, clothing and food and the specific occupational illnesses they suffered under. Much attention is paid to the increasing mechanization of the industry. The book is impeccably researched throughout (there are more than 330 pages of endnotes) and also richly illustrated. There is a fantastic index for anyone who is searching for a specific topic, place or person. It provides insightful reading to everyone interested in the history of German trade unionism in the printing profession.

Returning to the importance of women in social movements, we move to Steve Shone's volume under review here. What he is attempting is to draw attention to what in social movement studies would be called "cross-movement mobilization" through ten biographical portraits of American women who were connected to each other by their beliefs in anarchism, libertarianism, feminism, free love and anti-Federalism. Their lives range from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries and they were always

11 Uwe Fuhrmann, *Feminismus in der frühen Gewerkschaftsbewegung (1890–1914): die Strategien der BuchdruckereiHilfsarbeiterInnen um Paula Thiede* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2021), 105, 143.

both notable writers and campaigners. Amongst them are the first two women to run for Congress in the United States, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Tennie C. Claflin, the first woman to run for American president, Victoria Claflin Woodhull, sister to Tennie, and a range of others all notable for their activism and their literary achievements. Mercy Otis Warren, famous for her anti-Federalism, is depicted by Shone as more of a libertarian than a Republican. Louise Michel, of Paris Commune fame, Lois Waisbrooker, the anarchist promoter of free love, Itō, Noe, the Japanese anarchist, Margaret Sanger, the ardent advocate of birth control who, Shone argues convincingly, has been wrongly accused of racism in some of the literature about her, Mollie Steimer and Rose Pesotta, both immigrants to the US with strong anarchist leanings are all united by the striving for different forms of liberty that intersected and intermingled during their life-times. There was, first and foremost, the liberty of women who had to be freed from centuries of patriarchal oppression. Connected to this was the liberty that came with education, not only for women. Marriage was often seen by these women as a form of oppression against which they posited free love. Free speech was vitally important to them as was the liberty to participate in politics. As women they were often painfully aware of restrictions to gainful employment which is why many of them campaigned for the right to work. Furthermore, true liberty only came with the absence of wont, which is why they were also engaged in a variety of campaigns to end poverty and to allow poor people to become truly free. Between the eighteenth and the twentieth centuries the world population grew rapidly and many of the women portrayed here saw in this unchecked growth a major threat to the liberty of people which is why they favoured different schemes of birth control.[12] Champions of a diverse set of liberties, the women portrayed here by Shone in a very engaging way, have a clear message for the friends of liberty today—their struggles are far from complete, and their past activism and writings can serve as inspiration for all those who are still carrying on this cross-movement struggle on behalf of liberty.

In our contemporary world, this struggle has been taken up by the young generation in particular with regard to the environmental challenges awaiting mankind. Over the last decade a world-wide protest culture has taken shape under the slogan "Fridays for Future." This global protest movement is the subject of a book edited by Sebastian Haunss and Moritz Sommer. The sub-title of this volume which references the global contours of this movement is a little misleading, as this is primarily a book about the German movement with some references to European comparisons. Indeed, a more global look would immediately highlight that "Fridays for Future" was overwhelmingly, albeit by no means exclusively, a phenomenon of the global north which correlates with the findings of this book that the majority of the protesters were

12 Peter C. Engelman, *The History of the Birth Control Movement in America* (Santa Barbara, CA: Edward Praeger, 2011).

motivated by post-materialist values and came from highly educated and economically well-off backgrounds. Most of the protesters that were surveyed in Germany between the summer of 2018 and the spring of 2020 initially came from very young age groups (14–17). Young women were overrepresented as were those in top educational institutions (*Gymnasien* in Germany). For this age group "Fridays for Future" was often the first mobilizing experience and the first protest movement they participated in. Towards the end of the period under examination, participants in the demonstration had become slightly older (many more now were university students) and more male, but they were still overwhelmingly coming from privileged backgrounds with migrant groups virtually absent from the protesters. Although poorer and poorly educated groups were also largely absent from the protests, the movement itself combined an interest in "climate justice" with a concern for "social justice" indicating the potential of the movement for the kinds of cross-movements mobilization that characterized the activism of American women discussed by Shone.[13]

