

Radicalism or Reformism? Socialist Parties before World War I

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This article builds on social movement theory to explain ideological variation among socialist, social democratic, and labor parties across 18 countries in the early twentieth century. We propose a causal argument connecting (1) the political emergence of the bourgeoisie and its middle-class allies to (2) the political space for labor unions and working-class parties, which (3) provided a setting for internal pressures and external opportunities that shaped socialist party ideology. Combining quantitative analysis and case studies, we find that the timing of civil liberties and the strength of socialist links with labor unions were decisive for reformism or radicalism. Refining Lipset's prior analysis, we qualify his claim that male suffrage provides a key to socialist orientation.

“Changes in class and political relations within industrially developed societies, much like the shifts in left-wing politics in the United States and Europe, may be analyzed within the framework of an ‘apolitical’ Marxism—that is, by accepting the proposition that technological advances and the distribution of economic classes determine the political and cultural superstructures, but without assuming that socialism will succeed capitalism” (Lipset 2001:77).

The ideological development of socialist parties resembles a natural experiment and has relevance for social scientists beyond its substantive importance. As Lipset and Rokkan (1967) recognized in their classic account of party structure, the conflict between workers and employers has framed the sociology of politics

in all industrial societies. Unlike the center/periphery and religious cleavages arising from nation-state formation and the Reformation, the class cleavage characterizes all industrial societies. In this article, we ask why that conflict varied so decisively prior to World War I: Why were some socialist parties radical and others reformist?

Socialist, social democratic, and labor parties formed across Europe, North America, and Australasia in the decades prior to World War I. All appealed to manual workers as their core constituency. All began with, or adopted, political programs demanding male suffrage (later, universal suffrage), civil rights, economic equality, and a decisive role for the state in the economy. Yet the goals pursued by socialist parties varied widely. Some parties, such as the Russian Bolsheviks, Finnish socialists, and Spanish socialists, had revolutionary platforms demanding the dissolution of the existing capitalist system, the expropriation of private property, and an immediate transition to socialism. Other socialist or labor parties, such as the British Labour party, the Danish socialists, and the Swiss socialists, were reformist, campaigning for welfare reforms, an eight-hour workday,

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and more working-class representation in the legislature.

From a social movement perspective, this study explores how three features of a system of institutionalized politics—repression, suffrage, and civil liberties—affect movement strategy. Since Tilly's landmark study (1978), social movement theorists have explored how state repression shapes social movements and their repertoires (McAdam 1996; Tarrow 1996). Subsequent research has focused on variation in the *process* of repression: Is repression brutal or soft, generalized or selective, legal or illegal, preemptive or reactive, rigid or flexible, professional or improvised (della Porta and Reiter 1998; McPhail and McCarthy 2005)? This article disaggregates repression into three substantive mechanisms—denial of civil liberties, denial of the right to organize in the labor market, and denial of political citizenship—on the grounds that different kinds of political access have different consequences for movement strategy.

The topic of radicalism or reformism has been taken up by political sociologists from the time of Karl Marx, and while we build on their ideas throughout this article, the explanation we offer differs from previous ones in three respects. First, we evaluate the research hypotheses quantitatively as well as qualitatively. One reason why there has been negligible systematic testing in this field is that we lack objective measures, and so our first step is to estimate socialist ideology and the political context that confronted socialist parties.¹ Second, we reject the notion that participation in elections dampened the revolutionary ardor of socialist parties and we qualify Lipset's claim that political citizenship provides a key to socialist orientation. Basic civil liberties (freedom of association and freedom of the press) are prior to, and apparently more decisive than, citizenship. Finally, the explanation we propose goes beyond the widely-held view that socialist ideology is a response to the structure of political alternatives. Instead, we claim that the structure of the labor movement—in particular, links between the party

and labor unions—constituted a powerful pressure for socialist radicalism or reformism.

THEORIZING REFORMISM OR RADICALISM

An astonishing variety of factors have been hypothesized to affect socialist party orientation. These include economic variables bearing on the structure and consciousness of the working class, such as the standard of living, the degree of industrial concentration, the character of the division of labor and the work process, and the level, pace, and timing of industrialization. The literature also points to social variables shaping working-class attitudes, such as the status system, social mobility, the spatial nexus of work and home, the development of compulsory education, and the ethnic, religious, and linguistic composition of the working class. Finally, there are political variables influencing both working-class attitudes and socialist party ideology, such as the timing of male suffrage, state repression, cross-class coalitions, the degree to which a state is decentralized, the role of intellectuals, and the type, coverage, and timing of welfare provisions.

Studies have approached this diversity of plausible causes in two ways. The first details comparisons across a few cases to understand the interaction of multiple factors. By observing change in even a single country, researchers can present evidence about how, for example, the introduction of male suffrage affects socialist leaders' political orientations. Causal inference is difficult, however, given the large number of possible influences and the limited variation of relevant conditions across a small number of cases.

The second approach, which we use here, compares a larger set of cases. Although it sacrifices descriptive specificity, the larger sample size allows for greater rigor. The number of independent cases at our disposal—37 cases drawn from 18 countries—is still not large enough to control the range of influences listed above. We therefore focus on two sets of causally proximate variables. First, what political opportunities were available to socialist parties within their respective political systems? Could workers vote? What channels were open for workers to organize and express their demands? Second, what was the structure of

¹ Bartolini (2000) is a major exception, and we draw on his data to measure union-party links (see also Schakel 2004).

the labor movement and what pressures could labor unions exert on socialist parties to reform, rather than abolish, the system of wage labor?

The political channels available to socialist parties and the structure of the labor movement resulted from explicable patterns of economic, social, and political development. The ability of the bourgeoisie and its middle-class allies to mount an effective challenge to the hegemony of the monarchy and its agrarian allies appears to have been crucial. Political liberalism promoted the interests of the propertied middle classes, but by limiting absolutism it had two unintended consequences: it extended a minimal, although contested, domain of freedom of expression and association to workers and it created legal ambiguity for workers' combinations in the labor market, thereby providing them with some breathing space.²

The literature on the development of socialist parties has been an extended dialogue with the ideas of Karl Marx. Our analysis of socialist strategy does not assume that workers will challenge the basic framework of capitalism, but our explanation is Marxian in that it focuses on successive stages of class conflict. Classes are groups "endowed with particular rights" (Marx 1843), the most important of which are property rights over the means of production and rights underpinning control of the state. Following Lipset, we argue that prior class conflict between the landed aristocracy and commercial and industrial elites conditioned the rise of a new class, the proletariat.

MALE SUFFRAGE

The effects of male suffrage were a puzzle for socialists around the turn of the twentieth century. Some believed that access to the vote would deepen workers' class consciousness. In 1894, Engels noted with satisfaction that British unions were intent on gaining representation in

the House of Commons: "Let us have textile workers in Parliament just as we already have miners there. As soon as a dozen branches of industry are represented class consciousness will arise of itself" (Lapides 1986:165).

Others argued that male suffrage would weaken demands for the wholesale rejection of capitalist society. Lenin claimed that German Social Democracy could benefit from the fact that "the bourgeois-democratic revolution was still incomplete" and that, conversely, American socialism was weak because it existed in a "firmly established democratic system . . . which confronted the proletariat with purely socialist tasks" (Lenin [1907] 1962:362). In an interview with Arthur Ransome, Lenin described England as the "freest [sic] country in the world," harnessing the masses to political democracy via a "systematically managed, well-equipped system of flattery, lies, and fraud" (Cowden 1963:50). Lipset (1983:7) summarized this argument in his presidential address to the American Political Science Association: "The exclusion of workers from the fundamental political rights of citizenship effectively fused the struggle for political and economic equality and cast that struggle in a radical mold. Thus, a large number of European socialist movements grew strong and adopted a radical Marxist ideology while the working class was still unfranchised or was discriminated against by an electoral system that was explicitly class or property biased" (see also Dahl 1971).

Scholars have put forward several arguments for the male suffrage hypothesis:

1. The denial of male suffrage meant that social democratic parties could not convert electoral support into political reform. Instead, they had to campaign for fundamental change in the rules of the political game.
2. The denial of male suffrage alienated workers by making them feel a class apart. It legitimated the social democratic claim to represent workers as a class against the ruling class (Lipset 1983).
3. Laws were biased against workers to the extent that workers were politically disempowered (Stephens 1979).

