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THE LOST REVOLUTIONS OF BERNIE SANDERS

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„Und wenn sie sich in eine Sackgasse verrannt, wenn sie sich hinlänglich kompromittiert haben, um zur Ausführung ihrer Drohungen gezwungen zu sein, so geschieht es in einer zweideutigen Weise, die nichts mehr vermeidet als die Mittel zum Zwecke und nach Vorwänden zum Unterliegen hascht. Die schmetternde Ouvertüre, die den Kampf verkündete, verliert sich in ein kleinlautes Knurren, sobald er beginnen soll, die Schauspieler hören auf, sich au sérieux zu nehmen, und die Handlung fällt platt zusammen wie ein luftgefüllter Ballon, den man mit einer Nadel pickt.“

“And when they’ve reached a dead end, when they’ve committed themselves to the point where they’re going to have to carry out their threats, then things get so confused as to dispense them from finding the means to reach their goals. Then they cast about for an excuse to throw in the towel. The thunderous overture that introduced the struggle fades to a low growl as soon as it’s about to begin. The actors stop taking themselves seriously and the performance collapses like an air-filled balloon pricked with a needle.”

Karl Marx. *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*.

In *Ten Days that Shook the World* John Reed recalls how, on November 8 1917 at the Smolny Institute in Moscow, he ran into an Anarchist who explained disconsolately,

“To us the Revolution is a great failure; it has not aroused the patriotism of the masses. Of course that only proves that the people are not ready for Revolution.”¹

What makes the comment at once comic and pathetic, is that it comes hours after the taking of the Winter Palace and minutes before Lenin’s proclamation of a new socialist order. Comic, pathetic and a pundit’s commonplace: one could easily find similar explanations for the collapse of Bernie Sanders’ presidential campaign in 2020 America, except that the Russian Anarchist was falling back on a clichéd belief in Russian exceptionalism while Americans on the Left rely, as they usually do, on clichéd American exceptionalism to justify their own failure to “arouse the masses;” on the fantasy that America is intrinsically unsuited for socialism because of its social structures, its economic system, its “values,” anything but their own lack of clarity in pursuit of their goals. They exempt themselves from the hard questions that must be asked: what errors did Sanders, his staff, his followers commit that could have been avoided? Would a better understanding of the theoretical and practical contradictions in his campaign clarify the ways in which his strategy misfired?

¹ John Reed, *Ten Days that Shook the World* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1919), 77.

I

Let's start with the fundamental issue, the widespread belief in the innate values of American Society: that Americans are, and always have been, competitive, individualistic, self-reliant to the core and opposed to socialist values. American values don't come from the Values Fairy — or the Founding Fathers, which amounts to the same thing. What's typically American, rather, is the continuous and obsessive struggle to define "American" values among intellectuals, artists and historians from even before America was founded. The history of American values is merely the history of attempts to control the narrative of American values. According to Michel Cordillot,

"During the first half of the 19th Century, the revolutionary origins of the nation [...] generally remained a source of pride for many Americans [...]. Sharing an egalitarian political culture [...], they did not hesitate to support those who fought against despotism and absolutism... [T]hey saw themselves as pioneers in the struggle against tyranny [...] [T]he upheaval of Reconstruction after a bloody Civil War [...] did much to prepare American public opinion to internalize an in-depth transformation of the republican ideological legacy based on a Darwinian approach to US society. [...] As spectacular economic progress galvanized the mystique of individual success, more and more voices rose to condemn all forms of egalitarianism and socialism. The turning point must be looked for somewhere between 1871 and 1877."²

² Michel Cordillot, "Socialism v. democracy? The IWMA in the USA, 1869-1876" in *Arise Ye Wretched of the Earth: The First International in a Global Perspective*, ed. Fabrice Bensimon, Quentin Deluermoz and Jeanne Moisan (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 278-279.

In those days, good Americans were known as communists, humble denizens of the heartlands with a deep sense of solidarity; the bad ones were the foreign workers in the big cities of the East and they were usually called “socialists.” It was this rigid, one-size-fits-all nativism that Karl Marx dismissed in 1878, in an interview with the *Chicago Tribune*:

“[The Socialist Movement] is the natural outcome of [America’s] development. [...] You will see that Socialism has sprung up in that country without the aid of foreigners, and was merely caused by the concentration of capital and the changed relations between the workmen and their employers.”³

Two decades later, in a short book suggestively titled *Why is there no Socialism in the United States?* the German sociologist Werner Sombart drew the opposite inference: foreigners or not, social conditions in America made it unlikely that Socialism would flourish there. Sombart’s argument (or rather, what is interpreted as his argument) has been repeatedly brought forth as a decisive explanation for the failure of Socialism in America. To quote the hipster historian Thaddeus Russell,

“There’s a famous essay by Werner Sombart called “Why Is There No Socialism in the United States?” That’s something the New Left historians have been beating their heads against since the 1960s, basically trying to invent a socialism in the United States where there simply has not been one.”⁴

³ Karl Marx, “SPECIAL CORRESPONDENCE OF THE TRIBUNE,” *The Chicago Tribune* No. 6, (January 5, 1879); reprinted in *Marx-Engels Collected Works*, Vol 10 (London: Lawrence & Wishart 2010), 566.

⁴ Jesse Walker, “People who live in the Shade,” Interview with Thaddeus Russell, *Reason* (March 2011). <https://reason.com/2011/02/22/people-who-live-in-the-shade>; see also Eric Foner, “Why Is There No Socialism in the United States?” *History Workshop* No. 17 (Spring, 1984): 57-80.

Likewise in 2019, at the height of Bernie Sanders' presidential campaign, the German activist and scholar Ingar Solty cleverly twisted Sombart's original title to suit his own: "Why Is There Now Socialism in the United States?" Solty's explanation, like Russell's denigration, falls back on the concept of historic determinism, except this time it's the "all-determining economic conditions" that are going to override, in Marxist fashion, the innate individualism in American Society.⁵ So what's a revolutionary to do but sit around and wait for favorable historical conditions — conditions which, as the Russian Anarchist explained, are never ripe enough? The critic Harold Rosenberg wrote of the innate tendency of American intellectuals and politicians to go "hunting for the Zeitgeist in order to submit to its command."⁶ In the eighteenth and nineteenth century the fearless Zeitgeist-hunters could be found primarily in Literature and the Arts. Today the hunt's a sociological tautology, a way for politicals of all stripes to fall into a line they themselves have drawn. The trick is to identify "values" that happen to be the values of whatever group the writer or speaker claims to represent and present those values as the representative ones: qualities assumed to be innate to each authentic citizen, which allows the writer to substitute for universally valid human rights those values the writer designates as universal, which are in fact the normative values of the class or gender or ethnicity that the writer wishes to represent. If a certain type of American intellectual or politician finds an affinity with Sombart it's because of Sombart's affinity with Talcott Parsons, the American mid-fifties sociologist whose assumptions have become the assumptions of American hegemonism

⁵ Ingar Solty. "Why Is There Now Socialism in the United States?" *The Bullet* (June 6, 2019). <https://socialistproject.ca/2019/06/why-is-there-now-socialism-in-the-united-states/>.

⁶ Harold Rosenberg, "Death in the Wilderness," *The Tradition of the New* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1962), 245

as a whole: both issue from late nineteenth-century German neo-Kantianism, with its emphasis on values as the regulative structures in society. For Parsons the values of the white middle classes were assumed to be the values of America as whole. For Sombart the values of Socialism were assumed to be the values of skilled white laborers — values which he assumed, quite rightly, to be adequately represented by the Democratic Party. Sombart eerily reads like 1950s self-praise for and by union leaders, praise for the absorption of the American Working Class into America's political structure.

Suppose instead one were to approach the problem from another methodology, one that rejected Parson's assumption that all parts of society act as a smoothly functioning social and political unit, a well-oiled machine in which the political functions merely mirror the social? Beginning with his *Critique of Hegel's Doctrine of the State* of 1843, Marx consistently rejected the premise that political institutions are mere reflections of social values, for the simple reason that he saw no unifying social values to begin with. To measure America's readiness for Socialism by the yardstick of its political system is an exercise in futility.

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A similar caution runs through John Reed's narrative, a nagging, insistent question that dominates *Ten Days* from end to end. The theme of political and social revolutions and their potential conflict or resolution runs through the narrative, reflecting Reed's own close association with the left wing of the Socialist International and his familiarity with Social-Democratic theories. In the

first pages, describing the crisis that immediately preceded the Russian Revolution, Reed writes:

“Having at one bound leaped from the Middle Ages into the twentieth century, Russia showed the startled world two systems of Revolution — the political and the social — in mortal combat.”

Again, on November 8 Reed reports on Lenin’s proclamation of a new social order and claims to quote him directly (Reed’s is the sole surviving transcription):

“The revolution of November 6th and 7th [...] has opened the era of the Social Revolution.”⁷

According to Reed, Lenin was confirming that the political revolution he had just unleashed by arms was the prelude to the social revolution it would in turn unleash. In Lenin’s beloved Hegelian terms the political revolution was the transcendence and reconciliation (*Aufhebung*) of the political and the social. The “mortal combat” between the “social and the political” revolution was now dialectically resolved as a question of tactical precedence, the political empowerment of the social. This was consistent with earlier Marxist theories of Revolution. However, Reed was exceedingly uncomfortable with Lenin’s position, as were the leadership of the Marxist Second International. Was the Bolshevik Revolution a revolution in the Marxist sense, a social revolution

⁷ Reed, *Ten Days that Shook the World*, 22, 80.

transforming society from top to bottom? Or was it merely a political revolution imposing on Russian civil society an extrinsic order?