The sophisticated statistical analyses on the Fridays for Future movement provided in this book can rarely claim to be representative but are instead based on a random sample that can still yield important results. Many of the well-written and lucid contributions to this extremely insightful volume deal with the development of the movement over time and its profile. Who are the protesters, what are their motivations for protest and how did they get involved? What are their political interests and engagements? Whoever looks for answers to these questions will find a lot of intriguing answers in this book. Thus, for example, the book highlights how the school strikes were vitally important in forging a collective identity for the protesters which subsequently became a major strength for mobilization efforts. The movement also carries on long-standing debates surrounding the legitimacy and values of civil disobedience as a means of highlighting political concerns. The "Fridays for Future" movement has sought actively to build alliances with other environmental activists in a range of NGOs and other movements concerned with climate change. Particularly engaging is the attention of the volume to how the movement has used the media, both traditional and new social media in order to further its aims and objectives. Their often clever and strategic use of media has led to very high acceptance levels in society, with well over half of the population being broadly sympathetic to the movement—a figure which is much higher among younger age cohorts. There is, overall, much evidence in this volume for the existence of a "generation Greta," with Greta Thunberg occupying an iconic position within the movement. From her comes the firm belief of the movement in science and scientific knowledge, which is its rallying cry. The Europe-

13 See also the special issue of Moving the Social entitled: *Cross-Movement Mobilization—Perspectives from the Global North and South*, ed. by Sabrina Zajak, Jenny Jansson, Ilse Lenz and Geoffrey Pleyers 63 (2020).

an comparisons of the volume mainly highlight similarities—in political profile and social background of the protesters; country-specific characteristics, such as the very young age of the protesters in Poland, are highlighted and explained (in Poland's case with the absence of large-scale environmental concerns before the Fridays for Future movement) but it emerges clearly from the volume that there is still a wide-open field for more in-depth comparisons. One can only hope that this excellent volume serves as encouragement for such wider comparisons.

The young have long had a huge potential for democratizing movements, and Julian Schenke's book draws attention to the political potential of German students in past and present. In the first part of the book, using mainly secondary sources, he surveys student oppositional movements from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the end of the twentieth century focusing in particular on the revolutionary years of 1848/9 and 1968 but also highlighting the crisis years of the interwar period which resulted, above all, in right-wing mobilizations of students.[14] In a nutshell, Schenke argues that the political mobilization of students was particularly successful where they could find a language that criticized the social basis of society. Such a language allowed them to mobilize powerful networks and develop utopian ideas that in turn re-enforced political mobilizations. Those who are familiar with the historical literature on the political mobilization of students will find little that is really new here although providing a historical long-term perspective is in itself an interesting and insightful undertaking.

The second part of the book is based on a focus-group study which looks at contemporary student cohorts. The author finds here a strong belief in a society in which chances of success are distributed fairly and in which principles of reason and rationality govern selection criteria. The mental world of contemporary cohorts of students, the reader learns, is heavily dominated by quite traditional ideals of neo-humanistic forms of *Bildung*, i. e. education that is character- and personality-forming rather than merely functional. This leads to a widespread antipathy towards those social classes who do not have access to university education. In other words, it re-enforces the social cleavage in society between the educated and the uneducated which is a cleavage between the privileged and those at the bottom end of the social ladder. The student body in Germany was traditionally characterized by a strong social homogeneity, i. e. they overwhelmingly came from the middle and upper classes who were reproducing their own social milieux through university education. Although working-class children managed to access university in greater numbers from the 1960s to the 1980s, this window has been steadily closing again from the 1990s onwards. Schenke argues

14 On the illiberal traditions of German students see also Konrad H. Jarausch, *Students, Society, and Politics in Imperial Germany. The Rise of Academic Illiberalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982).

that the contemporary student body is characterized more by a desire of self-optimization rather than a willingness to embark on conflictual political conflicts. While they do not any longer understand themselves as a separate corporate body, they lack a collective will to challenge fundamentally the foundations of society in the way in which the 1848/9 and 1968 generations of students had done. There is a notable absence of widespread socialist or anti-capitalist sentiments. In his concluding chapter the author asks whether this might change if the chances of the students on the labour market will become worse in years to come. Overall, this reviewer would have wished this book to have a clearer focus and clearer red lines that structure the argument of the book. In large parts it resembles a meandering reflection on the political potential of German students over more than two centuries. Even in the conclusion the author fails to say clearly what the reader may be able to learn from such a long-term analysis.