Przeworski and Sprague (Przeworski 1985; Przeworski and Sprague 1986) argue that male suffrage undermined the revolutionary commitment of socialist parties, but for reasons distinct from the classic male suffrage hypothesis. In their view, the very act of participating in

² In explaining the push for male suffrage, Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens (1992:143) argue that "capitalist development strengthens civil society and both the middle and working classes, thus leading to the strengthening of democratic forces," but that the middle classes tended to resist the extension of suffrage to male workers in the decades around the turn of the twentieth century (p. 96ff).

democratic elections blunted revolutionism. The argument underlying the electoral participation hypothesis is subtle. Because the unit of electoral appeal is the individual, socialist parties were induced to frame their appeal in individual, not class, terms. Elections therefore undermined the ability of socialist parties to extend class solidarity to the political realm.³ Moreover, as socialist parties entered the electoral arena, their leaders came to realize that, despite Marxist claims, the working class would never constitute a simple majority of the voting-age population. If socialist parties limited their appeal to the proletariat they would be doomed to minority status. Hence, socialists made cross-class appeals. The net result, according to Przeworski and Sprague, is that elections undermined class cohesiveness by individualizing representation and inducing socialist leaders to appeal to non-proletarians.⁴ The decision to participate was therefore a decisive step in the path from class-based revolutionism toward integration within capitalist democracy.

CIVIL LIBERTIES

Scholars have argued the civil liberties hypothesis on the following grounds:

1. When a regime makes it impossible for a party to gain political influence, basic institutional change becomes a logical precondition for the pursuit of the party's other goals.
2. To the extent that a regime denies a party political access, it isolates the party from diverse influences that could co-opt, moderate, or incorporate the party and its leaders (Katzenstein 1985).

³ "People who are capitalists or wage-earners within the system of production all appear in politics as undifferentiated 'individuals' or 'citizens'" (Przeworski 1985:13).

⁴ Michels ([1916] [1962] 1999:254, quoted in Przeworski 1985:26) made a similar point: "For motives predominantly electoral, the party of the workers seeks support from the petty bourgeois elements of society, and this gives rise to more or less extensive reactions upon the party itself. The Labour Party becomes the party of the 'people.' Its appeals are no longer addressed to the manual workers, but to 'all producers,' to the 'entire working population,' these phrases being applied to all the classes and all the strata of society except the idlers who live upon the income from investments."

3. A regime that stonewalls gives the initiative to radicals in a party who can point to past experience to support their claims that gradual ameliorative reform is impossible.
4. Repression arouses feelings of deprivation and resentment. Social injustice is more acute when those subject to it are denied the chance to defend themselves (Mikkelsen 2005; Tilly 1978).

Liberal political theory from Locke and Mill to Dahl and Lipset draws on these arguments to make a law-like generalization: toleration moderates; repression radicalizes. The path to socialist reformism begins not with working-class citizenship and male suffrage, but with freedom from state repression, which is at the core of negative liberty (Berlin 1969; Dahl 1971).

The comparative literature echoes these expectations. Lipset (1983:6) believed that "cross-national variations in working-class political activity were . . . affected by differences in the extent to which the proletariat was legally free to form class-based organizations and participate in the economic and political life of their societies." In his comprehensive analysis of socialist parties, Bartolini (2000:397) concludes that "political repression was one of the main determinants of early socialist movement behaviours and the instrument through which the state shaped the structure and fundamental forms of labour protest" (see also Eley 2002). Marx (1842:6) also argued that it was in the interest of Germany's ruling class to tolerate freedom of the press: "Censorship does not abolish the struggle, it makes it one-sided, it converts an open struggle into a hidden one, it converts a struggle over principles into a struggle of principle without power against power without principle."

Radicalism, from this perspective, is a response to the absence of legitimate channels, not a psychological disposition produced by alienation or poverty. Where civil liberties were weak or absent, social democratic parties were denied legal channels of expression and organization. Consequently, they had to combat the regime to gain the political space necessary to exist, even if they would have preferred a reformist course (Bartolini 2000:379). Indeed, one might say that radicalism is reformism under duress.

Extreme repression may raise the cost of resistance to such an extent that even the most angry or alienated person may be beaten into

acquiescence. Hence, the effect of repression on radicalism is U-shaped. As Charles, Louise, and Richard Tilly (1975:286) observe, “Under heavy repression, collective action subsidies, and the effectiveness of those collective actions which do occur, and do generate violence, declines. . . . Highly tolerant regimes also diminish the effectiveness of those collective actions which have considerable probabilities of violence. They do so by multiplying the available paths to any particular objective, thus making the violence-strewn path less attractive. The maximum relative effectiveness of the high-violence path probably lies between the extremes of repression and nonrepression, toward the repressive end of the range.”

UNIONS

Labor unions predated socialist parties in every society, and by the turn of the twentieth century they had far larger memberships and far greater financial resources. Socialist revolutionaries and business union leaders from Lenin to Samuel Gompers agreed on the consequences: where socialist parties were enmeshed with strong unions, socialism would be driven in a reformist direction.

One reason for this is that unions are embedded in the capitalist system of wage labor. The first unions in Britain, France, Germany, and many other countries did not bargain with employers. Printers and other skilled craft workers attempted to control the supply of labor at its source, unilaterally, by setting the rates at which workers offered their labor to employers. Subsequently, industrial unions were formed by less-skilled workers, such as coalminers and textile workers. Such workers could never hope to control the supply of their labor but could gain some bargaining power by threatening to withhold their labor en masse (Laslett 2000). Industrial unions had the numbers to campaign for legislation concerning working conditions, but like craft unions, they sought to improve working conditions rather than abolish the system of wage labor.

Unions challenged orthodox Marxism in another, more fundamental, way: they were sectional organizations. Although they were more proletarian than socialist parties (they were composed exclusively of wage workers—and led by them!), they did not amalgamate into

classwide organizations. The first durable unions were composed of workers who identified their life chances with those of other workers in their occupation. This allowed them to overcome the free-rider dilemma. Compositors, cigar makers, shoemakers, handloom weavers, and coalminers, for example, formed close-knit occupational communities that could punish defectors and sustain union membership as a social norm (Marks 1989). These occupational communities were bounded. Levels of union membership vary widely across countries and across time, but union movements are almost always composed of organizations rooted in particular occupations or industries (Connell 1988; Conell and Voss 1990).

In the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels ([1872] [1890] 1985:90) predicted that union sectionalism was a temporary condition. Experience, they believed, would teach unions to consolidate into classwide organizations: “The real fruit of their battles lies not in the immediate result, but in the ever expanding union of the workers. This union is helped on by the improved means of communication that are created by Modern Industry, and that place the workers of different localities in contact with one another. It was just this contact that was needed to centralize the numerous local struggles, all of the same character, into one national struggle between classes.”

Forty years later, Engels described the rise of new unionism as a turning point in British history because it appeared to be a “general cry for the organisation of all trade unions into one fraternity and for a direct struggle against capital” (Cowden 1963:45). However, in his preface to the second edition of the *Condition of the Working Class in England*, Engels made no mention of his hope for “one fraternity.” Instead, he emphasized that general unions provided strong support for a labour party that would be independent of the Liberal party (1892:1ff).

Left-wing socialists were convinced that amalgamation was essential if unions were to represent workers as a class. The decentralized craft structure of unions in the American Federation of Labor incensed Eugene Debs (1909:11), five-time presidential candidate of the Socialist Party of America: “You have innumerable unions represented there, but no unity. You have this great body of workers parceled out among scores of petty and purposeless unions,

which are in ceaseless conflict with each other, jealous to preserve their craft identity. As long as this great army of workers is scattered among so many craft unions, it will be impossible for them to unite and act in harmony together. Craft unionism is the negation of class solidarity. The more unions you have, the less unity; and here, in fact, you have no unity at all."⁵ In 1905, Debs (1909:5) set up the Industrial Workers of the World, "a working class organization, so all-inclusive, so comprehensive, that it will embrace every man and woman who does useful work for a livelihood." However, the effort failed to attract more than a small proportion of workers and unions, as did all subsequent efforts by socialists to create classwide union movements.

