Cobden as Educator: The Free-Trade Internationalism of Eduard Bernstein, 1899–1914

R. A. FLETCHER

BY THE 1890s MANY GERMANS were all too painfully aware that Bismarck's answer to the German question had raised almost as many problems as it had settled. One solution already being touted was that of the irrationalist, antimodernist "conservative revolution." In 1874 Friedrich Nietzsche had published a meditation entitled *Schopenhauer as Educator*. In 1890 a different yet not unrelated sort of cultural pessimist named Julius Langbehn published an extremely popular and influential polemic entitled *Rembrandt as Educator*. In its thirty-ninth edition within two years, Langbehn's passionate, incoherent denunciation of bourgeois values and industrial society called for a cultural regeneration in a wholesale return to the uniquely Germanic values of an idealized past. Following Langbehn's success, a number of books and brochures appeared, offering as "educators," either seriously or satirically, Bismarck, Moses, Moltke, and others. The search for popular mentors persisted at least until 1922, when Martin Havenstein's *Nietzsche as Educator* seemingly completed the circle.[1] All of these formed part of the quest for cultural and spiritual values that lay at the heart of the conservative revolutionaries' attempts to confront the problems of modernity in their German manifestation.

At the other end of the political spectrum, in working-class and socialist circles, a similar debate had long been in progress. By 1890, when the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) emerged from its enforced semi-underground existence, the working-class movement appeared to have decided in favor of a Marxist revolutionary response, which accepted industrialism while aiming at the destruction of bourgeois society. During the 1880s the three individuals most responsible for the triumph of revolutionary Marxism as the dominant and official ideology of the SPD were August Bebel, the party chairman, Karl Kautsky, the premier ideologue of the German party and of the Second International, and Eduard

Research for this paper was sponsored by the German Academic Exchange Service, the Austrian Ministry for Science and Research, and the Commonwealth of Australia Postgraduate Research Fellowship scheme. The author wishes to thank Professor Fritz Fischer of Hamburg for his inspiration and constant encouragement. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Fifty-Second Congress of the Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science, held at Macquarie University, May 1982.

[1] See Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1961), 116. For a more recent, sociologically oriented study of the politics of the radical right in imperial Germany, see Geoff Eley's *Reshaping the German Right: Radical Nationalism and Political Change after Bismarck* (New Haven, 1980).

Bernstein, a former Berlin bank clerk who functioned as editor in chief of the illegal, emigre party newspaper, the *Sozial-Demokrat*. In 1888 Bernstein had been forced to leave Zurich for London, where he remained in exile until his return to Germany in 1901. By the late 1890s, however, Bernstein had ceased to be a revolutionary Marxist and had nailed his colors to the mast as a revisionist—what we now call a democratic socialist. Among Continental socialists, Bernstein's apparent apostasy (his position of trust within the movement was such that Engels had named him as executor of his will) created a furor that was no less strident or intense than that prompted by Langbehn's work. Bernstein's principal attempt to offer a literary justification of his heresies was a book that appeared in 1899 under the title *The Presuppositions of Socialism and the Tasks of Social Democracy* and long remained the "bible of revisionism."[2]

Bernstein's conversion to a peaceful and gradualist path to socialism without doubt left most of his German comrades bewildered to the point of incomprehension. Typical was the reaction of Lily Braun, a not unsympathetic or uneducated socialist feminist on the right wing of the SPD: on listening to his first public lecture after his return to Germany, her response was a dumbfounded "Was will der Mensch?" ("What on earth is the man driving at?"). The only explanation that made any sense to the vast majority of Bernstein's contemporaries—German and otherwise, friend and foe alike—was that his long years of exile in London had either addled his brain or distorted his vision, leading him to view the world through a Fabian, a Labourite, or a Liberal lens. Such critics were on the right track, although only recently has the lens in question been correctly identified as that of mid- and late-Victorian British radicalism. By considering Bernstein's views on the tariff question, together with his frequently remarked leanings toward neo-Kantianism (still the most commonly alleged source of his indebtedness to liberal ideals), I hope to demonstrate that the thought of Eduard Bernstein—founder and chief ideologue of German and international revisionism, foremost stormy petrel of the Second International, evolutionary socialist and ancestor of the principal socialist alternative to Marxism-Leninism—was in important respects not only fundamentally more British than German but also thoroughly imbued with the values of Cobdenite radicalism.

Three obstacles stand in the way of this enterprise. One is the virtual impossibility of offering an adequate definition of nineteenth-century British radicalism, which was neither a political party nor even a faction so much as a generally moralistic,

[2] Following the convention of the time, the term "revisionist" is here used (erroneously but conveniently) as a factional label to describe all those elements that made up the right wing of pre-1914 German Social Democracy; the term thus embraces theoretical revisionists like Bernstein, ethical socialists or neo-Kantians like Kurt Eisner, south German reformists like Georg von Vollmar, and, most numerous of all, theoretically indifferent or self-consciously atheoretical party practitioners like Ignaz Auer, Gustav Noske, and Friedrich Ebert as well as imperialists like Joseph Bloch. On Bernstein, see Peter Gay, *The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism: Eduard Bernstein's Challenge to Marx* (Collier edn., New York, 1962); Pierre Angel, *Edouard Bernstein et l'évolution du socialisme allemand* (Paris, 1962); Bo Gustafsson, *Marxismus und Revisionismus: Eduard Bernsteins Kritik des Marxismus und ihre ideengeschichtlichen Voraussetzungen*, trans. Holger Heide (Frankfurt, 1972); Thomas Meyer, *Bernsteins konstruktiver Sozialismus* (Berlin, 1977); Horst Heimann and Thomas Meyer, eds., *Bernstein und der demokratische Sozialismus* (Berlin, 1978); and Herbert Frei, *Fabianismus und Bernsteinscher Revisionismus, 1884–1900* (Bern, 1979).

often patriotic, and pre-eminently critical frame of mind deploring the lack of principle and ideas in politics. Even Cobden and Bright were not always of one mind, and there were many issues on which Victorian and Edwardian radicals remained deeply divided, a notable example being the fissure between noninterventionists and liberationists.[3] A second difficulty arises from Bernstein's frequent denials of the charge that he contemplated the world through an English monocle. Like E. D. Morel in Britain (after 1908 this somewhat naive but highly influential radical publicist, later prominent in the Union of Democratic Control and as an architect of Labour Party foreign policy, worked to avoid war by appeasing Germany and destroying the Foreign Office "dictatorship" over British foreign policy), Bernstein was widely condemned as being nothing less than a foreign agent; his detractors ranged from patriotic Reichstag deputies to fellow revisionists.[4] If he hoped to retain any political effectiveness in Wilhelmine Germany, Bernstein had no choice but to play down his Anglophilia and his indebtedness to British models. Here his denials are thus discounted as being essentially the product of political expediency. Finally, it must be admitted, intellectual influence is extremely difficult to prove. I could point to Bernstein's British contacts, to the judgments of his contemporaries, and to the results of recent scholarship,[5] but the method I have followed here is to allow Bernstein to speak for himself, for the internal evidence from his own writings is sufficiently compelling to suggest the existence of strong parallels between Bernstein and the stock in trade of Cobdenite radicalism.