When students became a formidable political force, they rarely did so out of a consciousness of having a strong collective identity as students. Rather, they identified with collectives that incorporated other social strata. In 1848/9, the collective was the nation or the people (Volk), and in 1968 the collective was again the people imagined as united by a socialist utopia. In one way or the other, however, collective identity played an important role in mobilizing student movements or wider social movements, in which students participated. In social movement research, the role of collective identity as a vital resource of mobilization that strengthens the internal cohesion and overall strength of social movements is well established.[15] Martin Wilk in his study on the importance of constructions of collective identity for the radicalization of social movements draws on that tradition. Thus, many social movement researchers have discussed collective identity as consisting of narratives that appeal to the collective on a cognitive, relational and emotional level.[16] Wilk provides the reader with a detailed discourse analysis of the internal debates surrounding collective identity of one particular social movement, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) that was part and parcel of the American civil rights movement of the 1960s. It is a particularly striking example of an organization that underwent a dynamic of radicalization from pacifist origins in the 1960s to the advocacy of violence by a paramilitary organization. The author traces the development of the SNCC through early peaceful protests, mainly in the southern states of the United States, to the registration campaigns for black voters and the adoption of militant and violent strategies—largely under the influence of black nationalism. An increasingly exclusive

15 Hatem M. Hassan and Suzanne Staggenborg, "Movements as Communities," in: Donatella Della Porta and Marco Diani , eds.,, *The Oxford Handbook of Social Movements* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 340–354.

16 See the literature review by Priska Daphi in her book entitled Becoming a Movement: *Identity, Narrative and Memory in the European Global Justice Movement* (London: Rowman and Littefield, 2017), chapter 1.

identity politics led to a step-by-step isolation of the group which finally dissolved in 1969. Although Wilk does not explicitly draw that conclusion, one can say that the turn of the group to identity politics and violence was hardly a success as it ultimately led to its marginalization within the broader civil rights movement and to its end. Recording the history of the SNCC is therefore also a warning to social movements today not to adopt an exclusive identity politics which is rarely successful in building strong societal alliances.

The conclusion that Wilk does draw from his study is that collective identity constructions are far more important in explaining the radicalization of social movements than other factors, including political opportunity structures or access to resources. The civil rights movement, he argues, did have increasing opportunities to influence politics and gained significantly more resources during the 1960s, but the SNCC still radicalized which, for Wilk, is almost the exclusive result of its turn to a radical identity politics. I have to admit that I find this argument rather questionable: after all, wide sections of the civil rights movement did not radicalize themselves and were, in some respects, so successful because they remained nonviolent. Furthermore, the brutal and murderous racism against blacks in the 1960s (and beyond) is surely a major factor why sections of the civil rights movement despaired of the peaceful struggle for equal rights and turned to violence. It is understandable that progress on the road to true liberty for black people seemed incredibly slow and incremental to many black activists. They did not have the impression that the political opportunities were increasing and that they suddenly had a wealth of resources at their disposal. Hence, I would find it far more convincing to say that a turn to exclusive identity politics and to essentialized forms of identity tends to construct a strong positive "us" against a vilified "them," which becomes not an adversary but an enemy that has to be physically destroyed. That is historically true both for left and right wing identity politics (both Communism and Fascism operated with those ideas).

Ultimately Wilk's book cannot answer the question how social movements radicalize themselves because it is essentially based on only one case study. What is needed is a far more comparative approach ranging more broadly over many social movements who have radicalized themselves in the past. Having said this, where the book is extremely useful is in highlighting how problematic such a turn to essentialized forms of collective identity is. Stuart Hall's concept of identification is so useful for social movements because it allows them to use narratives of identification to build strong collective identities that remain, however, aware of their own constructedness.[17] Ac-

17 Stuart Hall, "Introduction: Who Needs Identity?," in: Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay, eds., *Questions of Cultural Identity* (London: Sage, 1996), 1–17; Stuart Hall, "The Question of Cultural Identity," in: Stuart Hall, David Held, and Anthony McGrew, eds., *Modernity and its Futures* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 274–316.

tivists have an awareness of their own choice—of choosing to construct a collective identity that is also reversible and changeable, hence non-essentialized. Identification rather than identity can forge powerful alliances for social and political change while averting the radicalization that leads to the construction of enemies that have to be destroyed through violence. In this way social movements can stay clear of collective identity discourses and still have a powerful way of forging internal cohesion that together with other factors decide on their success or failure in achieving their objectives.