"We don't know exactly what Bernie Sanders means by a 'political revolution'," writes a New York activist of a decidedly Leninist bent.⁸ The Comrade is not entirely convinced that Bernie sincerely meant to seize political power and afterward impose the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. Perhaps the Comrade should have investigated the meaning of the expression "Political Revolution" in contemporary political science — say, in Theda Skocpol's *States and Social Revolutions*, a classic in the field. (The title itself is a counterpoint to Lenin's own *State and Revolution*.) Skocpol, who in the preceding pages has proclaimed her "commitment to democratic-socialist ideals," lays out the following distinction between social and political revolutions:

"Political revolutions transform state structures but not social structures, and they are not necessarily accomplished through class conflict. [...] What is unique to social revolution is that basic changes in social structure and in political structure occur together in mutually reinforcing fashion. And these changes occur through intense sociopolitical conflicts in which class struggles play a key role."⁹

⁸ Ben Beckett, "Political Revolution in the Twenty-First Century," *Socialist Forum* (Fall, 2018). <https://socialistforum.dsusa.org/issues/fall-2018/political-revolution-in-the-twenty-first-century/>.

⁹ Theda Skocpol, *States and social revolutions. A comparative analysis of France, Russia, and China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), xii, 4, 5; see also Paul D'Amato, "Political Revolution and Social Revolution. What's the Difference?", Audio recording, *Socialism 2016 Conference* (Chicago: July 3, 2016); <https://wearemany.org/a/2016/07/political-revolution-and-social-revolution>; Hal Draper, *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution*, Vol. 2: *The Politics of Social Classes* (London and New York: Monthly Review Press, 1978).

In a nutshell, there are two types of political revolutions. The first merely imposes a new political regime on society, the second develops in symbiosis with the revolution in society at large. This latter is the type that Reed wanted to believe Lenin had initiated. Lenin, then Stalin kept their promises, though not as Reed anticipated. As Skocpol and others argue, the Russian Revolution briefly ushered in a “Revolution of the Spirit” of the type favored by bohemians and anarchists, but the political apparatus itself, the Communist Party, was eventually assigned the role of defining and promoting moral values according to the principle of *partyinost*’ or party-line loyalism, resulting in the imposition of petit-bourgeois values on Russian society as a whole.¹⁰ The “social revolution” was accomplished all right: a conservative one. Reed’s experience has its tragic parallel in the career of Gustav Landauer, the influential anarchist thinker who rigorously opposed “a mere ‘political’ revolution (which he accused communists, and most anarchists, of propagating)” in favor of a purely social and moral revolution.¹¹ Landauer’s theories were popular in America in the ‘sixties, due in part to the influence of his spiritual comrade, Wilhelm Reich, the radical psychoanalyst. Similar ideas were propagated in America by the libertarian Murray Bookchin in the ‘sixties and ‘seventies, along with similar accusations directed at left-wing organizers. Reed died in Moscow in 1920 of typhoid fever; Landauer was murdered during the

¹⁰ Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front. Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 89; Zenovia A. Sochor, *Revolution and Culture. The Bogdanov-Lenin Controversy* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988), 230, with reference to the work of Archie Brown.

¹¹ Gabriel Kuhn with Siegbert Wolf, "Introduction" in Gustav Landauer, *Revolution and other Writings. A Political Reader*, edited and translated by Gabriel Kuhn (Oakland: PM Press, 2011), 25, 173-74.

suppression of the Bavarian People's Republic in 1919; Bookchin died a peaceful death in 2003, in Bernie's home state of Vermont.

And which type of revolution did Sanders believe he was engaged in? A moral-social revolution alone? A political revolution *tout court*? Or a political revolution working hand in hand with a social revolution? Sanders' own beliefs and practice are of another tradition than Lenin's, or rather two traditions: on the one hand the tradition of Democratic Socialism in America; on the other the Social-Democratic Marxism of the Second International in the years leading to and following World War I.

On the surface there is no conflict between Bernie's Social-Democratic theorizing and his Democratic Socialist loyalties. Since its emergence as a trend in the nineteen-sixties, Democratic Socialism has borrowed its rhetoric from Social Democratic and Marxist thought to ensure its legitimacy, and it continues to do so.¹² Bernie's platform is lifted almost wholesale from the Erfurt Program of the German Social-Democratic Party in 1891. His theorizing, likewise, is indebted to that of the Second International. If by now we still don't know what Bernie Sanders meant by "political revolution" it may be due to the unexpressed contradictions between these two practical applications of the theory of revolution, the Democratic Socialist and the Social-Democratic, and the ways these contradictions play themselves out in the context of American political culture. It is not my purpose to give Sanders a theoretical legitimacy (as I attempted in an earlier version of this paper) but to question whether his

¹² Dylan Matthews, "Inside Jacobin: how a socialist magazine is winning the left's war of ideas." Vox (March 26, 2016). <https://www.vox.com/2016/3/21/11265092/jacobin-bhaskar-sunkara>.

stated understanding of a political revolution was matched by the reality of his campaign, and whether this conflict played a role in his political demise.

III

Revolution: social, political, or both? The question was discussed at length after the founding of the Second Socialist International in 1889. Should a social revolution lead to the political revolution, or the other way around? Social values in a capitalist system are defined by capital; likewise, in a capitalist system it's capital that dominates and defines the means of political representation. Should Socialists therefore attempt to seize power in any number of ways that will empower them to promote or support a social revolution, the inevitable result of the newly changed relations among producers? Or should they put their energy into a social revolution, slowly fostering the values of proletarian solidarity to the point where political power can be seized to protect the full fruit of social development? Here is Bernie, in 2003, addressing a group of high-school students:

[Student]: "You're saying that, ah, the majority of Americans share your views on issues like healthcare and I'd like to believe that's true. What do you think needs to be done to get the majority viewpoint expressed in places like Congress and the Supreme Court and the White House?"

[Sanders]: "Well, you need a political revolution... But... the main point that I want to make on that question: never forget this; don't let anyone beat you down. You are citizens of the United States of America and you have a right to

make demands on the system. You have the right to say, 'Excuse me, I want...'
And we're going to fight for those rights."¹³

Note how Sanders shifts the discussion from a question of tactics to the wider issue of political rights. The priority goes to political organizing, not merely to “transform state structures” as in a purely political revolution, but to build awareness of their rights among the People. As with Lenin, the political is prioritized over the social. As with Tom Paine in *The Rights of Man* of 1791, there is no need expressed for a social revolution, a political revolution will supposedly suffice to liberate the American People’s instinctive yearnings for Democratic Socialism.¹⁴

These problematic assumptions form the background of a testy exchange between Friedrich Engels and the Russian revolutionist Pyotr Tkachev in 1875:

“Every genuine revolution is a social one inasmuch as it brings a new class to dominance [*Herrschaft*] and allows it to remodel society in its own image.”¹⁵

The German expression *Herrschaft* is often translated as “dictatorship,” as in “Dictatorship of the Proletariat.” *Hegemony* would be the more accurate translation. In German Marxist terminology the two words, *Herrschaft* and *Diktatur*,

¹³ “‘I’m Not a Liberal.’ Bernie Sanders Explains Political Revolution to High Schoolers,” *Cspan2 Students and Leaders* (Washington, DC: School without Walls, May 21, 2003), *Youtube*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lv7ifl-HYx_E&t=1322s at 47:52 and 58:15.

¹⁴ Raphael Hörmann. *Writing the Revolution: German and English radical literature, 1819 - 1848/49* (Berlin: Lit, 2012), 102-105.

¹⁵ „Jede wirkliche Revolution ist eine soziale, indem sie eine neue Klasse zur Herrschaft bringt und dieser gestattet, die Gesellschaft nach ihrem Bilde umzugestalten.“ Friedrich Engels, „Soziales aus Rußland“ Part 2. [“Refugee Literature”], *Der Volksstaat* no. 45 (April 21, 1875); reprinted in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Werke* [hereafter referred to as *MEW*], Band XVIII (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1966), 560.

have different meanings. Engels' point is that any revolution, be it bourgeois or feudal or extra-terrestrial, be it violent or peaceful, will have to impose its own image of society on the society it has come to dominate in order to reverse the image that the previous political order had imposed. Lenin and Sanders would have agreed that Socialism entails the "maximalization of the Republic," as against anarchists and libertarians who dream of the total abolition of the State: the instruments of political power cannot be bypassed, they must be retooled to meet the goals of Socialism, and this includes the need to implant the values of Socialism. Tkachev, conversely, put his hope in an initial, spontaneous and violent uprising of the oppressed Russian people, arguing that this would be the inevitable outcome of traditional Russian values. Tkachev himself was an admirer of the French revolutionary Louis Blanqui, a tireless advocate of violent uprisings led by a small elite who would deeply influence Lenin by way of Tkachev himself: revolution as an "art" based on spontaneity and intuition. In that light the question of revolutionary violence is peripheral to strategic planning because violence or lack thereof is contingent on specific social developments. That lesson never reached American progressives, for whom violence is simply the antithesis of Democracy and Democracy the answer to all violence.