On questions of tariff policy—more than in his attitudes toward the problems of nationality, militarism, or even imperialism—Bernstein's unequivocal condemnation of protectionism and his sweeping endorsement of free trade treated Marx as an irrelevancy to be bypassed and ignored. Marx and Engels contemplated tariff policy almost exclusively from the standpoint of its probable bearing on the revolution, inclining strongly to free trade precisely because it seemed to them to be natural to capitalism and most likely to effect the earliest and full maturation of the capitalist system.[6] Since Bernstein had long ceased to regard socialist revolution as practicable or even desirable, and since he had also had to consider the question in the context of imperialism, a force that Marx had not foreseen, that Bernstein and Marx were at cross purposes on this issue is hardly surprising. In matters of tariff

[3] See John W. Derry, *The Radical Tradition* (London, 1967), vii–xi; A. J. P. Taylor, *The Trouble Makers: Dissent over Foreign Policy, 1792–1939* (London, 1957), 11–24; Michael Howard, *War and the Liberal Conscience* (London, 1978), 46–72; Keith Robbins, *John Bright* (London, 1979), 101–02, 107, 137, 171; and D. W. Bebbington, *The Nonconformist Conscience: Chapel and Politics, 1870–1914* (London, 1982), 106–26.

[4] See Catherine Cline, *E. D. Morel, 1873–1924: The Strategies of Protest* (Belfast, 1980), 68–97; and Francis L. Carsten, *War against War: British and German Radical Movements in the First World War* (London, 1982), 30–31, 176–77.

[5] I have attempted to explore these analytical approaches in my "Bernstein in Britain: Revisionism and Foreign Affairs," *International History Review*, 1 (1979): 349–75.

[6] Hans-Christoph Schröder, *Sozialismus und Imperialismus: Die Auseinandersetzung der deutschen Sozialdemokratie mit dem Imperialismusproblem und der "Weltpolitik" vor 1914* (2d rev. edn., Bonn, 1975), 48, 79–89; Shlomo Avineri, *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx* (Cambridge, 1968), 252; and Tom Kemp, *Theories of Imperialism* (London, 1967), 8–29.

policy Bernstein sought inspiration, therefore, not from Marx but—like Marx himself—from classical economic liberalism. Generally much more explicit in opposing protectionism than in expounding free trade, a doctrine he approached more from the standpoint of international trade than from that of national economics, Bernstein consistently revealed a perspective that was, on the whole, less economic than political and ethical, as indeed Richard Cobden's had been.[7]

On socioeconomic grounds Bernstein condemned protectionism as inherently reactionary ("a crude expedient, inherited from a time when scientific administration was practically non-existent"), unrelated to capitalism, and utterly indefensible. That it had found favor among the bourgeois parties in Germany and elsewhere merely registered the increasingly reactionary stance of these parties, which had lost the courage "to stand up for their former ideals."[8] That its introduction coincided with a great upsurge in German trade and industry was no argument for protection: free-trade economies had also prospered and German prosperity might have been greater still under a free-trade system, since the recent growth of the German economy had largely been due to the achievement of national unity, technical progress, population increase, and the great mineral wealth of Germany. Protectionism could be granted some measure of economic validity only during the initial take-off stage of industrialization, but he confessed to skepticism even in regard to the theory of educational duties or teething tariffs that Friedrich List had advocated.[9] The British experience had, Bernstein believed, demonstrated beyond doubt that free trade was superior to protectionism at all stages of economic development.[10]

In essence, protectionism meant agrarian protectionism, for German industry generally had no need of protective tariffs. But neither agriculture nor industry stood to gain from this system. Economically, it was of no use to agriculture; protectionism did not increase grain production, it did not effectively counter foreign competition, it did not increase agricultural profits, and it did not promote agrarian rationalization. By inflating rents, interest rates, and prices, protectionism functioned as a crisis-producing doctrine of the first magnitude. Although protec-

[7] F. H. Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace: Theory and Practice in the History of Relations between States* (Cambridge, 1963), 96–97; Bernard Semmel, *The Rise of Free Trade Imperialism* (Cambridge, 1970), 162–63; and John A. Hobson, *Richard Cobden: The International Man* (new edn., London, 1968), 36–43. On the development of Cobdenite radicalism to 1914, see the important articles by Peter Cain: "Capitalism, War, and Internationalism in the Thought of Richard Cobden," *British Journal of International Studies*, 5 (1979): 229–47, "International Trade and Development in the Work of J. A. Hobson before 1914," *History of Political Economy*, 11 (1979): 406–24, and "J. A. Hobson, Cobdenism, and the Radical Theory of Economic Imperialism, 1898–1914," *Economic History Review*, 31 (1978): 565–84.

[8] Bernstein, "German Professors and Protectionism," *Contemporary Review*, 86 (1904): 31, and *Protokoll über die Verhandlungen des Parteitages der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands, abgehalten zu Bremen, 1904* [hereafter, *Bremen Protokoll*] (Berlin, 1904), 229. Also see his "Deutschland als Konkurrent Englands," *Die Neue Zeit* [hereafter, *NZ*], 14 (1895–96), 2: 757–58. Bernstein demonstrated protectionism's irrelevance to capitalism by contrasting Britain as "the bastion of free trade" with Russia as "the bulwark of protective tariffs and monopolies"; Bernstein, "Kreta und russische Gefahr," *NZ*, 15 (1896–97): 17.

[9] Bernstein, "The Growth of German Exports," *Contemporary Review*, 84 (1903): 785–86, "Zum Kampf gegen die Zollschraube," *Sozialistische Monatshefte* [hereafter, *SM*] (1901), 2: 688, "Was treibt England zum Reichszollverein?" *ibid.*, (1904), 2: 549, and "German Professors and Protectionism," 18–20.

[10] Bernstein, "Zum Kampf gegen die Zollschraube," 689, "Englands Wirtschaftsentwicklung im letzten Jahrzehnt," *SM* (1904), 2: 813, "Die internationale Politik der Sozialdemokratie," *ibid.* (1909), 2: 621, and *Die englische Gefahr und das deutsche Volk* (Berlin, 1911), 40.

tionism served a legitimate aim in that it professed to enhance the competitiveness of domestic grain production, the best that could be said of it was that it was the wrong remedy. Bernstein denied that protective tariffs bestowed any worthwhile benefits on industry and trade. The alleged advantages of protectionism (such as those stemming from cartellization and dumping) could not apply equally to all branches of industry. Indeed, some trades could not benefit at all from protection, and quite a few were even harmed by its apparently successful application in others. Bernstein was particularly critical of the benefits that protectionism allegedly accorded to export industry, whose unlimited expansion he in any case declined to accept as an unqualified blessing under all circumstances. For Germany's strongest export industries were either unprotected or more harmed than helped by protective duties. Citing recent trade statistics, he argued that the greatest increase in German exports had taken place under the Caprivi system, when relatively free trade had prevailed, and in the face of economic recession.[11]

If protectionism offered any substantive beneficial export incentives, their value was strictly limited by the necessity of maintaining a fine balance between foreign and domestic sales. The more one exported at dumping prices, in other words, the more one was obliged to sell or raise prices on a domestic market that, even under monopolistic conditions, was not infinitely elastic. In any event, such advantages, whether real or imagined, were largely irrelevant, for competitiveness on the world market was determined above all by "technical science, [which] knows so far neither protective duties nor duties on exports." Moreover, Bernstein argued, protectionism entailed clearly identifiable and serious economic disadvantages. Not only did it create an unfavorable trade balance but it also fostered "monopolistic positions of the worst sort" and a high-cost economy. It strained domestic consumption to the utmost, subsidized inefficiency, and prevented industrial rationalization.[12]

Although it might help some people brought to the point of economic ruin by foreign competition, protectionism "always enriches people who need no help at all, at the cost of the masses who are grievously needy." Not only did protectionism bring higher prices, lower living standards, and fewer employment opportunities for the masses, but it also, by so burdening the working classes and restricting consumer purchasing power, simultaneously transferred resources from the legitimate satisfaction of broad human needs to the indulgence of minority whims and fancies. To this extent it was socially as well as economically objectionable, indeed antiprogressive (*fortschrittsfeindlich*).[13] By "breeding capitalists at the expense of the masses" and artificially prolonging the superfluous and parasitic existence of uneconomic agrarians, protectionism in addition enabled "a reactionary social

[11] Bernstein, "Das Grundsätzliche in der Frage der Handelspolitik," *SM* (1911), 1: 429–30, "Prinzipielles zur Frage der Agrarzölle," *ibid.* (1901), 1: 189–90, "Zollfreier internationaler Verkehr," *ibid.* (1911), 2: 831, and "The Growth of German Exports," 780–82.