Whether within black nationalism or other forms of nationalism, the problem of essentialized nationalist collective identities is an acute one. The study of nationalism, national identity and national(ist) movements has had a formidable renaissance since the 1980s, and there is no sign of it abating, as nationalist movements have raised their heads again across the globe and form a formidable force in many parts of the world. As a consequence there are now many primers and textbooks on these subjects, and the one reviewed here in its second edition by Christian Jansen and Hennig Borggräfe belongs to the best succinct ones in the German language. In the first substantive chapter the leading terms, i. e. nation, nationality, nationalism, nation-building and nation-state are introduced. The second chapter deals exclusively with German nationalism starting from the discovery the *Volk* and its ethnic definition around 1800 and moving to the beginnings of organized nationalism in the 1820s to the radicalization and differentiation of nationalist movements until the revolution of 1848/9. Then the authors deal with the oppression of nationalist movements after the revolution and the developments leading up to the formation of a unified German nation-state in 1871 after which they discuss changes to nationalism in Imperial Germany and nationalism as a mass movement. In the third chapter they review a variety of different theories of nationalism, including those of Karl W. Deutsch, Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson, and Anthony D. Smith before reviewing contemporary themes and controversies. Their selection can be questioned—Miroslav Hroch, John Breuilly and Eric Hobsbawm are all absent here as are Homi Bhaba, Partha Chatterjee and postcolonial writers more generally.[18] In the final substantive chapter we learn about European developmental path of nationalism and nation-building looking at three other nations—France, Switzerland and Macedonia. There is too little attempt here to move away from the national frame and provide genuinely European and comparative perspectives. The final twelve pages of the book not only attempt a summary but also an outlook onto the twentieth century, because everything before related more or less to the period before the outbreak of the First World War. Indeed, one of the central arguments of the book is that nationalism had ultimately found its ultimate form by 1914

18 Recent interdisciplinary perspectives on the relationship between nationalism and the postcolonial condition are provided by Sandra Dinter and Johanna Marquardt, eds., *Nationalism and the Postcolonial* (Leiden: Brill, 2021).

and that everything that came after did not change its character substantially. One can certainly disagree with this view and find good arguments why the hyper-nationalism of fascism in the interwar period, Communist nationalism in the Soviet Union after 1917 and in Eastern Europe during the Cold War, or postcolonial nationalism in the wake of decolonization after the Second World War are substantially different from nineteenth-century forms of nationalism. However, as an introduction to nation, nationality and nationalism spanning less than 200 pages, the book still works well, even if those drawn into the topic will want to pick up a whole host of other books after reading Jansen and Borggräfe.

The revival of nationalism in the 1990s was intimately connected to the fall of communism in East Central and Eastern Europe. It also affected the reunited Germany, where, in the wake of the 1990s significant public debate about the need to adopt a new understanding of the nation emerged. Florian Finkbeiner's study seeks to analyse how reunification affected the conservative understanding of nation. He focusses in particular on a group of writers, historians, and journalists including in particular Karl Heinz Weißmann, Rainer Zitelmann, Heimo Schwilk and Günter Rohrmoser who are introduced as representative of a new conservatism seeking to win the right-wing centre in German politics for a new nationalism that would renounce Westernization and its anchor in a coming to terms with the National Socialist past, in particular the holocaust. While in the early 1990s it seemed unclear for a while whether this self-declared conservative avantgarde would succeed in forging alliances with the centre-right, in particular the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), by the mid-1990s it was clear that their thinking was increasingly marginalized to a radical right fringe represented by journals such as *Criticón* and newspapers like *Junge Freiheit*. There are undoubtedly links of their thinking to the ideas propagated today by right-wing populism, including Pegida and the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), but the centre-right, including the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the Free Democrats (FDP) have, in their majority kept their distance, even if there is an increasingly vociferous right wing, especially in the CDU, where there are overlaps with this more national-conservative thinking, especially in some of the new Bundesländer in the east, like Saxony.[19]

However, such an overlap between a national-conservative thinking and the centre-right was already characteristic of the old Federal Republic, as the rise and decline of the party Die Republikaner demonstrates. In that respect it is surprising that Finkbeiner sees a sharp departure point between the 1980s and the 1990s. Attempts in the 1980s to move to postnational positions were, by and large restricted to the centre left, in particular the Greens and the Social Democrats (SPD). Intellectually they were

19 Anna-Sophie Heinze, *Strategien gegen Rechtspopulismus? Der Umgang mit der AfD in Landesparlamenten* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2020).