Neither of which was on Engels' mind. What was missing from Tkachev's argument, he argued, was the political side of revolution without which there was no revolution at all but a blind uprising, violent or not, by muzhiks with pitchforks or baristas with I-phones. Behind that question lurked another, the one that obsessed our Russian Anarchist and still obsesses American progressives: the question of the readiness of any one nation for social

improvement. All sides agreed that this readiness was a precondition for change. Engels, however, disputed Tkachev's belief that revolutions arise from the spontaneous awakening of the People. As Engels pointed out — he and Marx and many of their followers in the Second International never tired of pointing this out — it was not the moral or economic advances of the people that the revolutionary leadership should aim for, it was their level of political awareness. If a political revolution was impossible without its social component so, too, the social component could not be expected to develop spontaneously from the people. To think otherwise was to join forces with revolutionary holy rollers of all types, from bomb-tossing anarchists and muzhik-huggers to radical undergrounds, Weather or not, for whom the Revolution was akin to magical thinking. One need only pull the right switch or churn out the right buzzwords from the podium or throw the bomb at the correct time and *voilà!* Revolution! Violence was a mere contingency, a theoretical distraction.

The seeds of Engels' argument can be found in an apparently insignificant article written jointly by himself and Marx, a review of two memoirs of self-professed agitators published in April of 1850 in Paris. Marx and Engels set out to disprove the suggestion that the dark and covert deeds of agitators were the true engines of revolution:

“A genuine revolution is the exact opposite of the projection of the *mouchard* who along with the ‘men of action’ consistently sees in every revolution the work of a small coterie...”

“It stands to reason that these conspirators do not lower themselves to organizing the revolutionary proletariat before all else. Their business in fact is to grasp the process of revolutionary development beforehand, to provoke it artist-like

[*künstlich*] to a crisis, to create a revolution on the spur of the moment without first creating the conditions for revolution... They are the alchemists of Revolution."¹⁶

This passage was to play a pivotal role in Walter Benjamin's unfinished masterpiece, *Charles Baudelaire. A Lyric Poet in the Age of High Capitalism*.¹⁷

What attracted Benjamin was the shaded profile of the *mouchard*. The closest meaning is "police informer" but the word also suggests a double agent, one whose allegiances are not clear, even to himself; for whom betrayal is no longer a conscious act but an existential one. In that light a peaceful election that merely modifies the political landscape without modifying or being modified by existing social relations, one that occurs through the magical superpowers of a charismatic leader or a black-clad conspirator, is as much of a coup as a seizure of power by violent means.

IV

The belief in an inherent contradiction between the political and the social first emerges in the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the philosopher of the French Enlightenment. In his *Social Contract* of 1762 Rousseau

¹⁶ „Eine wirkliche Revolution das gerade Gegenteil ist von den Vorstellungen des *Mouchards*, der mit den "Männern der Tat" übereinstimmend in jeder Revolution das Werk einer kleinen Koterie sieht.“

„Es versteht sich, daß diese Konspirateurs sich nicht darauf beschränken, das revolutionäre Proletariat überhaupt zu organisieren. Ihr Geschäft besteht gerade darin, dem revolutionären Entwicklungsprozeß vorzugreifen, ihn künstlich zur Krise zu treiben, eine Revolution aus dem Stegreif, ohne die Bedingungen einer Revolution zu machen. ... Sie sind die Alchimisten der Revolution.“ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Reviews: "Les *Conspirateurs* par A. Chenu, ex-capitaine des gardes du citoyen Caussidière ; Les sociétés secrètes ; La préfecture de police sous Caussidière ; Les corps-francs, Paris 1850; *La Naissance de la République en Février 1848* par Lucien de la Hodde, Paris 1850, in *Neuen Rheinischen Zeitung. Politisch-ökonomische Revue*. Viertes Heft, April, 1850; MEW VII.5, 268, 273.

¹⁷ Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire - Ein Lyriker im Zeitalter des Hochkapitalismus*. Herausgegeben und mit einem Nachwort versehen von Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1992).

conceptualized society as a dynamic whole directed by common will and natural law, not merely an aggregate of individual interests held together by autocratic force. Three years later, Rousseau was denounced as a socialist, one of the earliest known uses of the term.¹⁸ What made him so, according to his critics, was his assumption that a just society harbors the promise of a common good distinct and occasionally at odds with the interests of individuals. *The Social Contract* lays out a logical paradox that would spur the thought of Karl Marx and of America's founders, and that still plays a central role in progressive and liberal agendas:

“For a newborn people to enjoy the healthy principles of politics and follow the basic rules of Statehood, effect would have to be cause, the spirit created by the institution would preside at the birth of the institution itself, and men would have to be in advance of the Law what they were to become by it.”¹⁹

A government charged with implementing the People's will could only be as effective as the people who created it. A corrupt or decadent people could not and would not institute a political system to check their inherent antisocial traits, their greed, their tendency to violence. If, as Rousseau suggested, no people could spontaneously regenerate themselves, then no government that faithfully reflected the People's will could improve the People against their will

¹⁸ Ferdinando Facchini, *Note ed osservazioni sul libro intitolato 'Dei delitti e delle pene,'* as quoted in F. Venturi, “‘Socialista’ e ‘socialismo nell’ Italia del settecento,” *Rivista Storica Italiana* LXXV (1963): 129-41; see also H. Müller, *Ursprung und Geschichte des Wortes Sozialismus und seiner Verwandten* (Hanover, 1967); both referenced in James Billington, *Fire in the Minds of Men: The Origins of the Revolutionary Faith* (New York: Basic Books, 1980), 582, note 5.

¹⁹ « Pour qu'un peuple naissant pût goûter les saines maximes de la politique et suivre les règles fondamentales de la raison d'État, il faudrait que l'effet pût devenir cause, que l'esprit social qui doit être l'ouvrage de l'institution présidât à l'institution même ; et que les hommes fussent avant les lois ce qu'ils doivent devenir par elles. » Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Du Contrat social* [1762] (Paris : Garnier Flammarion, 1966), 79.

and its own. A revolution that was at once democratic, ethical and political was impossible. Popular Sovereignty was an oxymoron.

Rousseau himself is a paradox. His curious mixture of conservative pessimism and radical-seeming optimism presents all revolutionary movements with immense challenges and immense appeal, depending on how they interpret him and depending on which part they choose to interpret. His influence on the French Revolution was incalculable. Following Rousseau, the French revolutionary bourgeoisie could claim the People were engaged in a “Revolution of Morals,” pulling themselves up by their own bootstraps. The actions of the middle-class politicians who represented them were faithful reflections of the People’s will. As the historian Jules Michelet put it, the Revolution of 1789 was “Our Modern Creed,” “the coming of the Law” through its agent, “the People itself, the whole People, everybody.”²⁰ The Nation was the Law and the Law was the ultimate moral value, the incarnation of the Social. This is the creed of bourgeois democracies everywhere: the fulfillment of private interests will harmonize with the common good. Paradox Lost.

Paradise Regained. Following disillusion with their own revolution, French utopians of the early nineteenth century turned to America where, they imagined, the new nation had found the solution to Rousseau’s Paradox. In America, they willed themselves to believe, there was no conflict between the individual and the general will, the way they willed themselves to believe there had been

²⁰ « Notre Credo moderne... L’avènement de la Loi... Le peuple même, le peuple entier, tout le monde » ; Jules Michelet, *Histoire de la Révolution française* [1847-1853], ed. Gérard Walter (Paris : Gallimard, la Pléiade, 1952), I I, 21, 7.

no violence in their own revolution.²¹ Peaceful democratic revolution was the spontaneous fruit of the American Soil, at least to those who were predisposed to believe it.

Among the most disposed of all stood Alexis de Tocqueville, the French aristocrat and politician who wanted to believe that a good, a peaceful and guillotine-free democracy was possible: having your cake and sharing it. As the conservative historian Stephen W. Sawyer has argued, Tocqueville and his peers did not see Democracy as an ideal but a necessity, an efficient political restraint on the mob that was the Social.²² Democracy was the common ground on which a profoundly unequal society could pretend to be equal; the only ground as well. In 1831 de Tocqueville embarked on a wide-ranging tour of the United States, soaking up the myths fed to him by the local elites and subsequently publishing them in the two volumes of *Democracy in America* which are read today as a reliable description of American democracy in action. Tocqueville counted Rousseau among his daily readings. His contacts were, for the most part, urban intellectuals and politicians who were happy to recycle Rousseau back at him. One of Tocqueville's rare encounters outside this ideological echo-chamber occurred on a freezing December morning. While descending the Mississippi he encountered a group of Choctaw about to embark on the Trail of Tears. When asked why they were leaving one of

²¹ Durand Echeverria, *Mirage in the West. A History of the French Image of American Society to 1815* (New York: Octagon Books, 1966).

²² Cf. Stephen W. Sawyer, *Demos Assembled: Democracy and the International Origins of the Modern State, 1840-1880*, esp. Chapter 2, "Inequality: Alexis de Tocqueville and the Democratic Foundations of a Modern Administrative Power" (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2018).

the men answered: “In order to be free.”²³ The irony — or was it paradox? — of a state in contradiction with its own values was entirely lost on Tocqueville. His was the fairy-tale America, the fantasy of a peaceful revolution, the solution to Rousseau’s Paradox that Europeans and Americans had dreamed of finding in America and of which many still dream today.