[12] Bernstein, "The Growth of German Exports," 782, 777, 783–87, "Prinzipielles zur Frage der Agrarzölle," 190, *Die englische Gefahr*, 41, "Das Grundsätzliche in der Frage der Handelspolitik," 430, and *Die neuen Reichssteuern* (Berlin, 1906), 62.

[13] Bernstein, "German Professors and Protectionism," 31, "Prinzipielles zur Frage der Agrarzölle," 189–90, "The Growth of German Exports," 777, 780, *Die neuen Reichssteuern*, 62, *Stenographische Berichte über die Verhandlungen des Deutschen Reichstages* [hereafter, Verhandlungen DR], December 11, 1905, p. 223, and "Zum Kampf gegen die Zollschraube," 687.

stratum to maintain its way of life and give effective representation to its political tendencies." To Bernstein it seemed almost as though the infamous Bülow tariff of 1902 had been specifically designed to encapsulate in concentrated form all of these social and economic evils.[14]

Since it could delay but not prevent the economic development of Germany, protectionism represented more a political than an economic menace. It had been fetched by Bismarck from the rubbish-heap of history not merely to shore up the tottering finances of a handful of his fellow Junkers but above all to preserve indefinitely an antiquated and moribund semi-feudal social order. In origin and nature German protectionism was animated fundamentally by "the political rather than the economical point of view, home policy rather than foreign." Since Bismarck, its proponents had appealed to a variety of specious but spurious arguments, such that not even a Listian national economist could in conscience endorse, to thrust on the German nation an autarkic economic policy that aimed primarily at insulating Germany from the world economy.[15]

Bernstein deplored this objective as "a utopia, and by no means an attractive utopia," for it was as undesirable as it was unattainable. Germany, like all great trading nations, had certainly become dependent on foreign markets and sources of supply, but this was "not at all an unmitigated evil" in that "mutual dependence of countries on one another" assured general prosperity, peace, and progress in civilization.[16] The autarkist arguments advanced by economists like Albert Schäffle, Karl Oldenberg, and Adolf Wagner were in fact "sheer romanticism." Out of political necessity they were based on hypothetical dangers that were, by their authors' own admission, highly improbable. This same political necessity had obliged Bismarck to extend protectionism to heavy industry and to persuade the bourgeois parties of the existence of a general threat to national prosperity and social order. Protectionism, which was "impossible to defend . . . by true economic arguments," was nothing if not a weapon designed to stem the social and political tide of industrialism by attacking democracy and socialism within Germany.[17]

The danger in this mercantilist atavism, in Bernstein's view, lay mainly in the serious obstacles it raised to domestic social and political reform. Foreign countries had nothing to fear from German protectionism unless they neglected public education, overextended themselves in imperial ventures, or also adopted protec-

[14] *Neue Hamburger Zeitung*, October 31, 1901; Bernstein, "Prinzipielles zur Frage der Agrarzölle," 189, "Zum Kampf gegen die Zollschraube," 687, and "The Growth of German Exports," 787; and Eduard Bernstein, ed., *Dokumente des Sozialismus* [hereafter, *DdS*], 2–3 (1903): 392.

[15] Bernstein, "German Professors and Protectionism," 27, 21, 25–27, 30, and *Die englische Gefahr*, 7. Bernstein believed that the views of conservative economists like Wagner, "if consistently acted upon, would lead to a Chinese state of civilization" and "aggravate the evils pointed out"; "German Professors and Protectionism," 25.

[16] Bernstein, "Prinzipielles zur Frage der Agrarzölle," 189, "Zum Kampf gegen die Zollschraube," 687–88, "The Growth of German Exports," 777, "German Professors and Protectionism," 20, 25, and "Allerhand moderner Spuk," *SM* (1912), 1: 344.

[17] Bernstein, "German Professors and Protectionism," 30, 21–31. On these men and their social and political views, see K. D. Barkin, *The Controversy over German Industrialization, 1890–1902* (Chicago, 1970), 131–85; and, on the social and political function of protectionism in Germany, see H. A. Winkler, ed., *Organisierter Kapitalismus* (Göttingen, 1974); Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Das Deutsche Kaiserreich, 1871–1918* (Göttingen, 1973); and Martin Kitchen, *The Political Economy of Germany, 1815–1914* (London, 1978).

tionism.[18] In the external environment protectionism might be inherently destructive, but it was not necessarily expansionist. Canada, for instance, discriminated heavily against British goods, but this was so far removed from any hostile political intent that in the event of an Anglo-German war Canada, like the whole of the English-speaking world, would almost certainly, and willingly, offer its wealth and its manhood in defense of Britain. In Germany, to be sure, protectionism had become part and parcel of a "system" of mutually supportive evils—militarism, navalism, colonialism, official religion, the Prussian class suffrage, residual feudal monarchism, and German federalism. This system stood "in all possible spheres in contradiction . . . to the great stream of natural evolutionary tendencies in modern international life."[19] The threat, however, was more psychological than real. Feeding on an atmosphere charged with fear and hostility, protectionism tended to create the very perils it purported to counteract. Although he admitted there was some danger of "destructive wars" in "the tendency of German chauvinists to imitate 'now that we are great' the faults of other nations," Bernstein saw this menace arising principally from misguided assumptions of political rivalry and animosity tending to endow unreal fears and imaginings with tangible form, so that in this sense, too, protectionism functioned "like drowning a man to save him from the shock of a dip."[20]

In the world economy protectionism represented a retarding factor, but it could not significantly impede the internationalization of trade and business on which the progress of humanity and the civilization of the globe so heavily depended. Despite the wave of protectionism that had engulfed the Continent and North America, free-trade Britain continued to prosper and even to expand its share of world trade.[21] Politically, however, the question had another, more threatening aspect. What Bernstein disliked most about protectionism was less its "false economic theories" *per se* than their destructive implications for relations among civilized states, especially for Anglo-German relations. He argued that this "perverse mode of economic thought" was tending toward the breakdown of economic internationalism and creating in its place artificial conflicts among nations. It confused the minds of whole peoples on the great issues facing humanity and supplanted the "uplifting sense of cultural community and the creative cooperation it produced" with a "stupidly barbarous mistrust among neighboring peoples" and "an insane superstition" regarding the true interests of nations.[22] Here, as elsewhere, Bernstein customarily identified Bismarck as the principal malefactor, but a large measure of responsibility also had to be borne, in Bernstein's view, by those

[18] Bernstein, "The Growth of German Exports," 787. For the Cobdenite core of this view, compare Donald Read, *Cobden and Bright: A Victorian Political Partnership* (London, 1967), 110.

[19] Bernstein, *Die neuen Reichssteuern*, 63–64, "Was treibt England zum Reichszollverein?" 536, *Die englische Gefahr*, 45, "Neue Englandhetze," *Vorwärts*, September 1, 1911, and "Der kanadisch-amerikanische Schicksalsschlag," *SM* (1911), 1: 301–11.

[20] Bernstein, "German Professors and Protectionism," 23, 30, 25, 29, and "The Growth of German Exports," 787.

[21] Bernstein, "Zum Kampf gegen die Zollschraube," 190, "Die internationale Politik der Sozialdemokratie," 621, and *Die englische Gefahr*, 39–40.