The core idea of the union-party links hypothesis is that socialist parties tied to sectional, economistic unions were impelled toward reformism. Orthodox Marxists believed that socialists would socialize and educate unionists, but given the preponderant size and financial strength of unions, it is more plausible that unions would shape the party. The contrast in resources was stark. Socialist parties collected small annual dues; unions collected larger dues on a weekly or monthly basis. Most socialist parties depended on unions to provide them with members, and where this was not the case, socialist party membership was but a fraction of that of unions. Before World War I, socialist parties aspired to reform or transform the economic, social, and political system. Unions, by contrast, were concerned with workers' material rewards, economic security, safety, and dignity—in short, the conditions of daily life.

Trade unions, like socialist parties, were sensitive to the legal climate. Union reformism depended on the right of workers to combine (Lipset and Marks 2000; Marks 1989). When unions were free to organize, they led socialist parties to reformism. When unions were repressed, socialist parties led unions to revolutionism, or unions

assumed the task themselves by turning to revolutionary syndicalism.

Unions that were not suffocated by the state sprouted up as independent, reformist organizations. Revolutionary socialists and reformist unionists regarded this as a fact of life. Lenin argued that unions were capable of nothing more than "economism," a derogatory term for wage bargaining. Gompers, president of the American Federation of Workers for all but one year from its inception in 1888 until his death in 1924, came to the same conclusion, although he regarded it as a virtue. As Geary (1981:69) observes, "To a large extent labor protest remained purely industrial where it could satisfy its needs through the application of industrial muscle. The absence of such muscle, however, or its thwarting by laws and the intransigence of employers, transformed attitudes and the arena of conflict."

METHOD AND DATA

We test the expectations set out above against a new data set for 18 European, North American, and Australasian countries across two time points, 1900 and 1914.⁶ Social democratic positioning is estimated on three indicators: (1) the party's orientation to the political system, (2) the party's orientation to the economic system, and (3) the methods the party advocated for achieving its goals. We then adjust these scores for dissent. The coding scheme and historical sources are available in the Online Supplement on the *ASR* Web site (<http://www2.asanet.org/journals/asr/2009/toc070.html>). The Cronbach's α for the three components is .93, suggesting a single dimension.⁷

⁵ John Commons (1926:286) agreed but saw this as a strength: "Finally, when Gompers and the others built up the American Federation of Labor, they did not have a centralized big union where Gompers would be a dictator and have control of the funds and discipline, but a loose federation, with shop autonomy, union autonomy, craft autonomy—'autonomy' everywhere, and only two rules—union card and no dual unions."

⁶ The data set encompasses 37 cases in 18 countries across two time periods. Socialist, social democratic, or labor parties existed in all countries at both time points, except in New Zealand where a labor party was established in 1910; France, where there were two socialist parties in 1900, the *Parti Socialiste de France* and the *Parti Socialiste Français*; and Russia, where there were two parties in 1914, the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks. Because estimation errors are likely to be correlated within individual countries, we calculate cluster-corrected standard errors and check robustness across separate models for 1900 and 1914.

⁷ A principal component factor analysis yields one factor with an eigenvalue > 1 , which explains 86

Table 1. Operationalization of Predictors

Variable	Description
Civil liberties	Time elapsed between survey date and mean of two basic civil liberties: freedom of the press and freedom of association (logged).
Electoral participation	Time elapsed between survey date and date when the party first participated in national elections (logged).
Freedom of combination	Time elapsed between survey date and date of right of combination (logged).
Male suffrage	Time elapsed between survey date and date of male suffrage (logged).
Middle-class suffrage	Time elapsed between survey date and date when middle class first formed a majority of the voting population (logged).
Union-party links	Institutional cross-linkage between socialist party and trade unions, following Bartolini's coding (2000:256–62). 1 = very weak or nonexistent links; 2 = weak or contingent links (contingent); 3 = medium or strong links where unions are dependent on party (dependency/interlocking); 4 = medium or strong links with equality between party and unions (interlocking); 5 = party is dependent on unions (dependency/interlocking). We extend the coding to socialist/labor parties in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Russia, Spain, and the United States.

We argue that socialists were more reformist to the extent that the bourgeoisie and its middle-class allies achieved their political objectives. It is not possible to observe middle-class power directly, so we estimate it indirectly as a function of the timing of middle-class suffrage. We presume that the earlier middle-class enfranchisement took place, the more able was the middle class to achieve its political objectives. One could also argue that greater economic and political power led to earlier middle-class enfranchisement. Endogeneity is often problematic for social science, but in this case it is good because it suggests that the indicator we use is associated with the phenomenon we wish to measure.

Our measure of union-party links extends Bartolini's (2000:256ff and Table 6.4) categorization of "cross-linkages" between socialist parties and trade unions in 13 European countries to the 18 countries in our data set.

We operationalize civil liberties as a function of the elapsed number of years between the legal recognition of freedom of association and freedom of the press and our survey time point. Freedom of combination and male suffrage are operationalized in the same way. The results reported here measure time elapsed as the

logged number of years between a particular event and our survey time point on the assumption that the marginal effect of an additional year declines as the number of years increases. Results are robust when time is measured linearly. Table 1 explains how we calculate the independent variables and Table 2 provides the

SUFFRAGE, ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION, AND REFORMISM/RADICALISM

Figure 1 confirms the male suffrage hypothesis. The univariate association between male suffrage and reformism/radicalism is $-.53$ and significant ($p < .01$), correcting for the clustered character of the data. Political citizenship opens a channel for working-class representation, which moderates socialist demands. The timing of male suffrage, however, is blind to the context in which it is introduced. Middle-class suffrage provided property owners with a channel for legislative influence; male suffrage did the same for individuals who lacked property and were therefore dependent on the mobilization of numbers, not resources. The right to vote is one thing, freedom to articulate and organize demands in a mass movement is another.

Austria, Italy, Russia, Spain, and Finland granted male suffrage but suppressed civil liberties. In Belgium, Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands, Britain, and Canada, male suffrage was delayed, but in the context of a relatively open society. In the latter societies, the

percent of the variance. The component weight of orientation to political system is .94, orientation to economic system is .92, and method is .92. The correlation of this factor with the summary score in Table A1 in the Appendix is 1.00.

Table 2. Predictors of Socialist Party Reformism and Radicalism

	Freedom of the Press ¹	Freedom of Association ²	Electoral Participation ³	Freedom of Combination ⁴	Middle-Class Suffrage ⁵	Male Suffrage	Union-Party Links ⁶
Australia	1830	1824	1901	1824	1856 ⁷	1858	5
Austria	after 1914	1867	1897	1870	1873 ⁸	1907	4
Belgium	1830	1830	1894	1866	1831	1893	4
Canada	1830	1824	1900	1824	1867 ⁹	1885 ¹⁰	5
Denmark	1846	1849	1884	1849	1849	1849 ¹¹	4
Finland	after 1914	1906	1907	1906	1907	1907 ¹²	3
France	1881	1884	1893	1884	1815 ¹³	1848 ¹⁴	2
Germany	after 1914	1869	1871	1869	1871	1871 ¹⁵	3
Great Britain	1830	1824	1900	1824	1832	1885	5
Italy	1900	1890	1895	1890	1861 ¹⁶	1912	2
Netherlands	1848	1855	1888	1855	1849	1896	4
New Zealand	1830	1824	1890	1824	1852	1852	5
Norway	1814	1839	1894	1839	1815	1898 ¹⁷	4
Russia	after 1914	after 1914	1918	after 1914	1900 ¹⁸	after 1914	1
Spain	1883	after 1914	1898	after 1914	1890 ¹⁹	1890	2
Sweden	1838	1864	1896	1864	1866	1909 ²⁰	4
Switzerland	1830	1848	1896	1848	1848	1848	2
USA	1787	1787	1900	1842	1787	1860 ²¹	1

