THE NON-REVOLUTIONARY NATURE OF THE GERMAN SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY FROM 1863-1890

by

Michael Minko Sotiron

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© MICHAEL MINKO SOTIRON
SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

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APPROVAL

Name: Michael M. Sotiron
Degree: Master of Arts
Title of Thesis: The Non-revolutionary Nature of the German Social Democratic Party From 1863-1890.

Examining Committee:
Chairman: Dr. Charles L. Hamilton

Dr. J. Martin Kitchen
Senior Supervisor

Dr. Warren Williams

Dr. Michael A. Lebowitz, Assistant Professor
Department of Economics and Commerce.

Date Approved: 17/November 1977
A B S T R A C T

The thesis contains three interwoven parts: the transformation of a collection of worker's educational societies into a mass political movement that was the largest socialist party in the world; the theoretical development of the Social Democratic Party from the ideology of Ferdinand Lassalle to the "orthodox Marxism" of Karl Kautsky, who composed the official programme of the party in 1891, the Erfurt Programme; and the relationship of Marx and Engels to the party and an account of the creation of the myth of the revolutionary origins of the party.

In the 1860's the nascent labour movement was characterized by its eventual separation from an alliance with the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois political groups that sponsored the worker's associations. Ferdinand Lassalle's response to a Leipzig worker's group helped to open the way to independence for the movement, as he created and led a workers' association which was based on agitating for state-sponsored productive cooperatives and universal suffrage. The labour movement grew as Germany's industrial development gained momentum, and out of the movement two principal political groups formed--the Lassallian ADAV, which was based in Prussia, and the other, led by August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht and eventually called the Eisenach Party, which was based in southern Germany and the Rhine. Although the Eisenachers were identified by the watchword "Marxist" and the ADAV as (iii)
"Lassallian", this was a false distinction. Their difference lay not in social and political theory, since their programmes were largely similar, but rather on their stands on the German national question. The ADAV was in favour of a Germany united by Prussia excluding Austria, while the Eisenachers were anti-Prussian and opposed excluding Austria in the unification of Germany.

This question and their disagreement became obsolete as the Franco-Prussian War decided the national question, and so five years later the two groups united to form the Social Democratic Labour Party of Germany. The party grew rapidly, as each new election success testified, until the Prussian government outlawed it in 1878. This produced a crisis in the party, as well as the creation of a left and right wing in the party, and it barely avoided self-destruction.

The Lassallian ideology with its emphasis on state-aid, social determinism, and especially universal suffrage as the panacea to all social ills fit the party's needs perfectly. Although Bebel and Liebknecht originally postulated a tactic, which was falsely considered revolutionary, that avocated the use of parliament solely for agitational purposes, this tactic was increasingly ignored as the party gained more votes and especially when the party gained the rights of a parliamentary caucus, a Fraktion, which enabled it to initiate legislation
in the Reichstag. The anti-socialist laws of 1878 made parliament even more important since it was the sole legal escape-valve for the party, and a further consequence was that the parliamentary Fraktion took complete control over the affairs of the party. Furthermore, the laws in addition to the party's growth produced disruptions within the party since they exacerbated the contradiction between a growing militant working class and an increasingly reformist leadership. It was left to Karl Kautsky to fashion a theory, called Marxist, that would encompass the revolutionary aspirations of the rank-and-file and the reformist right wing.

Due to the party's transformation into a mass party and the pressure of the anti-Socialist laws, there were growing instances of opportunistic actions by the leadership during the 1880's as well as a resolute strengthening of the reformist forces. All this led to charges from the left of the party that the party was betraying its revolutionary origins. These charges were repeated by Lenin and other revolutionaries in criticism of the party's support of the government in 1914, and a myth was created.

Marx and Engels' criticism of the theory and practice of the movement throughout its history revealed that these charges, and the party's revolutionary reputation were false. The party began and remained a movement concerned with issues and demands, which were realizeable within the framework of the bourgeois state.
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"Don't worry ...", Jean Jaures, leader of the French socialists said, "Four million German socialists will rise like one man and execute the Kaiser if he wants to start a war."¹ He said this after the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) had signed the Basle manifesto of 1912, which pledged the militant opposition of the workers of the world to any steps that led to militarism and war. The world knows the fate of this manifesto and the sentiment it inspired. In August 1914 the SPD, then the largest, best-organized, and most influential party in the Second International, repudiated its international agreements of solidarity by supporting its government's war policies.

This act became the target of V.I. Lenin, who denounced it repeatedly in a series of pamphlets as a "betrayal of socialism".² Lenin's accusations revived charges that had been made as long ago as 1880 when Hans Most, then a prominent member of the party, accused the party of having abandoned its revolutionary course in favour of an opportunistic one. These charges were again heard in 1890 when a group of young Berlin party members, called the "Jungen", condemned the party for limiting its politics to elections and parliament.
The common thread that tied the earlier charges to those of Lenin's was the assumption of the party's revolutionary origins. This assumption was challenged for the first time during the "revisionist" controversy of 1896-1900, when Eduard Bernstein argued for the unity of theory and practice. He maintained that since the party's tactics were not and had not been revolutionary but were rather "opportunistic" and reformist, the party should scrap its revolutionary rhetoric and declare itself for what it was in reality.3

On the whole, Bernstein's provocative observations did not fare well because they were lost in the sound and fury of the reaction to his more sensational recommendations. And for a long time, the conventional image of the party reflected Rosa Luxemburg's description of it in her famous Junius pamphlet:4

For the first time the cause of the proletariat and its emancipation were led by the guiding star of scientific undertaking...the theoretical works of Marx gave the working class of the whole world a compass by which to fix its tactics from hour to hour in its journey toward the one unchanging goal. The bearer, the defender, and the protector of the new method was German Social Democracy...German Social Democracy has been generally acknowledged to be the purest incarnation of Marxism socialism.

This view, together with the concept of betrayal, was shared by Lenin and Luxemburg and was furthered by Lenin's Bolshevik lieutenant, Georg Zinoviev, in an important work on the subject, Der Krieg und die Krise des Sozialismus. To
support the accusation of betrayal, Zinoviev cited the now
classic evidence of the revolutionary origins of the party:
Marx and Engels' involvement with the party and their description
of it as a "revolutionary proletarian party to which members
of the petty-bourgeoisie belonged"; the refusal of August
Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht, the two major leaders of the
party, to vote war credits during the Franco-Prussian War and
their consequent imprisonment for treason; the party's behaviour
when it was outlawed during the anti-socialist period of 1878-
1890; and the party's adoption of a form of Marxism as its
official ideology in 1890.\textsuperscript{5}

The assumption of the revolutionary origins of the party
remained unchallenged until 1929, when Kurt Brandis, a German
Marxist, argued that Marx and Engels had a negligible effect
on the party and that Marxism as a theoretical system never
had decisive influence on the strategy and tactics of the Social
Democratic movement. His conclusion was that the party from
the beginning was and remained a reformist parliamentary party.\textsuperscript{6}

Even though the Brandis view is gaining acceptability--
Hans Rosenberg, for instance, termed the revolutionary
reputation of the party a "historical lie" and a "myth"\textsuperscript{7}--
the controversy over the true nature of the party continues.
Horst Bartel and the East German school still insist on the
revolutionary reputation of the party and have explicitly repudiated the views of Brandis. 8

The result of these conflicting views on the nature of the party is confusion. This confusion is further compounded by the great numbers of historians who either deal with the party as a small subject in a work of larger focus 9 or conversely who deal with only a portion of the party's history, magnify it into a book, and fail to provide a comprehensible overview of the party. 10

This thesis began as a tentative effort to assess the conflicting descriptions and analyses of the nature of the SPD in the years of its formation and development, (1863-1890). In the course of research for this thesis it became evident that the party did not have a revolutionary heritage and that the party began and remained a social-reformist, parliamentary-oriented, non-revolutionary party. In order to prove that the party experienced no qualitative change either theoretically or tactically in its development from a sect to a mass party, it was necessary to provide the details of the founding and development of the SPD in a narrative history. This thesis provides both a description of the party's history and an explanation of the origins of the "myth" of the revolutionary reputation of the party.


3. Bernstein ignited the "revisionist" controversy in a four part series in the party theoretical journal *Die Neue Zeit* beginning in December 1896. Among the things that he advocated were that it was not the goal that mattered, but that movement was everything, and that the party should substitute Kant for Marx. The articles are collected in *Evolutionary Socialism*; New York; 1961.

   His most explicit statement of the non-revolutionary reality of the origins of the party was contained in a letter to August Bebel on October 20, 1898, which is contained in *Victor Adler Briefwechsel mit August Bebel und Karl Kautsky*; Vienna, 1954; p. 259.


5. Georg Zinoviev, *Der Krieg und die Krise des Sozialismus*; Vienna, 1924

6. Kurt Brandis, *Die Deutsche Sozialdemokratie bis zum Fall des Sozialistengesetzes*; Leipzig, 1931


9. Examples are:


Carl Landauer, *European Socialism*; Berkeley and Los Angeles 1959

Hans Rosenberg, *op. cit.*

10. Examples are:

Werner Conze and Dieter Groh: *Die Arbeiterbewegung in der nationalen Bewegung*; Stuttgart 1966


Vernon L. Lidtke, *The Outlawed Party: Social Democracy in Germany, 1878-99*; Berkeley 1966

Carl Schorske, *German Social Democracy, 1905-1917*; Berkeley, 1965

Hedwig Wachenheim, *Die deutsche Arbeiterbewegung*; Koln und Opladen, 1967

The origins of the German social democratic movement are to be found in the worker's educational associations (Arbeiterbildungsvereine), or more specifically in the rebellion of many of their members against the paternal tutelage of their sponsors, the liberal bourgeois parties. The creation of the worker's associations stemmed from the changes in Germany that were wrought by the combination of the upswing in capitalist activity and the international thaw that resulted from the disintegration of the alliance between the partners of the 1849 counter-revolution. ¹

By 1860 international relationships in Europe had changed significantly since the Italian war of independence had shaken the foundations of Austrian reactionary power and the Crimean War had seriously weakened Russia; moreover, France had become enmeshed in a losing adventure in Mexico and through her meddling in Italy and Poland had antagonized both Austria and Russia. Since the forces that traditionally maintained a divided Germany were now in disarray, the question of the unification of Germany, especially under the leadership of Prussia, had again become acute. ²

Pressure for unification increased as the example of Italy rekindled the hopes of German nationalists, (as was evident by the Schiller celebrations for national unity in 1859); ³ furthermore, pressure for unification was intensified by the economic boom of 1851-1857, which represented the consolidation
of Germany's industrial revolution. In the wake of these social and economic factors, the liberal bourgeoisie awakened from its long slumber since 1848 and formed several political groupings: among them were the Nationalverein, which advocated free trade, the "German mission", and the leadership of Prussia; the Progressive party, which attempted to revive the neglected constitutional institutions of 1848 in Prussia; and the People's Party of south Germany, which advocated universal suffrage. Prominant 1848 democrats were instrumental in the forming of these parties—for example, Schulze-Delitzsch in the Progressive Party and Karl Mayer in the Volkspartei, (People's Party)—who, however, had learned to be very cautious because of the abortive revolution of 1848. An example of this political timidity was the fact that in their official names both parties avoided any mention of democracy, since it was felt that the word "democrat" was not suitable for a peaceful and legal party. In their struggle with Prussian absolutism, especially the constitutional conflict with the King and the nobility, the liberal parties sought allies in the nascent working class, and it was to this end that the workers' educational associations were formed. Because the Progressive Party supported suffrage for all and the creation of self-help cooperatives for the workers, the party was to remain popular among the workers during the 1860's.
This alliance, however, was not to last because the aims of the labour movement and that of the bourgeois groups clearly conflicted. The bourgeois groups' sole interest in the working class was as a subordinate reserve force to aid them in their struggle for political hegemony. They certainly were not interested in the workers acting as an independent political force as was made quite evident by their active opposition to direct political activity by the working class. Politically active workers, however, began to see the necessity of the working class defining its own role and fighting its own political and economic battles. The growing contradiction then between the workers' associations and their sponsors was to lead to the gradual sundering of the growing labour movement's ties with the petty-bourgeois and bourgeois parties; and it was this separation and the consequent establishment of the labour movement as an independent social and political entity that was to characterize the movement during the 1860's.

From the beginning the politically active workers considered the establishment of democracy in Germany as a primary goal; yet, although the bourgeois parties had created the workers' associations, the Prussian bourgeoisie was a feeble basis for the struggle for democracy, since during and after 1848, due to the belated development of German society, it was neither psychologically fitted nor socially equipped to become a truly
revolutionary class. In the situation of 1848 it was not capable of becoming the vanguard of social change, as was its counterpart in France during the Revolution of 1789, but played instead a vacillating role. It wanted change, but by bargain and compromise; its interests at first led it to ally itself with the proletariat and the peasantry against the feudal reaction, but it perpetually sought to come to terms with the conservative forces of the old order—the monarchy and the army—to forestall the proletariat's own revolution against itself. As Karl Marx observed:

Irresolute against each of its opponents—because it always saw both of them before or behind it; inclined from the very beginning to betray the people and compromise with the crowned representative of the old society because it itself belonged to the old society; representing not the interests of a new society against an old but renewed interests within a super-annuated society; at the steering wheel of the revolution not because the people stood behind it but because the people prodded it on before them;...revolutionary in relation to the conservatives and conservative in relation to the revolutionists;...dickering with its own desires, without initiative, without faith in itself, without faith in the people, without a world-historical calling;...such was the Prussian bourgeoisie that found itself at the helm of the Prussian state after the March revolution.10

The effect of the weakness of the Prussian bourgeoisie was that there was a vacuum in the place of the 1848 democratic movement, and this vacuum was consciously filled by the working class. The working class, or rather its incipient party, inherited then the strength and weakness of the democratic movement, which had been a mass movement; therefore, the
possibility existed that the class aims and interests of the proletariat would be subordinated by the aims of the larger movement. The later Social Democratic movement revealed this heritage as it always laboured under the ambiguous nature of its role, unable to decide whether it was a populist party or a party of the proletariat. (The ambiguity of its nature was apparent from the beginning of the movement since it was largely composed of artisans and some petty-bourgeois; it was only at the end of the decade that the party composition began to be significantly proletarian.)

The first signs of the contradiction in the alliance of the bourgeois parties and the workers' associations occurred in the Gewerbliche Bildungsverein of Leipzig in 1862. Very early in the existence of the association, there was discord over the extent of political involvement of the workers. The liberal sponsors and their supporters felt that the role of the association was to educate and inform rather than to encourage the workers to be active politically. The other group, led by Friedrich Fritzsche, Julius Vahlteich, and August Bebel—all of whom were to be become leaders of the movement—countered with Fritzsche's argument that the purpose of the association was to formulate a political strategy for the workers and not
to make up the defects of the school system. The dispute became irreconcilable and the Fritzsche-Vahlteich group pulled out of the association and founding a new association, called Vorwärts ("Forward"), which quickly assumed an activistic and propagandistic role.

The drive for independent workers' parties was international as 50 German workers discovered on their visit to the World's Fair in London in 1862. Here they came into contact with Karl Marx and the international socialist movement, and on their return to Germany they spread the new ideas throughout the country. By this time, Germany had become receptive of the need for some sort of workers' organisation. In Leipzig a workers' rally called for a German workers' congress—a call that was echoed at similar gatherings in Berlin and Nuremburg. To this end the Leipzig workers elected a Preparatory Committee, (which included Fritzsche, Vahlteich, and Bebel), and it steered the fledgling movement for a time.

The Congress, which was attended by workers from other cities and was addressed by some of the workers who had gone to the World's Fair, was held at Leipzig from 18-25 November, 1862. It was decided that the Congress should become the mouthpiece of the German working class because the delegates felt that the working class had come of age politically.
and had to deal with the misery and suffering of their comrades. The Congress passed resolutions which called for the freedom to move and work throughout Germany, the right of workers' associations to exist, and the establishment of invalid insurance. 16

In early 1863, the Leipzig committee, which ran the affairs of the Congress, made an appeal to Ferdinand Lassalle and other national economists to state their views about the working class, and to make suggestions how they could assist the young movement. It was at this juncture that Ferdinand Lassalle effectively entered the consciousness of the German labour movement.

It is often forgotten today that Lassalle was one of the truly influential figures in nineteenth century Germany. 17 In a few short years, he became the most important figure in the labour movement and almost a legend. More significantly, the vast majority of German social democrats were introduced to socialism through the teachings of Lassalle. As August Bebel, the future great leader of social democracy, admitted:

Like most others who were socialists in those days, I became acquainted with the teachings of Marx through Lassalle. We had Lassalle's teachings in our hands long before we were aware of any by Marx and Engels. 18

The character of the early and later social democratic movement cannot be understood without an understanding of
his ideology, for it is not an exaggeration to state that Lassalle was the single greatest influence on the direction and the ideology of the party before World War I. Only through the examination and consideration of the origins of the party in the workers' associations and the Lassallian heritage are its later actions explicable. An examination of its nature will reveal that the party developed organically from its democratic populist roots and experienced no qualitative change in its ideology or practice from the early period of the 1860's until World War I. The party began and remained essentially a parliamentary reform party, and the confusion surrounding its nature stemmed from its maintenance of a dual role of revolutionary rhetoric for its proletarian base and reformist practice for its populist aims.

2.

In spite of the reputation of being a revolutionary and a champion of the working class that Lassalle was to enjoy in the history of nineteenth century social democracy, his social and political philosophy remained on the whole within the realm of bourgeois thought. Although he was long a student of Marx, his ideology clearly rested on the democratic natural-law formulations of the French Revolution.
of 1789 and on Hegelian idealism. Lassalle, unlike Marx, remained a Hegelian to the end of his life and neither accepted nor understood Marxism. 20

Lassalle revealed his Hegelian idealism in two books—Heraclitus the Obscure and The System of Acquired Rights. In the latter book he claimed that the difference between the ancient and Roman systems of inheritance rested solely on legal distinctions. It is noteworthy that instead of seeking to explain the different systems of inheritance in relation to either the economic conditions in which they arose or in terms of historical environment, he simply attributed the two views to the different Volksgeist of the two peoples; and it is significant that he does not explain why one people's Volksgeist differed from another one. The attempt to explain social institutions in terms of the spirit of the people meant that he saw history as the development of ideas in the consciousness of nations, which, like Hegel, he regarded as more real than the minds of individual men. Principles or ideas as ideological "realities" were the true moving force of history, of which the external events were manifestations that were determined by the ruling ideas. 21

Lassalle's idealism was revealed in his speech on constitutional matters when, after a labourious explanation of natural laws, he asserted that the written constitution represented the reality of powers in the state; 22 therefore,
it was a simple logical step to imply that social change could be engineered through a legal move or declaration, and it was in this manner that the concept and word "revolution" was used by Lassalle. He did not consider the concept of "revolution" in the Marxist sense as being the result of class struggle, but rather in the abstract breakthrough of a new Principle or Idea. His conception of revolution stemmed from an idealistic abstraction of the experience of the bourgeois revolution. The tendency to describe what was in reality concrete socio-economic changes in the language of natural rights tended to lead to the concentration on legal rights as equaling the interests and reality of the revolution. In this sense, revolution for Lassalle was reduced to merely a declarative act.

The philosophy of Lassalle was the opposite to what Marx believed since Lassalle regarded Hegel's termination of the dialectic at the bourgeois stage of society as premature and attempted to assign a new historical task to Hegel by extending the idealistic system to encompass the working class and thereby the rest of society. This, of course, contrasts strongly with what Marx thought:

In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality
of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness.26

The source of Lassalle's view that Hegel's system had to be extended from the bourgeoisie to the working class stemmed from his experience in the Revolution of 1848 which convinced him of the inability of the bourgeoisie to achieve unity and democracy in Germany. Because of this failure he was convinced that only working people or royal Prussian absolutism had the strength to achieve unity. He regarded Prussia as the agent that would bring about the unification of Germany, which he considered absolutely necessary since Germany was destined to become the world-historical agent that ultimately would bring about progress for all other peoples by establishing the empire of complete freedom.27

On the level of practical politics, he advocated a platform which could be classified as radical-democratic but which never went beyond the bourgeois limits of nationalism or chauvinism and "Tory-chartism". The socialism of Lassalle was the abstract consequence of his conception of democracy and always remained pure theory. It was pure democracy that was the pivot of his practice and he insisted that "in
democracy alone is everything right—and in it alone lies power. His democracy never went beyond the concepts of liberty, equality, and fraternity of the French Revolution; and he certainly never implied that democracy would be gained through the dictatorship of the proletariat. It meant simply that the working class would co-exist with other classes and would have a better chance of social advancement.

Since the liberal bourgeoisie had proven its incapacity of either "fighting for freedom" or "breaking the military state", it was left to the "fourth estate" of the working people to complete the struggle for the revolution. The only way that the people could successfully complete the revolution was to gain control of the state, which did not represent the instrument of class oppression as in the Marxist sense. The state, for Lassalle, had the "function of bringing to fruition mankind's development of freedom." The question of the state was an essential difference between Marxism and the Lassallian ideology. Lassalle had a strong Hegelian belief in the state and specifically the Prussian state, and he felt that the machinery of the state, its organization as well as the loyalty of its servants could be preserved while all the oppressive elements, which it had inherited from the Middle Ages and from absolutism, could be cleaned out.
The state had not yet reached its full potential, but it would when it realized the humanitarian, ethical and democratic principles as embodied by the working people. Therefore, in spite of all his agitation and opposition to the Prussian state, it was clear that he had no fundamental differences with it. Bismarck certainly realized this in his shrewd observation of Lassalle who he felt:

...was very ambitious and by no means a republican. He was very much a nationalist and a monarchist. His ideal was the German Empire, and here was our point of contact.32

The means by which the people seized the state was outlined by Lassalle in his famous "Open Letter of Reply to the Leipzig Central Committee for the Calling of a General Workers Congress". The working class would first establish itself as an independent political party with the principal slogan and aim of universal, equal and direct suffrage.33

The necessity of universal suffrage rested on the assertion that the working class could never pull itself out of its economic misery and deprivation through its own economic efforts. He based this assertion on his "iron law of wages", which under the present circumstances of the domination of supply and demand for work, determines wages: the average wage will always be reduced to the level of the essential subsistence level which a people generally considers to be sufficient for bare existence and for bringing up children. This is the point around which the real wages swing like a pendulum, without
rising above it for long, because with an easier and better position for the working class there would be an increase of workers and this in the supply of hands which would pull down the wages to their previous levels. 34

The only possible means of removing this "inhuman iron law which determines wages" was to make the working class its own employer through its self-organization into voluntary productive organizations. Borrowing from Louis Blanc and Sismonde de Sismondi35 he argued that the difference between wages and profit would disappear because through the cooperatives the "estate of workers" would be its own employer and entrepreneur at the same time. This then would have the effect of eliminating the reality and necessity of bare wages because the cooperatives would ensure that labour would reward itself since labour and entrepreneur were one and the same thing. Since he had already asserted that the working people could not solve its problem through its own efforts, the only way that they could establish these voluntary productive associations was to have the state subsidize them. Since the "state belonged to the needy classes" it was their right to use the state for their own purposes. Lassalle based this Blancian assertion on an analysis of tax payments which revealed that 96% of the population was in a depressed and needy position.36 The conclusion was obvious for with universal suffrage they could capture the state
through sheer numbers.

