

SOCIALISM AND THE INTELLIGENTSIA 1880–1914

Edited by
Carl Levy

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SOCIAL AND POLITICAL THOUGHT IN
THE NINETEENTH CENTURY



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To the Memory of Adam Westoby

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AND THE
INTELLIGENTSIA
1880–1914***

Edited by
CARL LEVY



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*In memory of
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Book education and not skill is now the road to status and, with diminishing exceptions, even skill has moved into the world of diplomas. And, of course, the road into that world has been broadened. There was a time when miners might want their sons out of the pit at all costs, but engineers were content to offer their sons a presumably improving version of their own prospects. How many of the sons of toolmakers today are content to become toolmakers? . . .

. . . When the last men who have driven and cared for steam locomotives retire – it will not be long now – and when engine-drivers will be little different from tram-drivers, and sometimes quite superfluous, what will happen? What will our society be like without that large body of men who, in one way or another, had a sense of the dignity and self-respect of difficult, good, and socially useful manual work, which is also a sense of a society not governed by market-pricing and money: a society other than ours and potentially better? What will a country be like without the road to self-respect which skill with hand, eye and brain provide for men – and, one might add, women – who happen not to be good at passing examinations?

E. J. Hobsbawm, *Worlds of Labour*, London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1984, pp. 271–2

In our own time the division between high-born and base-born has become a fiction, transparent to every eye. But the distinction between the lowly manual world and the lofty intellectual one continues – no longer as lord and serf, but as officer and subaltern, party cadre and party member, expert and everyone else. Even after the rights of property have been unmasked, those of intellectual labour remain.

R. L. Heilbroner, *New York Review of Books*, 5 November 1981,
p. 52

Class antagonism within the ranks of revolutionary cadres remains the great unwritten history of nineteenth-century radical politics.

R. Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, Cambridge University Press,
1977, p. 253

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Although this book is a collective enterprise, I, needless to say, take full responsibility as its editor.

Carl Levy

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I

Introduction: Historical and Theoretical Themes

Carl Levy

The expansion of the European middle classes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, together with their political significance, have recently been increasingly studied by social historians. Much of this, however, has been concerned with the propertied middle classes.¹ At the same time students of contemporary social structures have devoted increasing attention to the role of the highly educated but unpropertied strata, East and West.² Within the literature and its debate the relations between the educated middle classes and the origins and development of modern socialist organisations during the era of the Second International (*circa* 1880–1914) have been frequently commented upon, and occasionally examined in more detail in particular periods and contexts. There has never been a study examining the role of the educated middle classes generally during this formative period for major modern socialist organisations and movements. While socialist intellectuals of the period have been widely studied, this has largely been in biographical treatments or as the principals in doctrinal disputes and institutional histories. A study of the appeals of socialism for the educated middle and lower middle classes has been lacking.

The essays in this volume address this theme. They originate from a seminar held at the Open University's London centre in November 1982, but in their final version they have been greatly revised and supplemented by entirely new contributions.

In this introductory essay I shall set the problem in its historical

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context. This will be followed by a discussion of the theoretical questions the contributors raise. In my conclusion I will discuss the particular problems raised by the Russian case.

A NEW PROJECT

The history of an idea seems an appropriate place to commence. Using points raised in Wolfgang Mommsen's and Royden Harrison's contributions to this volume, we might start by a comparison of the Webbs and Weber.

Both shared strikingly similar intellectual preoccupations, firstly in their elitest sociologies, and secondly in their hankering after social imperialist solutions to the 'social' question. Increasingly they considered state intervention in the economy and social life as a way to regulate industrial disputes and eradicate urban or rural pauperism. Stephen Yeo, in his contribution, quite rightly quotes Stefan Collini's contention that in Britain, amongst the highly educated public before 1914, the ideological fault-line was individualism vs collectivism as socialism rather than capitalism vs socialism.³ However, I would argue that particular idioms influenced different national educated middle classes, and each nation's civil society set limits to, or opened opportunities for collectivist or reformist liberal intellectuals' participation in popular socialist or labour movements, in contrast to their reformers from above.