The realization that the State embodies a contradiction at its very core would be left to Marx. A few years after Tocqueville’s travels, in 1844, a young Karl Marx felt compelled to respond in print to his friend Arnold Ruge. Ruge, hiding under the nickname “A Prussian,” had argued that social reform could be achieved by appealing to the moral sense of the rulers and the ruled, calling on progressives to work through established political institutions. Marx, who was determined to clarify that he was not the “Prussian” in question, set out to disprove the argument, and in doing so drew on his own recent reading of *The Social Contract*.²⁴

Rousseau’s Paradox suggested that the political apparatus reflected society as a whole and vice-versa. According to Marx, however, the State could never reflect the Common Will since the State itself was an agent in the distortion of the existing social structure:

²³ « Il y en avait un qui savait l'anglais et auquel je demandai pourquoi les Chactas quittaient leur pays. "Pour être libres" me répondit-il. Je ne pus jamais en tirer autre chose. » Alexis de Tocqueville to his mother, December, 1831, quoted in George Wilson Pierson, *Tocqueville and Beaumont in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1938), 598.

²⁴ Jacques Guilhaumou, « Marx, Rousseau et la Révolution française », *Rousseau et le marxisme* (2011) : 95 ; see also Hörmann, *Writing the Revolution*, *passim*.

“...because [the state] is based on this contradiction. It is based on the contradiction between public and private life, on the contradiction between general interests and special interests.”²⁵

Marx in 1844 was not yet ready to conceptualize this contradiction in terms of social class, but his recent reading of Hegel’s *Doctrine of the State* led him to believe that the relationship of State and Society was dialectical, not reflexive; you could not change the one without changing the other.²⁶ Marx agreed with Rousseau that a democratic government was a contradiction in terms. Unlike Rousseau, he believed that theoretical contradictions must be resolved on the plane of action. Revolution must be democratic and political at once, Society and State intertwined in struggle, a dialectical reconciliation of opposites. Rousseau’s Paradox, like that of the Greek philosopher Zeno, ensured stasis, perhaps that’s the reason it’s so popular today among American liberals and progressives. For Marx, however, revolution was the overcoming of the paradox:

“...so much the more logical is a political revolution with a social soul. Revolution – meaning the overthrow of the existing brutality and the dissolution of old

²⁵ „...denn [der Staat] beruht auf diesem Widerspruch. Er beruht auf dem Widerspruch zwischen dem öffentlichen und dem Privatleben, auf dem Widerspruch zwischen den allgemeinen Interessen und den Sonderinteressen.“ Karl Marx, „Kritische Randglossen zu dem Artikel ‚Der König von Preußen und die Sozialreform. Von einem Preußen‘“ [“Critical Notes on the Article ‘The King of Prussia and Social Reform. By a Prussian’”], *Vorwärts!* no. 60, August 7, 1844; MEW I, 401.

²⁶ Karl Marx, *Kritik des Hegelschen Staatsrechts [Critique of Hegel’s Doctrine of the State]*, unpublished manuscript; MEW I, 208-333.

relations – is primarily a political act. Without revolution, however, socialism cannot realize itself.²⁷

V

The same contradiction, insurmountable in appearance, was to play itself out in twentieth-century American politics. In the 'nineteen-sixties the radical American historian William Appleman Williams proposed two theories, distinct but convergent. First, and in line with other revisionist historians: American Society from colonial days on harbored strong socialist values, if by "socialism" one means what the French call *La Sociale* and the Germans *die solidarische Gesellschaft*, a society focused on mutual support and the general welfare. Second: once the supposedly unlimited resources of the American Continent were found to be limited after all, the need to apportion them would drive American society as a whole toward Socialism, if by Socialism one means a political system designed to "promote the general welfare," in the words of the Preamble to the US Constitution.²⁸ Williams was a major influence on the young activists of the 'sixties, notably the founders of Students for a Democratic Society, the signers of the Port Huron Statement of 1962. The fracturing of their movement in the late 'sixties was due in some measure to their failure to understand the complementary and dialectical aspect of Williams' two distinct arguments. Some failed to see that it was America's *political* institutions that had been structured to accommodate and enforce social solidarity; those

²⁷ „...ebenso vernünftig ist eine politische Revolution mit einer sozialen Seele. Die Revolution überhaupt - der Umsturz der bestehenden Gewalt und die Auflösung der alten Verhältnisse - ist ein politischer Akt. Ohne Revolution kann sich aber der Sozialismus nicht ausführen.“ Marx, „Kritische Randglossen...“ MEW I, 409.

²⁸ William Appleman Williams, *The Contours of American History* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1961).

who doubted the progressive potential of these institutions were bound, like the Weather Underground, to reject peaceful political change by means of those same institutions.²⁹ Meanwhile, those who failed to see that social change was powerless without a legitimate political framework to enforce it turned to what the SDS activist Tom Hayden called the “Socialism of the Heart,” the fantasy of social epiphanies that has been a prop of political paralysis from Gloria Steinem through Joe Biden.³⁰ As Bayard Rustin, the civil-rights and labor activist testily informed Hayden, “Rousseau was not a cotton picker.”³¹ The fantasizing of epiphanies has, over the past fifty years, become America’s major, failed attempt to resolve the confrontations of race, class and gender that have torn the country apart.

These contradictions were resolved — not so much resolved as papered over — when a group of center-of-left activists and politicians came together in the early ‘seventies to found what would become the Democratic Socialists of America: a “Socialism of the Heart” all right, but one that would depend for its implementation on the seizure of political power by the Steinems of this world. The values projected onto the American People were the reverse of those ascribed to the Russian People by Tkachev: non-violent, big-hearted, in one

²⁹ Theda Skocpol, “What Tocqueville Missed. Government made all that ‘volunteerism’ possible.” Abbreviated version of the Presidential Address to the annual meeting of the Social Science History Association in New Orleans on Oct. 12, 1996. *Slate* (Friday, November 15, 1996). <http://www.slate.com/id/2081>.

³⁰ James Miller, *Democracy is in the Streets. From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 272.

³¹ Quoted in Tom Hayden, Norm Fruchter and Alan Cheuse, “Up from Irrelevance,” “Reply” from James Weinstein, Stanley Aronowitz, Lee Baxandall, Eugene D. Genovese and Helen Kramer, *Studies on the Left* Vol. 5 no. 2 (Spring, 1965), 5.

word: American. It was a call for a purely political revolution all the same, an electoral coup.

This was not the first time a similar conflict between theories of social action had been papered over, thinly. In “his” influential history of the February Revolution of 1848, Daniel Stern wrote:

“From the very first hours of the Revolution, while the apparent agreement of the classes to accept or join up with the Republic still lasted, one might have heard, had one’s attention not been disturbed by fear in some, enthusiasm among others, two distinct cries. To the bourgeoisie, loudly shouting: ‘Long live the Democratic Republic!’, the proletariat responded with a cry, ‘Long live the Democratic and Social Republic!’ The first of these cries expressed a very clear idea that was understood by all. No one could deny that the republic must be democratic. The people only wanted a token of goodwill, the recognition that they deserved a better fate and a sincere search for the means to provide it. The People in 1848, (...) were the forgotten, disinherited child who asks to enter the social family, not to bring discord or to live at the expense of his brothers, but to work with them for the common prosperity.”³²

³² « Dès les premières heures de la Révolution, pendant que durait encore l'accord apparent des classes dans la soumission ou l'adhésion à la République, on aurait pu entendre, si l'attention n'avait été troublée par la peur chez les uns, par l'enthousiasme chez les autres, deux cris distincts. À la bourgeoisie, qui criait bien haut : "Vive la République démocratique", le prolétariat répondait par un cri, "Vive la République démocratique et sociale". Le premier de ces cris exprimait une idée très claire et comprise de tous. Que la république dût être démocratique, personne n'y contredisait. Le peuple ne voulait qu'un gage de bonne volonté, reconnaître qu'il méritait un sort meilleur, chercher sincèrement les moyens de le lui procurer. Le peuple de 1848, (...) c'était l'enfant oublié, déshérité, qui demande à rentrer dans la famille sociale, non pour y porter la discorde ou pour y vivre aux dépens de ses frères, mais pour y travailler avec eux à la prospérité commune. » Daniel Stern [Marie d'Agoult], *Histoire de la Révolution de 1848*, Livre Premier (Paris : Gustave Sandre, 1851), 11.

The tale, unfortunately, is wishful fantasy.³³ The author is Marie d'Agoult, partner of Franz Liszt and mother of Richard Wagner's wife Cosima, presenting under a pseudonym the viewpoint of a liberal bourgeoisie that was desperate to believe that a good, a peaceful and a bourgeois society could be achieved through democratic institutions courtesy of the benevolent ruling classes on one side, the peace-loving, unresentful proletariat on the other, "the forgotten, disinherited child." Democracy, the liberals believed, would come about by appealing to the moral sense of the rulers and the innate wisdom of the ruled. D'Agoult and Ruge shared the same approach.

Engels, in his address to Tkachev, was to scoff at the idea of the innate values of the People, "the fairy-tale of the 'instinctive revolutionary,'" the dream of change arising from the awakening of the People's true natures by the elites.³⁴ The People had their own desires and wishes, thank you very much; and as far as that fraction of a divided people, the Proletariat, their "true nature" could only arise out of their own realization of their own objective position in society. Marx might well have been referring to d'Agoult's progressive elites and their fantasy of happy workers when he suggested that

"The socialistic bourgeois want all the advantages of modern Society without its unavoidable struggles and risks. They want Society as it is with its revolutionizing and destructive elements removed."³⁵

³³ Raimund Rütten, « À la recherche d'une république démocratique et sociale », *Cahiers d'Histoire* 139 (2018) : 153-166. <https://journals.openedition.org/chrhc/7417>.