The answer is crystal clear to you all; it is only possible by universal and direct manhood suffrage. When the legislative bodies of Germany are formed by universal suffrage, then, and only then, you will be able to tell the state to do its duty.

and,

The secret of success is to concentrate on one point, the most important, and never to look to the left or to the right. Never mention anything other than universal and direct manhood suffrage, or that which is connected with it, or that which can lead to it. If you can convince 89 to 96% of the population, which you can do within a few years, and these, as I have shown you are the under privileged and impoverished classes of society, you can be sure that the demand will be irresistible.  

Apparently, it never occurred to Lassalle that people do not necessarily vote in their self-interest or vote correctly nor did he heed the example of Napoleonic France which used universal suffrage to further its despotic ends.

Lassalle's conception of the working class or working people was not in terms of the Marxian "class" but rather of the French revolutionary conception of the "Fourth Estate." Indeed, he rarely used the expression "working class", and instead preferred to use the medieval term of Stand (estate) rather than Klasse. His definition of estate followed a clear populist perspective and did not deal with the Marxist industrial proletariat.
We are all workers in so far as we have the will in whatever form to make ourselves useful in society.

This fourth estate...represents the whole of humanity. Its concerns are therefore in truth the concerns of humanity, its freedom is the freedom of humanity itself, and its rule is the rule of all.38

His omitting from the workers those "with noble land holdings as well as capital holdings" tended to reduce his view of social antagonism to a simple Babeufian struggle between the rich and the poor. His rejection of the class struggle in favour of a populist movement was made quite explicit when he stated that: "I am calling for a universal democratic people's movement."39 Because he believed in a form of utopian socialism which had lofty visions of an equal and just society without bothering about the difficulties of establishing such a society, he insisted on confusing class conflict with class "hate", as if they were the same thing, thereby implying that the difference between the employed and the employers was an invention, and that the objective socio-economic differences were fostered solely by "hate".40 The purpose of this form of reasoning was an attempt to reconcile groups of society that were in direct contradiction to each other. This utopian and unrealistic aim of Lassalle's socialism was clearly revealed in a letter in which he described his Open Reply:

The most beautiful thing is that it is really conservative throughout--using the word in the good and intelligent sense--and deserves the most lively support from the propertied classes.41

Marx criticized the Iron Law of wages for its political
implications—trade unions, for example, were considered useless by Lassalle and his followers since the Iron Law stipulated that workers could not help themselves through their own efforts—and because it simply did not exist.

...there has asserted itself in our party the scientific understanding that wages are not what they appear to be, namely, the value, or price, of labour, but only a masked form for the value, or price, of labour power. Thereby the whole bourgeois conception of wages hitherto directed against this conception was thrown overboard once and for all and it was made clear that the wage-worker has permission to work for his own subsistence, that is, to live, only insofar as he works for a certain time gratis for the capitalist (and hence also for the latter's co-consumers of surplus value): that the whole capitalist system of production turns on the increase of this gratis labour by extending the working day or by developing the productivity, that is, increasing the intensity of labour power, etc.; that, consequently, the system of wage labour is a system of slavery, and indeed of a slavery which becomes more severe in proportion as the social productive forces of labour develop, whether the worker receives better or worse payment. And after this understanding has gained more and more ground in our Party, one returns to Lassalle's dogmas, although one must have known that Lassalle did not know what wages were, but following in the wake of the bourgeois economists took the appearance for the essence of the matter.

It is as if among slaves who have at least got behind the secret of slavery and broken out in rebellion, a slave still in thrall to obsolete notions were to inscribe on the programme of the rebellion: slavery must be abolished because the feeding of slaves in the system of slavery cannot exceed a certain low maximum.42

Inspite of the successful proof by Marx and others that the Iron Law of Wages did not exist and that the voluntary
productive associations were neither practical nor feasible, nevertheless, the party retained the conclusions of Lassalle's otherwise false reasoning. His legacy to the future Social Democracy was an interpretation of revolution that linked and limited it solely to legal and peaceful parliamentarism; furthermore, revolution was tied to a deterministic interpretation of social action in history.

One can never make a revolution; one can only steer a revolution, which has already entered into the objective conditions of a society, into correct paths.\textsuperscript{43}

This observation as well as the combination of economic fatalism with the identification of a socialist future society with parliamentary democracy was to have a long history in the development of the party; it was consistently to be used to justify the party's passive and impotent social role. Related to this concept was a mechanistic faith in numbers--Lassalle went so far as to boast: Give me 500,000 men and the reaction is no more!\textsuperscript{44} The belief that the achievement of the revolution meant no more than the winning of a simple majority had its origins here, and the simple measure of the party's numerical strength was to remain the sole yardstick of success for the party in the next fifty years. The Lassallian device of blurring class lines was to be faithfully
emulated in its single-minded pursuit of the majority vote so as a consequence the party always resisted appearing as a specifically working class party in order to present a populist multi-class appeal with the principal slogan of universal suffrage.

3.

Lassalle's Open Letter, (his reply to the request of the Leipzig Committee on March 3, 1863), marked his entry into politics on behalf of the working class. Even though the committee's decision to accept it was narrow by a vote of six to four, this decision was ratified by a nearly unanimous vote of a later workers' Congress. This was followed by other groups in more cities declaring themselves for Lassalle. At this point Lassalle threw himself wholeheartedly into the movement and began to speak at mass rallies before upwards of 4000 people.45

The need for an independent organization had become apparent, so on May 23, 1863, Lassalle and twelve delegates from eleven cities founded the General German Workers Association (Allgemeine Deutsche Arbeitervereine known by its initials as the ADAV). Among those present at the founding were Theodor York, Bernhard Becker, Wilhelm Fritzsche and Julius Vahlteich, the latter became the secretary of the association. The delegates elected Ferdinand Lassalle as
The first paragraph of the ADAV statutes stressed the "peaceful and legal path" to its aims:

The purpose of the association "ADAV" is to work for the social interests of the German workers' estate and for the true elimination of class difference in society. The association maintains that the sole way to achieve this end is to agitate through legal and peaceful means for the representation of these social interests through the means of universal, equal and direct suffrage.  

The overall impression of this document, besides its reformist and non-socialist nature, was its naivété; somehow the difficulty of achieving the task of eliminating "class differences in society" while limiting political activity to "legal and peaceful means"--in an absolutist state such as Prussia--seemed never to have occurred to its author.
The initial response of the working class to the new organization was modest, since most of the politically active workers chose to remain in their own organizations. Shortly after the founding of the ADAV, a major Congress of the Workers' associations, representing 17,000 workers in 54 associations, was held in order to discuss the means of alleviating working class poverty; on the whole the ADAV played little part in the Congress. 48

In order to attract workers to his organization Lassalle undertook a wide speaking tour. He attracted large crowds, owing to his notoriety--primarily gained through his participation as the lawyer in the long Countess Hatzfeld divorce case which was a great sensation in Germany during the 1850's--and to his exceptional oratorical skills. His success at attracting crowds, however, did not extend to workers signing up for the ADAV. At one of these rallies (in Solingen) a revealing incident took place which cast a shadow on his sincerity as a champion of workers' rights. When the police on order of the Progressive mayor attempted to dissolve the meeting, the vast majority of the crowd wanted him to continue, and some even went so far as to resist the police with their knives, but he refused to continue. Instead after the rally he led a huge crowd of people to the
telegraph office where he wired Bismarck to complain of his treatment at the hands of the Progressive mayor and to demand the mayor's dismissal. Three men were arrested at the rally and later were sentenced to three months' hard labour. When Lassalle heard of this he advised the men to humbly throw themselves on the mercy of the crown, as he had done earlier, but they refused and proudly served their sentence. 49

This incident as well as the authoritarian nature of the organization led to growing suspicion of the depth and sincerity of Lassalle's motivation. Julius Vahlteich resigned his post in the ADAV as a protest against the organization's dictatorial structure. Later, these suspicions were confirmed when Lassalle's secret meetings with Bismarck came to light. 50 At these meetings Lassalle asked Bismarck to introduce universal suffrage and to create the voluntary productive associations. Lassalle certainly had no scruples over accepting a conservative revolution from above.

After his conservations with Bismarck he continued his agitational tour in 1864 but eventually was forced to stop by exhaustion. Besides he was disappointed in the results of the tour since after a year of almost ceaseless agitation, there were only about 4600 members in the ADAV. He was never to resume agitating for during his vacation he was killed in a
duel over a love affair.\(^\text{51}\)

The fame of Lassalle really began with his death; fired by his showman flair, his spectacular trials and exploits, and finally his romantic death, a legend grew which quickly submerged the character of the real Lassalle, and it was to grow yearly in the popular imagination. At his funeral the precedent was set for exaggerated eulogies comparing him to Achilles and Jesus Christ. As the ADAV and its press grew, they created dogma out of his words to such a degree that one article even composed an ode which was a transcribed version of the Lord's prayer.

Both Marx and Engels, who had had close relations with Lassalle since 1848, had become very suspicious of him. They criticized his proposals in the Open Letter as simply a plan for a "workers' dictator".\(^\text{53}\) Marx complained of his lack of dialectics and of his infatuation with French liberalism. Although they acknowledged him as "the most important fellow in Germany today",\(^\text{54}\) nonetheless, they could not separate the agitator from the demagogue. They watched with alarm the growing cult of personality in Germany. Marx was suspicious of a socialist who replaced critical observation with dogmatism and a materialist attitude with an idealist one; who regarded his own wishes as the driving force of the
revolution instead of the real facts of the situation; and who flattered the craft prejudices and nationalism of the German workers instead of preparing them for a bitter and lengthy struggle. 55

Marx's conclusion about Lassalle was apt:

...He overlooked the fact that conditions in Germany and England were different. He overlooked the lessons of the Second Empire with regard to universal suffrage in France. Moreover, like everyone who maintains that he has a panacea for the sufferings of the masses in his pocket, he gave his agitation from the outset a religious and sectarian character. Every sect is in fact religious. Furthermore, just because he was the founder of a sect, he denied all natural connections with the earlier working class movement both inside and outside Germany. He fell into the same mistake as Proudhon: instead of looking among the genuine elements of the class movement for the real base of his agitation, he wanted to prescribe the course to be followed by this movement according to a certain doctrinaire recipe. 56

Engels criticized the Lassallian influence in a working class party in his 1864 article, "Die Preussische Militärfrage und die deutsche Arbeiterpartei". He foresaw what was to occur to the movement years later with the establishment of the German empire. Warning against undue reliance on universal suffrage as the panacea for all social ills, he questioned the wisdom of the working class building a majority through universal suffrage in a parliament that was virtually powerless. 57
Then he posed the hypothesis of the government imposing universal suffrage from above. The result would be an impotent party, he concluded, as had occurred in France where Bonaparte used the peasant vote and the bureaucracy to smash the workers at the polls.\textsuperscript{58} As a conclusion Engels presented the tactics that Marx and he had long advocated for working class parties: that the working class had to ally itself with the bourgeoisie if and when it was acting in a progressive and revolutionary manner, otherwise it was to remain independent of other parties and groups.\textsuperscript{59}

The course of action prescribed by Engels, however, was not to be followed by the young movement. Lassalle had made his mark and his influence was to last—indeed, Marx and Engels were aware of this and constantly pointed out the necessity of eliminating Lassallian doctrines from the consciousness of the movement. At this time, Marx and Engels only had nominal influence on the movement but in time their political association, the International Workingman's Association which was founded on September 28, 1964, was to have some effect.
Following the death of Lassalle, the ADAV respected his last will and testament and elected Bernhard Becker as president, but it soon became apparent that J.B. von Schweitzer, a patrician playwright, was the dominant personality in the organization. Schweitzer was planning to publish *Der Sozialdemokrat*, as a party organ, and he asked Wilhelm Liebknecht, a prominent '48er and an associate of Marx and Engels, to participate on the paper, an offer that Schweitzer repeated to Marx and Engels a few days later. Although both Marx and Engels gave their consent on the condition that the paper adhere to a revolutionary program that would advocate the establishment of a republic in Germany and an end to the capitalist system, they never lost their initial mistrust of the paper. Even the title displeased Engels, as he complained: "...what an awful title! Why couldn't they have named it straightaway *The Proletarian?*"

In spite of the initial cooperation between the two sides—Schweitzer published Marx's inaugural address on the death of Proudhon—the break was not far off. Marx became extremely distrustful of the paper after it printed several articles by Moses Hess, a man who Marx considered an enemy of the working class. Marx already had refused the presidency
of the ADAV partly because of his precarious status in Prussia, but primarily because he disliked the excessive adulation of Lassalle in the party. 62

It was the issue of strikes that eventually led to the break between Marx and the ADAV. Two years previously the issue had become pronounced as the rapid increase in the number of industrial workers led to widespread violation of the anti-combination laws of 1845. By 1864 agitation against these laws definitely was on the increase, and even Lassalle recognized the importance of the issue. 63 His successors, however, who adhered to his "Iron Law of Wages" tended to ignore the issue as they were convinced that it was impossible for the workers to better themselves by their own efforts, and several Lassallians, such as Fritzsche, publically opposed strikes as being of no benefit to the working class. 64 Marx urged Schweitzer to ignore this Lassallian dogma and follow tactics which would utilize the issue of the right to combine. To this Schweitzer replied that they were thankful for Marx's theoretical advice, but when he presumed to comment on their tactics then:

You are doing us therefore an injustice, when you in any way or form, transmit your dissatisfaction with our tactics. And this is only possible if you were acquainted with the actual situation at first hand. Also, you should not forget that since the ADAV is a consolidated body, it is to some degree bound to its traditions. 65
Schweitzer then followed his criticism of Marx with a series of articles that were extremely laudatory of Bismarck. At this Marx and Engels severed their relationship with Der Sozialdemokrat, declaring that their participation had been conditional and that the paper with its "royal Prussian government socialism" and its support of an alliance of the proletariat with an absolutist government had clearly broken the agreement. 66

Schweitzer countered with a denial of Marx's charge that he was fostering "serviler Lobhüdelerei", (servile hysterical praise) and then followed with an implied comparison unfavourable to the "literary doctrinaire" and Lassalle the "practical statesman" 67--an inaccurate distinction that became part of the conventional wisdom of the party.

The importance of the dispute lay in the precedents that had been established. The choice of the name "Social Democrat" was indicative of the moderate course that Schweitzer intended to follow and also of his refusal to elevate the struggle from civil rights and populism to the class struggle. 68 The dispute was the first of what was to be a long series of criticisms by Marx and Engels from a revolutionary and socialist perspective that constantly assailed the reformist and opportunist tendencies of the movement. Schweitzer's reply set the pattern of the responses of the later party leaders who used the argument that Marx and Engels' absence from Germany caused them to see the situation in a false perspective.
By the end of 1865 the two main movements within the working class, the ADAV and the workers' associations, remained divided although they shared a common Lassallian social view. Even though the ADAV had developed as a distinct and independent party that was closely identified with the working class, many of the workers' associations, especially those in middle and southern Germany, did not join the ADAV owing to strong anti-Prussian sentiments which made a merger with the pro-Prussian ADAV impossible. The development of the workers' associations also was different, since unlike the ADAV they did not constitute themselves an identity apart from the other social classes, but from the beginning remained allied with petty bourgeois democratic elements. A loose union of workers' associations was successfully established in June 1863 in a Congress where it was decided that the Union should meet annually. In the following year the Union met in Leipzig and decided on a program which reflected the influence of the petty-bourgeois democrats; it called for the freedom of movement and combination, the establishment of old-age insurance, and an end to child labour. Men like Leopold Sonnemann, the editor of the *Frankfurter Zeitung* and a prominent *Volkspartei* spokesman, were elected to sit on the steering committee of the Union of the Workers'
Associations along with August Bebel and other working class representatives. 71

In spite of the divisions existing between the union and the ADAV, pragmatic reasons for unification eventually outweighed them. In 1866, representatives of both groups met in Dresden where they agreed to participate in a united struggle for universal suffrage and the rights of assembly and combination.

Unity, however, was shortlived as it soon fell victim to national politics as the German crisis reached its peak with the consequent solution by arms. The national question came to the fore when the tenuous cooperation established between Austria and Prussia during the 1860 dismemberment of Denmark began to collapse in late 1865. The ADAV and the Union became as divided as the rest of Germany over the question whether a unified Germany would be kleindeutsch (unified by Prussia without Austria) or grossdeutsch (unified in a federal union with the German elements of Austria).

The issue quickly became the burning question in Germany; 72 the Volkspartei—a party composed of small farmers and tradesmen in middle and southern Germany—became the main proponent of a grossdeutsch solution; and strongly opposed a possible war between "brothers". On the whole, the party adopted an unrealistic and utopian political position, which
was based on an underestimation of Prussian power and relied on an idealistic conception of Austria and the German people. Its spokesmen, who believed implicitly in the magic of idealism, propounded the view that a war between the "brothers" was impossible because a giant rising of the German people would prevent such an occurrence, and also that the Austrian Germans would relinquish the rest of their non-German empire in order to become part of a federal union of Germany.

The two main spokesmen and theoreticians for the Union of Workers' Associations August Bebel, a Saxon, and Wilhelm Liebknecht, whose antipathy to Prussia had become established during the Revolution of 1848, soon fell under the sway of Volkspartei politics. Increasingly, Bebel sought to establish a closer union between the Union and the Volkspartei by arguing that the time for neutrality was at an end and that their platform should call for a constitutional republic. Bebel and Liebknecht were instrumental in organizing the largest mass agitation among the working class against a possible war. The height of the campaign came at a mass rally of 5000 people in Dresden where Bebel proposed a resolution which was unanimously accepted and which revealed the extent to which the ideas of the Volkspartei had influenced him:
...That in the case of a German war between the brothers, that can only reward other foreign powers, the German people will rise like one man with weapons in hand and defend itself and its honour.76

The decisive victory of Prussia at Königgrätz caused profound changes in Germany from the Prussian domination of Saxony and other principalities to the establishment of the North German Union, and it really determined the form of German unification.77 Unable to adjust itself to the reality of the Prussian victory, the Volkspartei's platform degenerated into an essentially anti-Prussian position since the grossdeutsch solution was no longer feasible. The party's hate for Prussia became so strong that in the annexed areas it began to accept supporters of the deposed "hereditary" princes resulting in a strange mixture of democrats and reactionary particularists.78

Bebel and Liebknecht followed the Volkspartei position and continued to agitate against Prussian leadership, and to that end they invited representatives of both the Saxon Workers' Associations and ADAV as well as representatives of the Saxon petty-bourgeois democrats for a Congress in Leipzig shortly after the war. The result was the formation of the Sächsisches Volkspartei (Saxon People's Party), which became known by its principal slogan of "through freedom to unity", 
and the adoption of the "Chemnitzer Program". This program was certainly not socialist as its social message contained nothing more than a vague desire for "the betterment of the conditions of the working class" and for "voluntary productive associations". There was no mention of class conflict or even of the elimination of the present state. 79 (Later, Bebel excused the program by saying that a greater dose of socialism might have made the workers of the associations hesitate about accepting the program). 80 The lack of militant social aims was understandable since the emphasis was on the national question; a typical example of which was the statement that "the yielding of one foot of Germany is to betray the fatherland"; a further example was the submission of a plea to the King of Saxony to act as a responsible sovereign and prevent the formation of a Germany which would exclude other Germans. 81 Bebel and Liebknecht quite clearly regarded the national question as primary and accordingly subordinated the social question, i.e. social misery and the antagonism between labour and capital. They believed that the solution of the social question would quite naturally follow the solution of the national question.

The enunciation of this position was publicized by Liebknecht in the first issue of the party's newspaper, the Demokratisches Wochenschrift:
We are agitating for a German Volkstaat, that encompasses all people of German origin (naturally, including the German Austrians), since the issue encompasses the two most burning questions of the day, the national and the social. Both questions come under the united banner of freedom, and therefore we will fight to the death against any cowardly politics which represents the aggrandizement of Prussia and the diminution of Germany. We will also work for the economic freedom of the working class.82

For a student of Marx and Engels', Liebknecht was clearly retreating into what Marx described as "stupid south German particularism"; and indeed, he even went so far as to claim to Engels that "I start from the viewpoint that the fall of Prussia equals the victory of the revolution."83 He had felt since 1848 that the main enemy was Prussian militarism, and he could never bring himself to welcome German unification as the result of a Prussian war, even a war fought against Napoleon III. He seriously underestimated the strength of the North German Union; his association with the Volkspartei particularists caused him to dream of "undoing the work of 1866"; and he seemed to believe that a French threat to Prussia would be enough in Saxony to set off a nationalist movement for "liberation" from the Prussian yoke. For him, once the power of the Hohenzollern Dynasty was broken, it would be the turn of the French to overthrow the Bonapartes, and Europe would then live under socialist democracies.84
Thus, the actions of Bebel and Liebknecht during the sixties must be seen in a particularist anti-Prussian perspective rather than that of a socialist one.