It is certainly the case that the Webbs always felt less distant from the British labour movement than Weber did from the German Social Democratic Party (SPD). The Fabians shared marginalist economics and an explicit quest to justify economically the higher salaries of the educated with the *Verein für Sozialpolitik*. But because of local conditions the Fabians succeeded in affecting both Independent Labour Party (ILP) political propaganda and the political education of trade-union officials, whilst the *Verein* were more or less excluded from SPD politics, although they evinced sympathy for reforms not very different from those which the SPD proposed.⁴

The remainder of this essay will place Collini's field of force within a broader European context. In the first half I shall highlight the various differences within states which heightened or lessened

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the importance of educated middle-class socialists. Throughout this introduction I shall also raise the distinct problems of the self-made party bureaucrat and lower middle-class white-collar worker within party structures. However, first I turn to the external pressures which shaped socialist parties' relationships to the broader middle-class electorate.

Suffrage

One of the most important yardsticks for measuring educated middle-class participation in socialist movements was the constraints of suffrage.⁵ Almost from their debut on the national scene socialist parties were pitching their propaganda at middle-class voters. Until about 1910–1914 the effects of plural voting, rigging and literacy requirements restricted suffrage significantly. In Britain and France residential requirements disenfranchised many workers. In Germany the three-class Prussian voting system weakened Bismarckian male suffrage, and in any case the Reichstag's power was limited by the Junker bureaucracy, the military and the Kaiser himself. In most cases women were excluded from electoral participation on the national level. Because none of these parties, with the exception of the SPD, acquired a mass membership for a considerable period before 1914, the Italian, French and British, to cite important examples, sought votes from non-party members. Such constituencies might include smallholders, independent artisans, white-collar public sector workers and the professionals.

Following upon the inherent logic of these tactics, socialist 'election machines' frequently instituted formal or informal alliances with radical liberal groups or parties which possessed collectivist programmes and were usually populated by the educated middle classes. These alliances sought, rather optimistically on the whole, to fuse elements of what were seen as 'modernising productive bourgeoisies' with mass constituencies of industrial and rural proletariats through variations upon the theme of 'gas-and-water socialism'. These programmes promised the renovation of urban infrastructures and housing as well as the expansion and partial democratisation of educational opportunities. We certainly need to know a great deal more about these phenomena. A typology of European municipal socialism, a form of socialism when it was put

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into practice which affected the daily lives of ordinary people to a greater extent than parliamentary politics, remains to be devised.

My own admittedly preliminary survey suggests that both municipal and national approaches encountered enormous difficulties, and its intentions must, I believe, be weighed against actual implementation. In France, for example, the non-socialist Radicals were on the whole deeply suspicious of social programmes and far more comfortable with shared Radical/Socialist anti-clerical legislation. In Britain, the Liberals were divided, but even those collectivists were not above stealing Labour's thunder, and increasing tensions between the labourist and the socialist currents within its erstwhile partner's constituent organisations. On the whole, the SDP is a quite different matter. Except for southern alliances, national and Prussian attempts were unsuccessful. The National Liberals, and even the more radical anti-Junker *Hansabund*, were firmly attached to the anti-socialist coalition. Attempts at creating electoral pacts with the Progressives in 1912, for example, merely drove their supporters into the arms of this bloc. Only in Sweden and Denmark do effective socialist-liberal intelligentsia alliances appear *before* the World War. And it is interesting to note that in Norway, where suffrage had been granted by 1905, a polarisation of the working class and liberal intelligentsia was so much more evident.⁶

To sum up, voting restrictions causing the uneven profile of the manual-worker socialist vote, and a low degree of party organisation in most of Europe, heightened the potential importance of the educated as electoral allies, but the outcomes are far from clear-cut and we need more cross-national studies of political behaviour to determine their influence.

INTELLECTUALS AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

If the external, electoral influence of the educated middle class was a complex, negotiated relationship, what of the undoubted importance of their representatives within party organisations and leadership? It seems to me that Stedman Jones's recent sketches for a possible history of the Labour Party might be incorporated into the project outlined in this book. Perhaps we should imagine party

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structures as contested terrains where various knowledges validate the power and status of members, but where no single discourse (even the much studied 'scientific socialism') is capable of direct translation into power. To paraphrase Stedman Jones, agendas arise from a 'vacant centre' where various 'groups possessing different and sometimes incompatible political languages of widely varying provenance' establish 'a changing balance of forces' which is informed by 'their discursive self-definition primarily from without'.⁷

These observations affect the way we examine the nature of socialist parties, particularly their class composition, an essential prerequisite in assessing the weight of the educated middle classes within them. Elsewhere I have written at length on the social class composition of socialism during the Second International. Here I will summarise my findings in order to introduce a broader discussion of how the educated middle classes influenced party organisation and ideology.