[22] Bernstein, *Die englische Gefahr*, 41.

economists who persistently interpreted Friedrich List in a one-sided, class-interested manner. The neo-Listians and the interest groups for whom they spoke had not merely distorted the teachings of their mentor by misusing his advocacy of temporary and selective teething tariffs to elevate neo-mercantilist protectionism to an absolute principle; just as they ignored List's view that "international free trade was the commercial system to be aimed at," they passed over in silence his enthusiastic admiration of the English model to misappropriate his "abusive attacks on perfidious England" on behalf of a "stupid Anglophobia," which they misrepresented to the German people as a product of economic necessity.[23] Insofar as this protectionism was also "the foster-mother of navalism and the colonial fever," socialists were obliged by their commitment to peace and internationalism to oppose it and to campaign for freedom of international commerce.[24]

BERNSTEIN'S DEFENSE OF FREE TRADE was more sketchy. Indeed, he once stated his belief that free trade needed no defense because its pacifist tendency was self-evident. Yet he did present a Cobdenite defense of what he preferred to call "duty-free international intercourse." A key factor in this defense was his endeavor to demonstrate empirically that free trade was the best available means of promoting international trade and general prosperity.[25] In bringing peoples together in mutually profitable commercial relations, free trade simultaneously created a host of common interests, bonds, and interdependent relationships of an intellectual and spiritual as well as material kind—in law, learning, art, politics, and so on. In time, these relationships, spanning the whole range of human experience and activities, would naturally become institutionalized. By fostering internationalism through prosperity,[26] "duty-free international intercourse" enhanced the spread of European culture, enlarged the area of human freedom, encouraged international understanding, and created a general interest in peace. As such, it functioned as an agent of social progress in the broadest and most meaningful sense.[27] By contrast,

[23] Bernstein, *Die neuen Reichssteuern*, 4–5, *Die englische Gefahr*, 5, 7, "German Professors and Protectionism," 18–22, and "Breakers Ahead," *The Nation*, September 2, 1911, p. 804.

[24] Bernstein, *Die neuen Reichssteuern*, 64, and "Das Grundsätzliche in der Frage der Handelspolitik," 428. Even after the Agadir crisis he professed to believe that the influence of the protectionist, imperialistic, and reactionary heavy industry lobby in Germany was "on the wane"; "Breakers Ahead," 804. And, although he recognized a reciprocal connection between such forces, only after the outbreak of the Great War did he acknowledge a causal or necessary connection between protectionism and imperialism, as, for example, in his description of imperialism as "to a high degree the product ... of protectionist reaction"; Bernstein, *Sozialdemokratische Völkerpolitik* (Leipzig, 1917), 114.

[25] Bernstein, *Sozialdemokratische Völkerpolitik*, 170. Thus he compared the trade and prosperity of the Australian colonies of Victoria (protectionist) and New South Wales (free trade) to demonstrate that the economy of the latter was in a much more flourishing condition; "Zum Kampf gegen die Zollschraube," 689.

[26] For a characteristically Cobdenite statement of this view, linking free trade with peace, retrenchment, and reform, see Bernstein, *Die neuen Reichssteuern*, 10.

[27] See Bernstein, "The Zeppelin Movement and German Nationalism," *The Nation*, August 22, 1908, p. 737, "Peace and King Edward's Visit," *ibid.*, February 20, 1909, 784, *Die englische Gefahr*, 84, "Das Grundsätzliche in der Frage der Handelspolitik," 430, *Sozialdemokratische Völkerpolitik*, 172–74, 177, *Völkerbund oder Staatenbund* (Berlin, 1918), 28, *Völkerrecht und Völkerpolitik* (Berlin, 1919), 184–85, "Zum Kampf gegen die Zollschraube," 687 n., *Verhandlungen DR*, December 12, 1903, p. 108, and "Das Finanzkapital und die Handelspolitik," *SM* (1911), 2: 955; and Haase, *Chemnitz Protokoll* (1912), 420. Although, like Cobden, Bernstein cherished free trade not just as an economic end in itself but also for its presumed contribution to such larger political ends as

protectionism, which had an exclusively national application, did not even pretend to serve such progressive ends.

But free trade also offered national advantages. Bernstein denied that it was antinational and that it impaired the development of relative latecomers to industrialization, like Germany. Friedrich List had argued, "to some extent quite rightly," that "it would be the greatest injustice to proclaim the existing division of labour as the proper state of things and so confine the great mass of the German nation to mere agricultural pursuits for an indefinite length of time." Britain's early industrial monopoly as the "workshop of the world" was thus conflated with its then existing industrial supremacy, which Germany was adjured to resist, and such resistance warranted state intervention, for, "in principle, state encouragement to the competitiveness of domestic production is thoroughly justifiable." Seeking, yet again, to have his cake and eat it too, Bernstein here supplied an *international* vindication of state intervention on behalf of a sound national economy: "As firmly as I believe in the league of peoples, just as little do I believe in a dissolution of nations in the foreseeable future. . . . In my view, the great republic of peoples imposes a duty to national health. But it can be satisfied otherwise than by means of customs duties."[28] Whatever these unspecified means might be, they must not encroach on duty-free international intercourse.

Bernstein's other counter to the interpretation of free trade as a weapon of British imperialism—Marx's view, later repeated by Lenin and Trotsky to explain the corruption of the European proletariat by imperialist superprofits, was already being manipulated, as Bernstein was painfully aware, to demand socialist support for German imperialism—was the rather lame argument that "neither Cobden nor Bright nourished the utopian thought that England could by any means—free trade or other—prevent the industrial progress of other nations." Yet he could not deny that British exports to the Continent in the wake of the Napoleonic wars had had a devastating effect on nascent German industries.[29] In short, by his failure to distinguish clearly between laissez faire and free trade, and by his inability effectively to dispose of the argument that free trade tended to perpetuate Britain's industrial supremacy, Bernstein necessarily presented a confused and already prejudiced case for free trade as a dictate of German national interest.

His case ran as follows. Free trade favored export industries while also promoting greater efficiency through international specialization. At the same time it lowered

---

peace and the partnership of Western humanity, this by no means implied a commitment to peace at any price, any more than it had done with Cobden, John Stuart Mill, and others. See Taylor, *The Trouble Makers*, 126; Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace*, 96; Norman Angell, *After All* (London, 1951), 169; and E. K. Bramsted and K. J. Melhuish, *Western Liberalism: A History in Documents from Locke to Croce* (London, 1978), 285–87.

[28] Bernstein, "German Professors and Protectionism," 22–23, "Zollfreier internationaler Verkehr," 831, and "Das Grundsätzliche in der Frage der Handelspolitik," 428–29.

[29] Bernstein, "The Zeppelin Movement and German Nationalism," 737, and "German Professors and Protectionism," 19. In 1901, Bernstein attributed such a position to English free-trade theorists generally; "Zum Kampf gegen die Zollschraube," 688–89. That there was in fact a markedly imperialist element to the thinking of many Victorian free-trade partisans now seems beyond dispute. See Semmel, *The Rise of Free Trade Imperialism*; K. Bourne, *The Foreign Policy of Victorian England, 1830–1902* (Oxford, 1970); B. Porter, *The Lion's Share: A Short History of British Imperialism, 1850–1970* (London, 1975); P. J. Cain, *Economic Foundations of British Overseas Expansion, 1815–1914* (London, 1980); and W. G. Hynes, *The Economics of Empire* (London, 1979).

production costs by reducing raw material and foodstuff prices.[30] The removal of agrarian duties in particular would, by reducing living costs, stimulate consumer spending and domestic consumption while also promoting agricultural rationalization and modernization. The Reich could recoup the revenue thereby forfeited through the imposition of modest direct taxes on income and inheritances, taxes that would not only enable the Reich government to meet its existing financial commitments but also relieve the poorer states of the sometimes crippling burden of matricular contributions and provide a surplus adequate to cover the additional costs of necessary social reforms.[31] Freer movement of labor need not result in the social dislocations, lower wages, and depressed living standards that might accompany a sudden influx of cheap foreign labor—"coolies and similar inferior workers" (*Kulis und dergleichen tiefstehenden Arbeitern*). That problem could easily be regulated through immigration laws and social policy.[32]