During this time, the ADAV also subordinated the social question to the national, but held a diametrically opposed position to that of Bebel and Liebknecht. While its pro-Prussian position was more realistic and accurate than that of Bebel and Liebknecht, nevertheless, its position tended to degenerate into overt chauvinism and the blind glorification of Prussian militarism, rather than the adoption of a progressive position that called for a united democratic Germany governed by a parliament. The non-critical adulation of Prussian power and the implicit alliance with reactionary forces originated of course with Lassalle since he assigned to Prussia the world-historical mission of unifying Germany. Carrying this chauvinism to a further extreme, Tolcke, a later president of the ADAV, announced that the King of Prussia was a friend of the working class and that he welcomed the creation of a Prussian empire. Tolcke uttered the pious hope that the empire would have all the necessary freedoms and civil rights. Schweitzer continued this theme with his articles that advocated the unification of Germany either through "Prussian bayonets or proletarian fists."
The conflicting nature of the policies of both groups led them onto a collision course, and it was at the Chemnitz Congress of 1866 that they collided. After learning of the purpose of the Congress, Schweitzer forbade the attendance of any ADAV member. It was from this point that the two groups not only remained divided, but became mortal enemies. Responding to the creation of the Saxon Volkspartei (SVP) at Chemnitz, the ADAV issued its "Programme of the Social Democratic Party of Germany" at the end of 1866. The programme consisted of all the old Lassallian demands for universal suffrage and the voluntary productive associations with a significant addition which widened the rift with the Bebel/Liebknecht group; it called for:

> The complete elimination of every federation and every type of state. The unification of all the people of German origin into an organically united state through which alone the German people can realize a glorious national future: through unity to freedom.89

The ADAV chose the slogan "through unity to freedom" in deliberate contra-distinction to the old slogan "through freedom to unity" adopted by the SVP and the south German particularists.90 Enmity soon increased to the point of competing in elections when Bebel defeated the Lassallian Fritzsche for the Glauchau-Meerane seat to the North German constitutional Congress.91 In August 1867 Bebel, Liebknecht,
Schraps and Gotz of the SVP and Schweitzer and Fritzsche of the ADAV were elected to the Reichstag, where this hostility continued. The SVP embarked on a policy of total negation in the Reichstag, and this even extended to Schweitzer's Workers' Protection Bill which proposed a ten hour day, the establishment of factory inspectors and a standing parliamentary committee that dealt solely with the affairs of working men. Schweitzer lacked the fifteen signatures necessary to put it on the floor partly because the SVP deputies refused to sign it. Liebknecht's excuse was that he could not support any measure that might enhance the authority of the Reichstag. 92

6.

The purely obstructionist policy of the SVP in the Reichstag was formulated principally by Liebknecht. His speeches at the Volkspartei rallies were virtually devoid of social comment or observation and consisted of little more than the bemoaning of the division of Germany, anti-Prussian diatribes and adulation of the Volkspartei. 93 In 1869 he wrote a little pamphlet, On the Political Position of Social-Democracy particularly in respect to the Reichstag,
which was essentially a defence of the SVP's negative politics. He developed the argument that Parliament was useless in an absolutist state, since "in the absolutist state universal suffrage can be nothing but the plaything and tool of absolutism." Then he launched an attack on the Lassallian stress on universal suffrage:

Everywhere...we encounter the unreasonable over-evaluation of universal suffrage, which, based on Lassalle's authority, has developed into downright idolatry. Many people, especially in North Germany, believe that universal suffrage is a magic wand, which will open up to the 'disinherited' the gates of state power; they labour under the delusion that though living in a police and military state they can pull themselves out of the quagmire by universal suffrage.94

He argued further that revolutions did not occur with the "gracious permission of the authorities, and that the only way that the socialist ideal could be created was through the "over-throwing" of the present state--"No peace with the present state!" He concluded by proposing the following tactics:

Let us continue to participate actively in the elections, using them however merely as means of propaganda, and emphasizing always that the ballot can never become the cradle of the democratic state. Universal suffrage will acquire its decisive influence on the state and society only after the abolition of the police and military state.
Liebknecht's essay was a landmark for Social Democratic theory and practice. It set up the theoretical framework for the politics of negation that characterized the party during the next four decades. It also provided the focus for future radicals of the left who chose to criticize the party's emphasis on parliamentarism, and here lies a crucial factor in the significance of this document. Not only was its message wrenched out of historical context and an undeserved reputation as a revolutionary given to Liebknecht, but the essential message of the pamphlet was misunderstood. Liebknecht quite clearly was not against parliament per se, but against the North German Reichstag in particular. This was borne out at the time by his statements in the Demokritisches Wochenschrift in which he stated that the states of the future already existed in Switzerland and the U.S.A. He opposed "pseudo"-parliamentarism, and what he wanted was "genuine" parliamentarism.

Marx's response to the pamphlet was one of rage, especially since he had schooled Liebknecht for 15 years. He complained of the lack of dialectics in Liebknecht who "was not capable of criticizing both sides," and his "imbecile south German politics". But it was the negative, undialectic SVP politics that drew the most scorn:
...The part of Wilhelm's speech (given in Berlin) that was printed in the supplement ("In respect...)
shows beneath its stupidity an undeniable cunning in arranging things to suit himself. This, by the way, is very fine! Because the Reichstag must be used only as a means of agitation, one must never agitate there for anything reasonable directly affecting the interests of the workers! ...That dumb ox believes in the future "democratic state". At one moment he has in mind constitutional England, at another bourgeois United States, and at the next wretched Switzerland. 97

It is significant that Liebknecht's reputation as a revolutionary was enhanced in the future by this pamphlet which must be regarded as a product of anti-Prussian south German sentiment rather than as a revolutionary Marxist work. 98 Moreover, this pamphlet represents one of the cornerstones for the establishment of the myth of the revolutionary origins of the SPD.

7.

In 1868 the struggle between the two groups continued for the allegiance of the labour movement which was growing rapidly in size. The cause of this growth lay in the economic depression, the existence of the few socialist members in the Reichstag, the fairly widespread knowledge of the activities of the International and the publication
of Marx's *Das Kapital*. Furthermore, social conditions had become more unsettled and as a consequence there was a marked increase in the number of strikes. The question of the strike began to have more importance within the labour movement. The ADAV retreated from its earlier dismissal of the strike as a weapon and increasingly regarded it as a means to "increase consciousness among the workers" and perhaps to alleviate the worst economic suffering under capitalism. It was clear that they were making a strong economic play for the workers. Another Lassallian, York, fashioned the birth of the modern German Trade union by propounding the view that the union should be neutral politically and should concern itself solely with economic matters. It was clear that the independent worker's party of the ADAV was having its effect since its membership doubled and the readership of the *Social-Democrat* trebled during the first eight months of 1868.

Bebel and Liebknecht were quite aware of the growing challenge of the ADAV and sought to increase their ties with the working class, and at the fifth Congress of the Union of Workers' Associations they invited three representatives of the International to address the Congress, which was held in Nuremberg on 5 - 7 September, 1868. The Congress was
significant as the first cracks in the liberal-working class alliance began to appear when after a heated debate a majority of the delegates (69 votes to 46) accepted the proposed party platform, which was closely modelled on that of the International. It stated that the emancipation of the working class could be achieved solely through the efforts of the working class itself; the economic dependence of the working class on the monopolist capitalist concerns was the basis of all forms of economic servitude, social misery, spiritual degeneration, and political dependence; and political freedom was the necessary prerequisite to the economic freedom of the working class; finally, the Congress declared its agreement with the aims of the international working class movement. The last point only came about after a bitter fight by Sonnemann and other petty-bourgeois representatives, who walked out in protest after the motion passed. This was a sign of the inherent contradictions in the nature of the anti-Prussian petty-bourgeois and worker alliance forged by Bebel and Liebknecht. To attract working class support they had to be publicly radical in order to compete with Schweitzer, and this in turn cost them the support of their petty-bourgeois allies. The way that they attempted to get out of the dilemma was to separate theory and practice in order to integrate otherwise
conflicting sections and groups. For this purpose, the concept of the free people's state ("freie Volkstaat") was central since the petty-bourgeoisie could then feel part of the new state. Here then lay the origins of the future party policy of the split between theory and practice in its radical rhetoric offset by reformist behaviour.

As the dispute between the two groups became more bitter, the role of Marx and the International became more important and both groups vied from his support. Marx commented on this:

I am having a good deal of bother just now in Germany in connection with the quarrels of the leaders, as you can see from the enclosed letters. On the one side, Schweitzer, who has nominated me Pope in partibus infidelium (in the country of the infidels, i.e. a functionary without a function) so that I can proclaim him the "workers" emperor of Germany. On the other side, Liebknecht, who forgets that Schweitzer, in point of fact, forced him to remember that there is a proletarian movement apart from the petty-bourgeois democratic movement.105

Marx refused to have anything to do with the ADAV until they separated themselves from Lassallian ideology, but was equally hesitant about granting it to Liebknecht's group since they "had more in common with the Peoples' Party (Volkspartei), a bourgeois party, than with the Schweitzer Lassallians, who after all are a sect of workers." and:

...The dissolution of the Lassallian sect and on the other hand the severance of the Saxon and South-German workers from the apron strings of the Peoples' Party are the two fundamental conditions for the
formation of a new genuine German workers party. The Bebel/Liebknecht wing was to move steadily leftward toward the International in the face of stiff competition from the ADAV. In August, 1869 they had formed their own independent political party and shortly after, the connection with the bourgeois Volkspartei was severed. When the newly formed party joined the International, albeit as far as "the laws of the land allowed", the identification of the Bebel/Liebknecht wing with Marxism and the International was complete, yet at the same time, it was clear that the move leftward toward the International was prompted primarily by opportunism in the face of the ADAV challenge rather than for reasons of a sudden transformation in theoretical understanding and agreement. This was borne out subsequently by Liebknecht's complete neglect of the affairs of the International—Marx was to complain bitterly of the situation a year later—and by the whole history of the relationship of the latter Eisenach party with the International. It was the watchwords of "Lassallian" and "marxist" by which the two groups identified and fought each other that had the effect of mystifying the difference between them, as the real basis of dispute lay not in their theoretical differences,
since they both adhered to Lassallian ideology, but rather in tactical differences, concerning a certain historical situation, the creation of the *Reich*, and in personality factors. The latter factor became increasingly noticeable by 1869 as the dispute sank to the level of mudslinging and vicious personal attacks. Typical was Liebknecht's charge that Schweitzer was an agent of the Prussian government and that he was little more than a "common swindler" and "betrayer". Wilhelm Bracke of the Union of Workers' Associations published over 50,000 copies of the pamphlet entitled the "Life and Memoirs of J.B. von Schweitzer the Royal Prussian Court Socialist". Not to be outdone, Schweitzer countered with charges that Bebel and Liebknecht were in the pay of the Austrian government and that they were merely "half-socialists" because of their alliance with the *Volkspartei*. Bebel and Liebknecht continued their attacks by charging him of corruption, and they were so convinced that their accusations were true that they challenged him to an open debate. Even though the debate duly took place in his own constituency of Barmen-Elberfeld and although he won the vote of confidence, Schweitzer was badly shaken by the depth of feeling against him as the charges of the two found an echo in his own party.
Since the avenue of unification with the ADAV was now closed to them, Bebel and Liebknecht were forced to create their own party. In July, 1869, the Demokratisches Wochenschrift issued an appeal, "To all Social Democrats", which announced that at Eisenach on August 7, 1869 a congress would be held which would "unite all the wings of Social Democracy in Germany." On that date 262 delegates from the Union of Workers' Associations and 110 representatives of the ADAV gathered and immediately a huge uproar occurred when it became obvious that there was blatant mandate manipulation by both sides. The ADAV lost as the majority rejected their credentials. Thereupon the ADAV led by Tolcke walked out of the hall in protest.

The remainder began the business at hand and eventually created the Social Democratic Workers' Party, which, however, became better known as the Eisenachers. The congress adopted a program which was significantly influenced by Lassallian ideology and was also an unfortunate compromise. The division of the program into two parts, consisting of a preamble of general aims followed by a list of specific social demands, was to become customary in the party's history. The first part called for a free people's state and declared
that the future state would be a republic; the second part consisted of the usual demands for all the civil rights and individual freedoms. In spite of Liebknecht's claim that the Eisenachers had transformed themselves from merely being "a number of social Democrats" into "the Social Democratic Party", its demands were scarcely different from those of the petty-bourgeois Volkspartei. (Indeed, its independence was really one of semantics as a significant debate revealed during the course of the Congress.) At one point, there was a debate over the name of the party. Most of the delegates preferred the title of the Social Democratic Party without the word "worker" in it. At first the workers referred unconsciously to that title until one of the worker delegates objected because "with this decision you have thrown the workers out of the party." At this point a debate erupted over the question and another delegate countered with the observation that in his area they always referred to workers' rallies as "people's rallies." Bebel agreed and opposed including the word worker in the official title because he argued that "our party of course is mostly composed of workers, but there are many of us that are not workers." The worker delegates, however, continued their protest until
one delegate observed that, since it was the workers who objected, perhaps the Congress should reconsider it stand. The result was that it unanimously decided to retain the word "worker" in the title. This is clearly evidence that pressure for the party to be populist rather than a class party of the proletariat existed at the very beginning.

Although pressure increased on Bebel and Liebknecht to sever their petty-bourgeois alliance, nonetheless, for reasons of national politics and electoral strength they were reluctant to do this. The Volkspartei exacerbated the situation with their attempts to strengthen the bonds between them and the workers' associations. The break, however, finally came about with the participation of Liebknecht in the International's Congress in Basel, Switzerland in late 1869. At Basel the famous "nationalization of land" resolution was adopted, and, although Liebknecht voted against it, he was still bound by the decision. This was the last straw for the liberals of the Volkspartei as they were worried about the growing influx of communist ideas in the working man's movement. They could accept "socialism" because at that time in Germany the word had the connotation of social reform while the word "communist" clearly meant "collectivism" and the basic transformation of society into the "red republic".

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Bebel and Liebknecht worked hard to overcome the contradiction but they were in an impossible situation; although they both felt the resolution to be "inopportune", nevertheless, they did not want to endanger the existence of their newly formed party by severing their relationship with the International; however, the continued alliance with the Volkspartei depended on nothing less; hence, their liberal allies did not accept Liebknecht's lame arguments that he was there as a "private citizen" and that the Basel resolution meant nothing because it merely consisted of some theoretical points! Although Basel represented the end of the formal connection of Social Democracy with any other party and ushered in an era of separate and independent worker politics, yet the effects of this early relationship were to remain. The party was to continue the separation of theory and practice as well as the presentation of a distinctly populist appearance by concentrating on its programme on universal suffrage and the free people's state.

This period of time from 1863 to the eve of the creation of the German Empire saw the creation of a labour movement which became represented by two political parties whose differences lay in their positions on the national question rather than any fundamental differences on the social question. The notable feature about both parties was that
they were influenced and had connections with the growing international socialist movement, yet they developed in an independent way. Although they were influenced by Marx and Engels, on the whole, this influence reduced itself to rhetoric and theoretical catch-phrases rather than being present in fundamental political practice. Marx and Engels's lack of influence was quite evident from their constant criticism of the theoretical and practical behaviour of both parties and to the fact that most of the criticism was to have little effect. On the whole, then, Marxism as a political social philosophy did not play a direct or influential role in the early days of the Social Democratic movement.
Carl Landauer, *European Socialism*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, p. 236
For a specific study of the nature and proliferation of the worker's educational societies in Württemberg, see Wolfgang Schmierer, *Von der Arbeiterbildung zur Arbeiterpolitik*, Hannover, 1970, pp. 51-60.


4. Helmut Böhme, *Deutschlands Weg zur Grossmacht*, Cologne, 1966, p. 65. (For an economic discussion of that period see Chapter i.)

5. Rosenberg, *Demokratie und Sozialismus*, p. 132


7. Mehring observed that although "the hen raised the duck's eggs, it could not prevent the ducklings from swimming." (p. 19). For a discussion see vol. II, parts i. 2, 3.


In discussing the "working class", Morgan notes that initially the main active support of the German labour movement came from the still independent artisans fighting hopelessly against capitalism, (p. 3).
9. For an excellent discussion of this, as well as a good historical perspective of the German bourgeoisie in a world-wide context, see Horowitz, David, Imperialism and Revolution, London, 1969, Chapter one.


15. Ibid., p. 20.


17. An example of this was that the young Leon Trotsky greatly admired him and boasted "that he would become the Russian Lassalle." Isaac Deutscher, The Prophet Armed--Trotsky 1879-1921, New York, 1954, p. 35.


24. Brandis, die Sozialdemokratie, p. 15.


27. For a discussion of this see Oncken, *Lassalle*, pp. 132-147.


33. Lassalle, "Offenes Antwortschreiben", Vol. III, p. 41. In a letter to Rodbertus he wrote "...therefore, it appears to me, that universal suffrage belongs to our social demands as the handle to the axe." Quoted in Schmid, "Lassalle und die Politisierung", p. 16.

34. Ibid., p. 58.


37. Ibid., p. 91.


50. Upon learning this, Marx was wildly indignant and shocked. He considered Lassalle to be in the pay of Bismarck. See Marx to Engels on June 11, 1863, *MEW*, Vol. 30, p. 173. Even such as an enthusiastic Lassalle supporter as Franz Mehring could not condone this act. *Geschichte*, pp. 108-120.

51. *Chronik*, p. 25.

52. Even as late as 1873 they were still writing extravagant eulogies in the party newspaper, *Der Neue Sozialdemokrat*. There are many excerpts in Richard Schuster, *die Sozial-Demokratie*, Stuttgart, 1876, p. 196. For examples of the odes and poems to Lassalle, see Susanne Miller, *Das Problem der Freiheit im Sozialismus*, Frankfurt a/M, 1967, pp. 317-321. Wilhelm Fritzsche was jailed for publicly comparing Lassalle to Christ, Reichard, *Crippled*, p. 218.


57. *MEW*, vol. 22, p. 73.

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid., p. 76.


64. Wachenheim, Die Deutsche Sozialdemokratie, p. 112. Mehring, Geschichte, p. 306.


68. Landauer, History of European Socialism, p. 252. For the origin of the term "Social Democrat", see Arthur Rosenberg, Demokratie und Sozialismus, pp. 161-162.

69. "It could be considered as certain that Marxism as a theoretical system played no role in the process of loosening the self-identification of the working movement in relation to the bourgeoisie." Brandis, Die Sozialdemokratie, p. 25.

70. Chronik, p. 28.

71. Chronik, p. 29.


73. Schmierer, Von der Arbeiterbildung, p. 104.


76. Conze and Groh, Die Arbeiterbewegung, p. 62.

78. Ibid.


86. Heiddegger, Die Deutsche Sozialdemokratie und der nationale Staat, p. 28.

87. Mayer, Schweitzer, p. 115.

88. Chronik, p. 29.


92. Mehring, Geschichte, p. 274.

93. Mayer, "Trennung", p. 34.

94. Wilhelm Liebknecht, On the Political Position of Social Democracy with Respect to the Reichstag, Moscow, 1958, p. 17.

95. Ibid.

96. Paul Kampffmeyer, Vor der Sozialistengesetz, Berlin, 1928, p. 53.

98. For example see the Soviet forward in Liebknecht's pamphlet.


100. Reichard, Crippled, p. 218.


104. Ibid.


107. SED Geschichte, p. 280.

108. Ibid.


111. Ibid.

112. Mayer, "Trennung", p. 43.

113. For an account of the accusation see Mayer, Schweitzer, pp. 285-290. In spite of all his brilliance, (he was really the only one who could understand Marxism at the time), Schweitzer never gained the trust of his comrades in the party. Sayings such as, "where there's gold, there you'll find Schweitzer", abounded. From the beginning, (possibly because of his conviction as a child molester), he never gained the confidence of those in the party.


116. Schmierer, Von der Arbeiterbildung, p. 137.

117. Eisenach, p. 468.

118. Ibid., p. 498.

119. Ibid., p. 497.

120. Ibid., p. 498.


123. Ibid., pp. 50-51.

124. Morgan, The SPD and the International, p. 64. The Stuttgarter Beobachter, a Volkspartei newspaper, did not accept Liebknecht's explanation that the Basel Resolution was harmless and just contained some theoretical points! It accused him of evasion and subterfuge and launched a vigorous attack against communism. Mayer, "Trennung", p. 54.
CHAPTER TWO

In 1870, the Franco-Prussian War effectively settled up the national question in Germany, and the Paris Commune opened up a new chapter for the international socialist movement in general as well as the German movement in particular. For international socialism, the result of the experience of the Commune associated Marxism directly and permanently with that of labour revolution. In Germany, it contributed to the growing revolutionary reputation of Bebel, Liebknecht and the movement which they led; furthermore, it helped to cause a significant rise in popular working class consciousness at the time.

The historical relationship of Marx to the Commune is best described by Arthur Rosenberg:

The work of Marx on the Civil War of 1871 has an extraordinary significance; for by this bold step Marx annexed the memory of the Commune. It is only since then that Marxism has possessed a revolutionary tradition in the eyes of mankind. By 1870 Marx had already gained a reputation as an outstanding theoretician of the labour movement, but the general public knew nothing of the political and revolutionary activity of the Marxists. It is only since Marx's resolute public defence of the Commune in 1871, with which he drew upon himself the entire indignation of bourgeois society, that he achieved his aim of identifying his International and the Commune in the public mind. It is only since 1871 that Marxism has been clearly identified with the labour movement.
The two main reasons for the revolutionary reputations of Bebel and Liebknecht were their association with Marx through the International and their opposition to the Franco-Prussian War. Admittedly, their refusal to vote war credits in the Reichstag was a momentous act of international solidarity as was evident by their statement in the Reichstag:

As principled opponents of every dynastic war, as social-republicans, and as members of the International Working man's Association, which seeks to unite all oppressed, we can neither directly nor indirectly support this war; and we announce our confident hope that the people of Europe will learn from these horrible events to sacrifice everything in order to seize the right to self-determination and to defeat the contemporary sword-and-classes domination, which is the source of all evil in contemporary society.  