In my previous work I demonstrated that not only was the intervention of the educated white-collar or entrepreneurial middle classes determined by specific national factors (a point which I will expand on), but that socialism appealed to a wide variety of workers and peasants who were as affected by the peculiarities of local conditions as their middle-class comrades. Certainly all socialist parties' mass base derived from the manual working class. But this in itself says little. The variety was as interesting as the qualifying adjective manual. There was no essential link between the socialism of these parties and the factory proletariat.

First, there were skilled textile workers, printers, locksmiths and other artisans; including a smattering of pre-industrial political shoemakers. They were the respectable self-educated workers who carried with them an older craft-based radicalism. But they shaded into a new wave of machine operatives (turners, precision tool makers, engineers and engine drivers) who were attracted to the scientific and technocratic socialisms synthesised by various educated scientific socialisms. (And I say socialisms advisably because revolutionary and anarcho-syndicalists in Italy or Spain were as attracted to the idiom as socialist engineers in Germany.)

But socialism could also appeal to certain working-class or rural communities where communitarian feelings outlived the collapse of older paternalist hierarchies. When industrial organisation or the

cruel logic of the world capitalist marketplace disintegrated their older world, these peasants and workers could become rapidly radicalised. Thus, and this example is particularly significant for the numbers supplied to pre-war socialism, the landless labourers of the Po Valley; the peasants of the Var; or the proto-proletarians of the Urals, the worker-peasants, entered socialist politics. In all of these cases communitarian socialism rather than technocratic or scientific socialism was an important ideological ingredient.

On the other hand, 'well-suited' candidates for socialist or even labourist conversion from older loyalties were not always so forthcoming. In the Ruhr's mines and steel mills paternalism reigned until the arrival of immigrants around 1910; Lib-Lab miners federations represented Northumberland colliers until the courts threatened their very existence; and in France the 'yellow unions' had more members than the vastly overestimated syndicalists, and only the World War and the Popular Front government of the 1930s stimulated a shift away from this powerful and little studied paternalism.

To sum up our argument so far: working and lower-class attraction to socialism was varied, inconsistent and unpredictable. Equally, when we turn to the educated middle classes, socialism was embraced for a variety of reasons. Romantic and communitarian impulses are discernible amongst artists and literati. However, scientific or technocratic arguments increasingly gained more attention in the late nineteenth century. This can be demonstrated by focussing on the 1880s, a crucial decade in which the ideology of the Second International is first formulated. Indeed, this ideology precedes the actual formal organisation of many modern socialist parties.

Older types of popular radicalism are criticised and overturned by self-defined 'scientific socialists'. This is not merely a shift associated with 'Marxism after Marx', rather Marxism is the most elegant and intellectually engaging version of a wider discursive practice. Thus Marxist vulgarisations by Engels or Kautsky, the Fabian anti-Marxist *Essays*, and works by various French and Italian positivist professors all proclaim the birth of scientific socialism. These works all praise modernity, particularly the modernity of science, the scientist, the professional, but also that other symbol of the new era: the industrial proletariat of the first gigantic modern factories. In all of these texts 'the people' is

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replaced by the proletariat. For scientific socialists the urban, propertyless, factory operator, especially skilled male engineers, possessed the skill, muscle and discipline to transform the capitalist system into a smokestack utopia. The scientific socialists admired the successful bourgeois professional who had declared for socialism. Unlike the Russian populists (the *narodniki*) or their Western admirers, scientific socialists did not believe that the educated need feel guilt due to comfortable lives based upon credentials or 'cultural capital' so long as they performed a useful service to humanity. One of these services might just be to disseminate scientific socialism itself.