But was there a specifically socialist case to be made for free trade? Bernstein claimed that there was, although he evidently had some difficulty locating its components. He described free trade as being, together with a democratic finance policy, a "self-preservation commandment of the common weal" (*Selbsterhaltungsgebot der Allgemeinheit*) and even maintained that it transcended class interest.[33] A point he frequently stressed was the desirability of free trade as required by the "cultural mission of the working class" and its commitment to progress,[34] a point he bolstered by reassurances about the political viability of free trade. Reactionary as the nonsocialist parties might be, he never tired of reminding his readers that significant bourgeois elements, in Germany and in general, had a vital interest, however dimly perceived, in the preservation or restoration of free trade.[35] Among these elements he specifically included "the banks, which are interested in free trade in capital."[36] What the working class stood to gain from free trade was a larger slice of a growing national cake, for free trade meant a redistribution of income in favor of export industry, which in Germany already employed a large majority of

[30] Bernstein, "The Growth of German Exports," 777–80, "Das Grundsätzliche in der Frage der Handelspolitik," 430, and "Zollfreier internationaler Verkehr," 828–29.

[31] Bernstein, "Die Entwicklung der Agrarverhältnisse in England" (1897), in *Zur Theorie und Geschichte des Sozialismus*, 3 vols. (4th edn., Berlin, 1904), 1: 41–57, "Prinzipielles zur Frage der Agrarzölle," 190, *Die neuen Reichssteuern*, 56–64, and "Das Grundsätzliche in der Frage der Handelspolitik," 430.

[32] Bernstein, "Zum Kampf gegen die Zollschraube," 693.

[33] Bernstein, *Die neuen Reichssteuern*, 63, and *Sozialdemokratische Völkerpolitik*, 173.

[34] Bernstein, "Zollfreier internationaler Verkehr," 832. Also see Bernstein, "Zum Kampf gegen die Zollschraube," 692, *DdS*, 1 (1902): 282, and "Das Grundsätzliche in der Frage der Handelspolitik," 428.

[35] Bernstein, "Zur Bilanz der Kampfes gegen den neuen Zolltarif," *SM* (1903), 2: 38–41, "Arms and the Bill," *The Nation*, March 20, 1909, p. 929, "Das Finanzkapital und die Handelspolitik," 952, 955, and "Politische Schwarzmalerei," *SM* (1912), 1: 538–44. The last two articles listed were polemics directed explicitly at Hilferding and Otto Bauer.

[36] Bernstein, "Das Grundsätzliche in der Frage der Handelspolitik," 425. Thus he was at odds not only with the neo-Marxist position of Hilferding, Bauer, Parvus, and Luxemburg but also with that of British radicalism represented by Hobson and Brailsford. On the latter, see J. A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (rev. edn., London, 1938), 71–93; H. N. Brailsford, *The War of Steel and Gold* (London, 1914), 63–86, 232–35; Taylor, *The Trouble Makers*, 95–131, esp. 100–01, 122–23; Z. S. Steiner, *Britain and the Origins of the First World War* (London, 1977), 146–47; and A. J. A. Morris, *Radicalism against War, 1906–1914* (London, 1972). Without naming Hobson as its true author (Hobson first stated his thesis in two articles published in the *Contemporary Review* in 1898), Bernstein branded the neo-Marxist theory a derivative of economic liberalism; *Zur Theorie und Geschichte des Sozialismus*, 2: 110.

the industrial workforce in a steadily expanding national economy. Free trade therefore meant more jobs at higher wages, shorter hours, and lower living costs.[37] Over and above such gains, the prosperity that it generated was generally beneficial to the working class in that "the richer the society, the more easily and surely socialist gains can be realized."[38]

In a rare speculation as to the probable tariff policy of the *Zukunftsstaat*, he further argued in 1911 that a socialist state would necessarily favor free trade because a state that had socialized exchange would be taxing no one but itself if it imposed protective tariffs.[39] Given Bernstein's view of socialism as a mere ideal worth striving toward, this palpably unconvincing piece of sophistry may best be seen as a nervous, indirect tribute to the success with which the protectionist writings of fellow revisionists like Max Schippel, Richard Calwer, and Gerhard Hildebrand were already meeting among large sections of the Social Democratic rank and file.

In his position on the tariff question, Bernstein revealed himself, even more starkly than elsewhere, as having been thoroughly imbued with the Cobdenite tradition of British radicalism. Here he hardly ever referred to Marx. When he appealed to authority, the names he mentioned were far more likely to be Jeremy Bentham, Richard Cobden, John Bright, William E. Gladstone, John Stuart Mill, or John Prince Smith. In the wider sense, Bernstein belonged to this tradition. Much as he disliked being labeled an advocate of Manchesterism, there can be little doubt that he knew and reflected all the principal ideas of this school. The Benthamite-Cobdenite school held that, whereas conflict prevailed between states, there existed a natural harmony among peoples and nations; that free trade and peace were "one and the same cause"; that the advancement of freedom and civilization were better served by peace, trade, and public education than by government; that diplomacy, war, and the balance of power were outmoded as well as wicked and inimical to human happiness; that arbitration, disarmament, and nonintervention were desirable goals; that free trade and peace would eventually bring world government; that intervention was permissible only in support of liberty; and that barbarians were incapable of either independence or nationality. If Bernstein was not always completely in accord with these views, his digressions and qualifications no more took him beyond the fold of the "dissenting" tradition than did those of John Stuart Mill.

In some respects Bernstein was, in fact, more an unreconstructed Cobdenite than were many of his English radical contemporaries. The innovations introduced by J. A. Hobson, for example, presented a hurdle that Bernstein refused to jump at, in part because of his strong attraction to the Fabian version of the national-efficiency

[37] Bernstein, "Das Finanzkapital und die Handelspolitik," 955, and "Zollfreier internationaler Verkehr," 828–29.

[38] Bernstein, "Die Zusammenbruchstheorie und die Kolonialpolitik," *NZ*, 16 (1897–98), 1: 556. Bernstein's position was therefore not radically different in principle from that of Joseph Bloch, Karl Leuthner, Max Schippel, and company. On the Blochian position, see R. A. Fletcher, "Revisionism and Empire: Joseph Bloch, the *Sozialistische Monatshefte* and German Nationalism, 1907–14," *European Studies Review*, 10 (1980): 459–84.

[39] Bernstein, "Das Grundsätzliche in der Frage der Handelspolitik," 426.

point of view.[40] When he was in Britain, the Fabians had been free-traders. By 1903 they had come out in favor of protectionism. George Bernard Shaw, certainly, was a "thorough protectionist" and agreed with Thomas Carlyle that free trade was "heartbreaking nonsense."[41] Bernstein also baulked at this fence. Although he learned a great deal from the British bourgeois radical tradition (principally through such intermediaries as the Fabians and the ethical socialists) and drew inspiration from the whole range of its offshoots and successor movements, from "Dissenters" both old and new, from the "Limps" (Liberal Imperialists like Rosebery and Haldane) and even to some extent from members of the fundamentally illiberal "national efficiency group" (the Webbs, for example),[42] Bernstein remained at heart firmly committed to the Cobden-Angellite radical orthodoxy. This commitment, first entered into in the mid-1890s,[43] intensified after his return to Germany and reached its acme in his post-1914 antiwar radicalism.