¹ Goldstein 1983:35.² Ebbinghaus 1995:61.³ Date at which the socialist party first participated in national elections (Mackie and Rose 1982).⁴ Bartolini 2000:321; Ebbinghaus 1995:61. We use Ebbinghaus's date where there is disagreement.⁵ Male suffrage and middle-class suffrage are from Carstairs 1980; Flora 1983:89-152; McMin 1979; Rokkan 1970:80-81; and Ward 1950: Ch. 12.⁶ See Table 1 for description of coding of union-party links.⁷ The timing of male suffrage varied across the six Australian colonies. South Australia, Victoria, and New South Wales legislated male suffrage in the 1850s. The smaller colonies were somewhat slower to do so.⁸ A curial system restricted the electoral weight of the middle classes. Of the four curia, one was reserved for large landowners and one for rural inhabitants who paid minimum direct taxes. The urban middle-class electorate was confined to the two remaining curia.⁹ Less than half of the enfranchised age group was eligible to vote for the first Canadian election.¹⁰ In 1898, the provincial laws were repealed and although most provinces adopted male suffrage, neither British Columbia nor Quebec did so.¹¹ Suffrage for the upper house (Landsting) was narrowed in 1866 to exclude all but the large landowners and wealthier middle classes.¹² Before 1907, a curial system restricted the electoral weight of the middle class even more decisively than in Austria or Germany.¹³ From 1815 to 1848, suffrage was effectively restricted to large landowners and the wealthiest sections of the bourgeoisie.¹⁴ Under the Second Empire, from 1852 to 1869, the government systematically manipulated elections.¹⁵ Universal male suffrage was for the lower chamber, which had little control over government.¹⁶ From 1861 to 1881, suffrage was restricted to less than 10 percent of the enfranchised age group. Only those who paid sufficient taxes and could read and write were eligible to vote. From 1882, more than one quarter of the enfranchised age group could vote. However, the government systematically manipulated elections.¹⁷ Rural areas were underrepresented and paupers could not vote.¹⁸ In 1905, the franchise was broadened but it remained a curial system that discriminated decisively against the urban middle classes and workers. In 1907, the system was reformed to further ensure landowner control.¹⁹ Caciquismo transformed a formally democratic system into an oligarchy.²⁰ Recipients of public poor relief were excluded.²¹ In 1830, 10 states permitted white male suffrage without qualification, eight states restricted the vote to taxpayers, and six states imposed a property qualification for suffrage. By 1860, five states limited suffrage to taxpayers and two imposed property qualifications.

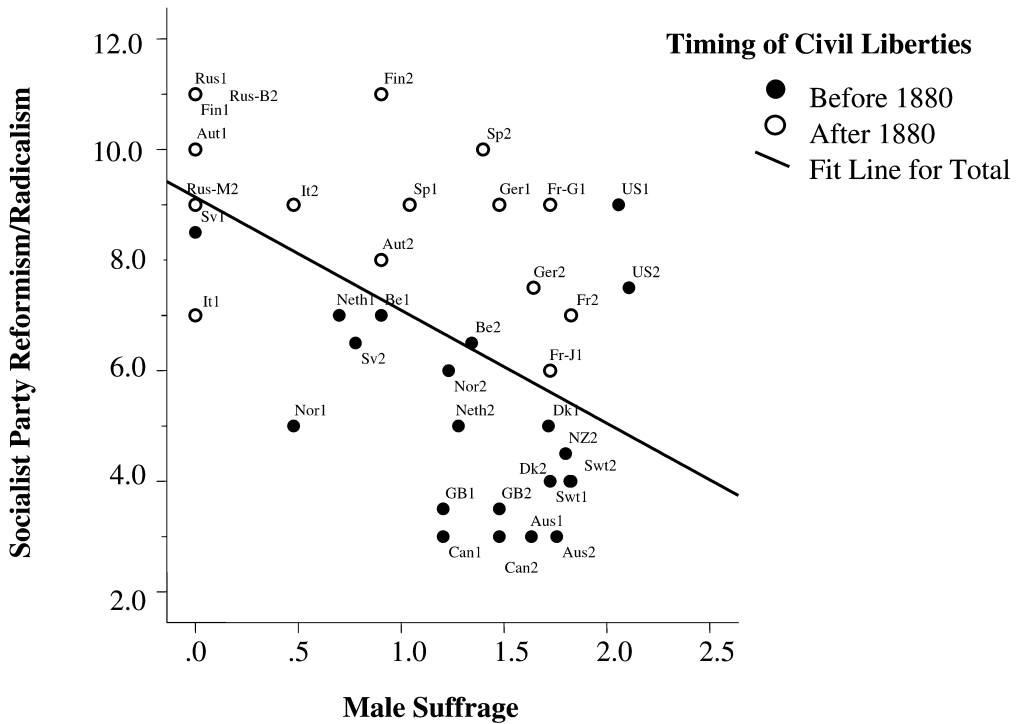


Figure 1. Male Suffrage and Socialist Party Reformism/Radicalism

Notes: 1 = 1900; 2 = 1914. Aus = Australia, Aut = Austria, Be = Belgium, Can = Canada, Dk = Denmark, Fr = France, Fin = Finland, Ger = Germany, GB = Great Britain, It = Italy, Neth = Netherlands, Nor = Norway, NZ = New Zealand, Rus = Russia, Sp = Spain, Sv = Sweden, Swt = Switzerland, US = United States, Fr-G = Jaurèsians, Rus-B = Bolsheviks, and Rus-M = Mensheviks. The male suffrage axis represents the logged difference between the year of male suffrage and the year for which socialist party reformism/radicalism is measured (1900 or 1914).

extension of the suffrage proceeded in steps. Socialist parties openly campaigned for reform in societies that were moving toward political citizenship. Many socialists regarded the pace of change as unacceptably slow, but the direction of reform was clear: with few exceptions, the extension of the franchise was ratchet-like.

In Figure 1, black markers indicate socialist parties in regimes where freedom of the press and freedom of association were in place before 1880; white markers indicate socialist parties in regimes where these rights were introduced after 1880. All but one party below the fit line is represented in black; all but one party above the fit line is represented in white. Male suffrage is associated with reformism/radicalism; civil liberties account for most of the deviation. Three cases—the Italian socialist party in 1900 and the American socialist party in 1900 and 1914—defy this line of explanation.

Before we investigate these cases more thoroughly, we must evaluate the hypothesis that participation in elections blunted the revolutionary ardor of socialist parties. As Przeworski and others note, the decades around the turn of the twentieth century saw a shift toward reformism in several socialist parties. In 1900, the mean score on our 12-point scale is 6.1; by 1914 it is 5.6. The turn to reformism is generally stronger among parties that were more radical in 1900 than in 1914 ($R = .39$), which is consistent with the electoral participation hypothesis. However, the timing of electoral participation does not explain much cross-sectional variation in socialist radicalism/reformism. The association is in the expected direction but is weak ($R = -.23$). Figure 2 reveals that the timing of electoral participation predicts too little reformism in societies where civil liberties were in place, and too much reformism in societies that lacked such liberties. Interestingly, electorally suc-