inspired by the writings of Jürgen Habermas. While it is true that also conservatives like Dolf Sternberger championed notions of postnationalism, they were quite distinct from those on the left and, more importantly, they were quite exceptional within the wider conservative milieu. After all, the CDU vociferously opposed all attempts to recognize the independent statehood of the GDR in the 1980s—something that the left would have been willing to consider. Demonstrating its commitment to a unified nation-state the centre-right underlined that the idea of nation and nationality still played a major role in their worldview. Finkbeiner himself, in his wide-ranging survey of the development of conservatism in the twentieth century, underlines the importance of nation and nationalism to the thinking of conservatives. Of course, he also struggles with the question how to define conservatism in Germany over the course of the twentieth century. In particular the major political party on the centre-right of German post-Second World War politics, the CDU, is not easily classified as a conservative party as it contains significant left-Catholic elements. Nevertheless, the CDU, throughout the history of the old Federal Republic, championed ideas of Heimat, nation and fatherland, both before and after reunification. Hence, I would argue that what we witnessed between 1990 and 1995 was an intellectual attempt to move the intellectual foundations of the old Federal Republic significantly to the right by championing a new idea of nation that significantly different from the key anchoring points of the nation before 1990.[20] However, by 1995, these attempts failed and a new consensus of the centre began to emerge that comprised all major political parties in Germany, from the Greens of the left to the FDP on the right. It was based on a historical understanding of the development of the German nation as formulated by Heinrich August Winkler "The Long Road West," which can be views as new historical master narrative of the reunified Germany.[21] It comprised the old anchor points of Western orientation and of an identity rooted in the coming to terms with National Socialism and the holocaust, but it also championed a new "normality" of the nation-state, which was to include not only flag-waving at international football matches but also military deployments of the German army outside of the borders of Germany and a new desire to play a more leading role in European and international politics.

A more conservative nationalism became the hallmark of a more extreme right which was eventually to find expression in right-wing populist movements. They in turn were particularly strong in eastern Germany, the territory of the old Communist German Democratic Republic. The people here were, as Detlef Pollack formulates

20 Stefan Berger, *The Search for Normality. National Identity and Historical Consciousness in Germany since 1800* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2nd edn, 1998).

21 Stefan Berger, "Rising Like a Phoenix … The Renaissance of National History Writing in Germany and Britain since the 1980s," in: Stefan Berger and Chris Lorenz, eds., *Nationalizing the Past. Historians as Nation Builders in Modern Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 426–451.

it in his title, "the unsatisfied people," disappointed with the results of the peaceful revolution of 1989 for themselves. Such dissatisfaction bred protest and resentment which has characterized East Germany from the 1990s to today. While some observers of reunification have talked about reunification as a process of colonization of the east and portrayed East Germans as victims of a West German land grab,[22] Pollack, himself born and raised in the east, emphasizes the agency of East Germans. The first two chapters of his book deal with the East German revolution of 1989 and the reunification process, where he is focusing on events in a few well-known East German cities and towns like Leipzig, Dresden, Plauen, Berlin and Arnstadt. Analyzing how the flight from East Germany turned to protest on East German streets, he underlines how that protest was never led by the motley group of East German dissidents who formed during the 1980s. Those civil rights groups were always different in their objectives and motivations from the masses who poured onto the East German streets in ever-growing numbers in 1989. The differences became obvious in 1990 when the masses wanted quick reunification while the civil rights groups debated a dialogue with East German communists and a "third way" between capitalism and "really existing socialism." Subsequently, Pollack argues, it was the East Germans who enforced an early economic and currency union which is why, according to him, it was they who actively handed their country to the west with high hopes of material improvement of their situation. Those hopes were nurtured in the west by the political rhetoric of chancellor Helmut Kohl who promised the East Germans "blossoming landscapes" in his televised speech on the occasion of the currency union between both Germanies on 1 July 1990. While that ensured him the votes of the East Germans in subsequent elections, what happened in the early 1990s was the destruction of wide areas of East German industry and high unemployment figures across East Germany. Such disappointment of East Germans, Pollack argues, led to the emergence of a separate East German identity, complete with ostalgia and a sharp distrust in markets and in democracy.[23] Once again, the author argues, the East Germans demonstrated their resilience in the face of crisis by turning into the infamous *Jammer-Ossis*, the constantly complaining easterners who had been wronged in the most terrible way—a very effective way of ensuring that millions of Deutschmarks were poured into the infrastructure of East Germany, making its cities look much better than many cities in the run-down deindustrialized areas of West Germany. The positioning of East Germans as nonconformist underdogs had, however, also a more sinister side, as it led to massive support for the populist right, for Pegida and for the AfD. Voting for

22 Wolfgang Dümke and Fritz Vilmar, eds., *Kolonialisierung der DDR: kritische Analysen und Alternativen des Einigungsprozesses* (Münster: Agenda, 1996).