AMONG POST-BISMARCKIAN GERMAN LIBERALS, as Bernstein well knew, support for free-trade principles had become as rare and as unpopular as a sincere and steady commitment to democratic principles. Such support was confined to a few intellectual mavericks like Lujo Brentano, to the left liberal splinter parties, and to interest groups like the *Hansabund*. Yet even the *Hansabund* in his view represented little more than a revolt by export industry against the economic burdens of exorbitant protectionism; certainly it was not a force for a more liberal foreign

[40] His main quarrel with Hobsonian radicalism was, of course, his optimistic interpretation of the future of capitalism in general and of the role of finance capital in particular. Bernstein could not accept Hobson's view without jeopardizing the central thesis of his revisionism, which asserverated that advanced capitalism, far from heading toward greater and more frequent crises culminating in a general collapse, was growing more flexible, stable, and prosperous, that this process was significantly aided by novel developments such as the progressive, ameliorative function of the modern credit system, and that the working class, through democracy, was at last in a position to effect cumulative improvements in its situation to the point of compelling a gradual transformation toward socialism. See Bernstein, *Die Voraussetzungen des Sozialismus und die Aufgaben der Sozialdemokratie* (Stuttgart, 1899), and its English translation, *Evolutionary Socialism*, trans. Edith Harvey (London, 1909). The English edition does not contain the key chapter on Marx and the Hegelian dialectic.

[41] Shaw, "The Solidarity of Social Democracy" (1906), in L. J. Hubenka, ed., *Practical Politics* (Lincoln, Neb., 1972), 14. For the Fabian position on the tariff question, see A. M. McBriar, *Fabian Socialism and English Politics, 1884–1914* (Cambridge, 1962), 131–34.

[42] G. R. Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency, 1899–1914* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1971), 54–101; Günter Hollenberg, *Englisches Interesse am Kaiserreich: Die Attraktivität Preussen-Deutschlands für konservative und liberale Kreise in Grossbritannien, 1860–1914* (Wiesbaden, 1974), 29, 259. Although J. A. Schumpeter can hardly be described as an inspiration, for his famous essay on imperialism first appeared in 1918–19, there exists a striking parallel between the views expressed by Bernstein and those of the young Schumpeter; Schumpeter, *Imperialism and Social Classes*, trans. H. Norden (New York, 1951). Nowhere is Bernstein's anticipation of Schumpeter more pronounced than in a lecture Bernstein delivered before the Vienna Sociological Society in November 1912; see "Der Imperialismus, seine Bedeutung und sein Zukunft," *Arbeiter-Zeitung* (Vienna), November 15, 1912. Thus it may well be, as W. L. Langer observed in 1935, that the credit for Schumpeter's insights ultimately belongs to Hobson; see Harvey Mitchell, "Hobson Revisited," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 26 (1965): 405. Worth a study in itself is the extent to which the views of Hobson, Bernstein, and Schumpeter may or may not have had a common ancestry in Herbert Spencer's distinction between militant and industrial societies; see David Wiltshire, *The Social and Political Thought of Herbert Spencer* (Oxford, 1978), 243–55.

[43] In 1894, for instance, he still maintained, as befitted an orthodox Marxist in the shadow of a still-living Engels, that the cosmopolitanism of bourgeois radicalism was "a very uncertain thing, always in danger of turning into its opposite from one day to the next," its internationalism extending no further than its business interests; Bernstein, "Am Gedenktag der Internationale," *NZ*, 12 (1893–94), 2: 807, 809.

policy or for democratic reform within the Reich.[44] Particularly in the area of foreign relations, German liberals of all persuasions were almost diametrically opposed to the kind of liberal internationalism that Bernstein associated with free trade.[45] As Brentano's biographer has observed, "men like Brentano, Barth, Naumann, and Weber . . . not only acquiesced in, but actively supported the tragic course of Germany's foreign policy." Largely for this reason Bernstein's overwhelmingly positive appreciation of British liberalism contrasted markedly with his fundamentally negative attitude—apparent in the chief exegete of revisionism no less than in the erstwhile orthodox Marxist—toward German liberalism, which he despised for its timidity and class egoism both in thoery and in practice.[46]

Believing liberalism in Germany to be more reactionary than it was elsewhere, and to be growing steadily more so, he drew the practical conclusion that it was incumbent on Social Democracy to display a conciliatory spirit and to take the initiative in forging links between the labor movement and middle-class parties. Here he pinned his hopes principally on the new middle class or white-collar proletariat.[47] The necessity of a bourgeois alliance he derived from two main sources. One was his conviction that revolution was no longer either possible or desirable, which left the parliamentary road as the sole alternative way forward, and this demanded the formation of a bloc of the left as "the indispensable precondition . . . for a sweeping democratization of political life."[48] Second, he periodically succumbed to bouts of extreme and unwarranted optimism regarding the possibilities of a socialist-liberal alliance. On such occasions he either generalized from his enthusiasm for English liberal experience or mistook individual exceptions (like Brentano) for an earnest of what might yet, somehow, become reality, even in Prussia-Germany.[49]

Just such an exception was Friedrich Albert Lange (1828–75), a Kantian democrat who is often alleged to have had a major impact on Bernstein's

[44] Bernstein, "Eine demokratische Bibliothek," *Frankfurter Zeitung*, January 18, 1913, and "The Meaning of the Bülow Crisis," *The Nation*, July 3, 1909, p. 491. On the *Hansabund*, see Siegfried Mielke, *Der Hansa-Bund für Gewerbe, Handel, und Industrie, 1909–14* (Göttingen, 1976).

[45] Bernstein regarded the nationalism of the liberals as the main obstacle to a bloc of the left and to parliamentary government in the Reich; Bernstein, "Political Scene-Shifting in Germany," *The Nation*, July 23, 1910, p. 595.

[46] James J. Sheehan, *The Career of Lujo Brentano* (Chicago, 1966), 180–81; and Bernstein, "The German Elections and the Social Democrats," *Contemporary Review*, 91 (1907): 481, 486, and *Verhandlungen DR*, May 15, 1914, p. 8887. Also see James J. Sheehan, *German Liberalism in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago, 1978), 272–83. On the antidemocratic inclinations of liberals like Brentano, see Walter Struve, *Elites against Democracy: Leadership Ideals in Bourgeois Political Thought in Germany, 1890–1933* (Princeton, 1973), 53–219.

[47] Bernstein, "Wird die Sozialdemokratie Volkspartei?" *SM* (1905), 2: 671, "The Pull towards the Left in Germany," *The Nation*, November 6, 1909, p. 241, "The Eve of the Prussian Revolution," *ibid.*, April 2, 1910, pp. 15–16, "The Death of a Deformed Reform Bill," *ibid.*, June 4, 1910, pp. 347–48, and *Was ist Sozialismus?* (Berlin, 1918), 19. This economically dependent class was, he noted, growing in size and in political radicalism. He hoped that it could be won over to Social Democracy or used as a lever for radicalizing or splitting the National Liberals and even the Center, facilitating the creation of a grand bloc embracing Social Democrats, National Liberals, left Liberals, and perhaps elements of the Center party as well.

[48] Bernstein, "Politische Schwarzmalerei," 541.

[49] For two blatant examples of such generalization, in 1890 and 1898, see Bernstein, "Carlyle und die sozialpolitische Entwicklung Englands," *NZ*, 9 (1890–91), 1: 666, 733–35, and "Kritisches Zwischenspiel," *NZ*, 16 (1897–98), 1: 750.

revisionism.[50] Certainly there were striking parallels and major points of contiguity to which the budding revisionist could hardly have been indifferent. Lange's empiricism, his hostility to speculative philosophy in general and to Hegelianism in particular, his eclecticism, and especially his blending of Darwin, Malthus, and Marx; his individualism, agnosticism, cosmopolitan patriotism, and interest in the agrarian question; his insistence on working-class self-help and antistatism; his moral idealism and humanism; his hostility to German liberalism for its tepid defense of political principle and its neglect of the social question; and, above all, his concept of socialism as identical to the cooperative idea, thus subsuming democracy, perceived both as a means and as an end and, therefore, also as gradualism and free associations—all this cannot have failed to strike a sympathetic chord with Bernstein.