Although both Marx and Engels recognized that the act was an "acte de Courage" and definitely a "moment", nevertheless, they had their suspicions that the act was motivated by "hidden south German federalism" rather than due to support for the international revolution. Indeed, Engels was worried about the extent to which Liebknecht was deluding himself into believing that the German proletariat might not enthusiastically support what was rapidly turning into a war of national existence. He dismissed as nonsense Liebknecht's avowed aim to "undo the work of 1866". This was also the
view of many people in the party; Wilhelm Bracke for one felt that it was really "narrow national feeling" of particularism that motivated their actions.⁵

There was a definite difference between the manner in which Marx and Engels considered the Commune and that of Bebel and Liebknecht. The basis of Marx and Engels' interest in the war rested on how it affected the development of the international socialist movement; therefore, their standpoint was not coloured by blind national sentiment. They regarded the war as necessary to complete the job of unification and thereby remove the obstacles that had been preventing the growth of the German proletariat;⁶ moreover, they felt that the removal of Bonaparte would benefit the French working class. As soon as the Prussian policy of annexation became apparent after Sedan, they vigorously opposed it. While Marx and Engels viewed these events in the light of the class struggle and the development of the international proletariat, Bebel and Liebknecht had a different perspective. They tended to express themselves in moralistic terms, which did not stray beyond the bounds of conventional bourgeois thought and expressed no direct class-consciousness. On the whole, they dwelled on the question of who began the war rather than attacking the ruling class as the originator of all such wars. In their attitude towards the Commune they followed a similar pattern.⁷
At first they were widely attacked from all sides for their stand, but after Sedan and the consequent Prussian attack on Paris, their stand became more popular. With the creation of the Commune, the minds of many in the working class changed so that gradually a mass sentiment developed that was anti-government and pro-Commune. This was evident by the success of a series of mass protest demonstrations that Bebel and Liebknecht began to establish their reputations, especially Bebel with his fiery speech calling for "war to the palaces! Peace to the hovels!"

The Commune heightened class consciousness and awakened great hopes in the German working class by representing the possibility of creating a social republic of which the Commune was regarded a forerunner. This conception and the identification of the working class with the Commune led to a qualitative change both in the manner in which the working class was regarded by itself and by bourgeois society. As Zinoviev observed, the change represented "...the beginning of the proletariat as a class." In the sixties, the movement was concentrated in the workers' educational associations. This situation was not frowned on by society, rather it was encouraged at times by the authorities. As they were then constituted, the educational associations certainly did not represent a
threat to the established society, certainly not when their avowed aims consisted of no more than the bourgeois ideals of freedom, equality, and social self-improvement through legal and peaceful means. All this changed with the advent of the Commune and the subsequent international hysteria over the International and the "red spectre"; consequently, the official attitude changed to one of outright hostility, harassment and constant surveillance of the young movement. At this point, bourgeois society began to associate Social Democracy with bloody revolution, and as a result the movement got an unwanted and really undeserved revolutionary reputation. It is significant that subsequent party history was to be dominated by a desire to rid itself of this image.

Thus, the hysterical propaganda of the early seventies had the effect of separating the defenders of the Commune from the rest of society; this, in addition to positive agitation that stressed the virtues of the Commune, helped to create the beginnings of class consciousness so that the working class began to emancipate itself from the ideals and conceptions of bourgeois society. Admittedly, it would be an exaggeration to describe the then miniscule German labour movement as revolutionary, but the foundation for such a
movement had clearly been laid.

2.

By 1872, the government felt the need to do something about the "red menace", since it was getting too large to ignore. Bismarck claimed that Bebel's speech, which described the Commune as the first spark in what was to be a world-wide conflagration, hit him like "a bolt of lightening" and awakened him to the danger of Social Democracy. Contributing to the government's determination to act was a notable rise in labour activity and turmoil, which was to grow with the later economic state of depression.

Accordingly, the government decided to try Bebel, Liebknecht and Hepner, who was the editor of the Volksstaat, for high treason, due to their alleged activity during the Franco-Prussian War. This attempt to root out radicalism was the beginning of the campaign against Social Democracy--indeed, these times became known as the "Era Tessendorf" after the name of the chief prosecutor who waged the growing campaign of harassment against the movement--and was to culminate in the anti-Socialist laws of 1878 that outlawed the party.
The trial, held in October 1872, was covered extensively by the press and was closely followed by the public. Liebknecht certainly was correct when he observed that if nothing else the trial served to present the Social Democratic view to the people. 14

The state's tactic was to convict them through guilt by association because of their membership in the International. To this end, the prosecution quoted parts of the Communist Manifesto, which advocated the use of force to overthrow the present system, and then tied this to Bebel's famous "war to the palaces" speech, especially the section which announced hope for the defeat of class domination. 15

Bebel and Liebknecht used the trial as a forum to spread their views on Social Democracy; above all, they attempted to show the legal and non-violent nature of Social Democracy. 16 First Liebknecht declared that the time for "conspiracies, putsches, and street battles" was long over. 17 Then Bebel used Lassalle's argument that the use of force was reactionary and was always instigated by the other side; and furthermore, a revolution could occur quite peacefully. The three then categorically rejected the prosecution's claim that they advocated the use of force in order to overthrow the state.
President: The third point of the prosecution is that you advocate the use of force and revolutionary upheaval to bring about the establishment of a Social Democratic People's state?

Liebknecht: No, I deny that most emphatically.

Bebel: Similarly, for me.

Hepner: Similarly, for me. 18

Bebel and Liebknecht maintained that the International Working man's Association did not threaten to overthrow the state. As this did not impress the Court, they then denied that they were "Marxists" and argued that they adhered to the rules of the International only so far as they were legal in Germany. 19

The prosecutor proceeded with the attempt to prove that the party advocated violence and force by quoting extensively from the vivid contents of the Volksstaat, which liberally used such words as "battle...combat...battlefield" and other images of struggle and war. Liebknecht dismissed these words and phrases as mere rhetoric and declared that everyone knew that battles merely referred to elections and that the only battlefields used were the voting booths. 20

To this end, Hepner observed that their conception of revolution was completely harmless, and for Bebel the term "decisive act" did not imply street revolution, but rather
meant no more than the unification of the workers—"a thoroughly legal aim." 21

Throughout the trial both Liebknecht and Bebel argued their case resolutely within the legal and conceptual bounds of bourgeois society. Bebel insisted that "the party could not get any more legal than it already was" 22 and Liebknecht made the astonishing assertion that it was in the state's interest for a man to break a bad law. In response to the state's contention that he was "an enemy of the law": he revealed himself to be fundamentally a reformer and petty-bourgeois moralist and certainly not a revolutionary, (in spite of his claim of being a "soldier of the revolution"). He stated that there were good and bad laws, and that the health of the state and progress in the state depended on the citizen to test all laws. 23

Liebknecht was primarily interested in democracy within a republic—socialism was subordinate at best—as he admitted that "ever since I was capable of reason, I have been a republican and I will die a republican." 25 In a passage concerning the establishment of a republic, he revealed that he considered the final aim to be a republic with a responsible parliament, and that if Germany had been a republic during the war with France, he would not have hesitated to defend it.
Bebel and Liebknecht tried to resolve the contradiction between their aims and means—that is, they predicted that a revolution would "transform" the existing order while at the same time they maintained that those who were involved would refrain from force—by postulating the Lassallian concept of revolution.

...We Social Democrats "make" no revolution; we study the process of development in state and society, and while it is continuing its progress, we will not forcefully interfere, but will wait in strength for time to take effect. We will leave the 'making' of revolutions to the regimes, emperors, kings, "genial" statesmen etc. 25

They based their observations on a completely mechanistic and deterministic concept of historical development; of course, they did not have to use force to achieve their aims when it was in the order of physical law that bourgeois society would do itself in by "digging its own grave" and thereby "pulling the wagon of socialism". 26 All the party had to do was organize, wait, and depend on universal suffrage, which in a "free people's state" would provide the necessary parliamentary "will of the majority regime, nevertheless, they had confidence in the power of universal suffrage and a parliamentary majority in parliament.

On the whole, Bebel and Liebknecht revealed their inability to transcend the reality of bourgeois society, and it was clear that they accepted the specific laws and
morals of capitalist society as universal and absolute. Therefore, in spite of their rhetoric of social revolution or more accurately "transformation", their aims were realizable within the contemporary structure. Moreover, their conduct was in direct contrast to the later Russian revolutionaries who did not defend themselves from the charges of the state but instead placed the state on trial. Rather than accepting the validity of bourgeois laws, the revolutionaries found the state to be guilty and answerable to the judgment of the people.

After examining the transcripts of the trial it is astonishing then to note that the admissions of Bebel and Liebknecht did not lessen but actually increased their revolutionary notoriety. Their behaviour quickly developed into one of the party's hoariest legends of revolutionary activity, and furthermore it became evidence for the revolutionary origins of the party. 27

The high treason trial was important since it provided the widest forum for Social Democratic ideas and afforded the most complete explication of them since Lassalle. It is noteworthy how little the basic ideas had changed since the death of Lassalle, especially in light of Marx's increased involvement with the party. In spite of the fact that Bebel was to read Das Kapital during his nine-month internment and
that a form of Marxism was eventually to be made the official ideology of the party, these ideas—especially the reformist practice disguised by revolutionary rhetoric, the social-determinism, the emphasis on non-violence, universal suffrage, parliamentarism, and legality—were to remain and the party was to stay within the confines of the principles and ideas enunciated at the trial.

3.

The Franco-Prussian War had removed the major bone of contention between the two rival Social Democratic parties, and soon after J.B. von Schweitzer retired from the political scene. All that was left was perhaps the issue of the Lassalle cult of personality in the ADAV. Apart from that there was little difference between the two parties, other than their respective geographical areas of strength. Support for the ADAV was located essentially in the north in Schleswig-Holstein and the cities of the north Rhine and that of the Eisenachers in the industrial districts of Saxony and the southern provinces.28 On the whole their political programmes were similar: both advocated peaceful and legal evolution, "hineinwachsen", into socialism; both based their conception of socialism on the French Revolution with its slogans of freedom, equality, and
fraternity; both stressed universal, secret and equal suffrage as the means to achieve their goals; and both had similar lists of essentially petty-bourgeois demands consisting of a people's militia, better working conditions, separation of church and state, etc. And as Franz Mehring observed there was a further similarity in that the concepts and practice of dialectical materialism was equally foreign to both. 29

Strong pressure for unification arose during the Franco-Prussian War when the ADAV switched from initial support of the government to opposition with the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine. For numerous reasons, not the least of which was the strenuous opposition of Marx and Engels, the various attempts at unification before 1874 failed. Unification, however, was inevitable especially as a defensive response to the increased police harassment by Tessendorf and in order to take advantage of rising labour agitation. That unification was just around the corner became evident by the parties joint participation in the elections of 1874. 30

From the outset Marx and Engels consistently opposed unification because they felt that the Eisenachers had nothing to learn or gain from the Lassallians, and that
Lassallian concepts would only contaminate the Eisenachers—an incorrect supposition as was quite evident from the similarities of the two programmes; moreover, they felt that given time the incorrect formulations as well as the organization would die a natural death. Unification, however, would only tend to preserve them. Marx and Engels were mistaken as to the conceptual purity of the Eisenachers. Although quite aware of the limitations of the Eisenachers, as was evident by their constant complaints regarding the theoretical abilities of the leaders and the composition of the party—(they complained that the party was filled with "half-educated scholars, philistines, and cranks")—nevertheless, they felt that the Eisenachers were at least free of Lassallian influence. To this end, they were misled and misinformed by the Eisenacher leaders, who assured them that "in our party Lassalianism has as good as disappeared." What they meant by this was not the doctrine itself, that was not considered a danger, but the cult of personality that stressed the infallibility of Lassalle's teachings. This was evident when Liebknecht wrote to Bracke on the outcome of the negotiations with the ADAV:
Yes, write to the Londoners! (Marx and Engels). Some things we have improved, we have broken the principle of infallibility, and we have prepared the necessary programme reforms. The program will be unanimously accepted.  

Eduard Bernstein observed that the reason for the stress on cult rather than doctrine was because Liebknecht was far closer to being a Lassallian than a Marxist, (as was apparent during the High Treason Trial.) Further evidence of this came during the unification debates, for when Liebknecht finished his speech, Hasselmann, the chief negotiator for the ADAV, gave up his chance to speak because he was "in full agreement" with Liebknecht.

The negotiations between the two parties were kept quite secret, and by the time Marx and Engels had got a chance to see the programme it was too late to alter it. When they finally did see it, however, they did not hide their displeasure but vented it through widespread correspondence with the leaders and through Marx's famous Critique of the Gotha Programme.

In a sharply worded letter to Bebel, Engels complained that the Gotha Programme contained an over-abundance of Lassallian slogans and phrases, a whole row of petty-bourgeois democratic demands, and "communist sounding" phrases loosely borrowed from the Communist Manifesto. Engels maintained
that the ADAV was the weaker party in the agreement, and that they were forced to finally beg for unification:

Our party has so frequently made offers of reconciliation or at least cooperation to the Lassallians and has been so frequently and contemptuously repulsed by the Hasselmanns, Hasenclevers, and Tolckes that any child must have drawn the conclusions: if these gentlemen are now coming and offering reconciliation themselves then they must be in a damned tight fix.\footnote{36}

Consequently, he could not understand why, if this supposedly was a unification between equal parties, the Lassallians not only outnumbered the Eisenachers in delegate strength, 70 to 56,\footnote{36} but also outnumbered them on the Executive Committee by three to two.

The Gotha Programme itself was a weak, disjointed document reflecting numerous demands and satisfying none. In this sense, it reflected what was to be a typical Social Democratic characteristic, separation between theory and practice. The first section was theoretical, consisting of a muddle of formulations from vulgarized Manifesto concepts, "Work is the source of all wealth", to almost incomprehensible ones, "the freeing of labour must be the task of the working class" to specifically Lassalian concepts calling for the "destruction of the Iron Law of Wages" and the establishment of "state-aid to productive cooperatives."\footnote{37} The second part consisted of a list of
demands calling for the end of child labour, the establishment of a popular militia, universal suffrage etc.

Upon examination of the programme, it is easy to understand the reasons for the misgivings and anger of Marx and Engels, who felt that the programme was a definite concession to the Lassallians. The Eisenachers were no more politically advanced than the Lassallians but Marx and Engels had reason to believe that their constant tutelage and theoretical advice to Bebel and Liebknecht should have had more effect.

If Marx's opinion of the Gotha Programme were to be summarized in one thought it would be that, he did not consider the programme to be a revolutionary one. "The German workers' party--at least if it adopts the programme--shows that it socialist ideas are not even skin-deep." In his Critique he criticized the programme as a "monstrous attack on the understanding" and also the style of writing as "slovenly". He dealt specifically with loose phrasing and imprecise terminology especially with such Lassallian notions as the "Iron Law of Wages":

So, in future, the German Workers' party has got to believe in Lassalle's "Iron Law of Wages". That this may not be lost, the nonsense is perpetrated of speaking of the 'abolition of the wage system' (it should read: system of wage labour) together with the iron law. If I abolish wage labour then naturally I abolish its laws also, whether they are of 'iron' or sponge.
Furthermore, he criticized the fact that Lassalle's pet scheme (of producer's cooperatives with state aid) was included and also its content:

Instead of arising from the revolutionary process of the transformation of society, the "socialist organization of the total labour" 'arise' from the 'state aid' that the state gives to the producers' societies and which the state, not the worker, calls into being. It is worthy of Lassalle's imagination that with state loans one can build a new society just the same as a new railway.40

The concept of the "free people's state" also came under criticism as Marx asserted that it was not the task of the workers to set the state "free" since the state of the German Empire was almost as "free" as that of Russia's to do what it wanted. "Freedom consists of converting the state from an organ superimposed upon society into one completely subordinate to it."41 The political demands were also criticized by Marx because they contained nothing beyond...

the old democratic litany familiar to all: universal suffrage, direct legislation, popular rights, a people's militia, etc. They are a mere echo of the bourgeois people's party, of the League of Peace and Freedom. They are all demands which, in as far as they are not exaggerated in fantastic presentations, have already been realized. Only the state to which they belong does not lie within the borders of the German Empire, but in Switzerland, the United States etc. This sort of "state of the future" is a present day state, although existing outside of the German Empire.42
Marx and Engels were aware that the lack of revolutionary content in the programme reflected the party's desire to have a populist appeal.

Since workers as well as the Bourgeoisie can read in the programme whatever they wish to see as well as to ignore whatever they do not wish to see; therefore, it does not occur to anyone from either side to carefully analyze the real meaning in those wonderful sentences. 43

The party's attempt to present a populist image brings up a seeming contradiction in the party's behaviour, to wit: although the party appeared to be populist; nevertheless, at the same time it consciously set itself apart from society in self-imposed isolation. A key phrase in the Gotha programme was used repeatedly over the decades to justify this stance: "the emancipation of labour must be the work of the working class, relatively to which all other classes are only one reactionary mass." 44 (Italics mine) The definition of the rest of society as "one reactionary mass" became the cornerstone of subsequent Social Democratic theory and practice. The result of this concept was that the party tailored its theory and practice to suit the belief that the transformation of society and the establishment of socialism was to occur with one decisive blow. Engels, later in 1882, dealt with the implication of it:
This at last is the dreamed of realization of the phrase "one reactionary mass". All the official parties united in one lump here, just like all the Socialists in one lump there—great decisive battle; victory all along the line at one blow. In real life things do not happen so simply. In real life, things do not happen so simply. In real life, the revolution begins the other way around, by the great majority of the people and also of the official parties rallying against the government, which is thereby isolated, and overthrowing it; and it is only after those of the official parties whose existence is still possible have mutually, jointly, and successfully accomplished one another's destruction that Vollmar's great division takes place bringing with it the chance of our rule. If...we wanted to start straight off with the final act of the revolution we should be in a terribly bad way.45

The party then used the logical culmination of "one reactionary mass" to justify its passive and impotent social activity by the claim that it was preparing itself for the decisive blow and final collapse ("Zusammenbruchserwartungen") -- and here were the origins of the concepts that Karl Kautsky, the later chief party theoretician, was to elaborate and perfect.

The last chapter to the ignominious affair surrounding the programme was the suppression of the Critique of the Gotha Programme by a few of the leaders from the general membership of the party. (It was not until 1890 that the criticism was made public.) Mehring argues that the reason
for this was that it was above the heads of the Eisenachers and to a lesser degree that of the Lassallians. The real reason, however, undoubtedly lay in Liebknecht's desire to preserve the unification, which he considered his lasting achievement, "at any price". Be that as it may, the suppression from public view established the unfortunate precedent of dealing with inter-party dissent through internal suppression rather than that of open debate and consideration. It also meant the downgrading of theoretical accuracy and principles in favour of practical considerations. An illuminating footnote to this effect was found in the behaviour of Bebel in relation to the Gotha Programme. Earlier Bracke and he had considered the programme wholly unsatisfactory and even considered writing a counter-proposal. Since they could not come to agreement on one, they did not write one. But for all his earlier protestations on the unsuitability of the programme, Bebel was wonderfully sanguine in his letter to Engels. After quickly apologizing for the programme, he concluded that, after all, things were for the best because the party was financially solvent!

The Critique of the Gotha Programme is of crucial importance to the understanding of the nature of the party because it revealed that Marx clearly did not regard either the party or its programme to have a revolutionary character; moreover, the internal suppression of the Critique revealed
how distant Marx and Engels as well as the concepts of Marxism were from the party.

4.

The victory in the Franco-Prussian War, the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine, reparations from the French, the maturation of war bonds, and general expectations of a great political and economic future in the unification of Germany all helped to stimulate the great economic boom in the period of 1871-73, (called the Gründerjahre). The foundation of the Reich brought in its wake virtually unrestricted freedom to found enterprises, a federal commercial law, a uniform national currency, and an improved banking system. Frenzied expansion occurred in the rapid creation of new railroad companies, mining and industrial enterprises, and real estate and building concerns. Since there was little official control, many of these concerns were set up for wildly speculative and even fraudulent aims. The scope of this frenzy can be measured by the fact that new capital investment in the three years of the Gründerjahre totaled 2.9 billion Marks as compared to only one-half billion Marks for the entire preceding twenty years. Production, commodity prices and stock quotations rose rapidly until 1873, when a crisis occurred with the collapse of the Berlin
stock exchange, due partly to over-optimism, swindling and excessive speculation. With the collapse of the railroads and a production crisis in the mines, the crisis deepened into a full-blown depression which lasted from 1873 until 1896. 49

Due to the rapid fluctuation of economic conditions, social unrest heightened markedly throughout the entire social spectrum during the "Great Depression" of 1873-96. The reasons are not hard to discover since average weekly real earnings followed the fortunes of the Gründerjahre by first rising then falling until the beginning of the 1890's. In 1880-81 real earnings were lower than they had been in 1871. 50 By causing the mass migration from the country to the cities, rapid industrialization dislocated the social structure of the country and contributed to the growing unrest. As a result, Berlin, and other cities which began to grow rapidly, experienced riots caused by severe housing shortages. With the boom cooling off, big strikes began to occur, mostly for the reduction of the working day with the same pay. 51 According to Hans Rosenberg, the mass psychology of the era was characterized by social pessimism, "a rise of chronic mass social dissatisfaction and unrest", and an increase of "ideological dynamics and hostility." Social questions,
such as the solution of the "Hunger" question, became the primary concerns for the population. 52

The social and economic depression consequently had the effect of aiding the transformation of Social Democracy from a sect to a mass-based populist Volkspartei. The party changed in every manner from its size to the basis of its support. In a mere five years from the election of 1873 the number of votes increased from 380,000 to 560,000, the number of periodicals, newspapers, and subscribers all doubled, and even the number of paid agitators increased from 22 to 46. 53 The results of the election of 1877 revealed that the party finally was a national party, since it began to make inroads in the big industrial cities of the north and east and in the Ruhr.

The enormous success at the polls began to exercise a profound influence over the party and it began to change its attitude on parliamentary activity. In the past the SDAP treated the Reichstag as a "farce" because it was considered to be the mere instrument of the hated Bismarck. The tactic of using the Reichstag solely as a tribunal for agitatorial purposes was first enunciated by Liebknecht in his famous pamphlet. This became party policy at the
Stuttgart Convention in 1870 where Bebel successfully proposed the following motion:

The SDAP participation in the elections for the Reichstag and Customs Parliament upon purely agitational grounds. The representatives in the Reichstag and the Customs Parliament shall, as far as possible, work for the interests of the labouring classes; but on the whole, they shall maintain a negative attitude and use every opportunity to show up the transactions of both parties in their entire emptiness and to unmask them as mere farces.  

Marx and Engels opposed this stance and advocated the dialectical tactic of using the Reichstag both for the purpose of publicizing the aims and principles of the party as well as struggling to improve the immediate conditions of the workers--always keeping in mind that the Reichstag, as well as any parliament, was clearly the instrument of class oppression.

Bebel and Liebknecht, however, were unable to act in a dialectical manner; and they disagreed with Marx and Engels' opinions on the nature of parliaments. The Chemnitz resolution was not directed against parliament in general, but rather against the North German Reichstag.

