

Summaries

Stefan Berger, Ways and Aberrations of Democratic Socialism. The Attitude of Labour Party and SPD towards Capitalism during the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

The British Labour Party and the German Social Democratic Party have certainly made a significant contribution towards the programmatic orientation of Social Democracy at an international level during its 150 years of history. Outlining the politics of both parties from the nineteenth century to the present, I will examine and compare the programmatic approaches of both Labour Party and SPD towards democratic socialism and their role in the context of international Social Democracy. In doing so, I will focus on tensions resulting from two basic aspects of socialist programmatic thought and political objectives: There is firstly the programmatic ambition of overcoming capitalism and secondly the aim to democratise politics and all aspects of life. These tensions were fundamental for the history of Social Democracy during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Bernhard Degen, Social Democracy in the Electoral System of Switzerland

Swiss Social Democracy could not make its mark as a pioneer of democracy. A bourgeois and petty-bourgeois democratic movement had already taken this position long before the political organisation of the workers' movement was founded. In 1848, universal, equal and direct suffrage had been introduced at the national level. Its flaws, which were to a large extent caused by local and regional interests, did not qualify as a sufficient basis for agitating and campaigning on the part of the workers' movement. The first-past-the-post system reduced the chances of workers' organisations to succeed politically and repeatedly assigned them the thankless role as junior partner of left-leaning bourgeois parties. Thus, for a long time there was no prospect of establishing an autonomous Social Democratic party. In addition, Switzerland during the nineteenth century was politically segmented. Hence, a critical mass to establish a sustainable party organisation was lacking in most places. After two failed attempts Social Democrats, together with other minorities, were finally able to enforce proportional representation after the end of the First World War. Due to the new electoral system, they gained more seats in the National Assembly, yet their votes still remained under 30 %.

Bernd Faulenbach, The Revolutions of 1989/90 and their Impact on German Social Democracy in the European Context

Hitherto, academic and scholarly discourses on »structural changes« in Western European societies during the 1980s and 1990s have been running parallel but not connected to discussions about the final crisis of Soviet Communism, the 1989/90 revolutions in Eastern Europe and their repercussions. The article discusses contemporary Social Democratic attempts of dealing with both aspects. During the 1980s, the SPD opposed neoliberalism, yet took up impulses from the alternative political movements. The party tried to continue its successful »Ostpolitik« (politics towards the East), but struggled to integrate dissident and oppositional movements in East Central Europe into its policy model. Against this background, it is not surprising that Social Democratic reactions on the revolutions of 1989/90 were inconsistent. Only a few Social Democrats, among them Willy Brandt and other older party representatives as well as the newly founded Social Democracy in the GDR, made effective attempts to use the new opportunities for action. Yet both failed in putting a Social Democratic mark on the revolutionary events. The simultaneity of very different requirements during the 1980s and 1990s overstrained Social Democracy and its concept of politics to some extent.

Joris Gijzenbergh, The Semantics of »Democracy« in Social Democratic Parties. Netherlands, Germany and Sweden, 1917–1939

This article examines how Social Democrats in the Netherlands, Germany and Sweden during the interwar years understood and used the concept of »democracy«. The focus is on the Dutch SDAP and its view of its sister parties, while the SPD and the SAP are studied for comparison. The article studies how they defined »democracy« and related phrases, when and why they stressed varying meanings and how they used their vocabulary in order to advance their political agenda. In this respect, this article differs from literature that analyses how much value Social Democrats attributed to the parliamentary regime. Advocates of revolution and reform not only talked differently about a democratic state form and a democratic society, but also discussed a democratic way of life. Within these spheres, Social Democrats referred to numerous types of democracy. Their internal debate about democracy entailed more than a choice for or against parliamentary institutions to gain power.