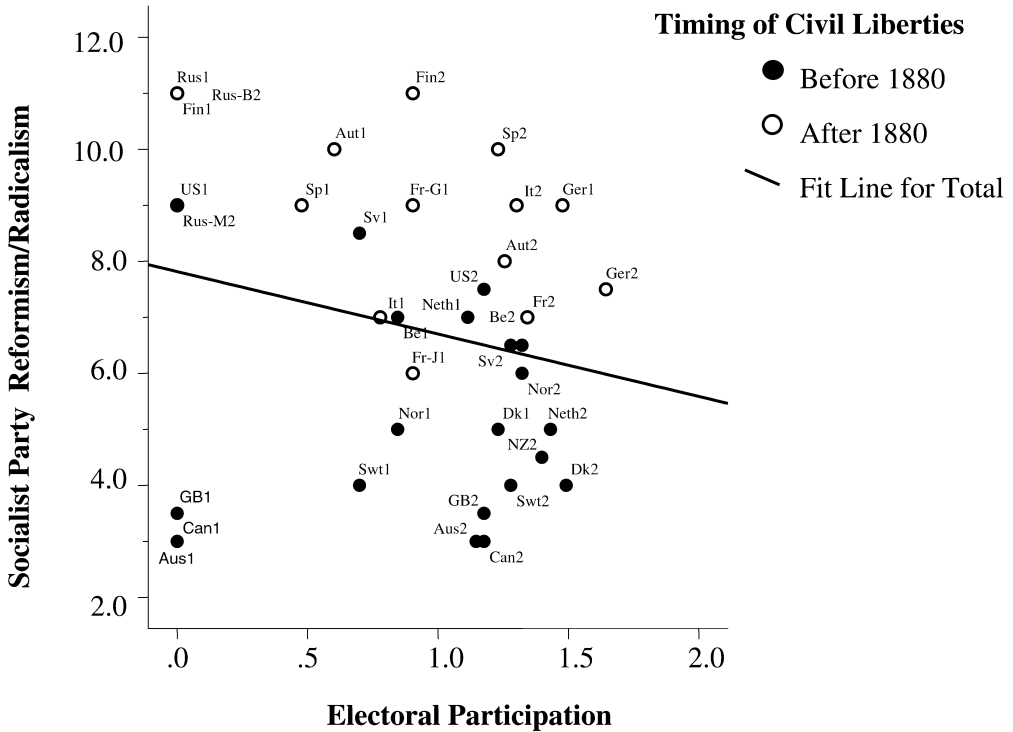


Figure 2. Electoral Participation and Socialist Party Reformism/Radicalism

Notes: 1 = 1900; 2 = 1914. Aus = Australia, Aut = Austria, Be = Belgium, Can = Canada, Dk = Denmark, Fr = France, Fin = Finland, Ger = Germany, GB = Great Britain, It = Italy, Neth = Netherlands, Nor = Norway, NZ = New Zealand, Rus = Russia, Sp = Spain, Sv = Sweden, Swt = Switzerland, US = United States, Fr-G=Guesdians, Fr-J=Jaurèsians, Rus-B = Bolsheviks, and Rus-M = Mensheviks. The electoral participation axis represents the logged difference between the year in which the socialist party first participated in national elections and the year for which socialist party reformism/radicalism is measured (1900 or 1914).

successful parties in Norway (26.3 percent of the vote in 1914), Finland (43.1 percent), and Italy (17.6 percent) were at least as radical in 1914 as they were in 1900, while electorally weak parties in the United States (6.0 percent) and New Zealand (9.6 percent) became more reformist.⁸

Figure 3 presents a structural equation model that explains variance among socialist parties as an indirect consequence of the political emergence of the bourgeoisie and its middle-class allies and the effect of this on the working class. Middle-class suffrage is associated with (1)

male suffrage; (2) liberties, a factor summarizing the timing of civil liberties and the timing of freedom of combination; and (3) union-party links via liberties. Together, these variables account for an estimated 68 percent of the variance in socialist party reformism/radicalism.⁹

⁸ $R = -.10$ for the percentage of socialist vote and change in reformism/radicalism (measured as reformism/radicalism in 1914 minus reformism/radicalism in 1900). $R = -.17$ for electoral participation and change in reformism/radicalism.

⁹ Using Amos 7.0. Estimates of model fit reported in Figure 3 are within acceptable bounds. The χ^2 statistic is a "badness of fit" measure: significance indicates that the given model's covariance structure is significantly different from the observed covariance matrix. To reduce the sensitivity of χ^2 to sample size, researchers divide it by the degrees of freedom, where a value < 3 is deemed acceptable. The next three indices (CFI, NFI, and IFI) are comparative or incremental fit indices assessing the relative fit improvement of the model implied here compared with the null model. Values for the CFI, NFI, and IFI range from 0 to 1, where a value $> .90$ is considered

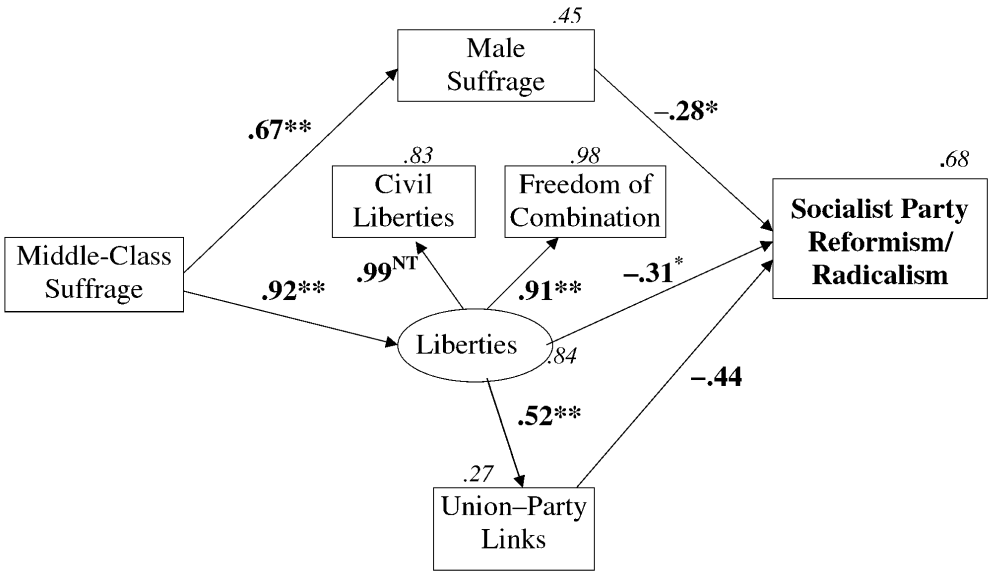


Figure 3. Sources of Socialist Party Reformism/Radicalism

Notes: Bold figures are standardized regression weights. Italicized figures are squared multiple correlations that estimate the total variance explained. NT = not tested, the parameter is constrained to 1 for the scaling. All estimates are significant (correcting for clustered errors): * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$. Model Fit Statistics: $\chi^2 = 21.54$, $df = 7$, $\chi^2/df = 3.07$, CFI = .92, NFI = .90, IFI = .93. χ^2 = chi-square statistic, df = degrees of freedom, CFI = Bentler's Comparative Fit Index, NFI = Normed Fit Index, IFI = Incremental Fit Index.

Table 3 lists the total standardized effects of the independent variables. Although middle-class suffrage has no direct effect on reformism/radicalism, its standardized total effect is greater than any other variable in the model.¹⁰ The legal framework of civil liberties and freedom of combination is causally important for both socialist parties and labor unions, so we model this variable as having both an indirect and a direct effect on socialist reformism/radicalism. Combining these pro-

duces a total effect for liberties that is second only to middle-class suffrage.

Our analysis implies that Marx was correct: (1) class relations reflected the productive basis of a society and (2) the bourgeoisie and its middle-class allies' political success in creating a liberal capitalist society shaped the rise of the proletariat. But he got the sign wrong. A stronger bourgeoisie fostered *less* radical working-class political parties, not more radical parties—in short, no bourgeoisie, no reformism.

THE UNITED STATES: AN EXCEPTION THAT SUGGESTS A RULE

One party in particular challenges the thesis that a relatively tolerant legal framework should lead to reformism: the Socialist Party of America. The party was considerably more radical than predicted by the timing of male suffrage, civil liberties, and freedom of combination. In 1900, the residual for the party is 2.33 standard deviations above the predicted value, and in 1914 the residual is 1.58 standard deviations.

acceptable (Hu and Bentler 1999). The correlation of civil liberties and freedom of combination is .90. A principal component factor analysis yields one factor with an eigenvalue > 1, which explains 95 percent of the variance. The component weights for civil liberties and freedom of combination are .97.

¹⁰ Regressing reformism/radicalism on male suffrage, liberties, and union-party links produces variance inflation factors (VIFs) of 1.98, 2.92, and 1.78, respectively. These suggest that our estimate for liberties is the least reliable of those in Figure 3, but that multicollinearity in the model is within acceptable bounds.