The growing stress on electoral success and parliamentary participation was to have lasting consequences for the party. Since the party neither was attempting to organize the working
class as a political force outside parliament nor inviting participation in the development of the party, there never was a political movement between elections to supplement the purely economist one of the trade unions. The growing emphasis on the elections, as the sole means of political activity, gradually cemented in the minds of the leadership and the masses the idea that revolution would come through the peaceful use of the ballot. Furthermore, this represented the beginning of the acceptance of the Reich and state, as it existed, by the party. Since the party translated revolution into the successful triumph at the polls and thereby the winning of a parliamentary majority, the numerical increase in votes began to represent the sole yardstick of success for the party. Consequently, the party had to tailor its message to appeal to the widest audience possible, and at the time this meant to a non-proletarian one, specifically the peasantry and the petty-bourgeoisie. Here parliament was clearly the instrument of class oppression.

Bebel and Liebknecht, however, were unable to think in a dialectical manner; and they disagreed with Marx and Engels' opinions on the nature of parliaments. The Chemnitz resolution was not directed against parliament in general, but rather against the North German parliament in particular.
It was clear that Bebel and Liebknecht, unlike Marx and Engels, did not consider the Volkstaat or "democratic republic"—that is, a Social Democratic republic governed by a parliament with a socialist majority (presumably non-Socialist parties could participate)—to be last stage of bourgeois society and therefore only a transitional goal. For them, the Volkstaat was the final goal and meant the triumph of the social revolution.\(^{56}\)

It was not surprising, therefore, that the party shifted its tactics from wholesale abstention to serious participation in parliamentary affairs. This was already discernible with the electoral success of 1873, after which the party weakened the intransigent "solely" to the weaker "essentially" using parliament for agitatorial purposes.

It was in 1877 that the party's change in tactics was fully revealed. The SPD caucus planned an active legislative programme centered around the proposal of workmen's Protection legislation. This proposal was the first piece of comprehensive labour legislation introduced by the unified party. By 1878, it was clear that the party was about to use parliamentary tactics to attempt the democratization of the Reich. There was a great deal of
pressure within the party for the "positive" use of parliament. The reformist, rather than revolutionary, nature of the proposals was revealed by the fact that deputies from the bourgeois parties, the Volkspartei, the Catholic centre, and even the National Liberals, signed some of them. (Indeed, after the introduction of the Anti-Socialist laws, Liebknecht, the man most responsible for the position of using parliament solely for agitatorial position, went so far as to complain that no longer were these parties signing their proposals!) The net result was that the party was seriously devoting itself to political reform and work within the existing system and that anti-parliamentary sentiments were beginning to have little practical effect.

The growing stress on electoral success and parliamentary participation was to have lasting consequences for the party. Since the party was neither attempting to organize the working class as a political force outside parliament nor inviting participation in the development of the party in parliament, there was no political effort between the elections to supplement the purely economist one of the trade unions. The growing emphasis on the elections, as the sole means of political activity, gradually
cemented in the minds of the leadership and the masses the idea that revolution would come through the peaceful use of the ballot. Furthermore, this represented the beginning of the acceptance of the Reich and state, as it existed, by the party. Since the party translated revolution into the successful triumph at the polls and thereby the winning of a parliamentary majority, the numerical increase in votes began to represent the sole yardstick of success for the party. Consequently, the party had to tailor its message to appeal to the widest audience possible, and at the time this meant to a non-proletarian one, specifically the peasantry and the petty-bourgeoisie. Here arose the dilemma of maintaining its working class base, through the espousal of working class politics, while at the same time, attempting to gain new votes that would not frighten them away,--and with the scare of the "red menace" and the labour revolution this was not easy. The SPD was determinedly attempting to bridge the classes; unfortunately for the party, this happened as the Depression grew more severe. With sections of the petty-bourgeoisie and bourgeoisie hurt by the crash of 1873, it was clear to the party leaders that a number of sympathetic votes could be gained. It was here that the source of the subordination of what was largely a
workingman's party to petty-bourgeois aims lies. To justify participation in what was essentially a powerless parliament in a semi-absolutist state it was necessary to create the fiction that the Reichstag was more powerful than it actually was, or to cease mentioning its condition. The logic of participation also compelled the party to justify Engels' complaint and appear all things to all voters. To overcome the basic problem of satisfying its base as well as attracting new votes, the party hit on the happy solution of designating ordinary democratic demands—which could easily be accommodated by the system as demonstrated by the USA and Switzerland—as "revolutionary" because it claimed that the bourgeoisie feared it. For example, the party leadership considered the demand of universal suffrage as revolutionary because the bourgeoisie "hated" and "feared" it "like the devil".\textsuperscript{59}

The electoral successes of the party and its visible growth in addition to the fact that it came to represent the opposition to the status quo meant that the party came to be popularly identified as a haven for the oppressed. It thereby acted as a magnet for cranks, scholars, inventors, and other disaffected individuals who sought in the party the recognition they could not win elsewhere. All of these
people--and their numbers in the party were augmented by
the large flow of declasse individuals into the party--
helped to increase the theoretical uncertainty in the party.
Mehring observed this and noted that the rapid growth of
its practical successes had made the party indifferent to
theory because it regarded such speculation and precision
as merely theoretical hair-splitting and somewhat irrelevant
to the main problem of continuing the numerical growth in
strength for the party. The party did not have standards
of admission; hence, it tended to accept uncritically anyone
who showed goodwill and offered some remedy to the sick body
politic. Furthermore, the party was consistently over-awed
by academic distinction and welcomed any academic into its
ranks in order to cement the alliance between those who
represented Science and the proletariat. 60

It was this theoretical weakness--a tendency to embrace
utopian socialism and other deviations--that led Engels to
tackle the problem in his famous Anti-Dühring.

...A rotten spirit is making itself felt in our Party
in Germany, no so much among the masses as among the
leaders (upper classes and 'workers'). The compromise
with the Lassallians has led to a compromise with
other halfway elements too: in Berlin (like Most) with
Dühring and his admirers, but also with a whole gang
of half-mature students and super-wise diplomaed
doctors who want to give socialism a 'higher idealistic'
orientation, that is to say, to replace its material-
istic basis (which demands serious objective study
from anyone who tries to use it) to modern mythology
with its goddesses of Justice, Liberty and Fraternity. 61
Dühring was perhaps the centre of a explicit non-Marxist socialist tendency in the party. He was an ex-professor of the University of Berlin, from which he had been ousted for his left-wing views (thus winning much sympathy in Berlin Social Democracy), and in the early seventies had won a considerable following in the party intellectual circles of Berlin. Rather a fanatic who insisted on his infallibility, he issued a torrent of books which at that time were reputed to be the latest word in socialism.62

Engels' answer or rather annihilation of Dühring, Anti-Dühring, was the most influential—since it was the first of the works of Marx and Engels that was to be widely read in the party—of what was to be a flood of fundamental texts on Marxism. Unfortunately, what was designed to be an introduction to further study of Marxism turned into the last word itself. The widespread dissemination of the book was to result in the over-dependence on it as a theoretical source to solve all the party's problems. Furthermore, the book was used to justify some of the party's reformist practices since in parts it analyzed Marxism in social-deterministic terms.63

The initial reception of the work revealed the depths to which the party had fallen in matters of theory. There was a hue and cry in the party objecting to the "tone" and
savagery of Engels criticism of Dühring. At the Gotha Congress of 1877 Engels narrowly missed condemnation. Hans Most had collected enough signatures to pass his resolution which declared that articles, (Anti-Dühring was serialized in the party paper), of the nature of Anti-Dühring were to be furthermore judged to be "without interest for the majority of the readers of Vorwärts" and not to be printed in the future. Bebel managed to prevent the worst from happening by a last minute compromise. A revealing aspect of the matter was that even among those who supported Engels in opposing Dühring, their point of disagreement was not in theoretical matters, but because Dühring had insulted Marx! Enraged at the attitude of the Congress, Engels observed to Liebknecht that the party leadership opposed scientific expositions of theory. Liebknecht disagreed by asserting that it was only a slender minority who felt this way; yet at the Congress it was Vahlteich who summed it up: "Among us there are neither Marxists nor Dühringites."
On October 21, 1878, Bismarck initiated legislation which outlawed the Social Democratic Party, its press and its organizations. The move was not unexpected since the 1870's had been characterized by increasing official repression and harassment. Bismarck first realized the danger of the movement from the days of the Commune and Bebel's stirring defense of it. The successful transformation of the party from a sect to a mass movement, the 1872 housing riots in Berlin, and the sharp upsurge of labour activity in the strikes of 1872-73, all caused the government to take the party's political intransigence and revolutionary rhetoric very seriously, and the government became convinced of the necessity of curbing a movement that was capable of capitalizing on the increased social misery and unrest engendered by the beginning of the "Great Depression."

In the period immediately following the passage of the law, hysteria reigned: hundreds of people were arrested for lese-majeste; rallies were broken up; the "small state of siege" was declared in a number of places, which banned scores of party members from certain cities and exiled many others; factories fired or refused to hire party members;
and there were boycotts and various counter-boycotts. In spite of the furor and although the law created hardship for many individuals, as a repressive measure, however, it was rather incomplete—a piece of bluff rather than genuine repression—since the law still allowed party candidates to be elected to the Reichstag.

The initial response of some of the party membership was to capitulate and formally dissolve the party—a course of action that was strenuously recommended by the deputy Geib, (who declared his incapability of fulfilling his mandate since he could not in good faith break the law), and by a formal declaration of the executive committee of Hamburg. The news of this caused such a storm of protest from the membership that the other leaders, who also were inclined to capitulate, reconsidered their position in favour of maintaining the existence of the party. It was true, as Mehring aptly observed, that in this situation the masses saved the day. 

The party leadership was aware that mass militancy had risen to such a pitch that violent outbreaks became possible, so they worked feverishly to quell the rising anger. For days, the following slogan was emblazoned on the masthead of the Vorwärts: 'Comrades! Do not let yourselves
be provoked! The reactionaries need riots in order to win their game!" Although to some degree the leadership was justified in its caution, nevertheless the militancy of the membership stood in significant contrast to the capitulationist politics of the leadership, who above all stressed the legality of the situation. They constantly urged the members to heed all the laws and reminded them that "our legality (Gesetznichkeit) will be the death of them." 71

This suggestion was made quite explicit by Liebknecht in a speech to the Reichstag on March 17, 1879. First he insisted on the absolutely law-abiding nature of the party.

We will obey the law, because we know that by our legality we will destroy the tranquility of the ruling system. When one Minister of Bonaparte said: 'La Legalite nous tue!' Legality will not kill us, it will kill our imperialistic blood-and-iron politics—that applies as well to Germany: we are going to continue within the law, because we know that we will triumph on the basis of our legality. 72

As if this did not go far enough to convince the government and public of the pacifistic and harmless nature of the party, he went so far as to state that the party was a "reform party in the strongest sense of the word" and that to "make" a revolution by force was "nonsense". Furthermore, the
party intended to remain within the limits of the law to finally eliminate the "foolish fear" of the bourgeoisie by proving that Social Democracy was not the "red bogey" (rotes Gespenst) that everyone thought it to be. 73

The speech was indicative not only of the fact that Liebknecht, with his grab-bag of liberal and Lassallian natural law concepts, was not a Marxist, but also more generally that there was pressure within the party for it to expand its base of support from the proletariat to the other classes. 74 The theme of eliminating the fear of the "red bogey"—associated with the Commune produced this—reoccurred constantly in the propaganda and tactical discussions of the party, and represented the party's desire to appear respectable and responsible to the rest of society. 75 Engels revealed the significance of the theme when he exposed it as the objective abandonment of what was left of the revolutionary stance of the party:

In order to relieve the bourgeoisie of the last trace of anxiety it must be clearly and convincingly proved to them that the Red Bogey is only a bogey, and does not exist. But what is the secret of the Red Bogey if it is not the bourgeoisie's dread of the inevitable life-and-death struggle between it and proletariat? Dread of the inevitable decision of the modern class struggle, and the bourgeoisie and "all independent people" will "not be afraid to go hand in hand with the proletariat". And the ones to be cheated will be precisely the proletariat. 76
The contrast between the militant membership and the capitulationist leadership was significant since a qualitative split developed for the first time between the two over matters of party policies and tactics and over the larger questions of the means necessary to achieve the revolution. The gap over these issues, especially the question of parliamentary participation, was to widen until a formal split threatened to divide the party by the mid-1880's. The question of parliamentary participation became crucial since the safety-valve of the elections, as allowed by the anti-socialist law, meant that it had paramount importance to the caucus, Fraktion, of parliamentary deputies, which for the first time had taken complete control over the direction of the party. The stress on parliamentary participation, however, clashed with the requirements of the leadership in maintaining its power, since its present position rested on it maintaining a revolutionary stance and granting radical action to a radicalized membership. It was difficult for the leadership to appease the largely proletarian membership and at the same time appeal to the non-proletarian majority, whose voting support, represented for the leadership the sole means to achieve the defeat of the exceptional law and the creation of the social revolution.
This problem was compounded by the changed relationship of the membership to the apparatus of the party. Before the anti-socialist law, mass participation in the movement and affairs of the party was passive, consisting largely of the exercise of the ballot. The outlawing of the party, along with its legal right to express its views, however, necessitated active participation by the membership of the party if the party was to survive at all. Mass participation manifested itself in the complex distribution system for the illegal press that was organized by Julius Motteler, the "Red Postman", and also in the organization of the election campaigns, because although Social Democrats could be elected they could not legally campaign; and so were forced to resort to illegal and often radical methods. This activity produced a closer and more vital relationship between the membership and the party, and it also produced a greater concern and interest in the inner workings and external direction of what the workers began to consider their own party. Since the membership felt responsible for the direction of the party, they were quick to protest against what they considered a weakening of the revolutionary stance of the party. This attitude produced a number of incidents between it and a leadership
that was more interested in playing down radical rhetoric and action in favour of reform and parliamentary tactics.

The first of these incidents occurred soon after the promulgation of the Exceptional Law in March 1879 when Max Kayser, a young Social Democratic deputy, took advantage of the party's disunity on economic questions to make a speech that supported Bismarck's proposed protective tariff. An immediate hue and cry arose protesting the speech since Kayser had broken one of the cardinal Social Democratic tenents which stipulated that "for this system not one penny."78.

Much of the protest originated in the exile press that had just been created—Karl Hirsch's Die Laterne in Paris and Hans Most's Die Freiheit in London.79 (Later, the party established its official organ Der Sozialdemokrat in Zurich). The exile press was radical and critical and in marked contrast to the "colourless" newspapers set up by various party members in a vain attempt to save the press equipment.80

It was Karl Hirsch's unceremonious and harsh attack on Kayser that fueled the controversy in the party. Bebel, as well as the party caucus, were thoroughly put off by Hirsch's "tone" although Bebel admitted that he did not
support Kayser. Marx and Engels, however, viewed the actions of Kayser as far more grievous and observed that Hirsch's tone was of practical necessity. When the editorship of Der Sozialdemokrat became vacant, they vigorously pressed for Hirsch's candidature to the job. This was opposed by other party members in Zurich, (C.A. Schramm, Dr. Hochburg, and Eduard Bernstein), who formed themselves into an ad-hoc committee, because Hirsch would not apologize for the attack. There was further pressure from Dr. Hochburg—a rich bourgeois who financed the paper as well as other publications and who wished the party to cease its revolutionary rhetoric and to become a populist reform party. After much wrangling, the Zurichers and Bebel got their way and appointed Eduard Bernstein to the position instead.

Bebel's behaviour in the incident is revealing in the manner in which he displayed his preference for appearance rather than substance, and that a rough, though true, criticism was far worse than the objective betrayal of the party's principles. He lamely attempted to defend Kayser's action to Engels by claiming that Kayser had made a particular study of the situation. Engels dismissed this
argument with the observation that when Kayser spoke in favour of the protective tariff, he should have known that Germany had two major steel foundaries so that in the final judgment "Kayser spoke in the interests of this ring (the steel monopoly of the two major foundaries), and when he voted for higher import duties he voted for their interests too." 85

In this issue, the response of the Fraktion was to close ranks and attack Hirsch; they reasoned that since they had given Kayser permission to speak for the Fraktion, (although a majority were not supporters of the protective tariff) Hirsch's criticism was therefore an oblique criticism of them. Their response was indicative of their increasing domination over the party and the growing importance of parliamentary participation. Marx commented on this when he observed that:

Parliamentary criticism has already eaten so thoroughly in their bones that they imagine themselves above criticism and condemn it indignantly as though it were lese-majeste. 86

Another controversy followed this issue, and it was a barely concealed proposal to turn the party into a form of progressive party. It was the famous Dreisterne article in the newly formed Jahrbuch für Sozialwissenschaft und Geschichte edited and financed by Dr. Hochburg. 87 The argument and
conclusion of the article was that the party brought the anti-Socialist laws upon itself through the frequent and indiscriminate use of revolutionary phrases and observations, which gained the party the false reputation of advocating a bloody revolution. It observed that since the party had made the greatest advances through participation in strikes and parliament, activities which had realizable goals, the party should profit from this insight and base its entire program and propaganda on essentially reformist and realizeable goals rather than ones of a beautiful but distant and nebulous future. The party, therefore, should abandon its rhetoric of revolution and talk of the future socialist state and concentrate on the present, for "what is the point of printing maps of the future, when one has not studied the streets of the present?" It criticized the practice of J. B. von Schweitzer because he caused the Lassallian party "to conduct itself in the most one-sided way as a worker's party". If the party was to attract "everyone imbued with a true love of humanity" then it should learn "tact" and "good manners". The party needed to gain the "adherents from the educated and propertied classes" because the workers did not have the education or the experience to represent themselves in the Reichstag. The article argued that the
party should shift its stress from a workers' party to one which embraced all classes.

Please understand us, we are not advocating the abandonment of our programme and party; rather we are saying that for the next few years, we have to make a maximum effort to merely achieve a few of the practical goals that lie near, and this has to be accomplished before we can even think of beginning to work on our distant goals. For a few of these demands we already have a great number of educated and well-meaning individuals willing to support us; however, if we insist on presenting definite theoretical formulations (on the imminent collapse of capitalism) as the elections, and also expectantly await them, then we cannot expect these people, as well as many thousands of petty-bourgeois and workers to join us, because these far reaching formulations... will have frightened all of these people away. 90

The authors then observed that the party should grasp the golden opportunity offered by this period since socialist ideas were permeating the upper classes to such a degree that not even Bismarck was immune to them. This upper strata could be won, if the party "cultivated good taste" and "learned good manners", and if the party was "more quiet, objective and well-considered" about its proposals for change and reform, and a repetition of the anti-Socialist laws could be avoided. Above all, with such behaviour the old Red Bogy would be eliminated from the minds of the bourgeoisie. The article concluded by challenging the
traditional practice of honouring the memory of the Commune by contending that it was unclear whether the actions of the Communards could be justified, and that it would be better to forget about it since it was one of the major sources of the red bogey. 91

Even though the article was resoundingly attacked from within the party, it was representative of the increasing pressure within the party to be reformist and populist not only in practice but also in word and name. The article was a reaction against the past party policy of political impotence and social isolation as well as its rhetorical intransigence.

For Marx and Engels, the article was the last straw, and they issued a joint letter, (called the "Circular Letter"), to Bracke, Bebel, Liebknecht and other leaders. It condemned the Dreisterne article and the right-ward petty-bourgeois populist drift of the party:

There you have the programme of the three censors of Zurich. In clarity it leaves nothing to be desired. Least of all to us, who are very familiar with the whole of this phraseology from the 1848 days. It is the representatives of the petty-bourgeoisie who are here presenting themselves, full of anxiety that the proletariat, under the pressure of its revolutionary position, may 'go too far'. Instead of decided political opposition, general compromise; instead of the struggle against
the government and the bourgeoisie, an attempt
to win and to persuade; instead of defiant resistance
to ill-treatment from above, a humble submission and
an confession that the punishment was deserved.
Historically necessary conflicts are all reinterpreted
as misunderstandings, and all discussion ends with the
reassurance that after all we are all agreed on the
main point. The people who came out as bourgeois
democrats in 1848 could just as well call themselves
social-democrats now. To them the democratic republic
was unattainably remote, and to these people the
overthrow of the capitalist system is equally remote,
and therefore had absolutely no significance for
practical present day politics; one can only mediate,
compromise and philantrophize to one's heart's content.
It is just the same with the class struggle between
proletariat and bourgeoisie. It is recognized on
paper because its existence can no longer be denied,
but in practice it is hushed up, diluted, attenuated. 92

The response of the leadership to the Dreisterne
article was that they did not see anything wrong with it.
Most of them, especially Ignaz Auer and Wilhelm Blos, felt
that Marx and Engels exaggerated the importance and significance
of it, as well as mis-representing the character of Dr.
Hochburg. 93 Yet, it was Auer and Blos who especially fit the
picture of the new party as proposed by the article; Blos
considered revolutionary phrases and rhetoric "tasteless",
and Auer felt that the party of "pure" revolution was even
less desirable than the worst despotism. 94 As usual, the
criticism was quietly ignored--because it was felt that
Marx and Engels could not understand the actual situation
in Germany because of their residence in England. This
excuse had a long history as it was used repeatedly whenever the party did not welcome the criticism of Marx and Engels, who usually demanded a more zealous prosecution of the class struggle.

Although a form of Marxism—the Kautsky mixture of Darwinism and economic determinism was beginning to take root in this period—was being prompted with the wide circulation of Anti-Dühring, Lassallian doctrines still held undisputed sway over the party. A good example of Lassallian thought was a major article by Auer in the first issue of Der Sozialdemokrat, (published in exile in Zurich, Switzerland on September 28, 1879), in which he outlined the tactical position of the paper. In the article, he echoed Lassalle's injunction against the "making" of a revolution, and declared that the party was "revolutionary" in the "truest and best sense of the word" because of its concentration on winning elections and relying on historical determinism to provide the party's ultimate victory.95

These thoughts were echoed at the end of the year (1879) by a published declaration of the parliamentary Fraktion, (it was signed by Bebel, Liebknecht and other deputies), which appeared in the second, third, and fourth editions of the Sozial-Demokrat. Called the "Rechenschaftsbericht", it repeated oft-criticized errors when
it insisted on dividing the country into two groups--
the party of the privileged or the "reactionary minority"
and the party of "equality, justice, brotherhood, and peace"
of the "socialist majority".96 It vigorously denied its
reputation of being a "party of upheaval" or party of "force",
and again trotted out the familiar Lassallian line on the im-
possibility of "making a revolution". Then, the article
launched into a classic statement of social determinism.