Susanne Götze, The »Parti socialiste unifié« (PSU) in the 1960s. A New Socialist Approach beyond SFIO and PCF as a »Third Way« during the Cold War

From radical left-wing to revisionist concepts: The French »Parti socialiste unifié« (PSU) was a party betwixt and between. Its heterogeneous members dared to try a completely new left-wing project in light of the crisis of traditional parties such as SFIO and PCF after the end of the fourth republic in 1958. Since 1960, disappointed Communists, Trotskyists, Socialists, Council Communists and Mendesists took up the challenge of re-defining socialism to avoid the mistakes made by the traditional Left. Thus, PSU members formed an intellectual »laboratory« prior to the May revolt in 1968. Despite internal conflicts – which hindered the party's success for more than 30 years – the members of the PSU were unanimous in their stand against colonialism, centralism, authoritarianism and capitalism. Neither the Western welfare system nor Soviet »real socialism« found the PSU's approval. By championing a position in between, the party tried to establish a modern concept of socialist thought as a »third way« in Europe during the Cold War.

Joachim C. Häberlen, Comrades Getting Their Knives out? On the Disintegration of the Left Proletarian Milieu in Leipzig at the End of the Weimar Republic

Using the example of the workers' movement in Leipzig, the article examines how the »left proletarian« milieu at the end of the Weimar Republic eroded. I will analyse social practices at the grassroots level and develop hypotheses about how the disintegration of the milieu is to be explained by looking at three different areas. Firstly, I discuss political violence in particular between Social Democrats and Communists. Secondly, I analyse the repercussions of the contested issue of the party-politicisation of the working-class milieu. Thirdly, the role of trust and mistrust between both parties of the workers' movement is investigated. It becomes evident that SPD and KPD had diametrically opposed ideas about political practice and thus also about political participation, which made any cooperation between the parties against the National Socialists particularly difficult.

Lutz Häfner, »Comrades«? Conceptions of Socialism and Political Practice of the Russian Socialist Revolutionary Party and Its Relationship to the German SPD, 1902–1914

The »Party of Social Revolutionaries« (PSR) pursued a concept of socialism that differed from the ideas of other European Social Democratic parties. It was neither an avant-garde organisation of professional revolutionaries nor a proletarian mass party. It claimed to be a party of all working people: labourers, farmers and intellectuals. There were various reasons why the PSR especially approached farmers, including the low level of indus-

trialisation and the social structure of the predominantly agrarian Russian Empire. It is fair to assume that the knowledge about the »agrarian question« – which was highly debated in the German SPD in the mid-1890s and alienated farmers from the party – also influenced the PSR. The PSR programme foregrounded anti-capitalism, socialisation of land and terrorism as important means in the political fight against the absolute ruler. Until the revolution of 1905, the Russian Empire did not have a public sphere to speak of: neither the right of assembly, nor a parliament or an uncensored press. Other European countries and the international public, including the German SPD, showed understanding for the »propaganda of action« against high-ranking state representatives between 1902 and 1905, since they considered the autocracy of the Tsar as tyranny.

Harm Kaal, Constructing a Socialist Constituency. The Social Democratic Language of Politics in the Netherlands, c. 1890–1950

This article explores the language of politics of the Dutch »Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiderspartij« (SDAP) in election campaigns between 1894 and 1948. It challenges the dominant interpretation of the SDAP as the political representative of the working class. Long before the notion of »volkspartij« would become the hallmark of electoral politics, the social democrats tried to broaden their appeal by targeting specific occupational groups outside the working class, like farmers, shopkeepers and market gardeners. Moreover, from early on, the SDAP used religious discourse to lure voters away from the confessional parties. In the late 1930s, the party reformulated its political discourse. Its ambition to be a broad-based people's party from now on was underpinned by a practical, predominantly non-religious and non-Marxist, but nonetheless anti-capitalist language of politics that centred on the party's social-economic agenda and would remain dominant after the Second World War.

Philipp Kufferath, Networks as Strategic Alliances and Latent Resource. Left-wing Opposition within the Social Democratic Milieu and Its Attempts to Gain a Foothold after 1945

Between 1945 and 1960, the left-wing opposition within the Social Democratic milieu in the Federal Republic gained a foothold at the fringes of the party by using personal contacts and informal networks. The generation of those who had experienced resistance and exile from 1933 to 1945 and gained contacts during this period played a significant role in this context. Confidential circles, often based on personal friendships, were essential temporary strategic alliances to influence decision-making in the SPD and the trade unions behind the scenes. Other contacts served as a latent resource for some activists, which could be activated in specific situations for political agendas or for personal purposes. Both a learning process and habitual and political tensions evolved between the generations. The centralistic structure of the party and the political culture of the Cold War undermined a democratic, controversial debate. They also hindered the cooperation between individuals with a high theoretical and political profile, small circles and their journals. Left-wing socialist networks were challenged in particular by the question of how to deal with Communism and by the antagonism between own convictions and loyalty to the party. These challenges were answered in many different ways.