Yet Bernstein was never a neo-Kantian, as both he and his friends have noted. Karl Vorländer, who was intimately acquainted both with neo-Kantianism and with Bernstein, reached the conclusion that Bernstein was "far removed from Kant's method and Kantian ethics" and that his "return to Kant" rested, "in the last resort, on a misunderstanding."[51] Bernstein's discovery of Lange, in the forefront of the neo-Kantian revival, seems to have dated not from the Karl Höchberg period (the late 1870s) but from January 1892, when Bernstein informed Kautsky that he had been reading works on and by Lange in the British Museum. The result was a series of articles published in the *Neue Zeit*, essentially an extended review of a recent popular biography by O. A. Ellissen. What these articles indicate is that "Bernstein was still very reserved toward neo-Kantianism."[52]

Writing six years later as a full-blown revisionist, he used the slogan "Back to Kant" but granted it only limited validity in its application to socialist theory. In his *Voraussetzungen des Sozialismus und die Aufgaben der Sozialdemokratie* he cited Lange in his attack on the Hegelian dialectic and translated "Back to Kant" as "Back to Lange," but what he really meant by this was a mere call for emulation of "the distinguishing union in Lange of an upright and intrepid championship of the struggle of the working classes for emancipation with a large scientific freedom from prejudice."[53] In short, the only conclusion warranted by the available evidence is that Lange's influence may have contributed somewhat to Bernstein's abandon-

[50] On Lange, see Hermann Lübbe, *Politische Philosophie in Deutschland* (Basel, 1963), 92–99; and Thomas E. Willey, *Back to Kant: The Revival of Kantianism in German Social and Historical Thought, 1860–1914* (Detroit, 1978), 83–101. Scholars who have suggested that Lange significantly influenced Bernstein include Hans-Josef Steinberg, Thomas Meyer, Peter Gay, and Sven Papcke; see Steinberg, *Sozialismus und deutsche Sozialdemokratie: Zur Ideologie der Partei vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg* (3d rev. edn., Bonn, 1972), 90–91, 98; Meyer, *Bernsteins konstruktiver Sozialismus*, 111–22; Gay, *The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism*, 154; and Papcke, *Der Revisionismusstreit und die politische Theorie der Reform* (Stuttgart, 1979), 76, 114.

[51] Vorländer, *Kant und Marx* (Leipzig, 1911), 189; and Bernstein, *Entwicklungsgang eines Sozialisten* (Leipzig, 1924), 40. Also see Willey, *Back to Kant*, 176; and Helga Grebing, *Der Revisionismus: Von Bernstein bis zum "Prager Frühling"* (Munich, 1977), 43. Yet Bernstein continues to be described as a neo-Kantian. See J. W. Burrow, *Evolution and Society* (Cambridge, 1966), 262; and R. Steigerwald, *Bürgerliche Philosophie und Revisionismus im imperialistischen Deutschland* (Frankfurt, 1980), 30, 33.

[52] Steinberg, *Sozialismus und deutsche Sozialdemokratie*, 90; and Bernstein, "Zur Wurdigung Friedrich Albert Langes," *NZ*, 10 (1891–92), 2: 68–78, 101–09, 132–41. Also see Vorländer, *Kant und Marx*, 180. The biography in question is that by Otto Adolf Ellissen, which Bebel also deemed "a commendable book"; Ellissen, *Friedrich Albert Lange: Eine Lebensbeschreibung* (Leipzig, 1891); and Bebel, *Aus meinem Leben* (5th edn., East Berlin, 1978), 154. Lange's main works are *Die Arbeiterfrage* (1865) and *Die Geschichte des Materialismus* (1866).

[53] Bernstein, "Das realistische und das ideologische Moment im Sozialismus" (*NZ*, 1898), in *Zur Theorie und Geschichte des Sozialismus*, 2: 124, and *Die Voraussetzungen des Sozialismus*, 54, 257.

ment of orthodox Marxism, but that influence only reinforced other and more significant forces impelling him toward revisionism. Indeed, there is reason to doubt whether this intelligent, earnest, and industrious autodidact ever really acquired a solid grasp of Lange, to say nothing of Kant. In 1905, for example, he still referred to Lange as a "socialist of the chair," and in 1909 he believed that Lange "gave materialism a prominent place in science," when in fact his putative mentor had set out to demolish the cardinal points of the materialist argument and to demonstrate that this argument was inherently and fallaciously monistic.[54]

This is by no means to deny Lange all influence on Bernstein. Like Bebel and Kautsky, Bernstein exhibited great personal respect for the man and his views, referring to him as the "noble F. A. Lange." What can reasonably be claimed is that through Lange he "discovered an affinity between revisionism and Marburg neo-Kantianism which offered the possibility of a timely convergence of bourgeois reformism with the working-class movement." Exemplars like Lange gave him hope, as did T. H. Green, the later J. S. Mill, and David Lloyd George, at a time when he could no longer accept the validity of the collapse theory, that class war and revolution were not the only roads to radical social transformation. No doubt Bernstein found Lange all the more acceptable by virtue of Lange's affinity with English liberalism; for Lange, too, was an admirer of British labor organizations and of English social thought, especially that of John Stuart Mill.[55]

That Bernstein could appreciate Lange's ethical approach to the social question without embracing neo-Kantianism must also be explained by reference to his English experience. The people with whom he had most contact and whom he most admired during his London exile were not the ineffectual SDF sectarians or the Fabians (as the "best informed" of English socialists, the Fabians evidently offered congenial, stimulating, and instructive company) but ethical socialists like Keir Hardie and Ramsay MacDonald, who drew their inspiration not from Kant but from the New Testament. Bernstein defended them stoutly. In 1890 he noted that British Christian Socialists were of an altogether different stamp from Stöcker, Distelkamp, and Treitschke. Many of them had participated actively in the workers' class struggle against capital and distinguished themselves in the organization of the new unions. In 1897 he sang their praises more loudly still: "if a large section of English democracy draws its ethics from the New Testament rather than from some atheistic treatise, these 'bigots' and 'pharisees,' or whatever one wishes to call them, have performed infinitely greater services for liberty in Europe than we enlightened Germans have so far done." In 1904 he maintained that Keir Hardie's socialism bore "a much more pronounced *ethical* hue than that of German Social Democracy," to which he added, "Emphasis on the ethical factor may be a sign either of a backward movement or of the more advanced conditions with which it has to deal. Here both factors coalesce."[56] Clearly Bernstein was more impressed by

[54] Bernstein, *Die heutige Sozialdemokratie in Theorie und Praxis* (Munich, n.d.), 8, as quoted in Meyer, *Bernsteins konstruktiver Sozialismus*, 111 n. 14, and "The Revival of Will in German Literature," *The Nation*, January 9, 1909, 576.

[55] Bebel, *Aus meinem Leben*, 85–86; and Steinberg, *Sozialismus und deutsche Sozialdemokratie*, 52.

[56] Bernstein, "Carlyle und die sozialpolitische Entwicklung Englands," 730–32, "Kreta und die russische Gefahr," 15, and "Nationale Besonderheiten und internationale Sprache," *SM* (1904), 2: 893–94.

Lange's social activism than by his Kantianism, more by British than by German ethical socialism.

As to Bernstein's liberal internationalism, there is no evidence of more than a certain compatibility of outlook with Lange. No more than Bernstein was Lange a doctrinaire free-trader or devotee of Manchesterism of the laissez-faire sort. Like Bernstein, Lange was an enemy of chauvinism and an adherent of the typically naive, nineteenth-century view that there was no inherent contradiction between a progressive patriotism and a healthy cosmopolitanism.[57] Although Bernstein must have found such views congenial, they were not echoed or otherwise registered in his discussion of foreign policy and tariff problems.