³⁴ „das Märchen vom ‚instinktiven Revolutionär“; Engels, „Soziales aus Rußland“ Part 2, MEW XVIII, 566.

³⁵ „Die sozialistischen Bourgeois wollen die Lebensbedingungen der modernen Gesellschaft ohne die notwendig daraus hervorgehenden Kämpfe und Gefahren. Sie wollen die bestehende Gesellschaft mit Abzug der sie

According to the Austro-Marxist philosopher Max Adler, far from wanting a few crumbs from the bourgeoisie the Proletariat of 1848 had grasped

“the idea of social democracy, of a solidary society, which burnt through the demand for universal suffrage and for the republic as the ‘People's State’ with the fire of political idealism.”³⁶

One major difference between America’s socialistic bourgeois today and the socialistic bourgeois of the Second French Republic is, that the French never claimed Exceptionalism in order to dismiss unbridgeable class differences. Otherwise, even the names are similar. In the late nineteen-sixties and early seventies, about the same time that American progressives were forming “democratic socialist” organizations, American and French historians started to pay attention to that loose association of French politicians and activists who had been known circa 1850 as the “dém-socs” or “démoc-socs,” an alliance of partisans of the “Democratic Republic” and the “Democratic and Social Republic,” the Social-Democrats. According to Maurice Agulhon, the French historian who, in the late ‘sixties did much to rehabilitate them,

“The démoc-socs placed all their hopes for the definitive accomplishment of Socialism — that is the eviction from power of the forces of injustice — upon the lawful means that they (justifiably) considered that the Constitution had

revolutionierenden und sie auflösenden Elemente. Sie wollen die Bourgeoisie ohne das Proletariat.“ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. *Manifest der kommunistischen Partei*[1848].

³⁶ „Die Idee der sozialen Demokratie, der solidarischen Gesellschaft, was die Forderung nach dem allgemeinen Wahlrecht und nach der Republik als dem ‚Volkstaat‘ mit dem Feuer des politischen Idealismus durchglühte.“ Max Adler, *Politische oder soziale Demokratie : ein Beitrag zur sozialistischen Erziehung* [1926], ed. Manfred Matzka (Wien: Czoklits & Wallner, 1982), 14.

made available to them. All that was needed was to make [the proletarian voters] conscious of where their own interests lay, and this aim seemed well on the way to being achieved. How could they fail to believe that at the double turning-point of [the national elections in 1852] [...] the partisans of the democratic and social Republic would at last come to power?"

[...]

"The *montagnard* ideology of 1850 can definitely be said to have been characterised by a combination of liberalism pure and simple, democratic ideals and a practical socialism derived from the utopians. So, notwithstanding the name "The Mountain" [*La Montagne*, the name originally associated with the radical deputies of the French Revolution in 1793-95] the party was in reality quite removed from a spirit of neo-Robespierreism. This group of men has been the object of much derision since Karl Marx and Proudhon who, for once in agreement, considered it to be no more than a derisory imitation, almost a parody, of Robespierreism."³⁷

There is a German expression, *Vernunftrepublikaner*, meaning someone who tolerates a democratic system out of pragmatism, without any particular affection for it. There should be another word, *Gefühlrepublikaner*, someone who supports a parliamentary, democratic system for sentimental reasons in the face of mounting evidence of its failures, its limitations, its unspoken contradictions. Such were the Democrat-Republicans, the bourgeois allies of the Social Democrats. Democracy for the Democrat-Republicans was not the pure expression of the social, it was a check on the instincts of the People, a firm

³⁷ Maurice Agulhon, *The Republican Experiment, 1848-1852* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 92-93; originally published as *1848 ou l'Apprentissage de la République 1848-1852* (Paris : Editions du Seuil, 1973).

and loving hand.³⁸ So it was for Agulhon himself, who in the ‘sixties and ‘seventies attempted to forge a compromise between the Marxist historiography that had dominated French History and the attacks of neo-liberal historians and politicians against the so-called “Nanny State.” Agulhon’s description of French peasant yeomen rising in defense of the Republic in 1851 (when Napoleon’s 18th Brumaire made their electoral dreams redundant anyhow) resonated with American progressives enamored of the Tocquevillian narrative, the peace-loving People at one with the State, while the story of the Fall of the Republic in December, 1851 flattered their fatalistic self-hatred after Nixon’s re-election in 1972. In addition, Agulhon’s suggestion that progressive cadres had successfully modeled democratic-social values among the French yeomanry fed into a growing institutional support for Behavioral Science as a means of fostering civic responsibility, with its flattering vision of the American Yo!-Man! as the “simple, passive receptor [...] of the civilizing mission of urban elites” whose instinctive yearnings only waited to be awakened.³⁹

VI

For Rousseau as for Marx a government that reflects the interests of the People as a whole is a logical impossibility but for different reasons, and those different reasons lead to divergent strategies. The democratic socialist strategy (Ruge’s, d’Agoult’s and others’) is to provide a model of social harmony, based on the sentimental and unrealistic hope of a political epiphany on the

³⁸ Sawyer, *Demos Assembled*, 164.

³⁹ Julian Mischi, « Introduction. Observer la politisation des ruraux sous l’angle des sociabilités : enjeux et perspectives » in Annie Antoine and Julian Mischi ed., *Sociabilité et politique en milieu rural* (Rennes : Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2008), 15.

part of the rulers and a social epiphany on the part of the ruled. Agulhon is off the mark when he argues that the dém-socs were “in reality quite removed from a spirit of neo-Robespierreism,” or that Marx’s sarcasm was misplaced. The tragedy that returns as farce in Marx’s well-known phrasing is not a “parody” of the policies of Robespierre and his Jacobin allies but a repetition of their schizophrenic postures and self-representations. Marx most likely had in mind those grandiose festivities by which the Jacobins staged Rousseau’s dream of transparency among the virtuous, along with their paranoid rants directed against those they imagined to be the obstacles to this transparency. Here was another model for that epiphany of perfect harmony between the rulers and the ruled in which the elites spontaneously reflected the People, the People were called on to reflect the elites, and the bad guys were unmasked and cancelled.

In 1962 the influential theoretician of the American Left Hal Draper wrote:

“For me, Marxism is the gateway to a revolutionary socialism which is thoroughly democratic and a democratic socialism which is thoroughly revolutionary.”⁴⁰

The phrase sounds more like an advertising meme than a pragmatic organizing principle: “Kraft Cheese: it’s sharp... yet mild!” It’s the same theoretical pick-and-choose that borrows general principles of Marxism without considering their historic context, the same self-delusion that irritated Marx about the dém-socs’ disingenuous borrowings from History. It’s one of several forms of

⁴⁰ Hal Draper, “Marx and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat,” *New Politics* (Vol. 1, No. 4, Summer, 1962), quoted <https://www.marxists.org/archive/draper/1962/xx/dictprolet.html>.

thought shared by French dém-socs and American democratic socialists. In 1978 the American historian John M. Merriman wrote, confusingly, of the original dém-socs, “They often called themselves démoc-socs, for democratic-socialists, or socialists,”⁴¹ while his colleague Ted Margadant claimed they opted for:

“an ideology of social reform... [...] The demo-socs wanted a government which would be ‘social’ in the sense that it would be responsible for the laboring poor. They were democrats who believed that universal manhood suffrage was the foundation upon which the republic of social justice would be built. [...] In addition, they had the optimism of the utopians, believing that man was essentially good and that he could change the world by changing his political and economic institutions.”⁴²

In the late ‘sixties and ‘seventies these glowing descriptions resonated with American liberal-progressive elites discouraged by their own apparent failure to connect with “the Masses.” Organizations like DSOC and its successor the Democratic Socialists of America matched the dém-socs for their radical rhetoric, their calls for class-free convergences and above all their single-minded focus on electoral epiphanies in the face of electoral defeats. Like Draper they fantasized a tendency, democratic socialism, which they imagined could be radical in its theorizing and pragmatic in its respect for Democracy. They restricted themselves to two options in order to make the first choice seem palatable: either Universal Suffrage, or the Dictatorship of the Rabble. They

⁴¹ John M. Merriman, *The Agony of the Republic: The Repression of the Left in Revolutionary France, 1848 - 1851* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), xv.

⁴² Quoted, Merriman, *op. cit.*, xxi.

thought of Democracy in political, not in social terms. Democracy was what happened at the ballot box, not in the workplace. Groups like the dém-socs, argued Marx, represented divergent interests “the way a potato sack stands for a sack of potatoes.”⁴³ Is it an accident of nomenclature if today a contemporary radical journal hides the contradictory content of its own struggles under the title *Jacobin*? Or that the editor of *Jacobin*, who also sits on the board of Democratic Socialists of America, when asked

“to pick between Eduard Bernstein the incrementalist German Marxist who sowed the seeds of modern social democracy and Rosa Luxemburg, who assailed Bernstein for abandoning hope of revolution, answered ‘Kautsky,’ naming Bernstein and Luxemburg’s contemporary who split the difference between the two.”⁴⁴

This is like splitting the difference between a Panther and a sewing machine, and I’ll let you guess which is which.

Marx in his *Tribune* interview had foreseen the same insurmountable problem that stares the democratic socialists of 2020 in the face as surely as the dém-socs of 1850. A revolutionary organization that rests its hopes on a hopelessly compromised electoral process will not stand:

⁴³ „wie etwa ein Sack von Kartoffeln einen Kartoffelsack bildet.“ Karl Marx, *Der achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis Napoleon* [1852], MEW VIII, 198.