Wim van Meurs, Democracy or Socialism? Peasant Parties in Southeastern Europe as Supporters of Democratisation at the Turn of the Century. A Sketch

During the interwar period, large peasants' parties existed both in Romania and Bulgaria. The Romanian peasants' party implemented socio-economic reforms for the benefit of the rural population through parliamentary politics, whereas its Bulgarian counterpart

championed authoritarian radicalisation. This happened although farmers in Romania had to face an even harder economic situation, while the expansion of suffrage since the late nineteenth century took about the same course in both countries and Russian agrarian populist ideas influenced politicians in both Bucharest and Sofia. The article argues that neither an intellectual history approach nor the agrarian system or the economic situation can fully explain these divergent developments. Key factors were in fact the completely different repercussions of the First World War in both countries and the conflicts of national party politics: Romania emerged victorious from the war and thus completed the process of nation-state building. In this context the Liberals were the main political opponents of the peasants' party. Bulgaria, on the other hand, faced territorial losses and reparation payments. Here, the key line of political conflict ran between the peasants' movement and the Communists.

Thomas Oellermann, German Social Democracy in the First Czechoslovak Republic. The Labour Movement of a Minority

German Social Democracy in the Bohemian states and in the Czechoslovak Republic played a significant political role. After 1918 it was initially opposed to the newly founded state of Czechs and Slovaks, yet it later changed its position and was then in principle willing to cooperate. From 1929 onwards it participated in government. Even when the Sudeten German Party was on the rise after 1933, German Social Democrats declared their support for the Czechoslovak Republic and for democracy. Historiography has focused almost exclusively on the relationship between Social Democracy as a party of a national minority and the state established by the national majority groups. Thus, research has largely overlooked the fact that German Social Democracy in the Bohemian states was a typical labour movement with various organisations and associations. This article offers insights into the internal workings of this movement by drawing on different aspects. The debate on the integration of women into the labour movement associations illustrates how the claim for emancipation was put into effect. The failed integration of associations of working-class footballers underlines that the German labour movement had difficulties to accept new cultural expressions and types of activity. This is also true for the efforts of the proletarian teetotalism movement which are discussed at the end of the article. Apart from the question of how German Social Democracy positioned itself as the political force of a national minority towards the Czechoslovak state, the example of the Gent system shows that this complicated relationship played a significant role on many levels.

Mike Schmeitzner, Ambivalences of Progress. The Fascination of Proletarian Dictatorship during the Democratic Revolution, 1918–1920

Germany's defeat in the First World War led to a revolutionary reorganisation in late 1918, which was initially supported by both independent and majority Social Democrats of the USPD and MSPD. Their objectives of democratisation and socialisation of key industries could not, however, be easily realised due to the results of the elections for the National Assembly. While the MSPD entered a coalition with democratic bourgeois parties and, consequently, had to lower its ambitions in questions of economic policy, a growing number of USPD members became radicalised while in opposition. Disappointing election results and the overly harsh domestic measures of the government and its military policy revived the vision of the »pure« dictatorship of the proletariat as it was outlined by Marx and Engels and propagated by the Bolsheviks in Russia – and this happened even in some strongholds of the MSPD. Yet how this dictatorship should look like was a highly controversial matter. But this did not diminish the fascination emanating from the concept of »proletarian democracy«, as the Reichstag elections in 1920 showed:

Almost half of the organised socialist workers voted for some form of proletarian government, while only the other half championed parliamentary democracy.