But these are only images and idioms found within texts. They say little about who actually appropriated or appreciated them. Nor does it follow that the first generation of 'scientific socialists' were triumphant politically, psychologically or culturally within socialist or broader social movements. Even the educated themselves possessed a dissident anti-industrial and romantic tradition, even William Morris was perhaps more romantic than scientist. Furthermore, as my review of class composition of socialist parties has just demonstrated, most socialist workers, scientific socialist imagery notwithstanding, were not 'disciplined' factory operatives or skilled engineers but artisans and labourers in smaller shops. Pre-socialist plebeian radicalism may have been losing its vigour but certainly was not moribund. The oral transmission of radical thought associated with centuries of heretical movements may have lost some of its importance to trade-union and party presses but still flourished in southern Europe and even, I would argue, in 'modern' England and Germany. The little traditions ignored and at times contested the scientific socialists's 'great traditions'.

In short, the ways in which party priorities were set owed a great deal to ideas and customs which educated or self-educated socialists imported from non-socialist sources. Some of the beliefs and utopias within socialism reflected those little explored elective affinities and class-blind cleavages of broader civil society, such as the British Victorian principles of work and respectability, the peculiarly German separation of all manual workers from the white-collar world, the pronounced productivism of trade-union officials, set against the 'moral economies' of ex-peasant or peasant socialists (particularly evident in France and Italy), or the continent-wide bifurcation of modern science and classical humanism, reflected if

not perfectly aligned within socialism as one between the romantic or bucolic and the technocratic.⁸

The circulation of socialist ideologies in any given national setting owed a great deal to the combined and uneven development of the state and civil society. Similarly, to understand how socialism was appropriated by those sanctioned as brain-workers, and to what extent the 'certified' were given opportunities to participate in internal party politics, one would have to examine the nature of different Western European experiences of industrialisation, different legal traditions, different religious histories and differences in popular associational culture and its relationship to the informal or accredited 'systems' of knowledge.

I will approach my check-list through the social history of the widely employed nouns 'intellectual' and 'intelligentsia'. There are slippages between definitions of the highly educated as intellectuals, as professionals or as university graduates. But these different definitions reflect varying national labour markets, university systems and state formations.

Starting in the 1880s and 1890s, for example, the German socialists preferred the term 'university graduate' (*Akademiker*) to 'intellectual'.⁹ For British counterparts the term 'professional' men or women, or even 'men of letters', was more meaningful than 'intellectual'. Their definition differed from the sociological one the Germans adopted. For the British the 'professional', and especially the 'man of letters', carried with his title a normative resonance either as a 'cleric' or sage or as a more democratic *narodnik*-like Russian populist, who abandoned, or at least attempted to abandon, a comfortable middle-class life-style.¹⁰ In Italy the analogous term might carry both meanings, where the first generation of anarchists, following Russian practice, fled academia for manual trades, and a second positivist generation of pioneering physicians, sociologists and criminologists saw no contradiction between successful bourgeois careers and their socialist beliefs. Indeed, one reinforced the other. Certainly the Italian case must be set apart from other Western European examples due to the sheer numbers of university graduates and literati who joined or sympathised with the Partito Socialista Italiano in the 1890s.¹¹

The French, more than any other nationality, popularised the conception of the successful writer, university professor or scientist committed to leftist or socialist politics. The *Manifesto of the Intel-*

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lectuals, published during the Dreyfus affair, demonstrates how the noun *intellectuel* presupposed social beings different from the Russians or Italians of the 1860s and 1870s. The *Manifesto* was deeply immersed in French cultural and political history, reinforcing a tradition which is traced back to the Revolution, but underlined by the important intervention of artists, poets and writers in the revolutions of 1830, 1848 and, to a certain extent, 1871.¹² There was a distinctive Parisian connection between certain *Grandes Écoles* (the *École Normale* above all), the middle and upper layers of the republican and anti-clerical bureaucracy and literary politicians. Even the Sorelian syndicalist and right-wing counter-attack against the 'Dreyfusard revolution' a few years later arose from the same Parisian hothouse.