Table 3. Standardized Total, Direct, and Indirect Effects on Reformism/Radicalism

	Total Effect	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	
Male Suffrage	-.28	-.28		
Liberties ^a	-.53	-.31	-.22	through union-party links: $.52 \times (-.44) = -.22$
Union-Party Links	-.44	-.44		
Middle-Class Suffrage	-.68		-.68	through male suffrage: $.67 \times (-.28) = -.19$ through liberties ^a : $.92 \times (-.31) = -.28$ through liberties ^a and union-party links: $.92 \times .52 \times (-.44) = -.21$

^a Factor of civil liberties and freedom of combination.

In 1787, the United States established freedom of the press and association. Male suffrage for the white majority followed in the late 1820s and freedom of combination in 1842. Yet the socialist party that formed in 1901 was radical even by continental European standards (Lipset and Marks 2000; Moore 1970). Eugene Debs was a committed Marxist who made no effort to conceal his revolutionary sentiments in his campaign speeches. Visiting British socialists, from H. G. Wells to Henry Pelling, were struck by the American party's dogmatic Marxism. Lenin praised Debs on several occasions and rarely attacked other U.S. socialist party leaders. Indeed, before the United States' entry into World War I, Lenin believed that the American socialist party, unlike most European parties, could become a truly revolutionary party.

The American socialist party was radical in a context that, according to political opportunity theory, should have induced political moderation. The most plausible explanation is that the party was never part of a labor movement that encompassed large and assertive unions. The American socialist party was not only independent of the American Federation of Labor (AFL), but there was well-publicized acrimony between the leaderships of the two organizations. Debs went so far as to set up a dual labor movement in an effort to outflank the AFL, and Gompers came to regard socialism as an ideological vice to be rooted out of unions.

The split in labor's ranks had several sources. Craft unions conceived their mission as the defense of skilled workers (Conell and Voss 1990; Marks 1989). In the early 1900s, they accounted for around two thirds of AFL members, a large proportion compared with other industrialized societies. Mass immigration from

Eastern and Southern Europe around the turn of the century reinforced the distinction between native unionized workers and nonunionized immigrants. The American working class was also religiously and ethnically diverse. Irish Catholics led several unions that rejected socialism on religious, cultural, and political grounds. For their part, socialists failed to reconcile their desire for an inclusive working-class movement with a penchant for ideological correctness. While some influential socialists, including Victor Berger, Morris Hillquit, and Frank Hayes, collaborated with nonsocialist unions, they never brought the party with them. They were opposed by those, like Debs, who rejected the AFL outright and thought it better to have a Marxist party than an inclusive labor party. Regardless, AFL leaders preempted a labor party strategy with their policy of "rewarding friends and punishing enemies," which signaled an intent to avoid any third-party entanglement (Archer 1998).

Denied union backing, the American socialist party never became a mass party. Its membership peaked at 120,000 in 1912, less than one fifteenth that of the British Labour party in the same year. The party remained one of activists and intellectuals, unalloyed by a large blue-collar base. The ideological effects were evident to contemporary observers and fatally determined the party's non-interventionist policy during World War I. The prospect of war in the years before 1914 traumatized socialist leaders in Europe and beyond, but once the war began, unionists pressed their parties to support the war effort. In the United States, AFL unions participated in the war effort, but they could not determine the American socialist party's stand. Nathan Fine ([1928] 1961:302) observed that the party's decision to oppose U.S. entrance

into the war was “due primarily to the fact that unlike the parties of Europe the Socialist Party of the United States . . . was not a mass movement.” According to Fine, the party’s “absence of control over the trade unions with their bread-and-butter demands, its lack of political strongholds and a large organization to conserve, all this made the American party primarily a party of propaganda and education” (p. 307).

This line of argument appears to be generalizable across a wide range of countries. The effect of union links on reformism/radicalism is strong and significant in univariate analysis and under controls. When we add union–party links to a model with male suffrage and liberties, we estimate that the variance explained across the 37 cases increases from 54 to 68 percent.¹¹

MIDDLE-CLASS WEAKNESS AND SOCIALIST RADICALISM

Six countries did not introduce basic civil liberties until the last decade of the nineteenth century or later: Russia, Finland, Spain, Italy, Germany, and Austria. In none of these countries did the middle class set the terms of political or economic competition. These countries denied workers freedom of combination in the labor market for most, if not all, of the nineteenth century. Where workers did have such a right, as in Germany from 1869 or Austria from 1870, strikes were suppressed by the state. These countries delayed male suffrage until the twentieth century or negated its effects through executive monarchy (Germany after 1871) or corruption (Spain after 1890). Beyond these similarities, however, lie contrasting conditions and divergent trajectories that illustrate both the power and the limitations of our theory.

A reform movement in a society as closed as Russia appeared impractical, if for no other reason than it would provoke repression. The paraphernalia of a mass socialist movement—public meetings, openly elected leaders, membership lists—were inviting targets for a police state. Lenin’s ([1902] 1973:171) conception of a professional revolutionary vanguard was premised on the infeasibility of an open party: “Just try to picture this in the frame of our autocracy!”

The early history of the Russian labor movement exemplifies both the appeal of reformist unionism for workers and the self-fulfilling consequence of state suppression in driving unions into the arms of revolutionists. When repression eased in 1906 and 1907, several groups of workers established unions that pressed for better wages and hours (e.g., the printers established formal channels of collective bargaining with their employers), but these efforts failed when repression intensified after 1907. As Bonnell (1988:291) observes: “Above all . . . the Bolsheviks struck a responsive chord among many union activists because the party’s approach coincided with the workers’ own experiences after 1912. The autocracy treated economic protest as political opposition, thereby creating the very conditions that eventually transformed the unions into revolutionary organizations.”

Until the revolution of 1905, Finnish workers were subject to Russia’s harsh controls, leading the Finnish socialist party to demand revolutionary change.¹² As in Russia, strikes unleashed police repression and reaffirmed Marx’s dictum that union activity was merely preparatory to the creation of a classwide political movement. When Russia’s repressive capacity collapsed in 1905, Finnish workers joined with civil servants in a general strike for civil rights and popular representation. They established a parliament based on male suffrage, but when Russia reasserted its imperial control after 1906, strikes once again faced police suppression and parliamentary power was curtailed. Participation in national elections based on male suffrage did nothing to tame the revolutionism of the Finnish socialist party, even though it won 37 percent of the vote in 1907 and 43 percent in 1913. The party succeeded in becoming a cross-class coalition, attracting a significant proportion of agrarian workers, but it rejected cooperation with other parliamentary groups and pulled back from its earlier participation in a national front for Finnish independence.

In Spain and Italy, the aristocracy lost its monopoly of political power during the nine-

¹² The causality described here is independent from that in Russia. Finnish socialists did not follow socialists in Russia but were influenced by socialists in Germany and Sweden (Knoellinger 1960:46f).

¹¹ The variance explained is 52 and 64 percent, respectively, when we adjust for chance.

teenth century, but the middle class remained politically and economically weak (Malefakis 1970; Nadal 1973). Rigged elections convinced working-class leaders that male suffrage was fraudulent. In both countries, political corruption led significant sections of the working class to ideologies rooted in distrust of the state. Anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism shared a millenarian belief that heroic acts could shake the masses from their lethargy into revolutionary action. Unions were suppressed, organizationally weak, and politically fragmented. Consequently, they exercised little moderating influence over socialist parties.

The response of the Spanish socialist party under the leadership of Pablo Iglesias was to build its organizational base while espousing a rigid and reductionist Marxism. The party participated in elections from 1891, but it pursued an isolationist policy in the Cortes until 1909. An entrenched agrarian elite sustained its hold on authority behind a façade of liberal democracy with the support of the Catholic Church and the bourgeoisie. The result was a government that alternated among established landed interests (*turno pacífico*), produced immobility, and undermined the case for gradual reform (Heywood 1989).

In Italy, state repression, late male suffrage, and weak unionism led to a deeply divided socialist movement that was initially dominated—contrary to our theoretical expectation—by its reformist wing. The Italian socialist party in 1900 is the most poorly predicted of the 37 cases and makes the point that historical materialism can take us only so far in explaining socialist party strategy. To go further, one must delve into other factors, including culture, that are independent of a society's economic base.