We do not have to topple the system of Bismarck.
We will allow it to topple itself! The system
must destroy itself through its own efforts and
characteristics. We do not have to destroy the
present state, since it will destroy itself, or
better stated: everything that is old and useless
dies--and is replaced by a newer and higher form.
State and society, composed to develop further
unabatedly, grow with the necessity of nature into
socialism.97

This declaration was written in order to allay the fear
that the party was one of bloody revolution--
it specifically mentioned reports in the American Social
Democratic press that had the party rioting in the streets
and declaring a republic in Saxony, and to reassure the party
faithful in the eventual triumph of the social revolution.98

It also provided the clearest indicator of the prevailing
political consciousness of the party leadership which
revealed the persistence of a petty-bourgeois ideology of
social reformism, populism, and determinism. Furthermore, not only was the declaration completely devoid of Marxist thinking in any form, but it also showed the little effect that years of criticism and instruction of Marx and Engels had had on the party.


3. Marx to Engels, August 17, 1870, MEW, vol. 33, p. 43


5. Conze und Groh, Die Arbeiterbewegung, p. 91


12. Schmierer, Von der Arbeiterbildung, p. 163.


15. Hochverratsprozess, pp. 88-89.


17. Hochverratsprozess, p. 41

18. Ibid., p. 104.

19. Ibid., p. 210

20. Ibid., pp. 389, 41
21. Ibid., p. 12.
22. Ibid., p. 412.
23. Ibid., p. 146-47.
24. Ibid., p. 69.
25. Ibid., p. 453.
26. Ibid., p. 40.

27. Zinoviev completely misunderstood the role of Bebel and Liebknecht in 1870/71 and even more so in his judgement of the Hochverratsprozess. "If one reads the protocols of the High Treason Trial where Socialists come out the best, one is left with the thought that to be a socialist in those days was wonderful." Der Krieg und die Krise, p. 92. I can not believe that he had read the protocols carefully. This also represents one of the sources of the myth that the early days of the party were revolutionary.

32. Marx to Sorge, April 4, 1874.
35. Eduard Bernstein, Sozialdemokratische Lehrjahre, Berlin, 1928, p. 46.

37. For the text of the programme see the epilogue of Lidtke, The Outlawed Party.


39. Ibid., p. 21.

40. Ibid., p. 23.

41. Ibid., p. 24.

42. Ibid., pp. 25-26.

43. Engels to Bracke, October 10, 1875, quoted in Leonard, Bracke, p. 82.

44. Marx, Critique of the Gotha Programme, pp. 18-19.

45. Engels to Bebel, October 20, 1882, Bebel Engels Briefwechsel, p. 136-137.

46. Mehring, Geschichte, p. 449.


48. Bebel to Engels, September 21, 1875, Bebel Engels Briefwechsel, p. 36.


51. SED Geschichte, Vol.1, p. 73.

52. Hans Rosenberg, Grosse Depression, pp. 29, 50.


55. *MEW*, vol. 16, p. 65.


60. Mehring, *Karl Marx*, p. 54.


67. There is a good description of the turmoil in Auer, *Nach Zehn Jahren*, pp. 69-82.


71. Auer, Nach Zehn Jahren, p. 84.

72. Schulz, die deutsche Arbeiterbewegung 1848-1919, p. 228.

73. Ibid.

74. Jürgen Habermas, Politica, p. 54.

75. This originated with the Commune and the international hysteria greeting the International.


77. Brandis, Die Sozialdemokratie, p. 50.


83. Bebel defended Hochberg in a letter to Engels, Aus Meinem Leben, p. 61. For information on Hochburg, see Karl Kautsky, Errinnerungen und Erörterungen, s'Gravenhage, 1960, p. 414, and Eduard Bernstein, My Years of Exile, London, 1921, Chapter 4.

84. For a full account of this affair see Horst Bartel, Marx und Engels, pp. 33-34.

85. Mehring, Karl Marx, p. 132.

86. Marx to Sorge, September 19, 1879, MEW, vol. 34, pp. 413-414.

88. Ibid., p. 84.

89. Ibid., p. 85.

90. Ibid., p. 88.

91. Ibid., pp. 94-95.


94. Auer, Nach Zehn Jahren, p. 103.

95. Ibid.


97. Ibid., p. 558.

98. Ibid., p. 554.
CHAPTER THREE

Although the "Rechenschaftbericht" was roundly denounced, nevertheless, the sentiments that lay behind it were growing within the party. Compromise was clearly in the air, as the removal of the anti-socialist laws quickly became the main goal of the party. During the period of the laws (1878-1890), numerous incidents occurred which revealed the party's tendency towards accommodation with the system. Indeed, the spirit of compromise and accommodation was shared by virtually the entire leadership from the growing right-wing to those who professed to be the followers of Marx. Since the elections of 1881 showed that the party was going to survive, if not grow, in spite of the laws, the leaders seized on the electoral tactic as the sole means of eliminating the restrictive laws. Liebknecht revealed the reasoning behind this conclusion in an illuminating article on parliamentarism. He admitted that the Reichstag was powerless and that parliamentary activity would not accomplish the goals of the movement, but because the government possessed all the power and weapons, the party had no choice but to participate in the electoral process. The problem, however, remained as to how the
movement was to achieve its aims of establishing the social republic. Liebknecht's answer to that was simplicity itself—nothing had to be done because the social and economic forces of capitalism would accomplish the destruction of capitalism by themselves; he frequently reiterated this deterministic view with his observations to the effect that Bismarck was doing the work of socialism. Although Liebknecht introduced this view, it was left to Karl Kautsky to refine and polish it so that the party had a theoretical explanation to justify its otherwise inactive and impotent social role.

The affair of Max Kayser and the creation of the revisionist Die Zukunft was already evidence of the party's drift, but it was the actions of Liebknecht and Bebel, who was becoming the major proponent of Marxism as well as the leading figure in the party, that most emphasized it. In Liebknecht's case, he violated the most sacred of the party's traditions—which was the policy of non-cooperation with the system that was typified by the slogan, "for this system, not one penny"—by swearing allegiance to the King of Saxony when he was elected to the provincial parliament. Even though he dismissed the oath as a "mere formality", nonetheless, the action aroused a storm of protest from the rank and
file. Similarly, the rank and file protested when Bebel made a nationalistic speech in the Reichstag claiming that Social Democrats were as ready as any German to defend and die for the fatherland.

The pressure of the anti-socialist laws furthered the increasing division of the party into two separate groups: one explicitly stressing parliamentarism and reformism, and the other implicitly stressing the same but maintaining publicly a stance of resistance and non-cooperation. The party began to be pulled asunder by the agitation and pressure from the extremes of the two wings. The division between the Fraktion and the rank and file has already been mentioned, but it must be noted that the Fraktion's response to both the left tendency of mass Social Democracy and the strident tirades of Most's Freiheit was to create its own newspaper, Der Sozialdemokrat, which specifically was created to reflect the views of responsible Social Democracy, especially its own. Unfortunately for the Fraktion, this was not to occur as the compromise editors Eduard Bernstein and Karl Kautsky, who both were under the influence of Marx and Engels, soon developed a radical critical stance for the paper. The Fraktion increasingly took issue with the paper especially when it dared to criticize it or its opportunistic tactics.
A full-blown dispute finally occurred in 1882 around the paper which revealed both the deepening division within the party and how far a good portion of the party leadership, especially those in the Fraktion, had moved to the position of becoming explicitly a formal reformist party of the opposition. Since the Sozialdemokrat had grown increasingly militant in its rhetoric, one of the Reichstag deputies, Wilhelm Blos, a member of the extreme rightwing of the party, chose to disavow the paper. His remarks revealed the beginning of a positive antipathy to radicalism.

My voters have not sent me to Berlin in order to defend articles that quite openly advocate the death blow (of capitalism), but rather they have sent me to participate in legislation and to promote the Social Democratic programme. I do not have anything against those who use forceful revolutionary phrases; I simply find them tasteless...6

This, of course, was a clear statement of parliamentary responsibility and therefore, Blos explicitly declared his agreement with the system as it stood as well as repudiating the revolutionary tradition of the party. The Sozialdemokrat immediately attacked this view, thereby prompting a counterattack from Fraktion members sympathetic to Blos' view. The attack on the paper elicited widespread support for the paper from party locals across Germany; typical was the statement issued by the Barmen "comrades" who summed up the mass
sentiment in the party. They disagreed with Blos' argument that "his" voters had sent him to Berlin to represent them by participating in legislation; rather they stated that the voters had sent him to Berlin for "propagandistic and agitatorial reasons" to symbolize their protest of the present "class rule". They rejected parliament as a "tribune" to radicalize the people.  

Although the Blos position was the most explicit yet of social reformism and was a forerunner of the Revisionist controversy of the later 1890's, not all the pressure for the party to change came from the right-wing, as there was also activity in the extreme left of the party. Most noteworthy was Hans Most, who had fled to London and was attacking the opportunism of the party from an increasingly anarchist position. A close ally was Wilhelm Hasenclever, a deputy in the Reichstag, who in 1880 shocked the Reichstag as well as the party by giving a furious denunciation of Bismarck as a "bandit" and a declaration of imminent and bloody class conflict. Later, he again shocked all with support of the Russian revolutionaries' campaign of assassination, and at a third reading of the anti-socialist laws' renewal in 1880 he declared that "the time of parliamentary blathering is over, and the time of action has arrived." The significance of Hasenclever and above all Most was that they fashioned the
charge that the party had slipped into opportunism and therefore was betraying its revolutionary past and origins; thus here was further affirmation of the myth. Significantly, in its response the party did not challenge the assumption of the party's revolutionary origins--with the result that the myth stood--but rather disavowed the statements and later at a secret congress in Wyden it purged the two.

The response of Marx and Engels to both wings gave perspective to the squabbling and counter-charges of all concerned: while they denounced Most and Hasenclever as left-adventurists, nevertheless, they admitted the justice of many of their charges. The letters of Marx and Engels were full of complaints of the "philistinism" and opportunism of most of the Fraktion. After the acts of opportunism began to multiply, it was common for Engels to complain that the latest acts were simply "more water for Most's mill." Marx summed up their position on Most by observing that:

Our disagreement with Most is in no way similar to the Zurchers...our criticism of Most is not that his paper, Freiheit, is too revolutionary; rather we criticize it because it has no revolutionary content, and instead deals only in revolutionary slogans. We do not criticize him because he criticizes the leaders, but rather because he insists on public scandal, instead of first criticizing them privately...
Their view stood in contrast to the party leaders who clearly deplored the criticism of their moves and who considered the position of Most as too revolutionary.

Another manifestation of left-wing sentiment occurred with a series of articles in the *Sozialdemokrat* written by Georg von Vollmar in 1882. The articles attacked the right-wing of the party and contended that there was a growing distance between the movement and the rest of society. The party had to become militant in its denunciations of the anti-socialist laws and the government that produced such a law. Far too often, he argued, the party tended to regard socialism only in theoretical terms and did not deal or act on it in reality. He concluded with almost a declaration of war against capitalist society.

Yes! We are enemies of your wealth, your honour, your religion, and your whole order... Yes! We will meet your force with force of our own! ...You have called the question of power, and we will meet your challenge. One day in the near future we will meet in combat, and the victor will then make the laws.12

Needless to say, there was general consternation among the more parliamentary-minded leaders of the party. Even Bebel disliked it: while he argued that it was "well-written and correct in principle", nonetheless, it was "false tactically". He feared that it would cause a tightening of the anti-socialist laws and moreover, that Vollmar's
speech implied a return to a struggle in the streets and this the party neither supported nor desired. In contrast, Engels rather liked this aspect of Vollmar's articles.) While Bebel's objections were valid to a degree, still again he was far more worried about appearance, since such a radical stance might scare some voters away.

By this time, it was clear that the "Marxists" of the party, Bebel, Kautsky, and Bernstein, were far more worried about the miniscule left in the party than the massive presence of the right-wing. This was apparent in their letters to Marx and Engels which either downplayed the actions of the right or apologized for and excused them. This was not surprising since many times they privately disagreed with the criticisms of the pair in London and tended to either agree with the parliamentary tactics of the right or feel that Marx and Engels were making too much fuss over something they considered a minor violation of principle. Engels accepted much of their explanation because he trusted that the masses would soon right the situation, but unfortunately, it appeared that he overestimated both the contemporary popular consciousness of the workers and the depth of Marxist understanding in Bebel, Kautsky, and Bernstein.
On the whole, Engels appreciated the Vollmar articles, especially the initial one which criticized the Fraktion, but he grew critical of the later articles, which degenerated into emotional expectations of cataclysm and which developed a crude analysis of the collapse of society in which the idea of the reactionary mass played a part.14 By this time, Engels, as well as Bebel, expected the party to split formally. While Engels openly welcomed such a development since it would purge the party of the corrupting influence of Lassallianism and parliamentary opportunism—in his letters he gave tactical suggestions, such as the seizing of the press, in the event of the split—Bebel, on the other hand, certainly did not favour or welcome such a split.15

By 1882, foreign criticism by exiles of party opportunism, the rancorous disputes, and the looming split finally necessitated a secret party Congress that was held in Wyden, Switzerland. The Congress dealt with many of the problems that were vexing the party, such as the lack of a tariff policy, the accusations of Most and Hasselmann, and the status of the party itself. Since the delegates that supported Most and Hasenclever were only three out of 56 delegates, the Congress made short shrift of the four motions
of censure, which were: Kayser's support for the protective tariff; Bebel's speech that asserted that Social Democrats were patriotic; Hasenclever's denunciation in the Reichstag; and Liebknecht's oath of allegiance in the Saxon parliament. The Congress rejected all the motions except the one against Hasenclever, and then they dealt with Hasenclever and Most and their accusations by simply purging them. 15 It was decided to solve the issue of tariff policy by dismissing it as an internal bourgeois matter. 16

The most spectacular decision to come out of the Wyden Congress was the decision to strike the word "legal" from the Gotha Programme so that the party could realize its goals "by all means" including, therefore, illegal ones. 17 This decision gave the party a greater reputation for being revolutionary--it became an oft-cited example of the revolutionary nature of the party--than it actually deserved. The move was not evidence of a significant shift leftward, because it simply reflected what the situation required since the party realized that it would have to indulge in some illegal activity, essentially in the distribution of the outlawed press. Indeed, the party emphasized that the change was little more than semantic, and this was quite apparent in the resolution, which stressed that the movement had not forsaken the traditional "path of organic reforms." 18
The last view was important to the party as the question of illegality and the use of force was an oft-repeated theme of the party spokesmen. The party took great pains to declare their peaceful intentions since it did not wish to scare voters away. The most notable example of this was Bebel's speech during the final reading of the renewal of the anti-Socialist law in 1881. He denied that the party strove or wished for a revolution by force—the question of whether or not force was to be used was entirely the other side's decision. The party could not be responsible for the forces that would be released by the economic and social manifestations of capitalism.\textsuperscript{19} Here Bebel mirrored the economic fatalism of Lassalle's definition of revolution since Lassalle considered the question of the use of force as subordinate because it would be determined by the opponents of social change. On the whole, the party spokesmen emphasized the peaceful and non-violent nature of the party, and whenever possible disavowed the use of force. Liebknecht summed up the party's stand on force by observing that "...we are principled opponents of putsches and other acts of force, which have no place in a civilized country such as Germany." From Lassalle to Bebel and Liebknecht there was a tendency in the party to regard the use of force as negative and not positive. The
revolutionary position should have been to regard the use of force as the expression of the will of the proletariat in carrying out its historical mission. Marx certainly never ruled out force, indeed in the Communist Manifesto he specifically comments on its necessity, and in 1848 he wrote that "the only way to shorten the murderous death tendencies of the old system...was revolutionary terrorism."\textsuperscript{20}

The Wyden Congress was not altogether successful in healing the wounds of the party as was apparent by the unabated feuding between the radical and moderate wings of the party. Shortly after Wyden, the dispute between the Fraktion and the Sozialdemokrat necessitated a further meeting at Zurich in August 1882. There the Fraktion led by Geiser and Blos attempted to gain control of the paper in order to stifle its criticism.\textsuperscript{21} Bebel and others managed to defeat this attempt, but inspite of Bebel's feeling that Zurich had finally managed to clear the air, the essential dispute between the critical newspaper and the reformist Fraktion was far from being resolved. The conference showed how deeply rooted explicit reformism now was, since it was far easier to openly disdain the desirability of revolutionary upheaval than ever before. Lassallian doctrines were just as popular as ever, as Eduard
Bernstein was the only one to oppose the reprinting of popular Lassallian pamphlets and brochures. He felt that the continued influence of Lassalle had much to do with the strong inclination of the party to support Bismarck's proposed social legislation, in spite of the traditional negative stand. 22

The conference at Zurich revealed the difficulties that the party was experiencing. Because the anti-Socialist law prevented open debate and more significantly, made participation of the rank and file in decision-making almost impossible, it meant that the Fraktion was successful in taking over the reins of the party; this, however, led to theoretical uncertainty because the leadership became increasingly removed from those whom it was leading. This was made quite apparent by the theoretical weakness and confusion surrounding the creation of a party position on state socialism.

To be sure, the party's position on state socialism had been uncertain as far back as 1877, but Bismarck's carrot-and-stick approach to the social question and the working class had compounded the difficulty in arriving at a firm position. The difficulty lay most in the leadership's
ambiguous attitude towards the state; yet its inclination was to welcome social transformation that emanated from the state because of the Lassallian heritage of the glorification of the state, in addition to the influence of popular expositions of Marxism, such as Schaeffle's *Quintessence of Socialism*, which reduced Marxism to state socialism by omitting its revolutionary implications. However, they could not ignore the reality of Bismarck's repressive moves against the party. The party's dilemma was obvious in its response to the Social Insurance Laws of 1880-81. The party worked energetically in the Plenum to make the bill as attractive as possible to the workers, but when the bill came up for approval they voted against it "out of principle". This was a pattern which occurred with other bills because the party wanted to reform the system while at the same time maintaining their traditional total opposition to it.

There was a definite tendency to regard every intervention of the state in the arena of free competition, such as the creation of state-controlled monopolies in the railways and the tobacco industry, as the beginnings of socialism. Liebknecht explicitly stated this when he observed that the "significance of the state socialist proposals of the Prussian government was that they meant..."
the socialist organization of society." 26 Von Vollmar echoed this view when he argued that the monopoly would aid the workers, harm the bourgeoisie, and smooth the way morally and economically for the socialists. Other radicals, such as Kautsky, Bernstein, and even the astute Bracke, initially supported state socialism. 27 Engels, however, soon righted the situation with a series of withering letters which condemned the inclination to view all forms of state intervention in free enterprise as a form of socialism.

If we develop a theory on the basis of this belief our theory will collapse together with its premises upon the simple proof that this alleged socialism is nothing but, on the one hand, feudal reaction and, on the other, a pretext of squeezing out of money, with the subordinate intention of converting as many proletarians as possible into officials and pensioners dependent upon the state, or organizing alongside of the disciplined army of soldiers and civil officials a similar army of workers. Pressure on voters exercised by superiors in the state apparatus instead of factory overseers--a fine sort of socialism! But that's where you get it if you believe themselves, but only pretend to believe: that the state means socialism... 28

The angry letters of Engels and the energetic efforts of Bernstein, Kautsky, and Bebel, of course, did not stem the tide of overt reformism; indeed, if anything, the situation in the party became exacerbated. What was emerging though was the development of a dogmatic view of Marxism that
was challenging the hitherto dominant doctrines of Lassalle. At first during the early 1860's the defenders of this form of Marxism were isolated from the main-stream of their party; but eventually due to the central position of Bebel and the energetic pen of Karl Kautsky, who became the editor of *Die Neue Zeit*, the influential theoretical journal, the party was to acquire this form of Marxism as its official policy. At this time, the letters of Karl Kautsky already revealed the genesis of his future role as the defender of what was later known as "orthodox Marxism". The new view was developing out of the two major intellectual influences of the time, the evolutionary theories of Darwin and the revolutionary theory of Marx, and it was Kautsky who was chiefly responsible for the construction of a theoretical system which combined the two. The result was the merger of social determinism or social Darwinism with a "Marxism" that was reduced to economic fatalism by the removal of the revolutionary dialectic of the class struggle; so that significantly, the conscious struggle of the proletariat was replaced by parliamentary activity and a blind faith in the future. The vulgarization of Marxism, especially by Kautsky and Bebel, meant that the science of Marxism was corrupted into a dogma in which expectations of a total collapse, (*Zusammenbrucherwartungen*).
played the most prominent part. In this period Kautsky began to formulate the tactics of "passive Zukunftserwartungen", which consisted of little more than the party being ready to take over when the socio-economic forces caused the sudden and complete collapse of capitalist society. Kautsky explained it thus:

We are not searching for means to bring about the revolution, but rather we are convinced that we see the signs of its coming... out of these grounds (economic reasons) we await the coming of an upheaval in the state. But we do not leave it at that, keeping all our eggs in one basket, so therefore, we discourage attempts to provoke revolutions... That the revolution has not occurred (in certain expected situations) does not mean that the masses have lost hope in it occurring. It simply means that the situation is again filled with new expectations of revolution.31

In spite of the theoretical vigilance of Engels—although it must be noted that Anti-Dühring encouraged the marriage of Darwin and Marx—the Kautskian view found its formal expression in the protocol of the party Congress in Kopenhagen in 1883:

We are not a parliamentary party—and we do not send our deputies to the various bodies to parlay—but we are not makers of revolutions. German Social Democracy is proud of its great master Marx, who would have nothing either of parliamentarism or of the making of revolutions. We are a revolutionary party, our aim is a revolutionary one, and we permit ourselves no illusions about its
accomplishment by parliamentary means. But we also know that the manner in which it will be achieved, depends not upon us, that we cannot make the conditions under which we fight, but that we have to study those conditions and we know that our task in conjunction with this knowledge consists simply in acting according to what we know.32

The Congress was characterized by strident feuding between the two wings: Bebel charged Geiser with not being true to the party programme; and von Vollmar accused Bios of practicing "pure parliamentarism". 34 Even so, the concrete result of the Congress was to place a definite emphasis on parliamentarism as it decided that the Fraktion would lead the next campaign, and it was the preparation for the election which occupied most of the Congress.