The contrast with Britain could not be greater, as it lacked the centralising bureaucracies, the large university enrolments or the formality which characterised intellectual life in France and other industrial second-comers. As Eric Hobsbawm wrote in a classic survey of Fabianism:

The bureaucrats, the technologically and scientifically trained manager or businessman, even the office worker, or for that matter a national system of primary, secondary and higher education were common-place in Germany and France from the early nineteenth century, but not in Britain.¹³

This, of course, did not prevent a series of professional middle-class groups from influencing the radicals, Chartists, Model Trade Unionists and pioneering socialists of the 1880s.¹⁴ However, the terms of engagement, I would suggest, were different. These individuals found a ready audience amongst trade unionists and artisans raised in similar traditions of debate and earnest self-improvement. When the British did in fact adopt the noun 'intellectual' in the 1890s, it was meant to negate this specific tradition of political activism. The largely literary British intelligentsia assumed an ascetic, detached and largely apolitical conservative vocation.¹⁵

In young nation-states intellectuals or professionals were at first placed in a quite different position. In Italy and Germany, for instance, the humanist middle class and university intelligentsia retained their dominance until the late nineteenth century by assuming the role of guardians of the national language and indeed,

at least before unification, as nation-builders. In nations where, at least initially, dialect rather than standard national languages was the rule, where region, religion or caste fractured civil society, the educated classes were bound to play a role far outside their actual numbers.¹⁶ In Germany the Bismarckian 'civil-service' state easily enticed or intimidated the intelligentsia. Italy is, as I have noted, quite different. Here the state remained weaker and inefficient, industrialisation more uneven, and the anti-papal political elite discredited by the apparent failures of the *Risorgimento* as well as isolated from the large Catholic landowners, who might have played an analogous role to the Junkers within the state apparatus. The educated middle classes, while perhaps not suffering from unemployment as badly as is usually implied, did resent the failure of reform after national liberation, which undoubtedly radicalised some of them.

Finally, in the subject nations of Eastern Europe, intellectuals were more likely than not attracted to national populist movements albeit for the important exceptions of the marginalised Jewish intelligentsia and student or intellectual exile circles based in Switzerland. This was certainly the case in the Balkans and is also evident in Poland where intellectuals divided within socialism between nationalists and internationalists. And even in highly industrialised Bohemia, intellectuals such as Masaryk were more inspired by the Czech national movement than social democracy. Foreign intellectuals could also play prominent roles in a host's socialist parties. It is worth recalling that many leading intellectuals within the SPD (Kautsky, Luxemburg or Parvus, to name three) were foreigners whose socialisation outside the German tradition of *Bildung* perhaps allowed them greater opportunity to transcend rigid mental boundaries. And in Italy Russian middle-class women, such as Kuliscioff or Balabanov, exercised greater influence on the PSI elite before 1914 than their Italian sisters.¹⁷

Associations

The extent and nature of associational life, that is to say, the ability of the self-educated to establish their own trade unions, co-operatives and clubs, delineated those social spaces where the 'certified' and the popular merged.

Associational life was firstly affected by law. The laws which

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might repress trade unions and strikers might not affect the involvement of the educated middle classes in socialist parties. Industrial legislation in practice may have been equally repressive in Italy, France or Germany, but civil rights for the educated were more readily granted in France, Italy or Great Britain than in Wilhelmine Germany.¹⁸ In this respect the German university graduate who declared openly for the SPD experienced a uniquely uncomfortable life in comparison to his/her socialist graduate comrades in other Western European states. Robert Michels, who had been active in both the Italian and German socialist movements before 1914, readily and rather bitterly described the differences.¹⁹ Many graduates' careers were abruptly terminated because civil-service posts (including academic jobs) were prohibited to socialists, forcing them to become journalists or lawyer/journalists. And this could be contrasted with Austria where professors were free to join the Socialist Party and helped stimulate a famous circle of Austro-Marxist intellectuals (Karl Renner, Otto Bauer, Max Adler, Gustav Eckstein and Rudolf Hilferding).²⁰

Religion was another crucial variable of associational life. Both Weber and Gramsci understood this, citing the intimate relationship between the clergy and the faithful in sectarian Protestant Britain and North America as stimulating rich voluntary organisational and anti-statist traditions. And these, in the writings of each, are contrasted with Russia, where a convergence of state and church stifled the growth of voluntary associations.