WITHIN THE SPD, BERNSTEIN'S FREE-TRADE INTERNATIONALISM was closest to the position of the party center, which, through Point Ten of the Erfurt Program, and still more by the onerous burden that the Bülow tariff inflicted on proletarian living standards, was firmly committed to free trade. In matters of taxation and tariff policy, he stood, as he later maintained in his autobiography, squarely on the ground of the party orthodoxy.[58] Not infrequently, center-orthodox spokesmen also drew the same kinds of internationalist inferences that Bernstein did. August Bebel, for example, told the party congress in 1911, "German industry and German commerce have expanded enormously. Great amounts of French, English, and American capital have been invested in Germany, whereas German capital goes abroad to be invested there. I openly admit that perhaps the greatest guarantee of world peace lies in this international export of capital." And at the subsequent party congress Hugo Haase also welcomed the trend toward economic interdependence as "a factor working against the warmongers."[59]

Bernstein recognized, however, that, "until very recent times, representatives of socialism [had been] regularly hostile to free trade, declaring themselves sometimes conditionally and sometimes unconditionally for protective tariffs." In 1896 he had deemed it "curious the way socialist heads can still be capitivated by the protectionist idea." Later, when it became apparent that such heads included a substantial body of his revisionist and reformist colleagues, he excoriated them for their "intellectual reaction," their "retreat from theoretical to crudely empirical thinking."[60] Apart from Eduard David and Albert Südekum, almost none of the prominent revisionists shared Bernstein's free-trade outlook. Indeed, the overwhelming majority of revisionists were, like Joseph Bloch, both protectionists and Anglophobes. On the left, of course, Bernstein had no friends at all, and least of all on the tariff question.

[57] Willey, *Back to Kant*, 83, 85, 91, 92, 94, 95; and Toni Offermann, *Arbeiterbewegung und liberales Bürgertum in Deutschland, 1850–1863* (Bonn, 1979), 217–18. On Bernstein's treatment of the national question, see Hans Mommsen, *Arbeiterbewegung und nationale Frage* (Göttingen, 1979), 109–24.

[58] Bernstein, *Entwicklungsgang eines Sozialisten*, 43.

[59] Bebel, *Jena Protokoll* (1911), 345; and Haase, *Chemnitz Protokoll* (1912), 412.

[60] Bernstein, *DdS*, 1 (1902): 101; "Deutschland als Konkurrent Englands," 757, and "Zollfreier internationaler Verkehr," 832.

To radical Marxists like Rosa Luxemburg the issue was, quite simply, neither protectionism nor free trade but socialism. Whereas some accommodation between Bernstein and Hobson was, at least theoretically, within the bounds of possibility, for Hobson considered imperialism "a depraved *choice* of national life" and eventually joined the Angellites in their crusade for peace as a common-sense dictate of rationality,[61] a *modus vivendi* between Bernstein and the radical Marxists was unthinkable. To Hilferding and Luxemburg imperialism was not a matter of choice but of economic necessity, and Bernstein's Cobdenism appeared to them as naive, illusory, and even reactionary.

Since he was not a socialist revolutionary like Luxemburg, Bernstein could argue, as he did before the Reichstag in May 1912, that international relations were the supreme and central issue of the age.[62] That he did not, before 1914, subject such issues as the nationality, militarism, imperialism, and tariff questions to the kind of searching and comprehensive analysis provided by Otto Bauer, Rudolf Hilferding, Karl Liebknecht, or Rosa Luxemburg is indicative less of a lack of interest in this problem complex than it is a reflection of his abandonment of the Marxist method for a typically reformist preoccupation with the minutiae of *Tagespolitik*. If his approach now appeared relatively superficial, eclectic, pragmatic, and empirical, this is because he had become, through the influence of his English environment, and yet largely unknown even to himself, a liberal democrat. This transformation is abundantly clear in his treatment of tariff policy, less unambiguously so in relation to other problems such as those of nationality and militarism, where he still made some effort to remain faithful to Engels, if not to Marx. Bernstein's treatment of all these issues is permeated with a strain of utopian optimism and idealism, an attachment to democracy as a panacea, and a firm commitment to the Cobdenite principles of free-trade internationalism.

In all circumstances his indebtedness to Marx was more apparent than real. At best, he was guilty of the same charge of idolatry that he so frequently brought against the party center, for he, as much as anyone, used Marx as little more than a grab-bag of convenient quotations. In fact, he was true to neither the method nor the spirit of Marx. This circumstance goes a long way toward explaining why Bernstein's position on many issues, and especially on those of foreign policy, turned out to be remarkably close to the position of the center-orthodoxy, as represented by Bebel and Kautsky. Similarly, Bernstein's essential liberalism was the root cause of his poor relations with the bulk of his fellow revisionists—reformists like David and Südekum, no less than illiberal social imperialists like Joseph Bloch and Karl Leuthner—most of whom went much farther and faster than he along the road to protectionism, nationalism, and militarism. Even in the most capable hands, and Bernstein was always willing to admit that his were less

[61] Hobson, *Imperialism*, 368 (italics added); and Taylor, *The Trouble Makers*, 101.

[62] Bernstein, *Verhandlungen DR*, May 14, 1912, p. 1996. On his treatment of the problem of imperialism, see H.-C. Schröder, "Eduard Bernsteins Stellung zum Imperialismus vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg," in Heimann and Meyer, *Bernstein und der demokratische Sozialismus*, 166–212; and R. A. Fletcher, "A Revisionist Looks at Imperialism: Eduard Bernstein's Critique of Imperialism and *Kolonialpolitik*, 1900–1914," *Central European History*, 12 (1979): 237–71.

capable than others,[63] liberalism has never distinguished itself as a rigorously systematic *Weltanschauung*. It should therefore surprise no one that Bernstein's thought, caught in the vice of his *soi-disant* Marxism and his new-old liberal commitment to "the facts," should be shot through with errors, inconsistencies, and illogicalities.

With the wisdom of hindsight we may observe that in his case one of the blunders that probably did a great deal of damage was his conviction that it was possible to be both a German patriot and an internationalist, a reasonable nationalist and a good European. As British free-trade imperialists had done in early and mid-Victorian England, and as many British workers and imperialists continued to do in the late Victorian era, Bernstein mistakenly took it for granted that in respect of German imperialism the world was large enough to accommodate a spiritually and economically conceived greater fatherland without involving Germany in undesirable collisions and entanglements with other European powers.

IT SEEMS FAIR TO SAY that Bernstein had scant affection for German liberalism and little understanding of neo-Kantianism. Insofar as the apostate Marxist *cum* revisionist sought a mentor or educator, he searched not among the tribal gods of Germany but in his immediate environment, which at the time happened to be British. Thus, his intellectual pantheon came to include such *numina* as Jeremy Bentham, Richard Cobden, and John Stuart Mill. All this is highly revealing of the character of Bernstein's revisionism and of his thought generally. It also sheds considerable light on two further transitions in Bernstein's political career: the transformation of the revisionist "half-and-half supporter of imperialism," as Georg Ledebour dubbed him at Mainz in 1900, into the social pacifist of the war years, incongruously rubbing shoulders with Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg as well as Kautsky and Hugo Haase, and what Bernstein himself termed his effective "political death" in the postwar years.[64]

[63] According to Bebel, this readiness to admit his own mistakes was one of the main reasons why Bernstein was always "moulting," or changing his views; Bebel to Bernstein, October 22, 1898, International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam, Bebel Papers, A6. For Bernstein's admission that his was more an "analytical" than a "synthesizing" brain, see *Entwicklungsgang eines Sozialisten*, 7.

[64] Ledebour, *Mainz Protokoll* (1900), 167; and Bernstein to Kautsky, November 9, 1927, as quoted in Gay, *The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism*, 296.