Jürgen Schmidt, Civil Society, Socio-economic Cleavages and Social-moral Milieu. Labour Movement and Labour Parties in Germany, 1860–1914

The article examines structures, attitudes, values, culture and affiliation to the social democratic labour movement at two levels, in an attempt to do justice to various historiographical approaches to the history of German Social Democracy during the nineteenth century and to the complex development of a socio-moral milieu in the same period. In the first part, the early socialist and social democratic labour movement up to the 1870s is analysed from the conceptual perspective of civil society. It is shown that the labour movement was characterised by the commitment to citizenship and political engagement and by a support for the political participation of excluded groups of society. The second part describes, analyses and interprets the social democratic milieu in a local case study for the time after 1890. Here, the mixture of cooperation and conflict between the key players of the milieu – trade unions and party movement – as well as socio-economic fault lines are taken into account. The article raises two fundamental questions: what was the place of the social democratic labour movement in nineteenth-century Germany? And how did the milieu of socialist labour develop its stability, which lasted right up to 1914?

Jens Späth, Antifascism after 1945? Italian Socialists in a Western European Perspective

In a first approach we can understand antifascism as a key paradigm by which Socialists define themselves. Moreover, it served as a guideline of action for a democratisation movement from an international and transnational perspective. By taking Italian Socialists between 1945 and 1963 as an example for developments in Western Europe, the article will verify these assumptions. The »Partito Socialista Italiano« is particularly interesting, since it was the only socialist party in Western Europe which did not abandon a united front with the Communists after the beginning of the Cold War. I will firstly discuss the experiences of certain Socialists from the time before 1945 to illustrate ruptures and continuities of discourse and action. Secondly, I will examine the time after the Second World War, when a new definition of antifascism became necessary and the remembrance of the fight against Fascist regime gained more and more importance in Italy's political culture. Finally, by comparing these findings for Italy with German and French Socialists, they are situated in a broader Western European context.

Christoph Stamm, The Political Situation in 1932. Unknown Minutes of Two Meetings of the SPD Party Committee

Both documents contain reports on meetings of the SPD party committee from 4 May and 20 September 1932, which are previously unknown to researchers. The party committee was the intersection between the central party leadership and regional party organisations and was supposed to foster the integration of different party wings. In the documents, issues predominantly discussed by Social Democrats are addressed: measures against mass unemployment, the policy of »toleration« vis-à-vis the Brüning cabinet, reactions towards the Papen government and the dismissal of the Prussian government in July 1932, as well as the relationship to the KPD and the fight against the ascending National Socialism. The party's work towards women is also illuminated, because the documents originate from this area. The documents contain details from the debate within the SPD by named contributors to the discussion, which provide hitherto unknown information. They also illustrate the depressing political atmosphere in which SPD leaders had to clarify their own position and sought for opportunities for action.

Kristian Steinnes, The European Turn and »Social Europe«. Northern European Social Democracy, 1950–1985

This contribution explores the changing character of social democracy in the post-war era by focusing on northern European Social Democrats up to the mid-1980s. During this period, Social Democrats adopted a more firmly pro-Europe position and launched initiatives designed to facilitate a social Europe agenda. However, European integration was ambivalent to Social Democratic parties, especially to reluctant northern Europeans, because it was perceived to challenge their policies and achievements at a national level. Yet the supranational structure was also believed to improve the possibilities to pursue social policies at a European level. By examining the nature, causes and the conditions under which European Social Democratic parties and politicians turned to Europe, the contribution demonstrates that the European turn was rooted in a complex mix of increased market interdependence, reformed social democratic ideology and the bringing about of a supranational democratic polity.

Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, »Class« in the Development of British Labour Party Ideology, 1983–1997

The nature of the »modernisation« of the British Labour Party between 1983 and 1997 has been controversial. Left-wing Labour politicians and some historians have claimed that modernisation involved the abandonment of Labour's traditional working-class constituency, of »class« analysis and of collectivist policies. This article challenges these claims. It analyses Labour Party rhetoric about class in propaganda, speeches and private papers. First, it outlines how modernisers thought that the British class system was changing, analysing the sources they drew on and the tactical considerations that influenced their account of social change. It then shows how Labour's constituency was re-imagined in public rhetoric and private debates; though there was a shift away from »class« imagery, this did not mean the end of a political project built around improving the lives of the majority: a majoritarian constituency was still envisioned, but was described by other means, in particular the language of »ordinariness«.