Jews always played a disproportionate role in German and other European socialist movements. In Germany and central Europe incomplete assimilation was caused by the *numerus clausus* in universities and the closure of more conservative professions. And just because of these informal and formal restrictions, the Jewish intelligentsia were more likely to be socialised within the oppositional or critical cultures of the newer or less prestigious professions and thereby be more available and receptive to socialist movements. Anti-clericalism, as an associational phenomenon, partially derived from reactions to the threat of clerical organisation, and it inspired much of the language and substance of socialist politics in Belgium, France, Italy and Spain. Albeit in the last case the rationalist generation of new intellectuals at the turn of the century (the generation of 1898) were anticlerical radicals rather than socialists or anarchists. But even if the anarchists or socialists did not attract large numbers

of intellectuals before 1914, the Barcelona libertarians did recruit some important artists, poets and educationalists.²¹ But religious life generated other outcomes as well. Anti-clericalism, as an associational phenomenon, partially derived from reactions to the threat of clerical organisation, and it inspired much of the language and substance of socialist politics in France, Italy and Spain.

In France the Paris Commune's bloody aftermath destroyed a generation of self-educated socialist artisans; university graduates after 1871 played important roles in the states' socialist and libertarian movements. In four of the five parties which defined the splintered movement before the creation of a unified socialist party (SFIO) in 1905, classically trained journalists and free professionals – masters of anti-clerical rhetoric – held sway. Even in 'workerist' anarchism and syndicalism the 'enlightened' journalist/lawyer, attracted to notions of rationalist libertarian education and culture, dominated national and, at times, local organisations.²² The Independent Socialist parliamentary group, led by Jaures and other *normaliens*, is perhaps the most extraordinary example of the dominance of high intellectuals in the French socialist movement.²³ Here, too, the language of rationalism and anti-clericalism popularised their appeal.

The German case should be placed between the anti-clerical and Anglo-American examples. Most early recruits to the SPD were male skilled Protestant workers from areas where popular involvement in the church and its influence on local social life had already weakened. Both the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant state churches were more conservative than British churches. And as in Catholic dominated countries, socialist associationalism stimulated an important Christian largely Catholic labour movement, with strongholds in the Ruhr and the Rhine industrial areas. Unlike their British counterparts the Protestant churches were much closer to the state, and the Kaiser, as their temporal leader, made sure that radical or reformist clergy were kept in line. Germany also lacked a vigorous free or dissenting church movement, that was so important in stimulating British Christian Socialism, which in turn provided leaders and cadre to the SDF and the ILP; and British socialists with their political languages, political apprenticeships and vital ties to Liberal dissenting and Anglican educated middle-class sympathisers.

The failure of a middle-class based Christian Socialism in

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Germany highlights an important difference with the British case. However, in Scandinavia the dissenting tradition seems to have played a role analogous with Britain's. In Sweden, for instance, the Lutheran Church allowed greater leeway within its walls than German Protestant churches but dissenters from Småland and Norrbotten were important socialist pioneers. Throughout Scandinavia the linkage between the powerful temperance movements and socialism opened another important avenue of influence with dissenting Protestantism.

Patterns of capitalist industrialisation also affected that key form of associationalism – trade-union organisation. Only in Germany, Britain, Belgium and Scandinavia were rates of unionisation sufficiently high for socialist or labourist representatives to be generated from the working class itself.²⁴ In this regard comparisons of neighbouring Belgium and the Netherlands are quite revealing. Whereas the highly unionised working-class Belgian party contained important rationalist intellectuals such as Vandervelde, Huysmans, Destré or De Brockère, only a small percentage of the entire intelligentsia joined the party. In the Netherlands, however, where trade unionism generally and worker representation in the party were far weaker, the weight and numbers of intellectuals within the party as well as their influence on the intelligentsia outside its boundaries was that much greater. The characterisation of the Dutch party as being the party of Protestant pastors, lawyers and students may be exaggerated but not that far from the truth.