Socialism in Italy was influenced by radical republican followers of Mazzini and Garibaldi, the founding giants of the Italian state (Stenson 1991). Filippo Turati, who led the Italian socialist party in its early years, was formerly a radical republican who believed that socialists should ally with liberal sections of the middle class to produce democratic reforms. Turati wrote to Engels for support, and Engels shared his view that “the *Socialist Party* of Italy is obviously too young and, considering the whole economic position, too weak, to be able to hope for an *immediate victory* of Socialism” (Engels [1894b] 1935:520; italics in original). Engels

backed Turati's position that socialists should support a reforming Republican ministry: “This will give us universal suffrage and greater freedom of movement (freedom of the press, of organisation, and of assembly)—new weapons not to be despised” (p. 522).

Gradualism lost its appeal when the historical compromise between reformist socialists and Giolitti broke down. Reformist socialists could not stem the tide of syndicalist strikes after 1901, and Giolitti's republican government could not maintain a policy of nonintervention in strikes. Led by Mussolini, maximalist socialists gained support, and the 1912 Socialist congress rejected parliamentarianism in favor of direct revolutionary action. By this time, the influence of republican reformism among socialists had run its course and the Italian socialist party was no longer an outlier.

In neither Germany nor France did early male suffrage engender reformism. In Germany, relatively early suffrage provided socialists with representation, but little else. In 1871, with the establishment of the German Reich, the government granted men age 25 and older the right to vote. The Kaiser selected the executive, however, and the upper chamber, the Reichsrat, could block constitutional change through a curial system that discriminated heavily against workers. Marx (1875:3) described the regime as “police-guarded military despotism, embellished with parliamentary forms.” The German Social Democratic party participated in elections, but its leaders claimed, justifiably, that the authorities used male suffrage as a tool to bind workers to the regime while denying them power. Civil rights were restricted even after the most repressive legislation—the Anti-Socialist Laws—lapsed in 1890. “The persecution not only failed to destroy the party but radicalized its membership, and led to a process of theoretical clarification which culminated in the adoption at the Erfurt party congress of 1891 of a programme written by Karl Kautsky that was avowedly Marxist” (Geary 1989:119).

Contrasts among German Länder confirm the causal link between civil liberties and socialist strategy (Bartolini 2000:321). Socialists in the south did not have to contend with a reactionary Junker landed aristocracy intent on eliminating socialism as a political force. The middle class was more diversified and assertive in Bavaria and Baden than in Prussia and, corre-

spondingly, civil liberties were stronger and more resilient. Socialists in the south of Germany experimented with reformist policies; while they never controlled the party as a whole, they broke the party ban on coalitions with bourgeois parties and on voting for state budgets.

Germany was home to the largest socialist party in the world before World War I and was a beacon for orthodox Marxism. Following the non-renewal of the Anti-Socialist Laws, however, increasingly effective and self-confident unions demanded freedom from party interference so they could pursue a gradualist strategy in the labor market. By the turn of the century, socialist Free unions had become a decisive influence in favor of reformism (Mikkelsen 2005). In 1905, the unions thwarted a push to revive the party's revolutionary stance. Most party leaders viewed the general strike as a potent weapon in their political arsenal, but union leaders insisted that the strike was an economic weapon that should be reserved for unions. Carl Legien, head of the socialist Free Union movement, described the general strike as "general nonsense."

The timing of male suffrage and civil liberties in France cannot fully capture the ruptures and discontinuities of regime change and its effects on socialist strategy. Male suffrage came early but did not lead to reformism. Some 9 million Frenchmen won suffrage in March 1848, the overwhelming majority of whom voted for a government that crushed an incipient socialist state within the state. The creation of a democratic Third Republic in the early 1870s was preceded by the Paris Commune, an experiment in populist rule that ended in defeat at the hands of a vengeful government and the execution of 20,000 sympathizers. This was the bloodiest episode of working-class repression in any society up to that time. It splintered the socialist movement into several competing strands, including reformists, later associated with Jean Jaurès, who believed that humanitarian socialism could be built on French republican traditions; Marxists of various tendencies, led by Jules Guesde, united by their rejection of compromise with bourgeois power brokers; and an insurrectionary stream in the tradition of Auguste Blanqui.

Unions in France did not experience the heavy hand of the state, as they did in Italy and

Spain, but they had to contend with legal uncertainty. Strikes were legalized in 1864, two decades before unions were legalized. Collective bargaining and industrial conflict outpaced organizational development. Unions, which struggled to survive in a twilight legal setting, distanced themselves from socialist parties that had the benefit of legal tolerance and relatively broad suffrage from the 1880s. Divisions among socialists reinforced the sense that links with socialist parties had limited utility. Many unions turned to revolutionary syndicalism, an ideology rooted in rejection of the state and distrust of electoral politics that made a virtue out of weakness by demanding no more than a loose, decentralized structure.

In countries where capitalist development went hand in hand with traditional absolutist controls suppressing worker combination, unions were denied the freedom to bargain effectively in the labor market and were formed in the wake of socialist parties or rejected the state altogether. Craft and industrial unions emerged whenever cracks of freedom appeared. In Russia, Finland, Spain, and Italy, however, the preponderant response of ruling elites was to crush overt resistance. In these countries, the ruling class was divided between soft and hardliners, but the latter took the initiative. In Germany and Austria, unions formed after socialist parties and existed in subordination to them (Deutscher 1952; La Palombara 1957). When unions were later given a little breathing room, most continued to support socialism, but they interpreted socialism as a long-term goal that allowed them to seek immediate improvements in wages and conditions.

In each of these countries, the failure of the middle class to shape the ruling regime fueled the working class's revolutionary goals. Socialists were confronted with the task of gaining liberalism as well as socialism. One logical response was to ally with the middle class, but this option was pursued only in Italy for a short time. The unwillingness of ruling elites to provide meaningful channels for working-class demands not only presented a strategic challenge for socialists, but also suppressed the emergence of effective parliamentary representation—and unions—that could provide the organizational backbone for reformism.

MIDDLE-CLASS STRENGTH AND SOCIALIST REFORMISM

Lipset hypothesized that the timing of male suffrage provides a key to the political orientation of a country's working class. The model in Figure 1 confirms that earlier male suffrage facilitated reformism among socialist parties. However, this did not hold when unions were cut off from the party (the United States), when civil liberties were denied (France), or when male suffrage was a sham (Germany). Conversely, as we argue below, late male suffrage did not always produce radicalism. Where the middle class was strong enough to entrench civil liberties and provide unions with space to be effective in the labor market, reformism could develop even if political citizenship was denied.

In the Low Countries, northern Scandinavia, and Britain, male suffrage was not in place until the late nineteenth or early twentieth centuries. Male workers were excluded for up to three generations after urban bourgeoisie and independent farmers gained the vote (Belgium, 1831; Britain, 1832; Netherlands, 1849; Norway, 1815; and Sweden, 1866). The demand for male suffrage pitted the working class against reactionary forces and made it inevitable that workers would conceive of their political opportunities in broad class terms, but this did not entail radicalism. In these countries, working-class movements could legitimately voice demands. Freedom of association and expression were in place before industrialization. Each of these countries experienced concerted efforts to suppress such freedoms, but they failed in the face of middle-class resistance.

The contrast between early liberties and late male suffrage is particularly stark in Sweden. At the turn of the twentieth century, the Swedish franchise was the most restrictive in Western Europe and a fully parliamentary system had not yet developed. The Swedish social democrats modeled their first official program, adopted in 1897, on the Marxist Erfurt Program of the German social democratic party. Over the next 15 years, however, the party shifted in a reformist direction. According to Tingsten (1973:712), "The movement's early adoption of a moderate and reformist character was due to the strong traditions of freedom and justice which prevailed in Swedish society. No special legislation against Social Democracy was enact-

ed; the opportunity to propagandize had few limitations; the state made no systematic attempts to prevent the growth of the movement through the use of existing legislation."

Universal male suffrage was not established in Britain until after World War I. Following prolonged working-class pressure, a Reform Act finally passed in 1884 but it excluded domestic servants and recipients of poor relief; it was perhaps 35 percent short of full male suffrage.¹³ In 1900, the proportion of men over the age of 21 who could vote was smaller in Britain than in eight of nine European countries for which we have comparable data (Flora et al. 1983). However, a strong and independent middle class undergirded a liberal regime that, apart from a harshly repressive period following the Napoleonic War, generally tolerated associations and a free press.