⁴⁴ Matthews, "Inside Jacobin."; see also James Muldoon, "Reclaiming the Best of Karl Kautsky." *Jacobin Magazine* (January 5, 2019); <https://jacobinmag.com/2019/01/karl-kautsky-german-revolution-democracy-socialism>; Charlie Post, "The 'Best' of Karl Kautsky Isn't Good Enough," *Jacobin Magazine* (March 9, 2019) <https://www.jacobin-mag.com/2019/03/karl-kautsky-socialist-strategy-german-revolution>.

“In America the need of an independent Workingmen’s party has been made manifest. They can no longer trust politicians. Rings and cliques have seized upon the Legislature, and politics has been made a trade.”

There is an apparent contradiction in Marx’s argument, however: On the one hand he acknowledges the corruption of the political process in America; on the other he calls for the Working Class to participate in the process all the same:

“In America the need of an independent Workingmen’s party has been made manifest. They can no longer trust politicians.”⁴⁵

The paradox is insurmountable only to those for whom the possibility of a third-party candidacy is viewed with something akin to terror because they conceive of electoral victories as a goal, not an organizing strategy. For Marx as for many Social-Democrats of the Second International, the purpose of participation in the political process was not primarily to “win” according to the rigged rules of the game but to educate the Working Class — all classes but the ruling, actually. This is the approach laid out at the Second International Socialist Conference in Brussels in 1891 by the German Social-Democratic leader August Bebel:

“The chief task of Social Democracy is [...] to explain to the workers the nature and character of present day society, in order that that society may disappear as quickly as possible, the more quickly as it bears within itself, by virtue of its own laws of development, the fatal germ of its own decay. The workers must

⁴⁵ Marx, “SPECIAL CORRESPONDENCE,” 576.

learn to understand the nature of that society so that, when its last hour has struck, they will be able to establish the new society."⁴⁶

Bebel was seconded by Victor Adler, the light and founder of Austrian Socialism:

"For us parliamentarianism as a whole, the franchise, the vote, labor protections are only means to an end, good ways of revolutionizing minds and thus acquiring the weapons that will carry out this revolution. We shall never be induced to lose sight of our ends because of these means."⁴⁷

The task of Social-Democrats, quite distinct from that of Democratic Socialists, is to help the workers understand and adjust to their shifting relationship with the Social. Electoral campaigns are only one element of that struggle, by no means the leading one, as Victor Adler reiterated 19 years later:

"Winning voters is useful and necessary; educating social democrats is even more useful and more necessary."⁴⁸

⁴⁶ „Vor allem wolle er betonen, daß nach seiner Auffassung Hauptaufgabe der Sozialdemokratie nicht die Erringung eines Arbeiterschutz-Gesetzes sei, sondern in erster Linie sei es ihre Aufgabe, die Arbeiter aufzuklären über das Wesen und den Charakter der heutigen Gesellschaft, um dieselbe so rasch als möglich verschwinden zu lassen, und zwar um so rascher, als diese selbst in ihren eigenen Entwicklungsgesetzen den tödtenden Keim ihres Unterganges in sich trage.“ *Verhandlungen und Beschlüsse des Internationalen Arbeiter-Kongresses zu Brüssel, 16.-22. August 1891* (Berlin: Verlag der Expedition des "Vorwärts", 1893), 11.

⁴⁷ „Für uns ist der ganze Parlamentarismus, für uns ist Wahlrecht, Stimmrecht, Arbeiterschutz nur Mittel zum Zweck, ein gutes Mittel, um die Gehirne zu revolutioniren und so die Arme zu gewinnen, welche diese Revolution ausführen sollen. Ueber diesen Mitteln werden wir nie das Ziel aus den Augen verlieren.“ *Op. cit.*, 13.

⁴⁸ „Wähler gewinnen ist nützlich und notwendig; Sozialdemokraten erziehen ist nützlicher und notwendiger.“ Victor Adler, „Neue Aufgaben“, *Der Kampf* 1907 (1, 1): 6-9.

Nineteen years after that the Austro-Marxist philosopher Max Adler drew from Victor Adler's call its logical inference for practice:

“For the proletariat, political democracy is an indispensable weapon, a tremendous means of asserting its influence on the State and increasing its mass following.”

Adding:

“Though it is neither a social democracy nor a social republic, the Proletariat will defend that democracy and that republic all the more passionately as they recognize in it not an end in itself but the strong means to realize their own revolutionary aims.”⁴⁹

If there was one area where the Proletariat failed to recognize their imputed revolutionary aims, however, it was the American electoral system. This was Sombart's main point: in no country was the working class more attached to the order of things, and few institutions bound them closer to the State than the electoral system.

This may well have been behind Marx's call for the formation of a Workers' party in 1878, and very much in line with the Social-Democratic focus on building parallel structures within the State in 1891. It was certainly in line with

⁴⁹ „Die politische Demokratie ist für das Proletariat eine unentbehrliche Waffe, ein gewaltiges Mittel, seinen Einfluß im Staate zur Geltung zu bringen und seine Massenanziehung zu verstärken.“ „Und die Proletarier werden diese Demokratie und diese Republik um so leidenschaftlicher verteidigen, obgleich es nicht die soziale Demokratie und die soziale Republik ist, je mehr sie in ihr keinen Selbstzweck, sondern das starke Mittel erkannt haben, ihre eigenen revolutionären Ziele zu verwirklichen.“ Max Adler, *Politische oder soziale Demokratie : ein Beitrag zur sozialistischen Erziehung* [1926], ed. Manfred Matzka (Wien: Czoklits & Wallner, 1982) 11, 14.

the goals of the dém-socs of 1850, with their focus on meetings, banquets and self-help projects as a way to involve participants in *La Sociale* as an ideal and the electoral process as the infallible means of reaching that ideal. It was in reference to the discrepancy between the ideal and the reality, and the need to resolve that discrepancy, that Marx in his 1844 response to Ruge, wrote:

“[Socialism] requires this political act to the extent that it requires the destruction and dissolution of the State. But where its organizing activity begins, where its end-purpose, its soul, emerges, there socialism throws off the outer shell of the Political.”⁵⁰

For Marx, a Social Revolution was not merely the dream tied to the wagon of the Political Revolution as suggested by Lenin and Sanders and the dém-socs; not only the carrot in front of the donkey’s nose. The purportedly egalitarian (“democratic”) system of representation was the fulcrum by which the gap between the political and the social would be abolished. The Social Revolution was to be the ultimate goal and transcendence of the Political. The political life of society was to be folded into the social.

VII

As it was in America until the nineteen-seventies, according to Skocpol. Reversing Sombart’s insight, Skocpol argues that American sociability is deeply rooted in the representative political system. Dismissing the common

⁵⁰ [der Sozialismus] „bedarf dieses politischen Aktes, soweit er der Zerstörung und der Auflösung bedarf. Wo aber seine organisierende Tätigkeit beginnt, wo sein Selbstzweck, seine Seele hervortritt, da schleudert der Sozialismus die politische Hülle weg.“ Karl Marx, „Kritische Randglossen“, MEW I, 409.

conservative-liberal fantasy that sociability and civic responsibility arise spontaneously from bowling or barn-raising (or out of workplace relations, as in Sombart), she argues that in America social relations have been as likely to be a reflection of political institutions as the other way around, a point with which Marx would have agreed. The State itself is an active agent in the distortion of the existing social structure.

“... American civic voluntarism was never predominantly local and never flourished apart from national government and politics. [...] In the United States, democratic governance and civic voluntarism developed together, whatever today’s conservatives may want to believe.”⁵¹

Skocpol implicitly dismisses the argument that concludes Sombart’s *Why is there no Socialism in the United States?* It’s an argument to which bureaucratic Marxists, socialists, DSOCers and other apologists for their own inaction have paid little attention — perhaps they should have read the assignment? Sombart begins his last section by admitting he has no evidence for his conclusions, actually, and then engages in a paean to the joys and satisfactions of the American worker. Just as Tkachev had posited an instinctive Russian muzhik ready to rise up at the call of Communism so, too, Sombart imagines an instinctively satisfied Joe Sixpack, forever ready — no, eager! — to vote for whoever fills his lunchpail or buys him a beer. The implication: the American

⁵¹ Skocpol, “What Tocqueville Missed”; *Diminished democracy. From membership to management in American civic life*. The Julian J. Rothbaum distinguished lecture series Volume 8 (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 12-13, 8-9; Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000).

worker's satisfaction with social relations under capitalism is faithfully reflected at the polling booth.

Quite the opposite, according to Skocpol: the system of relationships structured by the political system of representation is faithfully reflected in the civic life of Americans. One need only look at *Robert's Rules of Order*, an indispensable tool of parliamentary procedure whose influence pervades most forms of civic organizing in America, to recognize the impact of state structures in molding social behavior. Likewise, voluntarist groups in America are often patterned after state institutions — why else would they call it the *Salvation Army*? For Skocpol this is a Good Thing. For Marx? “Meh...”