23 On the impact of memory on East German identities see the insightful book by Jonathan Bach, *What Remains: Everyday Encounters with the Socialist Past in Germany* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017).

them was a way of voting against the western elites and positioning themselves again as "the people" against the elites. The AfD cunningly responded to such sentiments by a poster campaign in East Germany which alleged that the peaceful revolution in 1989/90 was similar to voting the AfD in 2021—a message that no doubt spoke to many East Germans.

Pollack's thought-provoking book is cogently and convincingly argued and provides much food for thought. The high levels of support for right-wing populism in East Germany is particularly strong among workers, and we have also observed that in the old Federal Republic white German workers seem particularly attracted to the messages of right-wing populism which has led Klaus Dörre to argue that the AfD is on the way of becoming potentially the new working-class party in Germany. In several of the German Länder working-class support is strongest for the AfD, i. e. more workers vote for the AfD than for any other party. Inversely, no party in Germany is less popular among workers than Die Linke, despite the fact that it has been campaigning stridently for more social rights and welfare and better protection of jobs and working-class interests. What are we to make of this? First of all, the trend is not entirely new. Dörre himself has been analyzing the links between the working-class milieu and the political right for a long time. Indeed, apart from the introduction and conclusion to this book, the other chapters are reprints of earlier articles ranging back to 1994. Many workers, Dörre argues, feel that they are not participating any longer in the spoils of capitalism. While companies make enormous profits and pay their CEOs millions of Euros a year, the workers' income is stagnating, and there is a widespread fear of social and economic decline. Furthermore, the political right provides the workers with a ready scapegoat—the immigrants who come to the country and take things away from workers: benefits, housing, welfare and, in the case of male workers, women. Hence, to the dismay of Dörre and others on the left, it is not capitalism that becomes the enemy but migrants. Workers fighting precarious jobs, unemployment, higher workloads, more pressure on the factory floor and lower wages in what is already one of Europe's low-wage economies, find their salvation in a mixture of xenophobia and nationalism that is espoused by the political right. Dörre also shows that trade unionists are as vulnerable to right-wing overtures as non-unionized workers and calls on the trade unions to develop anti-right wing strategies—something that many of the leading unions have been doing very successfully over the recent decades.[24] While his analysis for Germany is confirmed by an intriguing article in the book on Austria authored by Livia Schubert, the remedy he holds up in front of his readers is a dedicated class politics that indicts a globalized finance capitalism for

24 Stefan Berger, "The Alternative for Deutschland (AfD) and its Appeal to Workers—with Special Reference to the Ruhr Region of Germany," in: *Totalitarismus und Demokratie* 19 (2022), 45–68.

the worsening situation of workers over recent decades and that advocates class politics seeking to transcend capitalism. However, this has been pretty much what Die Linke has been doing in Germany and it has led them nowhere with workers (and anyone else). They look increasingly marginal in Germany's contemporary political spectrum. If we take a long-enough historical view, reaching back to the nineteenth century, we can see that working-class solidarity transcending boundaries of nation, ethnicity, race, and religion were always exceptional and had to be constructed convincingly in concrete situations of struggle.[25] Such solidarities are not impossible but they need to be worked for incessantly in the neighbourhoods and on the factory floors. They need engaged activists who share a vision of a socially just society. They also need a memory politics that can serve as resource for mobilizations towards more solidaristic structures in society.[26] Luckily there are still many people in Germany, active in social movements, left-of-centre political parties and trade unions who work towards such a vision of solidarity and against the xenophobic nationalism promoted by the right.