The government's response to Chartism (1838 to 1848) is a revealing example of the political elite's commitment to civil liberties. Chartism was the first mass working-class movement in the world and could have engendered large-scale violent conflict. The movement formed in response to the distress and famine arising from a series of failed harvests and a Tory tax on corn imports. The palliative, in the eyes of Chartist leaders, was political citizenship. The Charter consisted of six demands: male suffrage, the secret ballot, the end of the property qualification to stand for election as a member of Parliament (MP), payment of MPs, equal districts, and annual parliaments. The movement was uncoordinated but threatening. In the north of England, "physical force" Chartists (whose slogan was "peaceable if we can, forcibly if we must") were on the verge of violent revolt.

The government refused to budge on the demand for male suffrage or fair elections, but it avoided provocation. Rather than appoint a reactionary to command the Northern army, the Home Secretary, Lord John Russell, selected Sir Charles Napier, a man of radical sympathies. Russell was aware that Napier had actually been invited to be a delegate at the National Chartist Convention. Not surprisingly, Napier resisted

¹³ Engels (1894a [1953]:536) observed that non-payment of members of Parliament, and rules for voter registration and candidate selection, rendered Parliament "a club of *the rich*."

attempts by local magistrates to mobilize the army against Chartist meetings. In his diary, Napier (1857:53) recounts that the local justices “were for stopping the meeting by force, and would have done so without any encouragement; but I swore if they attempted it not a soldier should quit the barracks till both constables’ and magistrates’ heads were broken. This was bravado, for I dare not refuse to obey their orders.” Napier’s private letters and journal reveal considerable sympathy for the Chartists and a determination to avoid class war. Napier went, incognito, to an 1840 meeting in Manchester and wrote privately that he saw men “expressing orderly, legal political opinions, pretty much—don’t tell this—very much like my own” (1857:39). That Lord Melbourne’s liberal government could have chosen such a man to command the army in the potentially explosive north of England speaks volumes about the self-confident tolerance of the English ruling class at a critical political juncture.

The piecemeal establishment of craft unions from 1851 followed the failure of Chartism to sustain a durable working-class political movement. The development of independent union organizations prior to the creation of a working-class party is typical of English-speaking societies. Given freedom to organize and strike, unions developed sectionally, wary of calls for strong national federation or for the leadership of workers’ political parties. In Britain, Australia, and Canada unions established and funded reformist working-class parties that they continued to shape until recent decades. These parties’ self-designation as “labour” parties signifies their distinctive character. When they eventually took on socialist programs, they did so only after a lengthy period in which their chief aims were to extend union security and working-class representation within the existing political system.

CONCLUSIONS

Seymour Martin Lipset, to whose memory we dedicate this article, described himself as an apolitical Marxist. We find this a useful point of departure for explaining variation among socialist parties. The political struggle of the bourgeoisie and its middle-class allies against landed elites shaped the subsequent struggle of the working class. To defend against absolutist

repression, the middle class fought for basic civil rights, including freedom of association and freedom of the press, but once in place, such rights provided working-class movements with breathing room to pursue their own agendas. This was largely unintentional. The propertied middle classes demanded “specific minority rights, as a means of legitimating their own right to exist” (Lipset, Trow, and Coleman 1956:15–16). They delayed extending suffrage to workers and tolerated unions only with reluctance. In countries where the middle class was weak or subordinated to agrarian elites, however, workers experienced greater repression, had weaker unions, and, even when they could vote, were denied meaningful elections.

As institutional access expanded, socialist parties were induced to reject revolutionary action in favor of reform. Civil rights—freedom to organize and freedom of expression—were decisive. If civil rights were more or less in place, socialists were willing to play by the rules even if political citizenship—hinging on the right to vote—was delayed, in some cases, for decades. But if civil rights were repressed, male suffrage could not induce moderation. The right of workers to vote and socialist parties to participate in elections did not appear to be as fundamental for socialist strategy as the right to organize or express demands.

Beyond this generalization lie some interesting and causally influential variations arising from how socialist parties were embedded in their respective social movements. Socialist parties and unions were organizational expressions of working-class subcultures rooted in language, neighborhood life, and the workplace. Union movements, in contrast to socialist parties, represented distinct groups of workers in particular occupations or industries. Unlike socialist parties, trade unions defended workers’ interests on a daily basis within the capitalist system of wage labor. Socialist parties connected to effective union movements adopted reformism even when workers were denied full political citizenship. Socialist parties detached from unions (including the unlikely pair of the Bolshevik party and the American socialist party) were also divorced from pressures to ameliorate workers’ daily lives by acting within capitalist institutions.

Reformists and revolutionists alike recognized that relations between unions and the

party provided a key to socialist strategy. The orthodox Marxist and revisionist writings that poured out of socialist debates in the early 1900s, including Bernstein's *Evolutionary Socialism* (1902), Kautsky's *The Road to Power* (1909), the bulk of Debs's writings, and Lenin's famous pamphlet, *What is to be Done?* (1902), focus on one question: How should the political party relate to the labor movement? Where socialist parties were linked to effective unions, they formed broad class alliances rather than ideologically motivated sects.

Today, civil rights and universal suffrage are considered components of a single phenomenon, liberal democracy. Historically, though, they appeared independently with contrasting consequences for the character of political contestation. Most contemporary authoritarian regimes with revolutionary oppositions are politically inclusive but not liberal—they allow citizens to vote but deny them liberty. And like authoritarian regimes a century ago, many authoritarian regimes today are too weak or illegitimate to stamp out political opposition by brute force. The socialist experience of the early twentieth century suggests that basic liberties—the right to organize and freely communicate political opposition—are decisive because they establish the conditions under which political citizenship is meaningful.

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APPENDIX

Table A1. Socialist Party Reformism/Radicalism

	Year	Orientation to	Orientation to	Dissenting		Summary
		Political System	Economic System	Methods	Factions	Score
		(1 to 4)	(1 to 4)	(1 to 4)	(-1 to 1)	(2 to 13)
Australia: Australian Labour Party	1900	1	1	1	0	3
	1914	1	1	1	0	3
Austria: Austrian Social Democratic Party	1900	3	3	3	1	10
	1914	3	3	2	0	8
Belgium: Belgian Workers' Party	1900	2	2	3	0	7
	1914	2	2	3	-.5	6.5
Canada: Canadian Socialist Party	1900	1	1	1	0	3
	1914	1	1	1	0	3
Denmark: Social Democratic Party	1900	2	2	1	0	5
	1914	1	2	1	0	4
Finland: Labour Party/Social Democratic Party	1900	4	4	3	0	11
	1914	4	4	3	0	11
France: Parti Socialiste Français (Guesde)	1900	3	3	3	0	9
France: Parti Socialiste de France (Jaurès)	1900	2	2	2	0	6
France: SFIO	1914	2	2	2	1	7
Germany: Social Democratic Party	1900	3	3	3	0	9
	1914	3	3	2	-.5	7.5
Great Britain: Labour Party	1900	1	1	1	.5	3.5
	1914	1	1	1	.5	3.5
Italy: Italian Socialist Party	1900	2	2	2	1	7
	1914	3	3	4	-1	9
Netherlands: Social Democratic Workers' Party	1900	2	2	2	1	7
	1914	1	2	1	1	5
New Zealand: New Zealand Labor Party	1914	1	3	1	-.5	4.5
Norway: Labor Party	1900	2	2	1	0	5
	1914	1	2	2	1	6
Russia: Russian Communist Party	1900	4	4	4	-1	11
Russia: Bolsheviks	1914	4	4	4	-1	11
Russia: Mensheviks	1914	3	3	3	1	9
Spain: Spanish Socialist Party	1900	3	3	2	0	8
	1914	3	3	2	1	9
Sweden: Social Democratic Party	1900	2	3	3	.5	8.5
	1914	1	3	2	.5	6.5
Switzerland: Social Democratic Party	1900	1	2	1	0	4
	1914	1	2	1	0	4
United States: Socialist Party of America	1900	2	3	3	1	9
	1914	2	3	2	.5	7.5

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