The tide of reformism became stronger in 1883 and 1884, as was revealed by the Fraktion's initial favourable reaction to Bismarck's "right to employment" schemes. It appeared that many of the deputies clearly preferred a role of philanthropy to that of a socialist and revolutionary party. The deputy Geiser reflected this in a speech to the Reichstag when he asserted that Bismarck's "right to employment" was a "furthering of the social revolution".34
The election of 1884 represented a significant turning point for the party, since its impressive victory signified the beginning of its transformation from a protest movement to that of a parliamentary party of the opposition. The transformation already was reflected in the party's electoral campaign, although the change was not so much in the familiar list of radical-democratic demands—a progressive income tax, equal rights for women, a forty-hour week, a popular militia, and the right to referendum and recall—which remained unchanged since the 1860's. Rather the change lay in the party's decision to portray itself as a responsible, peaceful, and law-abiding parliamentary party. This was quite apparent in the campaign literature which claimed that "universal suffrage is the sole means through which the people can realize their demands." If Germany had "true" freedom of suffrage then,

the vote could be represented as the legitimate expression of the people's will and the highest law, and no longer would there be a barrier to the peaceful solution of the social question and consequently the "bogeyman" (Schreckgespenst) of social revolution would be banished by that of social reform.35
Finally, the goal of the party was declared as simply being "the bettering of all social and political conditions. Everything else is secondary."  

These statements clearly revealed the party's definite commitment to parliamentary democracy in the form as it existed in bourgeois countries, and moreover represented its willingness to repudiate social revolution in favour of social reform. These statements were explicable since the most immediate and important aim of the party was the elimination of the anti-Socialist laws. The same reason applied when the party went one step further towards reformism by offering to support any non-party candidate in the run-off elections who agreed to a minimal programme. This programme did not have one positive socialist demand, but instead consisted of negative and liberal-oriented points. For instance, a candidate could have enjoyed the support of the party if he agreed to vote against: the extension of the anti-Socialist laws; the limiting of universal suffrage; the lengthening of the life of the legislature; a worker report card; and new taxes and tariffs on the necessities of life.  

Both this position and the results of the election led Engels to believe that the right-wing of the party had become strengthened. He feared that over-emphasis on removal of the laws had prompted the party to disavow its
revolutionary intentions in order to effect a compromise on the law. To this effect he cited the nature of the party's campaign, especially the proposed minimal programme of support for non-Socialist candidates. Again, he predicted the necessity and inevitability of a split. 38

Characteristically, August Bebel played his usual role of mediating between the two views of the party. To Engels, he claimed that his fears had no grounds and that the entire party was united in its determination not to bend or compromise under the anti-Socialist laws. Indeed, the party was moving forward in a more "determined and decisive" way. 39 Here he denied the obvious to Engels, and it was in a false assessment of Bebel's revolutionary character that part of the foundation of the myth of the revolutionary nature of the party arose. Engels, as well as later Communists, misjudged the essence of Bebel's concept of revolution. For example, in Engels' letter of 1884 to Bebel expressing his fears about the right-wing drift of the party, 40 he assumed that these opportunist tendencies happened in spite of Bebel while, in fact, Bebel was the very creator of those tactics. 41 This role was apparent right from the beginning of the period of the anti-Socialist laws since Bebel consistently stressed the need to placate
popular fears of Social Democracy as a prerequisite to the removal of those laws. It was for this reason that he gave his patriotic speech of 1880.

Even though his position had much in common with the reformist wing, Bebel managed to place himself in the middle between the right-wing and the left-wing (initially represented by Most), and this was the origin of the later position of the center "orthodox Marxist" that he and Kautsky fashioned in between the left of Rosa Luxemburg and the right of the Revisionists.

The entire electoral campaign revealed the party's willingness to conciliate, compromise and in short, behave in a traditional parliamentary fashion. Furthermore, the enormous success that the party enjoyed at the polls had the effect of concretizing the drift towards reformism. This was because the party's newly-won twenty-four seats meant that it now was a formal Fraktion, therefore entitling it to initiate legislation. Since the party could now participate in the committees that fashioned legislation, the victory led the party to remove the emphasis from using parliament as a "tribunal" to actively participating in legislation. Indeed, the value of parliament to the party rose proportionally to the increasing role and weight the party enjoyed in it. This was evident in a statement of the party after the election for the run-off elections:
...So how you vote for the Reichstag will determine the kind of Reichstag that you get. The voting ballot will be the ticket that will bend the state to your wishes and that will compel it to heed your hopes and needs. You are in the truest sense of the word masters of your destiny. Do not say 'those above are doing what they want; they don't pay any attention to the Reichstag'. This is false. Universal and equal suffrage has made the poorest and the lowest equal to anyone.42

This statement demonstrated the lengths to which the party leaders were willing to go in order to quiet popular fears about the party. Not only were they willing to discard the Marxist concept of the state and embrace the Bourgeois ideal of parliament, but here they made a significant step towards accepting the powerless Reichstag as it existed. In contrast to this position was Lenin's observation on the role of a revolutionary party in parliament:

We must fight in a revolutionary way for a parliament, but not in a parliamentary way for a revolution; we must fight in a revolutionary way for a strong parliament, and not in an impotent 'parliament' for a revolution.43

The growing crisis within the party finally came to a head around an issue that was to signify a new era for Germany--the issue of colonialism and imperialism.44 On May 23, 1884 the government proposed a subsidy for a proposed private steamship line connecting certain points
in the south Pacific. At the first debate on the question, the party remained quiet but soon it became obvious that within the Fraktion a majority supported it. By the end of the year it was clear from their first public statement, which viewed the matter as one of "practicality" rather than "principle", that the question of how the Fraktion would vote on the question was left open. Behind the scenes though there was a stormy debate within the Fraktion how it would vote. A majority of eighteen, (among them Auer, Blos, Singer, Grillenberg), insisted that they were going to vote for it while a minority of six, (Bebel, Liebknecht, von Vollmar), severely criticized the majority. After three days of wrangling, it was decided to allow each deputy to vote according to his conscience since the issue could not be resolved. In the Reichstag debate of March, 1884 the party presented a list of conditions to their acceptance of the subsidy, which stressed that the ships be new and built in Germany. When Bismarck rejected this the entire party voted against the subsidy.46

From the moment that the news of the split within the Fraktion came out, the party became embroiled in a crisis which threatened to split it. The opening shots were made by the deputy Dietz in an article in one of the "colourless" newspapers--(they were still legal and in the
hands of the right-wing). He argued rather nationalistically that support for the subsidy was necessary as otherwise the Germans would lose distant markets to France and England. Moreover, he employed a distinctly Lassallian argument by maintaining that the party should support the state when it attempted to regulate industry and consumption by encouraging manufacture and employment. This view, which appeared in other "colourless" newspapers signed by other right-wingers, soon fell under the attack of the Sozialdemokrat as it began to vigorously oppose the subsidy.47

The Sozialdemokrat's attack on the supporters of the subsidy was spurred in part by August Bebel, who felt that only external pressure on the Fraktion by the rest of the party could bring the supporters, whom he felt had forgotten their "proletarian origins", to reason. As soon as the internal vote for support came to light, the Sozialdemokrat criticized the decision as violating both the Wyden and Copenhagen resolutions not to take positions on matters that were purely bourgeois.48 Its major criticism was directed against the Fraktion openly supporting what amounted to colonialism. Liebknecht attempted to defuse the dispute by arguing that the debate was over a procedural matter and
not one of principle— all of which had the effect of confusing the issue and postponing a necessary debate on where the party stood on principle and theory. The majority of the Fraktion refused to connect the subsidy with colonialism and instead argued that their support rested on practical and idealistic grounds: the subsidy was an instrument of peace; it would be the "carrier of civilization"; and it would provide many working-class jobs, especially in the hard-hit ship-building industry. Auer's response was typical, "...in this I see a means to promote the exchange of goods among the people of the world, to increase trade and thereby to strengthen the world of peace." The initial response of the majority of the Fraktion showed the extent to which reformism had permeated the party leadership since many no longer made even a perfunctory acknowledgement of the necessity for revolution; furthermore, their action, considering that this was a time of severe government repression, revealed the readiness of most leaders not only to cooperate with the regime but to tacitly support it.

Although the specific debate on the bill had been settled the larger debate, however, was not settled. Rather it became more acrimonious as the Fraktion reacted furiously to the penetrating and direct criticism of the Sozialdemokrat by issuing a declaration which insisted on the subordination of the paper to the Fraktion; it concluded that:
It is of the highest importance that the editorship of the Sozialdemokrat...never forgets that under no circumstance does it dare to come into opposition with the Fraktion, which has a moral responsibility for its content.

It is not the paper which is to comment on the position of the Fraktion, but rather the Fraktion, which is to control the position of the paper.51

The declaration, on the whole, was little more than a thinly veiled attempt to stifle criticism from the party.

The attempt to censor the paper brought a deluge of criticism from the rank-and-file. The most mordant one came from the locals in Frankfurt who complained of the "dictatorial" attempt of the Fraktion to impose "some sort of anti-socialist law against inner party debate." They charged that the Fraktion "sought to sink our revolutionary movement in the swamp of parliamentarism".52 The Königsberg membership, as well as numerous other locals, supported the Frankfurt declaration and protested against "censorship" by the Fraktion. They reminded the deputies that "they existed because of the workers, and that the workers did not exist because of the deputies."53

Due to the vigorous response of the membership, the majority shifted tactics and sent Liebknecht to Zurich in order to bring the editors to "reason". Later, there was a meeting between the Fraktion and the editors, and a compromise was worked out in which the paper remained autonomous, but it was no longer the official organ of the
After the immediate debate, the Marxist analysis of colonialism held sway. Initially, the Sozialdemokrat propagated the view that colonialism furthered the class domination of capitalism and hindered the emancipation of the working class by separating the working class from class struggle, but gradually these views began to disappear until later implicit support began to emerge from the party for Germany's "world mission". The steamship subsidy question marked a historic point for the party since the modern party that voted for war credits becomes apparent here. There was a direct link between the initial decision to support the government on the subsidy and the decision to support the regime in World War I. It was this decision which set the party on the road to repudiation of whatever revolutionary traditions it possessed in favour of open class collaboration with the bourgeoisie.

Already at this time, the party began to fit the model of a party that betrayed the revolutionary tendencies of its members to reformism—(this model was drawn by Lenin, Zinoviev, and Lukacs since the collapse of the First International made such studies absolutely necessary). In later analyses of the party, Lenin and Lukacs attributed the triumph of reformism in the party to the following causes:
the growth of trade union spontaneity and economism; the development of a labour aristocracy connected to imperialism; socio-economic differentiation within the working class; the subjective advantages of a labour bureaucracy over its class, due to its professional knowledge and administrative skills; and rising life-standards to petty-bourgeois levels among the leadership which, because of its influence over proletarian organizations, helped to cause the obscuring of the class-consciousness of the workers and tended to lead them towards tacit alliances with the bourgeoisie. 55

In the mid-1880's the party began to reveal these characteristics. In his study of the membership of the party, Robert Michels found that the party was free of the poor and needy, and that the party essentially was composed of the "elite of the industrial workers." 56 It was significant that pressure and support for imperialism during the steamship subsidy controversy was the strongest from the well-paid shipbuilding workers in the harbour districts. 57 During 1884-1886, there was a wave of strikes that were purely economist and not political. 58 Trade unions were beginning to revive from the onslaught of the anti-Socialist laws, and labour leaders, such as Carl Legien, stressed the non-political nature of the unions by stating that the unions should be open to any worker regardless of his political
beliefs. The living standards of the leadership, especially the Fraktion, rose significantly, and this was the source of controversy at the Congress of St. Gall in 1887 where there were complaints about the avid search for multiple mandates by Fraktion members in order to supplement their incomes. Liebknecht was a case in point since he was not only a member of the Reichstag, but also a member of the Saxon Landtag. Finally, although bureaucratic domination of the party was to begin after the removal of the anti-Socialist laws and the influence of Friedrich Ebert, the seeds of this were present in the ascendency of the Fraktion over the party. Significantly, the basic unit of organization for the party was the electoral district rather than factories and working class areas. Even though participatory democracy was not possible due to the anti-Socialist laws, still the party was clearly not one in which the decisions were made from grass-roots levels but rather one in which the decisions came from the top down.

The form of the party that voted for the war credits was set by the time of the St. Gall party Congress as the theoretical and tactical considerations of the party were firmly settled. At that time the "orthodox" centre of
Bebel and Kautsky had successfully defeated a rival theory that threatened to put the party completely in word and deed on the path of explicit reform. This theory was based on the formulations of the economist Rodbertus, as he provided a solution for those in the party leadership, such as C.A. Schramm, Max Quarck, and Geiser, who feared the implications of the rising influence of Marxism. This was evident in C. A. Schramm's pamphlet Rodbertus, Marx, and Lassalle in which he argued that the party "repudiated" Marxism and clearly preferred the "peaceful path to reform" of Lassalle, who was the greatest revolutionary of them all. The theory of Rodbertus was a boon to those Social Democrats who preferred a party that would work in harmony with other social and political groups for social reform, since Rodbertus provided a form of socialism which combined severe criticism of capitalism with unquestioned loyalty to the Bismarckian Reich.  

Karl Kautsky won his spurs as a theoretician in his counter-attack to the Rodbertus cult and continued to gain influence, so that by the time of the St. Gall party Congress he had superseded Liebknecht as the party's most influential theoretician. Kautsky provided the
theoretical structure for Bebel's tactic of ambiguous parliamentarism—that is, maintaining the party's emphasis on parliamentary participation while continuing to argue that the party could not realize its aims solely through parliamentary activity. Bebel's stature in the party was so great that he successfully imposed this tactic on the party. Bebel must have realized that the intensity of anti-parliamentary feelings among the masses that supported Social Democracy made untenable the overt reformism of many in the leadership. Kautsky fitted into this situation perfectly, for although his attacks on Rodbertus made Schramm and others nervous, nevertheless, since the discussions were highly theoretical and more significantly, since Kautsky did not touch on the relation of Marxism to party tactics, party officials did not object to Kautsky's observations. Therefore, in spite of Kautsky's professed Marxism, which contrasted with the overt reformism of most of the leadership, the leadership still did not mistrust or fear Kautsky. For he was tolerated in his position due to the growing popularity of Marxism and the level of popular militancy; and moreover, his books did not touch on the issues of the day, and his magazine only had influence on a small number of intellectuals who understood theoretical questions. When
Kautsky did concern himself with problems of the day, he only discussed them and did not presume to take action on them. Since the Fraktion accepted Liebknecht's division of theory and practice then no matter how much the party's reformism stood in contrast to Kautsky's Marxism, there was no occasion for the two to collide. 65

Since he had mastered their theory, Kautsky was the recognized apostle of Marx and Engels, and better still in the party view he did not have their disadvantages. Marx and Engels not only gave theoretical advice but also advised the party on tactics. Their advice was usually unwelcome because they consistently criticized the opportunistic path that the party was taking, as it was clear that the party leadership was far more interested in reform legislation which would be more radical than the Bismarckian social legislation but would stop short at the unleashing of revolution. In this situation Kautsky's Marxism served perfectly because it was an inoffensive doctrine that either attacked anarchism in a way with which the entire party could sympathize, or advocated revolution in an abstract, distant and mechanical manner which did not frighten the party moderates. In his discussion of revolutionary theory he was able to give an intellectual aura to Social Democracy
without interfering in the reformist course of the party.

The center position of Bebel and Kautsky was also maintained by their attacks on anarchism that continued long after it disappeared as a viable trend within the working class. At the beginning of the anti-socialist laws there seemed some justification in the attacks criticizing the outrages advocated by Most and Hasenclever since it was feared that the party would lose popularity if it became identified in the public mind with anarchism. These views, however, never gained much headway in the party, and gradually the continued rhetoric against anarchism took on the form of a ritual which was designed to assure the German public of the non-violent and peaceful nature of German Social Democracy. The anti-anarchist rhetoric also strengthened the position of parliamentarism within the party because the party had to stress its importance in order to show the difference between anarchism and it. By the end of the 1880's, moreover, the ritual was being used to stifle criticism of the party's parliamentary path by the implication that all such criticism was anarchist inspired.

In spite of Bebel's position of ambiguous parliamentarism, the party entered the elections of 1887 by appealing to the voters on the basis of being a radical bourgeois party:
The programme of Social Democracy suffices so completely for the economic and political requirements of the German bourgeoisie and is so permeated by democratic ideas that there is no place alongside Social Democracy for a so-called bourgeois democracy. This explains the miserable shattering of all previous efforts to create such a party. 67

The results of the election was another resounding success for the party, and this further strengthened the position of the Fraktion as well as proving the worth of their tactics. Thereafter, the party went even further in pursuing parliamentarism as was evident when the party continued to participate in the test-election with its opponents. This was done in spite of the protests of the membership and Engels about this practice during the elections of 1884; moreover, in 1890 the party's central campaign committee decided to violate the St. Gall decision, which forbade support for any non-socialist candidate, by openly supporting any candidate who was against the anti-Socialist laws. The St. Gall decision was ignored by no less than August Bebel, who defended the practice by claiming that it was in party tradition since the practice started as long ago as 1879. 68
By 1890, it was clear that Kaiser Wilhelm II and most of the government, with the notable exception of Bismarck, was tired of the anti-Socialist laws and the air of class war that pervaded the Reich. The massive miner's strike of 1889 and the tremendous electoral gain of the party in the election of 1890 represented the failure of the government's policy of solving the social question through repression. Thus, the anti-Socialist laws were not renewed when these factors combined with the antagonism between Bismarck and the young emperor, who wanted to be his own emperor and to start his regime by befriending the workers, and with the disintegration of the traditional support for Bismarck in the Reichstag; and the party was legal again.

Although the party made great claims for a stunning victory with the elimination of the anti-Socialist laws and the fall of Bismarck; yet on consideration, the result was not as clear-cut as the party claimed. Despite Liebknecht's boast that Bismarck had broken his teeth on the party in attempting to carry out the laws, it could just as well be maintained that the state won a victory over the party, since it fully realized its aim of permanently forcing Social Democracy on a legal and parliamentary
path. Certainly, fear of provoking a renewal of the repressive laws worked to add even more caution to the party's normal conduct of safe reform politics.

The effect of the laws was not so much a lessening of revolutionary fervour and principles, since in the past these were rhetorical at best, but rather cemented the party's tendency towards being a populist reform party rather than a revolutionary labour party. Lassalle certainly meant for it to be a populist Volkspartei; however, with the growth of genuine proletarian class consciousness, the workers began to regard the party as their own, is clearly seen in vide the Eisenach dispute over the name of the party. From that time, there was a struggle between these two pressures within the party. Marx and Engels continually agitated for the party to be more proletarian, but for the most part, the party leadership resisted this and instead preferred to pursue luminaries from the educated classes. An example of this occurred when Marx and Engels demanded that more workers be nominated for candidacies, and Liebknecht replied that it "really was not necessary". Furthermore, at the 1875 Gotha Congress he went further and repeated Lassalle's vague definition of worker, thereby implicitly repudiating Marx's analysis of class and class struggle.
The word worker really does not mean anything exclusive. Worker signifies the occupation of humans. Work specifically applies to humans, for it is that which differentiates man from beast. Man became formed through work. Work means the same as man... 71.

The declaration of the anti-Socialist laws tended to high-light the differences between a leadership that was either petty-bourgeois in origin or in the process of becoming so and a membership that was growing increasingly class-conscious. This was definitely revealed in the disputes between the two over the initial decision to dissolve the party in 1879, and the attempts of the Fraktion to censor the Sozialdemokrat and to behave in a parliamentary fashion, and the Steamship Subsidy Controversy. Since the repressive laws did not permit contact between the membership and their elected representatives and prevented the far more radical membership from exercising control and influencing policy, the result then was the creation of a policy of exclusive reliance on parliamentary action. Much of this was also due to the fact that the Fraktion was not elected by the membership but by constituencies in which non-party voters greatly outnumbered actual Social Democrats.

The anti-Socialist laws also came at a time of depression when many petty-bourgeois were reduced to proletarians. The economic crisis caused an influx into the only explicitly democratic party that moreover proclaimed
its aim of protecting the people, and it was to be expected that these newcomers would attempt to force the party to be their vehicle. A study of Social Democracy by a party researcher revealed that by the elections of 1893 at least 25% of the people that voted for the party were of bourgeois origin, and in some cities it was as high as 30 to 40%. Conrad Schmidt, a party leader, summed up the situation when he observed:

The tendency, founded in the German condition, of Social Democracy to expand into a party of the small people, i.e. of the lower classes as a whole and grow into a democratic people's state having its support in the broadest strata of society--when viewed from this standpoint, it may appear to be a departure of the party's final aim, a turning aside of the necessary final goal.

It cannot be claimed, however, that the "fellow travellers", "mitläufer"), were the sole cause of the lessening of the revolutionary labour potential of the party but certainly "the fellow travellers have created a conduit through which the opportunists can flow into the worker's party." The most definite sign of the party's shift in perspective occurred at the party congress at Halle in 1890 when it officially changed its name to the Social Democratic Party of Germany by dropping the Labour from the title.
thus, finally accomplishing what it failed to do at Eisenach in 1869. The party emerged out of the period of the anti-Socialist laws as a definite populist party with a programme of radical reform and not one of revolutionary class struggle. Moreover, the party leadership, especially the parliamentary Fraktion, had gained tight control of the organization, a position that was consolidated by its success at the polls, which made it difficult for the militants to criticize their policy.

Criticism, however, did come from two groups which were aware of the changed circumstances both within and without the party. One was led by the former radical, von Vollmar, who in a famous set of speeches, called for new tactics. They were necessary since the fall of Bismarck represented a change in the government's character and therefore, the party should change its approach to it. The party should now be completely reformist and should advocate only realizable goals, such as a shorter working day, protection of the right to organize, and removal of tariffs. He argued that for the present the final goal of socialism should be forgotten. Since the government openly claimed to be pursuing peaceful policy it was therefore the party's patriotic duty to protect the motherland against foreign
attack. Also, to preserve internal peace and maintain cooperation between the new government, the party should do all it could to discourage strikes and all forms of violent political action. 77

Although August Bebel denounced this view at the Erfurt Congress in 1891 as pure opportunism, nevertheless, the difference between the overt reformer Vollmar and the "orthodox Marxist" Bebel was not so great as it appeared. This certainly was made clear when during the same Congress Bebel launched into a classic piece of reformism and mechanistic determinism.