Linkages between socialist movements and trade unions were affected by developments within elite and popular politics, and as John Breuilly has shown, liberalism preserved its dominance in Britain for example longer than in Germany because of a series of unique cultural and political factors.²⁵ Nevertheless, by the early 1900s there are many similarities between British and German working-class parliamentary representation.²⁶ Twenty-three out of twenty-six of the Labour Representation Committee's successful candidates in 1906 were trade-union officials, and in the much larger SPD *Reichstagfraktion* of 1903 fifty-three out of eighty-one deputies were similarly employed.²⁷

It is certainly true that while in Britain the rather small ILP gained its influence from locally negotiated agreements with Lib-Lab trade unions whose membership was counted in hundreds of thousands, the German SPD and the Free Trade Unions adopted

a more openly socialist approach, in reaction to the authoritarian state which repressed a liberal alternative. However, it is with low rates of unionisation in France and Italy, where combined socialist and syndicalist membership never exceeded 8 per cent, that one finds a radically different social composition of parliamentary representatives.²⁸

If we compare the Germans and the Italians the differences are extremely revealing. While nearly 88 per cent of the *Gruppo Parlamentare Socialista* (GPS) in 1903 were university graduates, only 16 per cent of the German deputies were. Of the twenty-four graduates in the GPS, nine were professors – three times the grand total for the entire Reichstag in that year!²⁹

But one should not overlook the differences between the German and British labour movements. For at least half a century before its neighbours, Britain possessed a massive labour movement of trade unionists. The ability of the British labour movement to create an impressive network of co-operatives and trade societies by the middle of the nineteenth century, capable of producing a leadership largely independent of middle-class intellectuals, inspired foreign observers. Royden Harrison quite rightly underlines the deep interest which the British trade-union movement inspired in the European intelligentsia who lived in, passed through or were interested in Britain before 1914. Bernstein, Lenin and Sorel all studied it, and the Webbs' theoretical industrial sociology is based very closely upon its history.³⁰

Social spaces

We also need to know a great deal more about how socialist ideology was understood by the self-educated.³¹ It is probably true that socialist ideologies were reinterpreted by trade unionists to serve pragmatic needs. For example, even if the Berlin party school of the SPD was run by such radical intellectuals as Mehring and Luxemburg, students assimilated their methods of study rather than their ideological passions.³² And what we know of the books read by the working-class rank and file and trade-union officials in the SPD seems to show that they were largely unaffected by the Marxist texts produced by party intellectuals. Surveys of worker libraries and of memoirs of leading trade unionists demonstrate that the books that made them politically aware were few in number;

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perhaps Bebel's vulgarisation of positivist Marxism, *Women under Socialism*, Edward Bellamy's technocratic utopian projections and Lassalle's pamphlets were the limit of their political reading. But these were overtaken by a steady diet of 'penny dreadfuls' and occupational manuals, although Kautsky's and other intellectuals' prolific production may have been more seriously considered by what William Guttsman terms the SPD's 'functionaries' democracy' – the thousands of white-collar officials and enthusiasts whom the party needed by 1910.³³ It should also be noted that the depth or range of reading by other nations' socialist publics did not vary greatly from that of Germany, even if pamphlets by Lassalle or Bebel were replaced by those of Morris or Ferri; Bellamy, who needs greater investigation, was a universal favourite.³⁴

We lack studies which reveal how cultural and intellectual networks of the 'certified' and the popular encountered each other. What are required, I would argue, are synthetic monographs which join together evidence from working-class clubs and schools with works, like the suggestive contributions of Régis Debray and Raymond Williams, which focus upon the middle-class literary café, the university, the dinner-table or friendship circle.³⁵

One might distinguish the Latin 'coffee-house' culture of French, Italian or Austro-Hungarian intelligentsias from the Anglo-Saxon 'dissenting club' or earnest confab of dinner-table journalists and university collectivists, as crucially important and little studied nationally specific sites where various traditions, and formal or informal knowledges, were circulated and cross-fertilised. Both popular and 'certified' networks served as party 'universities', labour exchanges for intellectuals or apprentice brainworkers and informal 'policy-making units'.

The lower middle class

Finally, a cross-national comparison would have to trace the ways in which the lower middle class of white-collar teachers and state functionaries, as well as clerks and commercial travellers, intervened within pre-1914 socialism. Here, too, influence was largely determined by specific national historical and cultural legacies, although the flexibility of party tactics become an important variable as they established their own organisational momentum about 1914.

In Germany the white-collar middle class – the *Angestellten* and