The xenophobia and nationalism of the populist right is often underpinned by anti-feminist perspectives. Gabriele Dietze and Julia Roth have assembled a range of contributions on Germany, Austria, France, Hungary, Slovenia and the US which demonstrate the importance of various campaigns against an alleged gender police by a motley alliance of right-wing extremists, religious fundamentalists and a bourgeois centre-right that has been radicalized through its opposition to calls for greater gender justice. Throughout this eminently readable book, the contributions provide fascinating insights into diverse facets of the right's obsession with gender. They invariably connect the progress of neoliberal economic policies with an undermining of traditional male identities—as breadwinners, heads of families and generally the stronger sex. This in turn provoked the rise of a masculine identity politics which has been propagating a return to traditional gender roles and what is often referred to by the right as the "natural order," i. e. heterosexuality with clearly defined roles for women (motherhood and traditional femininity) and men. In the US, Donald Trump's appeal to white male workers was not only based on economic protectionism and anti-immigrant rhetoric, but equally on his promotion of traditional gender roles. By juxtaposing feminism with an idealized American way of life, Trumpism managed to convert many who had long felt threatened by an alleged forward march of women. Alt-right

25 Lex Heerma van Voss and Marcel van der Linden, eds., *Class and Other Identities. Gender, Religion and Ethnicity in the Writing of European Labour History* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2002).

26 The German trade union confederation, DGB, has recently set up a commission to investigate how the trade unions can mobilize memory more effectively as a resource. The results of the commission have been published in Stefan Berger, Wolfgang Jäger, and Ulf Teichmann, eds., *Gewerkschaften im Gedächtnis der Demokratie. Welche Rolle spielen soziale Kämpfe in der Erinnerungskultur*? (Bielefeld: transcript, 2022).

bloggers and their followers, largely young white males, have made anti-feminism one of their most popular rallying cries across many countries. After the collapse of communism in East Central and Eastern Europe, the post-socialist political elites often combined authoritarianism with the promotion of anti-feminism. They portrayed feminism as a western import that was colonizing East Central and Eastern Europe. Such resistances to demands for greater gender equality could build on the impeccable track record of paternalism and male dominance under really existing socialism which had stood in stark contrast to the emancipatory rhetoric of the very same socialist regimes.[27]

Some of the most interesting passages of the book are, however, about bridges that the populist right has been trying to build to those calling for a more just gender order. It is by no means the case that all right-wing populists are straightforward anti-feminists. Thus, for example, there are calls for equal pay and for the protection of women against sexual exploitation and violence coming from the right. And we can even find an acceptance of homosexuality among sections of the populist right, especially where such homosexual identities are fixed and essentialized, rather than fluid and situational. This is in line with the identitarian essentialism that is often at the heart of right-wing populism. As long as the people have an essentialized identity, even if it may be a homosexual one, they can resist the alleged attempt of western liberalism to destroy such essentialized identities. The book is thus also a warning not to underestimate the potential of the populist right to build alliances outside of the heterosexual normativity that it is often promoting. As it has been capable of winning the hearts and minds of many workers, it might also prove to be capable of winning over not only those who desire a return to traditional gender roles but also those who challenge them and are promoting gender justice, of a racialized, nationalist and xenophobic kind. Intersectional alliances are by no means the preserve of the left, even if the volume under review also highlights the efficiency of feminist intersectional populism as a strategy of resistance against populist right-wing gender discourses.

Stefan Berger is Professor of Social History and Director of the Institute for Social Movements at Ruhr University Bochum. He is also Executive Chair of the Foundation History of the Ruhr and an Honorary Professor at Cardiff University in the United Kingdom. He has published widely on the comparative history of labour movements, deindustrialization, heritage studies, the history of historiography, historical theory, nationalism studies, memory studies and British-German relations. His most recent monograph is *History and Identity: How Historical Theory Shapes Historical Practice* (Cambridge University Press, 2022).

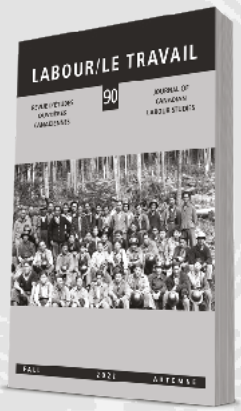
27 Anna Artwińska and Agnieszka Mrozik, eds., *Gender, Generations and Communism in Central and Eastern Europe and Beyond* (London: Routledge, 2021).

LABOUR/LE TRAVAIL

REVUE D'ÉTUDES OUVRIÈRES CANADIENNES

JOURNAL OF CANADIAN LABOUR STUDIES

VOLUME 90 (FALL/ AUTOMNE 2022)



www.lltjournal.ca
cclh@athabascau.ca