For whoever still believes today, in view of the colossal progress made not only in the military field but also in the political field—and especially in economics, that we Social Democrats might reach our goal by the methods of the bourgeois party, as for example, by building barricades is powerfully mistaken. He totally misunderstands the nature of the conditions in which we find ourselves...Bourgeois society is driving so strongly towards its own destruction that all we have to do is to pick up power as it falls from its hands. 78

In the final analysis, the difference simply lay in appearance—Bebel wanted to preserve the revolutionary image of the party, while von Vollmar argued that it was time for the party to quite mumbling the "old catechism" and match its appearance to what it was in reality. 79
Another threat to the status quo in the party came from a left-wing orientated group, known as the Berliner Opposition or more simply as the Jungen, (the "boys"). The group was formed in part to combat the reformism as evidenced by the Steamship Subsidy Controversy and the weekly stream of it that came out of the bland party paper, the Berliner Volksblatt. To express their views they started their own organ, the Berliner Volkstribune. The essence of their criticism was that the party was giving up the class struggle in favour of parliamentarism, and that this was due essentially to the growing influence of the petty-bourgeoisie who were threatening to transform the party into a populist party. They expressed a feeling that the anti-Socialist laws had not increased the revolutionary spirit of the leadership, but on the contrary, had taught them the safe and orderly path to parliamentary activity. Max Schippel, one of the leaders, offered a cogent argument on the dangers for the leadership that participation in the Reichstag represented. He noted that the party deputies tended to get lost in the "labyrinth of parliamentary skirmishes" so that they lost their "keen sense" of the class struggle. They lost sight of who the enemy was and what they represented when they dealt with them in the "courteous and in part
friendly relations that parliamentary colleagues were compelled to enter. Furthermore,

...devotion to parliamentary activity may easily bring with it a loss of contact with the proletariat...

...from a certain time on, the increase of the number of Reichstag members may cause permanent damage to the party and its agitation.

The Jungen contended that the Reichstag should be used exclusively for the purpose of agitation in the sense expressed by Wilhelm Liebknecht in his 1869 pamphlet, *On the Political Position of Social Democracy particularly with respect to the Reichstag*. They charged that present party politics were a "betrayal" of party traditions as expressed by the pamphlet and also the resolution on parliament--using it solely for purposes of agitation--of the Chemnitz Congress in 1870. With these charges the Jungen revived the myth that the party had betrayed a supposedly revolutionary past.

They brought forward their charges at the Halle party Congress, but due in part to inexperience, bad tactics, and the lack of a positive alternative--indeed, they tended to veer towards anarchism and syndicalism with their calls for instant mass action and revolution--they had little influence in the party and consequently they received a hostile reception.
Hostility for the group was already present by the time of the Halle Congress especially after the May Day fiasco in 1890. Since there was growing proletarian support for a May Day work stoppage to show international solidarity, left-wing leaders, especially the Jungen, picked up the issue and put forward resolutions supporting the workingman's holiday. Initially, the official leadership remained silent, so the radicals issued a call to celebrate May Day as both a holiday and a demonstration for an eight-hour day and petitions were circulated in its behalf. As soon as preparations were underway, the leadership decided to oppose it and declared that it was impossible to carry through a general work stoppage on May 1 and moreover, that this independent initiative represented a dangerous provocation. It then did everything it could to squash the planned demonstrations. The result was disorganization, uncertainty, and disunity, as some followed the leaderships strictures, while others, notably the Berlin and Hamburg workers, carried out their work stoppages. In Hamburg especially the result was a severe setback for the working class.84

At Halle the Jungen were roundly denounced for their part in the affair, as well as for their presumptuous attacks, and the leadership quickly shoved through a resolution which limited celebration of May Day to a Sunday --(this, by the way, caused international criticism from
fellow socialist parties who charged that this was a betrayal of the aims of international solidarity.)
The decision on May Day was a fair indication of how far the party was willing to go in order to preserve order and legality. Auer implicitly admitted that the party's most important immediate goal was to prevent the renewal of the anti-Socialist laws when he stated that "we will therefore... have to be unusually cautious." 

In the following year, the Eldorado speeches of von Vollmar fueled the Jungen's charges of opportunism so that they came better equipped to the Erfurt Congress; there they issued a declaration which summarized all their charges of betrayal and opportunism. Unfortunately for the Jungen, however, the leaders proved to be incompetent, for instead of concentrating on the issues they blundered by attacking personalities and not preparing their case adequately on other issues. As a result, August Bebel and others were able to destroy their arguments and completely crush the young movement.

The two groups were treated quite differently. Von Vollmar's views were treated with consideration--Bebel talked of holding out the olive branch of compromise, and nothing could be more revealing to show that reformism was really the official voice of the party than the confident
manner of von Vollmar, who demonstrated that his views were perfectly compatible with the praxis of the party. On the other hand, not only were the Jungen subjected to vitriolic abuse, but at Erfurt two of the leaders were summarily purged from the party. This uneven pattern of dealing with right and left opposition was quite in keeping with traditional party practice—vide the treatment of Most and Hasenclever versus the Dreisterne authors.

The most important decision reached at Halle was to create a new political program for the newly named party. It is not known how Engels reacted to the completed Erfurt program, but he did let Kautsky know what he would like to see in a program and what he was against. He responded angrily to Liebknecht's blatant reformism, (and also at his obvious distortions of Marx), and severely attacked Liebknecht's suggestion that the party would gain power by "growing into (Hineinwachsen) socialism." Engels stated that:

...in Germany where the government is almost all-powerful and the Reichstag and all other representative bodies are without real power—to proclaim such stuff amounts in taking the fig-leaf of absolutism to cover one's own nakedness. Such a policy in the long run can only mislead our party.87

At Erfurt, three programmes were offered: the party executive's version was timid and reformist and had no mention of revolution in it, rather the neutral word
"transformation" was used; another proposal by Auerbach, Lux and Kampfmeyer was even more reformist; and the convention eventually accepted the programme of Karl Kautsky. In relation to the first two and in comparison to the Gotha Programme it appeared "revolutionary". Upon closer examination, however, the programme was very ambiguous whereas it was neither openly reformist nor revolutionary. Kautsky did not heed Engels' advice of including a demand for a republic and making sure of eliminating the illusion of a peaceful transformation to socialism. Rather the programme consisted of the traditional two parts, one theoretical and the other a list of demands, neither of which had much to do with the other.

Since Kautsky had prepared a 200 page programme, the party executive advised him to prepare a more concise one. Kautsky then saw that his mission was to produce a "catechism of Social Democracy". The result, as Lukacs, observed, showed that Kautsky was a direct successor of Lassalle especially with his mechanical separation of economics and politics. Furthermore, the logical consequences of his theory were dependent not on Marxist formulations, but on the ideas of social determinism. Take, for example, the following choice:
Shall the system of private ownership in the means of production be allowed to pull society with itself down into the abyss; or shall society shake off that burden and then, resume the path of progress which the evolutionary path prescribes for it?92

Noteworthy was the reference to "evolutionary law", which, in spite of Kautsky's claim that he ceased to be a Darwinist in the mid-1880's, shows that there is far too much contrary evidence to support that assertion. For example, in his observation that class struggle originated in the nineteenth century he directly contradicted Marx; moreover, his description of the course of history is definitely linear, and it therefore, fits directly into a scheme of evolutionary deterministic development which is absolutely contradictory to Marx's concept of dialectical materialism. Furthermore, when Kautsky observed that "never yet in the history of mankind has it happened that a revolutionary was able to foresee, let alone determine the forms of the new social order, which it strove to usher in"...93 this was another denial of Marxism, for Marx stated that the form of the future was to be that of the dictatorship of the proletariat which would then create the classless society. It is significant then that nowhere in the program was there a mention of the dictatorship of the proletariat--all this from a man who considered himself a Marxist!
Overall, the program revealed the desire of the party to come to power through peaceful and parliamentary means. Kautsky defended the use of parliament.

Whenever the proletariat engages in parliamentary activity as a self-conscious class, parliament begins to change its character. It ceases to be a mere tool in the hands of the bourgeoisie. It is the most powerful lever that can be utilized to raise the proletariat out of its economic, social and moral degradation.

The proletariat has, therefore, no reason to distrust parliamentary action.94

Indeed, Kautsky soon after postulated the dictatorship of the proletariat in terms of parliament. In a letter to Franz Mehring on July 8, 1893 he stated that he could think of no better form of the dictatorship of the proletariat than a powerful parliament with a Social Democratic majority.

This concept was developed in his work The Dictatorship of the Proletariat. Although written in 1919 in reaction to the Russian Revolution, he revealed by quoting articles on the question written in 1893 and 1900 that his views had not changed. In the book he either attempts to defuse and obscure the dictatorship of the proletariat by arguing that Marx meant it to be a question of condition rather than a question of domination or by asserting that in a democratic country it probably would not be necessary.
This so-called peaceful method of the class struggle, which is confined to non-militant methods, parliamentarism, strikes, demonstrations, the Press, and similar means of pressure, will retain its importance in every country according to the effectiveness of the democratic institutions which prevail there, the degree of political and economic enlightenment, and the self-master of the people.

On these grounds, anticipate that the social revolution will assume quite other forms than that of the middle class, and that it will be possible to carry out by peaceful, economic, legal, and moral means, instead of by physical force, in all places where democracy has been established. 95

Nowhere does he comment on the difficulties involved in seizing and maintaining power; rather he places his trust in the "most effective weapon of the proletariat" which is its "numerical strength" exercised through a majority in parliament. He separated the political revolution, which would occur in one "sudden act", from that of the social revolution, which was merely "a new method of production". The social revolution, which had to be peaceful, would be followed by the political revolution, and its primary function was to ensure democracy.

By the dictatorship of the proletariat we are unable to understand anything else than its rule on the basis of democracy. 96

And this democracy within the dictatorship should exclude no group or class, (he severely criticized the Bolsheviks for denying the franchise to capitalists.) Instead of using the dictatorship of the proletariat to produce the classless
society or to regard parliament, as Marx did, as the instrument of class oppression, Kautsky saw a role for all classes.

Every class will, however, endeavor to shape the new form of the state in matter corresponding to its particular interests. This attempt is especially manifested in the struggle over the character of the Parliament, that is in the fight for the franchise. The watchword of the lower classes, of the people, is Universal Suffrage. Not only the wage earner, but the small peasant and the lower middle classes have an interest in the franchise.97

Kautsky's observation revealed the organic nature of the theoretical growth that the party had made from its Lassallian roots to the Erfurt program. In the Erfurt programme an ideology was called "Marxist" that really was composed of the most important doctrines of Lassalle, to wit: the central role of universal suffrage in bringing about revolution and the translation of the concept of revolution in forms of a parliamentary majority. This was the form of "Marxism" that the party adopted as its official ideology. It was designed to serve as a roof for both reformists and revolutionaries in the party, and it functioned in this way until World War I.

2. Selim, "Der Parlamentarismus", *Der Sozialdemokrat*, June 12, 1881.


7. Ibid., p. 1096.

8. Ibid.


16. Ibid., p. 27.

17. Ibid.
18. Ibid., p. 16.


22. Bernstein to Engels, September 15, 1882, Bebel Engels Briefwechsel, p. 130.

23. Dr. Hochberg ordered 10,000 copies of this book and he distributed them free to influential people in order to convince them to help lift the anti-Socialist laws. Bernstein, My Years of Exile, p. 63. Schaeffle's book contained such observations as "The alpha and omega of socialism is the transformation of private and competing capital into a united collective capital." The Quintessance of Socialism, London, 1890.


25. For instance, even Wilhelm Bracke claimed that he could support monopolies for those reasons, Adoratski, Briefe und Auszüge, p. 175.


27. Adoratski, Briefe und Auszüge, p. 175.


29. Steinberg, Die Sozialismus und die Sozialdemokratie, Chapter III.


33. Ibid., p. 8.

34. Schroeder, Sozialismus und Imperialismus, p. 121. A sign of the popularity of the right to work was that Viereck even published a newspaper called "Recht auf Arbeit".

35. Bebel, Tätigkeitserichte, p. 275.

36. Ibid., p. 219.

37. Fricke, Die Arbeiterbewegung, pp. 252-253.

38. Engels to Bebel, October 11, 1884, Bebel Engels Briefwechsel, pp. 189-190.


40. Engels to Bebel, December 11-12, 1884, Ibid., pp. 204-205.

41. Even a casual reading of the Tätigkeitserichte reveals this.

42. Ibid., p. 241.

43. Lenin to A.V. Lunarchevsky, October 11, 1905, Collected Works, Vol. 34, p. 353.

44. See Schroeder, Sozialismus und Imperialismus, for a detailed study of the relationship of colonialism and imperialism to the party.


47. Schroeder, Imperialismus und Sozialismus, p. 126.


49. Liebknechts Briefwechsel mit Engels, p. 473.


52. Bernstein, Lehrjahre, p. 163.


57. Schroeder, Sozialismus und Sozialdemokratie, p. 131.


59. Harry J. Marks, Movement of Reform and Revolution in Germany from 1890 to 1903. (Unpublished dissertation), Harvard, 1937, p. 11.


62. Ritter, Die Arbeiterbewegung im Wilhelmischen Reich, p. 94.


65. Reichard, p. 36.

66. Ibid., p. 44.

67. Blos, Denkwürdigkeiten, p. 130.


69. Wachenheim, Die deutsche Sozialdemokratie, p. 28.

70. This is what is claimed by Ferdinand Dome la Nieuwenhuis, "Der Staatssozialistische Charakter der Sozialdemokratie", Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik, Berlin, 1909, vol. 29, p. 103. Nieuwenhuis was before his time; in his article he had two columns opposite each other. One was what Marx said and the others were by Bebel, Liebknecht, and Kautsky directly contradicting Marx or misquoting him.

71. Schulz, Die Deutsche Arbeiterbewegung, p. 164.


73. Ritter, Die Arbeiterbewegung im Wilhelmschen Reich, p. 77.

74. Conrad Schmidt, "Condition of the Social Democracy in Germany", Journal of Political Economy, Chicago, 1898, Vol. 6, p. 510. Schmidt's views are not surprising because he became a prominent Revisionist and contributor to their journal, Die Sozialistische Monatshefte.

75. Zinoviev, Der Krieg und die Krise, p. 485.


77. Georg von Vollmar, Über die nächsten Aufgaben der Sozialdemokratie, Munich, 1899. His conversion was not surprising, since his radicalism was unnatural in a former aristocrat and calvary officer. Bebel always felt that his radicalism was "romantic affectation".


80. Hans Manfred Bock; "Die Literaten und Studenten-revolte der Jungen in der SPD um 1890, Das Argument, 13 Jhrg., 1871, pp. 24-25. Bock also discusses the relationship of Engels to the Jungen. Apparently, they approached him for support but he angrily denounced them. His judgment as usual was correct since shortly after the Erfurt Congress some simply faded away, while others, like Max Schippel, became prominent Revisionists.

81. *Erfurt*, p. 64.


86. *Erfurt*, p. 61.


CONCLUSION

After World War I, the distinction between Social Democracy and Communism became apparent. Although Lenin's charges of "betrayal" and "opportunism" could be considered as true, if the party's self-description is taken into account, the charges tended to obscure the fact that the distinction existed before the war. The history of the Social Democratic Party of Germany from 1863 showed the existence of this distinction, since the party was consistently a reformist, parliamentary, mass movement, that is, social democratic, rather than a party that advocated revolution through class struggle and force. Indeed, the SPD provided the model for such a party, after its consequential decision of August, 1914. The clues of the difference between the theory and practice of Communism and Social Democracy lie in the different meanings of the same words and concepts, such as "socialism" and "revolution", that both tendencies employed. The criticism of Marx and Engels of the party's behaviour and theory throughout its history from its origins until it became a mass movement provided the contrast to distinguish Communist from Social Democratic.
From the beginning of the movement, the socialist ideas came from Ferdinand Lassalle, and Marx and Engels had little or no influence. Although specific Lassallian notions, such as the "Iron Law of Wages" and overt Hegelian emphasis on the "Idea" as the motivating force in history, eventually faded away, the movement retained the Lassallian emphasis on universal suffrage, as the central issue which would usher in the new society, and the explicit assumption of working within the system and ruling out force in its drive to becoming the largest socialist party in the world by the first World War.

Marx and Engels were well aware of the dominant influence of Lassallianism in the party's theory and practice, and their relationship with the party could be summarized as essentially a struggle to rid the worker's movement of the Lassallian influence. The history of the party is studded with their attempts to purge this ideology, and each further attempt only underlined their inability to root out Lassallianism and their relative lack of influence in determining the course of the party. Evidence of this abounds, as for example in their relationship with J.B. von Schweitzer, who directly rejected their right to criticize the Lassallian heritage and more galling, in the behaviour of Wilhelm Liebknecht, long
a student of Marx's, who never went beyond the bounds of radical republicanism and reformism.

Even though, some historians, especially those in the DDR, argued that Marx and Engels had increased their influence by the early 1860's because one of the two wings of Social Democracy seemed to reject Lassallianism in favour of the International and Marxism. Upon examination, however, it was apparent that the "Marxist" and "Lassallian" watchwords of the two groups were used essentially as identifying their different stands on the German national question; moreover, Marx sharply criticized the "Marxism" of Bebel and Liebknecht as "stupid south German particularism." In his memoirs Bebel freely admitted that the Eisenachers were largely influenced by Lassallian doctrines, but the Marxist tag remained. Contributing to this fallacy was Liebknecht's anti-Parliament pamphlet, which was mis-construed by later critics of party policy to represent his condemnation of all parliamentary activity rather than activity in the Prussian Reichstag. In the later decades of party activity, the anti-Prussian motivation that was the basis of the political activity of Bebel and Liebknecht was largely forgotten and their motivation was regarded as revolutionary.
The same can be said for another example of heroic revolutionary action—the Reichstag protests of Bebel and Liebknecht during the Franco-Prussian War. Again they were primarily motivated by anti-Prussian sentiment rather than internation revolutionary socialist brotherhood. Similarly, opportunism rather than socialism was behind their activity and membership in the International.

Georg Zinoviev cited their behaviour during the High Treason Trial in 1872—another creator of revolutionary reputations—as an example of revolutionary socialism. The evidence again confounds this view, for Bebel and Liebknecht not only denied that they were Marxists, but quoted Lassalle chapter and verse to define their concept of revolution. Three years later, Lassallian doctrines came to the fore in the creation of the Gotha Programme that unified the two wings of Social Democracy. Inspite of Liebknecht's assertion that Lassallianism had as good as disappeared, he clearly meant the cult of infallibility and not the Lassallian heritage of universal suffrage and parliamentarism. This was amply revealed by Marx's critique of the programme when he observed that if the party accepted the programme it showed that its socialism was not even "skin-deep." The party's response was to suppress the criticism for fifteen years.
The anti-Socialist laws of 1878 stopped the party's headlong rush into overt reformism—this trend was spurred by the phenomenal rise in the number of votes for the party and the influx of non-proletarian elements hurt by the crash of '72 and the ensuing Great Depression. They necessitated some militance, or at least militant rhetoric, on the leadership if it was to maintain its hold over the increasing restlessness of the membership. These laws also provided the parliamentary and reformist Fraktion to take control over the affairs and direction of the party. Their reformist tendencies soon clashed with the rising revolutionary aspirations of much of the membership, as was made apparent by a series of clashes which centered on the role of parliamentarism in the tactics of the party: the Rechenschaftsbericht, the Kayser affair, Bebel's patriotic speech, Blos' insistence on rejecting socialism and emphasis on parliamentary activity, the Steamship Subsidy controversy, and the constant protests of the rank-and-file; all revealed the heightened contradiction between leaders and led. This obliged the leadership to circumvent the contradiction by insisting that its reformist activity was revolutionary because the bourgeoisie hated and feared it.
By the 1880's, Karl Kautsky eventually provided the theoretical cement which would join the desperate and conflicting elements; he wedded a version of Marxism, (which was increasing in popularity among the membership), with the dominant reformist practice of the leadership, which was based on the Lassallian emphasis on universal suffrage and parliamentary practice. The "Marxism" of Kautsky postulated revolution not by force or even activity but rather something that would occur because of the laws of social evolution; and so, dialectical materialism was ignored and the class struggle became equated with parliamentary opposition. Kautsky's Marxism, therefore, did not directly confront the reformism of the leadership, but upon examination, his "Marxism" meant no more than employing Marxist terms as a label bourgeois practice; as for example, his conclusion that a majority in parliament represented the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Karl Kautsky represented the disunity of theory and practice of the party. The accusations of Lenin and others were based on the assumption that there was unity in theory and practice, and thereby that a self-proclaimed socialist party should act in a socialist manner; moreover, historically criticism of the party from within the party was equally based on this expectation, whether right or left-wing. The Dreisterne authors, von Vollmar, and later Bernstein wanted the theory to conform to the reformist practice. Most and
the Jungen wanted it to adhere to what they falsely considered to be the revolutionary traditions of the party. They based this assumption on Liebknecht's argument for using Parliament solely for agitation and Bebel's resolution to that effect in the Stuttgart Congress of 1870. The left critics, however, ignored the historical situation of this argument which allowed them to confuse Liebknecht's particular hate for the Prussian Reichstag with a universal one for parliament. Between these two groups stood the "orthodox Marxism" of Bebel and Kautsky, who wanted the best of two worlds.

Although this thesis does not deal extensively with an analysis of why a political party with a large proletarian base was not revolutionary or why whatever revolutionary tendencies that existed were subsumed to petty-bourgeois aims, I have suggested some answers to these questions, such as the special circumstances of Germany, (a semi-absolutist, semi-democratic state), the bureaucratization of the party, and the control by a leadership composed of individuals of petty-bourgeois and labour aristocrat backgrounds; detailed explanation and analysis is beyond the scope of this thesis.

This thesis, however, has shown that the party was not revolutionary, it was a mass protest movement with a
multi-class composition and its aims were compatible with bourgeois society; its theory although called revolutionary amounted to little more than rhetoric and obfuscation; and finally the party's claim for revolutionary origins stemmed from a misreading and misunderstanding of the roots of the movement.
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