There is a second flaw in Sombart's argument, and it's telling that it was overlooked by Karl Kautsky and missed by Kautsky's American epigones. Because nouns are capitalized in German the original title draws no distinction between Socialism as a political movement and socialism as a value system. It's the kind of confusion a bureaucrat like Kautsky would make, or perhaps a bureaucrat like those found at the top of the American Labor Movement, a confusion based once again on the fantasy that one's own institution is in every way representative of the group whose social values one claims to represent. When Michael Harrington, the co-founder of DSA, claimed in his preface to Sombart that “in America, Socialism failed” (in addition to bringing up American exceptionalism) he couldn't possibly have been confusing Socialism and socialism, could he?⁵² And why have so many liberal and progressive

⁵² Michael Harrington, “Preface,” in Werner Sombart, *Why is there no Socialism in the United States?* (London: Macmillan, 1976), ix; https://books.google.at/books/about/Why_is_There_No_Socialism_in_the_United.html; Daniel Gaido, “The American Worker' and the Theory of Permanent Revolution: Karl Kautsky on Werner Sombart's

leaders in America been eager to confuse the *needs* they ascribe to their own constituencies with the *values* of America as a whole?⁵³ The answer is as readily available today as it was on 18th Brumaire, December 2, 1851, when Louis-Napoleon came to power proclaiming “a new suprapolitical authority abandoning all doctrine and seeking only concrete benefits for the masses.”⁵⁴

“Ultimately, Sanders is someone that wants to campaign *for* something [...] Although several [Sanders campaign] staffers found this trait admirable, the majority found it naive and something future progressive candidates shouldn’t mimic.”⁵⁵

Guys, I wouldn’t worry about the 18th Brumaire of Donald Trump. It’s here already.

Skocpol may have come closer to a Marxist position than she herself would care to admit. In *Diminished Democracy* (2003) she argued that by the early nineteen-seventies her rosy picture of American sociation modeled by Government was no longer applicable. Skocpol agrees with William Appleman Williams and other revisionist historians that the American State was originally designed to stand, inadequately no doubt, as a shield and refuge against

“Why Is There No Socialism in the United States,” *Historical Materialism*, volume 11:4 (2003): 79–123. https://www.academia.edu/5462909/The_American_Worker_and_the_Theory_of_Permanent_Revolution_Karl_Kautsky_on_Werner_Sombarts_Why_Is_There_No_Socialism_in_the_United_States.

⁵³ “Young Socialists Open Parley to Weigh ‘New Politics’ Split.” *New York Times* (December 27, 1972), 26.

⁵⁴ Billington, *Fire in the Minds of Men*, 342.

⁵⁵ Jordan Chariton, “Inside Bernie 2020: How Bernie’s ‘Magical Thinking’ Made Him His Own Worst Enemy.” *Status Coup* (June 22, 2020). <https://statuscoup.com/inside-bernie-2020-how-the-revolutionary-became-his-own-worst-enemy/>

rampant economism, that which Marxists call the domination of the Base Structure. In the elegant words of Eric Foner, “The ‘lessons’ of the polity were the opposite of those of the economy.”⁵⁶ Starting in the early ‘seventies, however, a vast alliance of liberals, conservatives and self-described progressives, the professional-managerial class, extended the social dominance of patterns of bureaucratization in a way that would have had Max Weber, the great German exponent of bureaucratization, twitching an eyebrow with delight. The original organizations (voluntary, participatory, not for profit) turned into top-down bureaucracies of well-funded non-profits, interest groups, political organizations and unions, mirror-images of a bureaucratic state at its worst. These organizations had little use for their constituencies except as sources of funding, and certainly no use for their input. This is the blind spot missed by democratic socialists, Leninists, American union leadership and the right wing of the Second International, the Kautskys and the Bernsteins and the others. All harbored the fantasy that by seizing the State in the absence of a social revolution they could proceed to socialize the Market. It was the same fantasy that led a number of Social-Democrats to take up the banner of War Socialism in World War I, confident that the State would dominate and discipline the Market. It may never have occurred to them that the Market would eventually “throw off the outer shell of the Political” and socialize the State itself, along with all the institutions that mirrored it. Once the Dictatorship of Capital had been allowed to permeate the means of political representation the very possibility of providing the working class (or any other class) with a refuge from economic exploitation collapsed and the State itself became an

⁵⁶ Foner, “Why Is There No Socialism in the United States?”, 68.

agent of capital on a par with any private corporation. That is as true of the USSR in the twentieth century as of the USA today. To give a concrete example: New York City's community boards are designed to facilitate interactions between the community and the City Administration, to register and process objections to invasive commercial practices; to negotiate or refuse liquor licenses, for instance. What they have become, instead, is a way to greenlight all and any commercial practices by the interposition of an additional level of administration for whom knowledge of the laws on licensing would be a hindrance because it might prevent the administrators from ignoring them. Meanwhile, enforcement is left to the police who function as the private army of Capital, simultaneously harassing underfunded businesses in minority neighborhoods and acting as a protection racket for the lucrative businesses in white neighborhoods—even the illegal ones like the flourishing upper-class drug trade. As a result, the bureaucratic organization of the State is virtually identical with the free-market system: there are no laws and no democratic oversight.⁵⁷

In America today the conflict between the individual and the general will is framed as a mere organizational problem, a question of adjustment — on the part of the individual, of course, or the candidate, for that matter. The Land of the Free has become a vast Office of Human Resources where all decisions are made, not for moral rightness or social value but first and foremost to protect the Institution itself. Individual success is based exclusively on what in the

⁵⁷ Moustafa Bayoumi, "Why Did Cup Foods Call the Cops on George Floyd?" *New York Times* (June 17, 2020); <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/17/opinion/george-floyd-arab-muslims-racism.html>.

USSR was known as *partyinost'* – not an ideology proper but conformity to an ideology:

"Partyinost' ... is fidelity to the higher [...] interests of the [...] class and its mission of the revolutionary transformation of the nature of social relations."⁵⁸

Like the original Jacobins, today's self-styled Friends of Liberty and Equality affirm their authority through vast rituals of unmasking and epiphany, now known as "Cancel Culture." If the American worker has ever been, as Sombart claimed, "freed from what might be may called vexatious supervision," that moment is long past.⁵⁹ What has changed, is that the supervision is now on the level of consumption, not production.

VIII

Skocpol's disappointment with American civic organization was to re-emerge during the mid-term elections of 2018. This time her ire was directed at

"Many Democratic Party insiders, political consultants, and national leaders [who] still seem focused on monetizing popular energy and hoarding contact lists, treating volunteers as interchangeable labor for last-minute door knocking. [...] Party officials [...] tune out entirely when grassroots groups describe their struggles to get even the most basic answers to simple logistical questions,

⁵⁸ Spartak I. Beglov, *Vneshnepoliticheskaya propaganda: Ocherk teorii i praktiki* (Moscow: Vneshnyaya shkola, 1984), 362; quoted in Frank Ellis, *From Glasnost to the Internet: Russia's New Infosphere* (Houndmills, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), xv.

⁵⁹ « Délivré de ce qu'on peut appeler la surveillance vexatoire ». Unsourced quote, Werner Sombart, *Warum gibt es in den Vereinigten Staaten keinen Sozialismus?* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (P. Siebeck) 1906), 130.

including: when local party committees meet, how decisions are made, and who can participate in any ongoing way.”⁶⁰

Bernie’s campaign was no different, except that the discrepancy between the manner in which his campaign operated and the change in human relations that the same campaign promised was so wide that it could lead to functional paralysis at best. I had a few direct exchanges with people at the very top of Bernie’s campaign. Having spent some time as a union organizer on two continents, I recognized the type you meet in any political organization anywhere, men and women caught between the stated mission of the institution and the conflicting reality of its function in the political structure. These operatives and the conflicts they embodied were a perfect illustration of Marx’s classic definition of social revolution and its effect on individual consciousness:

“At a specific stage in their development, the material productive forces of society fall into a contradiction with pre-existing relations of production... This is when an era of social revolution is ushered in.”

[...]

“One must interpret this consciousness as arising from the contradictions of material life, from the preexisting conflict between social productive forces and relations of production.”⁶¹

⁶⁰ Theda Skocpol and Lara Putnam, "Middle America reboots Democracy," *Democracy. A Journal of Ideas* (February 20, 2018). <https://democracyjournal.org/arguments/middle-america-reboots-democracy/>.

⁶¹ “Auf einer gewissen Stufe ihrer Entwicklung geraten die materiellen Produktivkräfte der Gesellschaft in Widerspruch mit den vorhandenen Produktionsverhältnissen. [...] Es tritt dann eine Epoche sozialer Revolution ein. [...] Man [...] muß dies [...] Bewußtsein aus den Widersprüchen des materiellen Lebens, aus dem vorhandenen Konflikt zwischen gesellschaftlichen Produktivkräften und Produktionsverhältnissen erklären.“ Karl Marx, *Zur Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie. Vorwort*. [A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy. Preface], 1859; MEW XIII, 9.

Which is a fancy-pants way of saying: a) that a political revolution cannot create a social revolution, only facilitate it; b) that those who consciously take up the task of effecting social change through a political revolution are as likely to be involved in resisting as facilitating a social revolution, because c) they themselves will reflect, consciously or not in their activities, the contradictions between the social and the political. They are caught between destroying from within the institution that pays the rent by facilitating a social revolution, and doing their job on the other hand, which consists of preserving a decaying political institution. Should the latter be the motivation, d) they must choose to hide their real interests behind the sophisticated arrogance of the expert or the innocent self-delusion of the amateur. Arrogance would best describe Bernie's political director, a graduate of a school for "Social Policy and Management" who ghosted three Sanders grassroots organizations on two continents and who knows how many more beside. "Distributed organizing" is the term for "allowing non-experts a say," and distributed organizing doesn't work, says so right here in the book.⁶² Ironically, after David had ensured that low-income and minority neighborhoods were virtually ignored by the Sanders Campaign he was chosen for a high position in Democratic Socialists of America, presumably to make sure the many DSA volunteers who had worked so hard for Bernie in the ghettos would never be empowered to do so again.⁶³

To be fair, most actors I encountered chose self-delusion over cynicism, being Americans and therefore inclined to the naïve optimism of the big-hearted and

⁶² Chariton, "Inside Bernie 2020."

⁶³ Democratic Socialists of America. *Democratic Socialists for Bernie. Debrief Pamphlet*. Google Doc, July, 2020. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/lym4VvpsH-SMd6flHhnkYAk6YLVBbxYYI/view>

the narrow-brained. Take my friend Bruce, who as counsel for my local branch of the Democratic Party tried to rewrite the by-laws to ensure insurgents would be expelled, all the while running the local chapter of Sanders' group, *Our Revolution*. In 1926 Max Adler drew out the fundamental contradiction between the two approaches:

“Thus the difference between political and social democracy is not merely political, but the difference between two forms of society, two worlds: the old world of non-solidarity and oppression and the new world of solidarity and freedom.”⁶⁴

Some people, it turns out, are very happy with the old world of non-solidarity and oppression so long as they can continue on the side of the oppressors. To them betrayal is no longer a conscious act but an existential one, borne of the double agency of their own stated program.

Or take the Sanders campaign's obsession with phone-banking, a sterile and unproductive form of organizing under most conditions, a magical process that consists in throwing vast numbers of volunteers at the voters, like those British soldiers in World War I who were sent marching into enemy machine-guns because the High Command thought they were too dumb to learn to maneuver. As the editor in chief of Jacobin Magazine put it,

⁶⁴ „So ist also der Unterschied zwischen politischer und sozialer Demokratie kein bloß politischer, sondern der Unterschied zweier Gesellschaftsformen, zweier Welten: der *alten* Welt der Unsolidarität und Unterdrückung und der *neuen* Welt der Solidarität und Freiheit.“ Max Adler, *Politische oder soziale Demokratie*, 159.

“We’re using this electoral opening and hoping that somehow through rhetoric and discourse alone, we wake up a working-class subject.”⁶⁵

Marx put it more bluntly:

“All they have to do is give the signal and the People, with all of its limitless resources, will fall upon the oppressor. If in the execution their interests turn out to be uninteresting and their power powerless, this is due either to niggling obfuscators who split the indivisible people into various enemy camps, [...] or because the whole thing failed due to a detail in the execution, or an unforeseen accident has spoiled the game this time around. Whatever it is, your Democrat emerges from the most ignominious defeat as squeaky-clean as he entered, with the newly-won conviction that victory is assured, not because he and his party have given up their old stance, but because circumstances have turned around.”⁶⁶

For a true mouchard it’s not enough for the cause to fail, the goal is to reverse any possible gains. American union leadership is at times indistinguishable from the more conservative wing of the Second International, the Eberts and the Renners and the Millerands, not for its goals but its tactics against its own

⁶⁵ Bhaskar Sunkara, “The Long Shot of Democratic Socialism Is Our Only Shot. An Interview with Leo Panitch,” *Jacobin Magazine* (January 15, 2020). <https://jacobinmag.com/2020/01/social-democracy-democratic-socialism-capital-unions-strategy>.

⁶⁶ „Sie haben eben nur das Signal zu geben, damit das Volk mit allen seinen unerschöpflichen Ressourcen über die Dränger herfalle. Stellen sich nun in der Ausführung ihre Interessen als uninteressant und ihre Macht als Ohnmacht heraus, so liegt das entweder an verderblichen Sophisten, die das unteilbare Volk in verschiedene feindliche Lager spalten, [...] oder an einem Detail der Ausführung ist das Ganze gescheitert, oder aber ein unvorhergesehener Zufall hat für diesmal die Partie vereitelt. Jedenfalls geht der Demokrat ebenso makellos aus der schmachlichsten Niederlage heraus, wie er unschuldig in sie hineingegangen ist, mit der neugewonnenen Überzeugung, daß er siegen muß, nicht daß er selbst und seine Partei den alten Standpunkt aufzugeben, sondern umgekehrt, daß die Verhältnisse ihm entgegenzureifen haben.“ Marx, *Der achtzehnte Brumaire*, MEW VIII, 144-145.

left wing. In his brilliant summary of the question, “Why Is There No Socialism in the United States?” Eric Foner points out that

“Labor leaders have constantly sought to undercut the militancy of the rank and file, preferring accommodations with capital to prolonged class struggle.”

Adding:

“No one has satisfactorily explained how and why a presumably militant rank and file constantly chooses moderate ‘misleaders’ to represent it.”⁶⁷

The explanation’s simple: union campaigns are not merely a form of organizing but a form of socialization as well. The Union must simultaneously radicalize the workers to the point of participating, and prevent them from following their newly radicalized consciousness to the point of taking action on their own. In that respect, Bernie’s political revolution was a union campaign writ large: rouse the People to the point of voting for you, never, ever empower them to go beyond that, and the professionals who ran the campaign knew all the moves. The purpose of phone-banking, for instance, was not so much to reach the undecided, let alone empower them, as it was to socialize the phone-bankers into a Taylorized factory routine of carefully scripted, mind-bending tasks. This is the usual means by which the union shows Management it can discipline the workforce better than Management itself, it’s how relations of production are maintained. This is the reason, I suspect, why that brilliant politician, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, walked away from Bernie’s campaign: before it could pull her down.

⁶⁷ Foner, “Why Is There No Socialism in the United States?”, 68.

There's an old union saying: "The boss organizes the workers." When it comes to socializing the workers, the Union can match the boss any time. From Leninist theory and practice it has adopted the concept of Democratic Centralism, the idea that once a position has been reached democratically within an organization that position must be adhered to by all. By now the democratic part of the equation has long disappeared, but that's not the worst part of the process. The worst part comes from the fact that Democratic Centralism exposes a fundamental weakness in the process of democratic elections themselves, the need to define a priori who is or is not part of the decision-making. This is why so many social struggles in America revolve around the legitimacy of the participants, not the resolution of the problem. And this is the context in which Marx brings up his Parable of the Potato: The potatoes define the bag and the bag defines the potatoes and because in the absence of a common goal the potato-bag is the only device that defines the institution, the bag must at all costs be preserved, damn the potatoes full speed ahead. The true model for this kind of split consciousness, the Bag against the Potato, is not Kautsky and it's certainly not Rosa Luxemburg; it's little Sammy Gompers, founder of the American Federation of Labor, cowering on the basement steps by Tompkins Square Park as the workers are beaten by the cops, while Sammy vows to snatch the American Labor Movement from the foreigners and Communists, the people with motives and ideas and demands, and return it to its true vocation as a sack of potatoes:

“I realized that . . . the labor movement is made up of men and women of all sorts of natures and experiences. Their welfare depends on solidarity.”⁶⁸

Einheit über Freiheit, “Unity over Freedom:” it’s the rallying cry of the return to order, in 1850 as in 1874 or 2020. What happened to the organizational powers of the American Left is similar to what, according to Lenny Bruce, happens to little boys who pleasure themselves: they turn into vampires and then they can’t rouse it anymore, just fan it with their wings.

IX

In the end the purpose of the American Electoral Institution was to preserve itself and above all else to preserve the illusion of a democratic process in the face of its decay. In the end the institution won.

One question still remains: why then? Why did Bernie drop out when he did? Or rather: why was Bernie advised to drop out at that moment?

The easy answer is, because he wasn’t going to get a sufficient number of delegates to win the nomination. Which boils down to, “because nothing mattered but winning the nomination.” Which then morphs into “because all else that would have been negatively affected by his dropping out was deemed irrelevant if not a positive development going forward.”

One of the fundamentals of organizing (Saul Alinsky writes about it): you go for the small wins at the outset, to encourage your people to believe they can win. There’s a segment of the American Institutional Left that prefers to go for

⁶⁸ Samuel Gompers, *Seventy Years of Life and Labor* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, 1925), 34.

the big losses, likely for the same reason: to discourage your people from getting uppity. I've seen this happen, for instance, in union organizing, the moment when the leadership walks away from its own base, either to cut its losses or consolidate its gains, and either way to ensure that members who've been empowered by the strike or the organizing process are disempowered. If the union has just won recognition the leadership ensures the radical elements are cut out of any decision-making or administrative positions in the new bureaucracy, lest they interfere with the union's ability to negotiate compromises with Management. On the other hand, if the union wants to back down from a strike it needs to ensure the radical elements at the base are neutralized, lest they challenge the leadership's decision. Throwing them to the management wolves simultaneously pacifies Management and makes public martyrs of them, more useful dead than red.

The Marxist resolution to Rousseau's Paradox is for a portion of the People to seize the state institutions that can empower the social movement that leads to the transformation of the State itself — its *Aufhebung* — into a social unit, not a political one. And participation of the People in their own political system on their own terms was the last thing Sanders' self-wrecking crew wanted. Without a political revolution the Social Revolution means little more than utopian fatalism; and the advantage of utopian fatalism is that can always fall back on the immaturity of the People as an excuse, and corrupt, manipulated democratic elections are the best excuse of all: "Of course that only proves that the people are not ready for Revolution." Of course it does. What else are elections for?

The transformation of this country will not be achieved without a radical transformation of its political structure. At the precise moment when the opportunity presented itself — when the possibility of radically changing the Democratic Machine from within presented itself — Sanders took the fall for the Good of the Party.

Bernie Sanders: The Jack Johnson of Democratic Socialism.

